

# POETRY

No. 239

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## P·R·O·J·E·C·T

### NEWSLETTER

a wave would be heard  
to enfold the notes  
spraying its foam  
music. I grew  
my thing  
struck  
in  
.

# THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

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Photo Above: Newark, NJ in January. Taken by TSE, 2014.

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\* The cover image and the images on pages 9 and 31 are courtesy of Erica Baum, new work in her series, *Dog Ear*.



I was recently proofing the “history” section of some of the Project’s grant prose when I came across Reverend Michael Allen’s name misspelled as “Allan.” I knew this to be wrong but double-checked it on the internet anyway. The search took me to Allen’s obituary in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. He passed away on September 4, 2013 at the age of 85. In the midst of the many deaths our community is experiencing, which I could only seem to be stoic about, finding this out finally moved me to a place of grief. For those readers who don’t know about the man of whom I speak, Reverend Michael Allen was the rector of St. Mark’s Church (from 1959-1970). He welcomed a young group of poets looking for a regular venue for readings and created a climate that fostered the development of The Poetry Project. He went on to be head priest at Christ Church Cathedral in St. Louis for more than two decades and always looked to poets and artists to help sustain his work. As I read more about him, I can appreciate how perfectly his ethos of honest investigation, which usually led to challenging the establishment, corresponded with and made possible—this.

We have a Spring lined up that will have everyone talking. An event for a landmark 2-volume publication of Etel Adnan’s work, several poet-packed tribute events, readings from beloved Bay Area poets, beloved Canadian poets, beloved beloved poets, our Spring celebration “Eileen Myles and Friends” curated and hosted by Myles, and a public q&a with cultural satirist and neighborhood friend Fran Lebowitz, and that’s just a glance at the Wednesday Reading Series. Turn to your calendar for the global picture. See you soon.

*Stacy Szymaszek (Director)*

Dear Reader of The Poetry Project Newsletter,  
Spring is here. Here is *Spring* by James Schuyler:

### Spring

snow thick and wet, porous  
as foam rubber yet  
crystals, an early Easter sugar.  
Twigs  
aflush.  
A crocus  
startled or stunned  
(or so it looks: crocus  
thoughts are few) reclines  
on wet crumble  
a puddle of leas. It  
isn’t winter and it isn’t spring  
yes it is the sun  
sets where it should and  
the east  
glows  
rose. No  
Willow.

*Arlo Quint (Managing Director)*

There’s this recording from the early ‘80s—I’m pretty sure it was on one of those Dial-A-Poem LPs Giorgio put out—of Rene Ricard reading for a generous and swooned audience in the parish house. You can tell that Rene is moving around, as his voice fluctuates in the amplification, and he’s reading “Rene Ricard Famous at 20”—that wonderfully arch title and its send up of the patronization of patronized poets, the ‘nouveau-cute’ poets, those with the capital to inform either designation. “I will never apply for a grant!” he says. “Let me starve,” to which the audience giddily applauds. His reason: “I must look out for my biography.”

It’s a pre-anti-FOMO polemic, a would-be denouncement of record breaking re-tweeted Oscar ‘group selfies’—a contradiction in terms—and status flaunting sameness in perfectly stasused bodies. It’s a necessary voice. It’s vital. And, now, we’ve lost him.

This issue is particularly special as we are presenting remembrances of two poets whose work and presence has had an unalterable effect on our community, Amiri Baraka and Madeline Gins—though these two are not the only poets dear to us that we’ve lost recently. This season has been tough with many passings, but I hope some of the work in this issue will speak not only to specific poets but in part universally to all of the poets who are now in absentia.

“Some vanish,” Rene says clearly amplified, “and the lucky ones become vampires.../ I didn’t, that’s all...”

*Ted Dodson (Newsletter Editor)*



# NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

## SUBSCRIBE TO THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

Long time readers of this publication have probably realized that once you subscribe to the PPNL (or receive it by becoming a member), you will continue to receive it whether or not you keep up with your membership or subscription.

The PPNL is a profound way to be in touch with you, our community near and far, and we have enjoyed providing it without asking for regular payment. But, as production costs increase, and our commitment to print issues remain strong, we're going to be writing to the people who have been receiving it the longest to invite them to subscribe or renew their memberships/subscriptions.

You can help us! If you are receiving your copy in the mail and have let your membership/subscription lapse, please go to [poetryproject.org](http://poetryproject.org) to renew.

## MAGGIE ESTEP (1963-2014)

Last month, we lost poet and novelist, dog lover and all around great person, Maggie Estep, to a heart attack. Maggie performed regularly at The Poetry Project, most recently at the 2013 New Year's Day Marathon. At the time of her passing, she was at work on a novel called *Girls and Grenades* and kept a blog at [maggieestep.com](http://maggieestep.com). Here is part of her post from January 23, 2014:

I HAVE TO WRITE because I don't know what else to do with my mind, how else to make sense of the world and its inhabitants. For whatever reason, I have trained myself, for many years, to do this thing. And when I don't do this thing, I get crazy. No amount of yoga, bicycle racing, rapacious sex, or buying things can take the place of writing.

We will miss you, Maggie.

## CONTRIBUTORS

BETSY ANDREWS is the author of *The Bottom*, winner of the 42 Miles Press Poetry Prize, forthcoming in September 2014, and *New Jersey* (University of Wisconsin Press), winner of the Brittingham Prize in Poetry.

ERICA BAUM lives and works in New York. She has had solo exhibitions at Bureau, New York; Crèvecoeur, Paris, MelasPapadopoulos, Athens, Lüttgenmeijer, Berlin and Circuit, Lausanne. Past group exhibitions include *Subject, Index* at Malmö Konstmuseum, Sweden. Her work was included in the upcoming group exhibition, *Postscript: Writing after Conceptual Art*, at the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, and the 2012 São Paulo Bienal. Her artist's books include *Dog Ear* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2011), with essays by Kenneth Goldsmith and Beatrice Gross, *Sightings* (onestar press, 2011), and *Bbabaubaumbaudevin* (Regency Arts Press, 2012).

ANNE BOYER's works include *Anne Boyer's Good Apocalypse*, *Art is War*, *The 2000s*, *Selected Dreams with a Note on Phrenology*, *The Romance of Happy Workers*, *My Com-*

*mon Heart*, and *A Form of Sabotage*, which was published in translation by the Turkish collective Kült Neşriyat in 2013. She has a forthcoming novel, *JOAN*, and a forthcoming book of prose, *The Innocent Question*. Recent writing can be found in *The New Inquiry* and *Spolia*. She is an Assistant Professor of the liberal arts at the Kansas City Art Institute.

THOM DONOVAN's first trade edition book, *The Hole*, appeared with Displaced Press in 2012 and his second book of poems, *Withdrawn*, will be out with Compline later this year. He is the co-editor and publisher of *ON Contemporary Practice*, an online journal and print monograph series for critical writings about one's contemporaries. He is also the editor of *Supple Science: a Robert Kocik Primer* (with Michael Cross; ON Contemporary Practice Monograph Series, 2013) and *To Look At The Sea Is To Become What One Is: an Etel Adnan Reader* (with Brandon Shimoda; Nightboat Books, spring 2014). Currently he teaches at Parsons, Pratt Institute, and School of Visual Arts.

THOMAS SAYERS ELLIS is a poet and photographer. He is the author of *The Maverick Room* and *Skin, Inc.*, and currently a Visiting Writer at the University of San Francisco.

ERICA KAUFMAN is the author of *INSTANT CLASSIC* (Roof Books, 2013).

## TED GREENWALD AND EILEEN MYLES HONORED BY FCA

Foundation for Contemporary Arts (FCA) is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2014 Grants to Artists awards. Fourteen unrestricted grants of \$30,000 each—a total of \$420,000—have been made to individual artists and one collective in the United States. Nominated confidentially by prominent artists and arts professionals and selected by the Directors of the Foundation and noted members of the arts community, the 2014 Poetry recipients are Ted Greenwald and Eileen Myles.

## FRANK SHERLOCK INDUCTED AS PHILLY POET LAUREATE

Frank Sherlock has replaced Sonia Sanchez as Philadelphia's new Poet Laureate! Way to go, Frank! We know you'll represent poetry well.

## RON PADGETT'S *COLLECTED POEMS* NAMED FINALIST FOR L.A. TIMES BOOK PRIZE

The Poetry Project would like to extend special congratulations to Ron Padgett, the founding editor of *The Poetry Project Newsletter*, for the inclusion of his *Collected Poems* (Coffee House Press) as a finalist for the L.A. Times Book Prize.

## GEORGE SCHNEEMAN AT POETS HOUSE AND PAVEL ZOUBOK GALLERY

*A Painter and His Poets: The Art of George Schneeman*, curated by Bill Berkson and Ron Padgett and on view April 22 through September 20 at Poets House, is the first major retrospective of the painter's collaborative works with prominent poets of the second-generation New York School, among them Ted Berrigan, Anne Waldman, Larry Fagin, Maureen Owen, and Michael Brownstein.

Running concurrently, from April 24 through May 24, will be an exhibition of Schneeman's collages and other works at Pavel Zoubok Gallery, 531 West 26th St., New York, NY.

JOYELLE MCSWEENEY is the author of two hybrid-genre novels and two volumes of poetry, including *The Red Bird*, which was chosen by Allen Grossman to inaugurate the Fence Modern Poets Series in 2001. With Johannes Göransson, she publishes Action Books and *Action, Yes*.

CAMILO ROLDÁN is a poet and translator who lives in Brooklyn, NY. From 2011 through 2013 he co-curated the Triptych Reading Series and is currently editor-in-chief for DIEZ. Among other journals, his work has most recently appeared in *Mandorla*, *West Wind Review*, *Lungfull!*, *Sun's Skeleton* and is forthcoming in *Aufgabe*.

DIANE WARD's many books of poetry have been included in the Belladonna Elders series, and published by Seeing Eye Books in Los Angeles, Factory School, and Portable Press at Yo-Yo Labs in New York, among others. Her latest book, *Love Poems*, is forthcoming from post media books in Milan. She is currently in the PhD program in geography at UCLA.

JACQUELINE WATERS is the author of *One Sleeps the Other Doesn't* (Ugly Duckling Presse) and *A Minute without Danger* (Adventures in Poetry).

# Amirika Newaraka

## Thomas Sayers Ellis



Photo Above: Amiri Baraka at the Poetry Project. Taken by TSE, 2013.

Photo Opposite: Amiri Baraka and Ahi Baraka in Albany. Taken by TSE, 2013.

### WHAT IT IS

Best, I guess,  
to begin at the end  
with the last,  
his-face-to-my-face,  
real voice thing  
he said to me,

“Don’t eat the shrimpy grits,”

### WHAT IT AIN’T

but before I run-down the recipe of the voodoo he was running-down I want to say-out in a shout that the poet Martin Espada was the first person I ever heard pronounce the name Amiri Baraka, “A-meeri Baraka,” Espada could make the percussive progression hesitate and every syllable between the opening noble “A” of Amiri to the last folk “a” of Baraka all ride in the same car and play their star-playa positions—Spanish Harlem, Old San Juan, Cuba Libre with pleasure. This was in Boston, cultural cold war Boston, back between *Trumpets of the Island of Our Eviction* and the birth of The Dark Room Collective, them anxious days, around the same time we lost James Baldwin and the weekend in D.C., a trombone player sold me a stolen 35mm camera a few blocks from Howard University, adding the theft of our arrival to my way of seeing, the same blocks a collegiate LeRoi Jones walked his way in the world before both class and the classroom became two of his early opponents.



Best, I guess  
to transition to the beginning  
with the first,  
his-face-to-my-face,  
real voice thing  
he ever said to me

"If you care about Black People and Black Writing, you will be at Jimmy's funeral"

although the "me" was a "we," me, Sharan Strange, Noland Walker and Darmone Holland, waiting to get our books signed at Brandeis University a few days after Baldwin split, me a low top fade, holding a cloth copy of *The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones*, my own stolen used bookstore lowcoup. And that was it, his word, the demanding invite, that was it, the shift in energy, a dig into a people, the opening like a homecoming home,



the flesh put back on reading, page-weight, whatever we was reading or whatever was reading us, so the words would always mean bodies, be bodies, substance, a stance that wasn't sub or 'stitute, just prose and song, the prosody of attitude, ours. Then was the call, the charter, the proclamation, the fire, the declaration, the tradition, in, in the commitment to a new constitution aka a new war aka not the old one at the bar or the liquor store—the knew who knows—the place to b, the real song like nation time, we always known new was a dangerous song, da music, da song, da music that would cut you if you were wrong, or backwards, and that was his thang, the sharp edges of nightmarish voodoo reversal, exploding the ugly wrapped in imploding beauty, running "it" down—a kind of Muthafuck Dante as a way of not belonging to the same lies the rest of us belong to, but nowhere near abandoning the rest-of-us-rescue. That was it, a new land: *Amirika*.

I always tried to act cool when I was around him—as cool as he thought Miles was, and even though there ain't no word for that level of cool, well, I thought he was cooler—like it wasn't no big deal that I was around him—although every time I was around him it was and I was a citizen. Most times I just felt like a pre Lula "Clay," empty seat next to me, a lame alter-ego of my own miss-educated self, blind and unable to scan my own blind breathing or like a young Al Freeman, Jr., acting, not really able to predict the round of my own demise but still showing up at the prizefight anyway, all the hands in all of the pockets so very visible. Me trying to hide my "tra-billion" questions and trying to find a coded way to show him that I wasn't like all of the rest of the Race Erasers who had stepped to him for guidance but who were also trapped in his style, even the ones I was now half-responsible for, the ones you

think are wading on the surface of darkness then you look beneath the water of their wet, failed feet and see that they really are standing on the reflections of dead, Negros, killed in the line of pushin' publishing, but he knew the codes, all of them, because he helped carry them forward, from slave ship to briar patch to housing projects to theater to New and Nowaraka, because one of our major briar patches, *the wherever we was/ is the was/ and is the way/ of the being in us*, was created in a heroical him, heroism up in Harlem (for a moment) by him who said "Can't be no act" and later—

"Poetry is labor. It is work.

It's not just emotions. It's not just

I hurt

I feel

I'm sorry

I love."

Wiser now and hip to podium per cussin' and the chauffeurs of chauvinism, because he saw so far and lived it publicly...in the arms of the avant-garde, in the belly of black nationalism

(as long as he could stomach it), a Marx(ist) Brotha, the one who pulled Groucho's cuban cigar to the shadows of reformed Nosferatus and other not so hidden American Nazis. Sharper as well, because he didn't sit on his poems for years crafting them into lightweight chunks and chumps of scaffolding meant to last longer than the people they were meant to inform. His poems, like the days and nights of the living events they are responses to, were gatherers of screaming gatherings. To riff on the content of "Getting Less & Less Safe Out Here (Tin Tin Deo, Diz), a poem he sent me a few weeks before he was hospitalized, "The world is less safe without Amiri Baraka," why, because there are very few American poets left who are willing to, directly, call an Oppressor an Oppressor, wiling to do the real diggin' and *and* turn that diggin', the meaning of it, into a system of resistant-language of root-work awareness, a poetics of the people capable of providing the kind of pleasure that satisfies the mouth and the mind the way living literature should. And, on top of all that Verse Marching, there are very few poets left with the fierce, street-cred-book-intelligence respected and feared by every camp within the Black Community, who are willing to take on "the worst Negroes in this nightmare." Unlike anyone before him, Amiri Baraka was able to name and articulate categories of Blackness with an accuracy that could make you feel shame and pride all in one line. He was both of *that us*. Hear, here, his black mouth—

Coloredpeepas Bushy Tongues Wailers Poppa Stoppa  
Counterfeit Nickels Yee Slave Folk Joe Griot  
Wooden Negroes

(Continued on pg. 28)

# In Memorium: Madeline Gins

*Anne Boyer*

"Let me  
come  
back  
to life so I  
can  
comply  
with this  
law."

The poetry of Madeline Gins proved the most possible thing about poetry is the impossible.

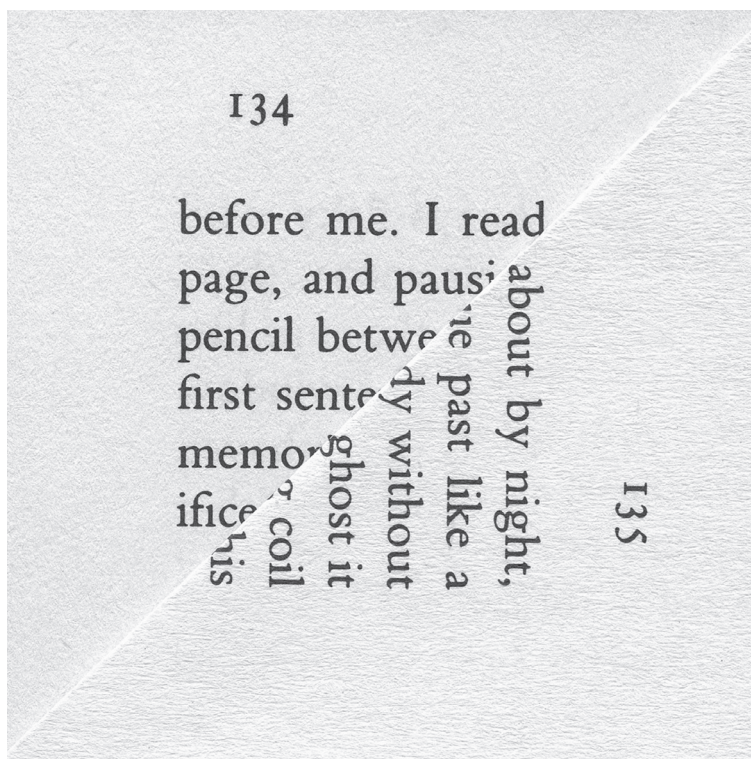
I met her only once, in October 2013, when I read at the Poetry Project with Matias Viegner, with whom she was collaborating. I had not known she was going to be at the reading, so when Matias announced her presence, I began to worry. If I had known I was to be reading to Madeline Gins, I would have read work with a more obvious trace of her influence. I wanted to show her what a dutiful student I'd been of the impossible made possible by her.

Ultimately, it didn't matter that I hadn't brought the right work. She was generous enough to receive me exactly as if I had. When she heard a poem I wrote about climbing out of graves, my friends told me she clapped her hands together and exclaimed, "That poem!"

After the reading, she offered the kind of lavish encouragement one stores away for the grim times of being a poet when the impossible feels merely impossible again. Finally, she said to me, as if she'd known all along that my thoughts are made of buildings: "It is easy to go from being a poet to an architect: it is as easy as taking your hand." Then she took my hand.

I've read her carefully over a number of years. It is clear if one did this how, despite apparent difficulties, all apparently difficult things—like living forever—are, in fact, easy. She has, after all, written, "It should not be viewed as preposterous, by you or your neighbors of all sizes and densities, that you have overnight become an architect. Do not laugh at yourself for having as much as declared





Erica Baum. *Page Pencil*, 2013. Photograph.

yourself to be an architect—unless.”

Unless. The laughter that follows that “unless” is actually this transformation’s propellant. The trick of making the impossible possible is in *the ludic resituating of any problem*. Seriously. Gins and her longtime collaborator, Arakawa, were never stingy about instruction, and they revealed their secrets so explicitly to their readers that this very explicitness, in how it startles, takes on the nature of secret. But, if you’ve ever wondered just how to have an architectural body, not die, write the biography of a non-existent (“I was not born”), have a nervous breakdown, predict the presidency, and so on, it’s as easy as going from a poet to an architect:

If you want to do the impossible, should you be desirous of tilting at windmills, why not build to your own specifications the windmills at which you wish to tilt? In the spirit of always taking things further, a spirit characteristic of those desiring to do the impossible, why not indeed build the whole of the world in which those windmills tilt? And furthermore still, why not build windmills that tilt back toward you knowingly and informatively?

When people talk about Gins, they sometimes forget that along with being a poet and an architect of immortality, she was also a political scientist. Along with Arakawa, she extended the forms of liberalism (the constitution, the contract, the law, the sovereign subject) to their absurdly delicious ends—like the Marquis de Sade but without any of the disemboweling. In her work, this snake of what we might know as the political

finally swallows itself by the tail.

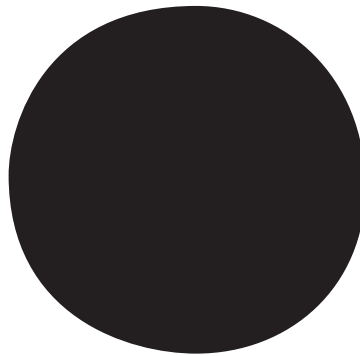
She gave us a political poetry of bio-scientific-lyric-anti-infra-archi-structuro-politics. She gave us “an early tentative for a planned economy”—as she herself wrote (as the president reacting to the work of Madeline Gins): “If Karl Marx were Madeline Gins, he would have written this!” In this poetry lab, she practiced her infra-anti-political science, and she gave us a poet’s revenge on the polis. She also gave us women’s.

During our conversation on that October night, she told me how necessary it was to continue writing feminist poetry. And what Gins did, particularly in “All Men are Sisters,” is provide a blueprint for how to build not just a feminist poetry, but make a feminist poetics that dances effortlessly and hilariously away from humanism, liberalism, and even, in the way the best poetry always does, poetry itself. “Women do not die—” she tells us, “this makes all the difference—although some women, having been brow-beaten by sheer syllogistic brawn, have at times pretended.”

Women do not die; therefore, I will never believe Madeline Gins is dead. She decided not to do that. So, surely, it must be the living that are dead, and where Gins and Arakawa have exceeded the crisis of the biological, *that* is life. And in this death that is the life we now live, without the poet who is the architect of immortality and the political scientist who ended politics, I feel considerably more alone. As Gins wrote in *Helen Keller or Arakawa*, “Perception has got to have a body—I cried.”<sup>11</sup>

# In Pursuit: Ann Lauterbach's Lyric Essay

*erica kaufman*



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Reading the rigorously intertextual and elegant second section of Ann Lauterbach's recent *Under the Sign*, "Task: To Open," I find myself taken back to Antony Gormley's 2010 installation in Madison Square Park, "Event Horizon." Following an italicized unpacking of the term, "*a boundary in spacetime, most often an area surrounding a black hole...*" Lauterbach writes, "Crossing of boundaries: no origins, no states: roots: routes." (63-64). I think of bodies and rootlessness, the way I/we want a place that feels like a real home (or hearth) and at the same time want to feel unencumbered and able to wander.

Gormley described his installation (the NYC incarnation) as:

hop[ing] to activate the skyline in order to encourage people to look around...Within the condensed environment of Manhattan's topography the level of tension between the palpable, the perceivable and the imaginable is heightened because of the density and scale of the buildings. The field of the installation has no defining boundary. The sculptures act as spatial acupuncture.<sup>1</sup>

Gormley's "Event Horizon" was a series of 31 life-sized reproductions of his own body (in iron and fiberglass) spread across the streets and tops of buildings in the Flatiron District. At the time I was teaching at Baruch College, on 23<sup>rd</sup> and Lexington, which meant that I walked past at least five of these statues on a regular basis. They became a part of my routine, and increasingly, I became fixated on the fact that no one stopped to notice them along their commute. I remember walking into my 8:10AM class late and somewhat distraught one day because I watched at least 20 people walk right past the statue in the middle of the entrance to Madison Park without blinking an eye. Who are we if we can't even see another body? I remember asking my students what they thought of the statues and although most of them commuted and walked past them daily, few looked up and noticed.

2.

Disclaimer: This is an essay on Ann Lauterbach's essays. Because I admire every lexical work she generates, I choose to limit myself to the prose, which I teach on a regular basis.

3.

I introduce the "essay" in a composition (first year writing) course I am teaching. I begin by inviting the class to look into the origins of the word. We find ourselves greeted by "essayer" and "assay"—both gesture towards the idea of the essay as an opportunity to try something out, attempt, even test. We then sometimes wander towards Montaigne and the way his "essays" meander, never married to a single formulaic "thesis," instead sailing the unpredictable waters of ideas, and where they take one. Sometimes we find ourselves talking to Emerson, looking at sentences like, "Every ultimate fact is only the first of a new series." ("Circles") What I want is for students to take some kind of responsibility over what they write about, to *want* to write an essay, to see the "paper" as a vehicle to explore an idea they are interested in mulling over.

I hand out "The Night Sky I," a piece from Lauterbach's *The Night Sky: Writings on the Poetics of Experience*, a piece that begins with a section titled "There is No Topic Sentence." The "topic sentence" is in many ways a cornerstone of how people talk about the essay—you need topic sentences to score well on whatever. But, what Lauterbach enables us to do it to rethink the way one approaches the "form" of the "essay"—she reminds us, "language is the material of the world. Every object is simultaneously itself and its word." (*The Night Sky* 61) Semester after semester I watch students react to this short phrase—"language is the material of the world"—the way Lauterbach's language

opens up a page of possibilities to them, for them. Even though in this classroom I need my students to write an argumentative essay, Lauterbach changes what that means. It's as if Lauterbach's masterfully constructed *The Night Sky I* opens the hypothetical floodgates by demonstrating that an essay should be full of unexpected swerves. Lauterbach writes, "to be able to say 'we' and 'our' without the filtering presumptions of authority." (*The Night Sky* 53) "Students have a right to their own language"<sup>2</sup> and Lauterbach's prose demonstrates what is possible to explore and accomplish within the "confines" of prose.

4.

"Task: To Open" begins with a description of returning to New York City as a native New Yorker who moved out of the city. Lauterbach writes, "Abundance of constant noticing, old practice of city life, before everyone looking at, speaking into, machines." She then continues, "Why try to capture in words, in pictures, to still or distill what vanishes even as it is being noticed?" (51). The *Oxford English Dictionary* reminds us that one of the definitions of "noticing" is to "become aware of," to permit stimuli to become a part of ourselves. What Lauterbach does in this passage is underscore the rigor that is inherent in the act of noticing—it is easier to look down at the sidewalk than to make eye contact with what surrounds.

This reminds me of how I often think about the form of the essay and how I am always looking for essays that are unpredictable in their thought experiments, essays that share the writer's vigorous observations as they welcome us to walk with them. The term "lyric essay" is one that has been increasingly garnering attention. Here's one definition:

The lyric essay partakes of the poem in its density and shapeliness, its distillation of ideas and musicality of language. It partakes of the essay in its weight, in its overt desire to engage with facts, melding its allegiance to the actual with its passion for imaginative form.<sup>3</sup>

This description of the "lyric essay" draws parallels between the form of the poem, and alludes to the original meaning of "lyric"—something meant to be sung. However, I'd add that, in my opinion, what makes a "lyric essay" a crucial form is that there is something clearly at stake for the writer, and this investment is apparent in both the way language is used (the risks the writer is taking in the writing itself), and in the way the piece moves unpredictably in many directions while still investigating a very real inquiry, pushing one's own endurance as both writer and thinker. In Lauterbach's "Task: To Open," "These are acts of delicacy and attention, to allow for an opening, to let something unknown in, let it combine with what is already there. How else do we change? How else love?" (53) The "acts" that Lauterbach refers to are acts of "writing," and she points to the crucial idea that one cannot always predict what writing evokes—both surprises for reader and writer—the unknown walks in and out of a sentence, greets what is there and perhaps changes it, and this is the risk that makes the writing meaningful, open.

I'm reminded of a moment in Barbara Guest's essay, "Wounded Joy": "Do you ever notice as you write that no matter what there is on the written page something appears to be in *back of everything that is said, a little ghost?*"

(continued on pg. 24)



# REVIEWS AND REACTIONS

## Some Other Deaths of Bas Jan Ader

**Dana Ward**

*Flowers & Cream*, 2013

Review by Jacqueline Waters

In 1975, Bas Jan Ader, a young Dutch artist living in Los Angeles, tried, as art, to sail alone across the Atlantic in a boat smaller than the smallest boat that had ever successfully made the journey. His 13-foot sailboat, larger than a walnut shell but small enough to be called a “pocket cruiser,” washed up months later off the coast of Ireland. Ader had disappeared, presumably lost at sea.

Nearly 40 years after the fact, the story feels impossibly romantic, oddly antiquated, just shy of suicidal. Also, fit subject for an obligatory festival-circuit documentary (*Here is Always Somewhere Else*, 2007), and finally overexposed until it has become, as Josef Kaplan remarked (in a text Ward points to as a “provocation” for this poem), “altogether too dreamy, too glorious to be anything but banal.”

Although concerned only “glancingly” with Ader, Ward’s magnificent, consuming long poem is propelled by both sides of Kaplan’s equation, by dreaminess and banality, along with myth and skepticism, enchantment and ordinariness, happiness and disquiet:

Then dreaminess recovers  
from historical amnesia to  
find its aspect integral & dear.  
Its interludes dissolve into  
the life of their occasions,  
desperation for relief & how  
the mind made peacock  
flesh resolves to deepen,  
in its iridescent crest, the  
fantasies developed in its  
overleveraged bliss.

*Some Other Deaths of Bas Jan Ader* is the third in a rapid-fire sequence of Ward’s books to appear over the last few years, the impact of which seems to spread by

the day. You can read Ward fast because it feels like he thinks fast or writes fast—initially the poem has the feeling of having been written all at once, like a breezy notebook entry, like “wind styled over the surface of the water, freely, with easy intensity, enough to cause commotion.” Go over it again and layers of intention unfurl, carrying you what feels like *along* but is really *up*, the grade of the ground increasing until trees start to stick out sideways.

It all starts in the waiting room of a records office. The poet needs a copy of his daughter’s birth certificate to satisfy an employer’s audit, to counter the presumption an employee is just drawing benefits for an imaginary baby:

Sarah’s employer  
is conducting an audit  
in order to substantiate  
the status of dependents  
in the house receiving benefits  
by virtue of privileged  
relation spelled out  
in the corporation’s policy  
regarding who is & who isn’t  
a qualified love.

Though it begins with this scene set in “the atmosphere/ of bureaucratic languor,” it’s more of a narrated poem than a narrative one, often returning to an oral storyteller’s “Then ...” locution: “Then I’m having serious moments inside.” “Then I’m in some kind of museum.” “Then the only thing I see is light on water.”

In the waiting room a strange inclusiveness begins to set in, where other people’s stuff and clothes are suddenly “ours.” And the scene begins to flatten into two dimensions, to a flat photo where a leather planner actually might border the rhinestones that border the sunglasses, then to a baby’s face, one whose “candle light complexion/ made him blend in with the walls.” Then the baby’s face turns into the flattest, most visually lifeless thing in our world today: the QR code, those little grids, would-be portals, in the corner of ads.

Ward, the poet and poem’s protagonist, walks us through generous swathes of this universe’s “unbearable completeness,” lolling there, if it’s possible to loll quickly, while multitasking, reveling in appearance and sensation simultaneously, giving equal affective import to the detritus that flies up from “long days inhaling info-meth, nose pressed to screen” and the commentary that crashes into it.

Eventually the “thens” turn into a list of instances where the poet was helped by his friends or family, “all the kindnesses provided,” the memories flicking by like pictures in a photostage tagged “sustenance”:

Then Micah stops by & I  
smoke while he nurses a  
nicotine lozenge & helps me  
better understand Laurelle.

Then Kathy moves her  
shoulder in just such a way  
so that I can sneak around  
her through the door.

Then Nancy is working my  
shift.

It becomes a poem of gratitude for good fortune, aid, mutuality, friendship, a world where “mercy & forgiveness as acculturated treacle are converted to hard gem.” Of course the flip side to gratitude is need, as anyone who’s had to say “thank you” to someone they’d rather not take from can attest. Your need exposes you. But it also releases ties of affection and warmth, as when “the sun was just a paper moon, its warmth an effect of its need for some beloved to believe in it & authorize the venue of its beaming.”

Among Ader’s more well-known pieces are the “fall” videos, short films he made of himself falling through space in inevitable ways – holding on to a tree branch above a muddy creek, sitting in a chair on the slanted roof of a house, riding a bicycle on the edge of a canal. Setting yourself up for failure, for a fall, was a recurring theme in Ader’s work. Or seems to be, once the work is bookended by his spectacularly sad end.

(Continued on pg. 25)



# Natural History Rape Museum

**Danielle Pafunda**

*Bloof Books, 2013*

Review by Joyelle McSweeney

Danielle Pafunda's fifth book shows her at the top of her hilarious, furious game. One must reach for the oldest stories to describe the particular clawed, fanged, winged, and always female bodies of these texts: *fury, harpy, Medusa, Baba Yaga, the killer sphinx at her least composed moments*. Pafunda's poetry is always a spiky sonic treat, punching a tracheostomy in the throat of lyric convention so that the noise of erased, extinguished, and strangled women can come out. Yet for all their uncanny, violent verbal fluency, each of her volumes feels not so much voiced as somehow pressed through a body, through the particular body of the text. Her always alert language spurts through the pores, orifices and wounds of these poems.

This new volume finds Pafunda full of trick moves and self-snaring complications, like a cutter-girl-Houdini or a lady knife thrower with her self roped to the target. Lyrics are pierced with lacerating text boxes, or compressed into tableaux and forced to host italicized narration. The book presents an antagonist—a male-pronounced figure referred to as “the fuckwad.” The fuckwad or other man appears in these poems and donates a certain aggravating grain, in response to which a ‘she’ figure produces an iridescent mucoid substance, a sticky, toxic emulsion that hardens into the pearl of the poetry. See example A.

In this punky loam  
the preservations  
Pop the glass eye  
Pin to his gagsuit

The man in your life  
will exercise his fink  
till it wail

A listory: sunshine, mollycoddle, sweetheart, princess,  
supine, peep cheater, gosh all git up.

*Example A, from Danielle Pafunda's Natural History Rape Museum*

In this rankly attractive and illustrative tissue sample, the gross lustre of Pafunda's strategy is apparent. The “punky loam vista” with its hidden color, pink, calls up the uterine/gestational imagery, which the book is pleased to

The fuckwad has placed her in the room with the knife.

Behind the one-way glass he zooms. Watch her pollywog doing.

First will she slice out her hundred tongues. Her beaded, beetled,  
work-wise tonguing. Then nine-quadrant cross-  
section skull brain scalp and face.

Oh she gives out unwise teeter. But

The reel sleety  
meaty vacancy

the dermoid void. Drain her winning doubt,

chain her slick padding, and still she winks her wile under the table.

*Example B, from Danielle Pafunda's Natural History Rape Museum*

host. The grit of the textbox with its life-sentence of conjugal servitude also encapsulates the gestational process—the man's exorcism of his ‘fink’ will produce a baby, an ‘it’ which ‘wails’ unless the derailment of miscarriage (also a theme in this book) can veto this logic. The presence of the alien text box causes the language to dense up around it, the mother-of-pearl that is Pafunda's fecund word horde lavishing the grit with synesthesia, sound that is also a mouthed, gritty texture, esses and chaw-chaws and gushes of sonority. The effect is both luscious and cossetting, like the pet names (sunshine, sweetheart) which convert to sexually vulnerable positions and epithets (supine, peep cheater) in the second half of the couplet. The couplet here is a kind of snare.

An irony of Pafunda's body of work, including the poems in this volume, is that the response-production of antigens and nacre is so intense that ‘poor’ “fuckwad” hardly stands a chance. The poems are allergic to

vista, count  
gone wrong.  
from his mildewed outlet.  
lapel a list history.

on the poem's own terms. For example, see example B.

In this excerpt, the fuckwad certainly gets things in motion, ‘placing’ our lady “in the room with the knife.” Remembering that stanza is Italian for ‘room,’ we can imagine this stanza as the carceral/theatrical ‘room’ in which we may now admire Pafunda's resourceful knifework. The spectacularly inventive diction is burlesque and acrobatic—violent, yes, but the violence seems to indicate a kind of contraction in the muscle of the syntax, pushing the female pronouns along. This time the text box seems to be less the irritant that produces the poem than an out-of-body observation about the poem itself, a traumatic extra-space, self-consciousness that rises up and looks down.

Pafunda's books continually and valiantly return to the scenes of gendered crimes, to the rape, the violation both historical and personal, the trauma of birth and of miscarriage and of objectification (the book begins, “When they called me vagina.”) which women are somehow expected to swallow down and survive. At the same time, each new book instants a furred and fishy banner under which an entirely non-virgin, mutant non-queen rides into battle. This queen must be doomed, as she must always take her lance (and lancet) back up, and never finish off fuckwad. But her ingenuity, her intensity, her brilliant, decaying armament is so radiant that each new volume by Pafunda seems to configure a new strategy of survival – however dubious such a goal as survival might be under current and foreseeable conditions. In which case, as another queen-slash-fuckwad once so gamely blazoned: Viva Hate. 🖤

## Psalms for Dogs and Sorcerers

**Jen Coleman**

*Trembling Pillow Press, 2013*

Review by Betsy Andrews

In “Woman and Bird,” the opening essay in *What is Found There*, Adrienne Rich describes her encounter with a large bird: “The Great Blue heron is not a symbol...[I]t is a bird...But I needed to acknowledge the heron with speech, and by confirming its name. To it I brought the kind of thing my kind of creature does...And poetry, too, begins in this way: the crossing of trajectories of two (or more) elements that might not otherwise have known simultaneity. When this happens, a piece of the universe is revealed as if for the first time.”

If there is a recent book of poetry that illustrates Rich’s point, it is Jen Coleman’s debut, *Psalms for Dogs and Sorcerers*. In it, birds and squirrels and fish and ocean, honeybees and mountain lions, rats and moon and more and more of what we might call the natural world hooks up with the human-built world—“bee in a junky old shop,” “pigeons atop rebar witness”—forming a sort of interspecies chorus that sings of the rending of the fabric of the universe.

What is beneath? Bare-nakedness, of course: “What the Brain has bestowed/is the Rude Body;/this Rude Body is Naked,” writes Coleman. Hers is a peep at the skin of the universe, beautiful but bruised, in need of healing.

For Adrienne Rich, nose-deep in ecology books post-heron, rectitude would lie in the holistic merging of systems of naming, so as to create a new way of knowing, and treating, the universe. “We might hope to find the three activities—poetry, science, politics—” she writes, “triangulated, with extraordinary electrical exchanges moving from each to each and through our lives.”

For Coleman, a longtime professional environmentalist as well as a poet, such integration is a matter of course. Take “The Time is Ripe,” a very ripe poem in a book of ripe poems:

Humans must share  
with marine mammals and sea  
birds  
squid, krill, and one quintillian  
copepods,  
the value of knowledge  
for its inherent interest:  
A Census of the Fishes.

To count and to name are human activities. We should use our own tools to fix our own screw-ups. In the luscious reckoning of the names we have given them—“count the puffers count the milkfish count emperors or scavengers// fairy basslets, catfish, thornyheads and thornfishes”—we are compelled to deal with the fact of fish; by counting them, to become accountable to them.

In Coleman’s continual cataloguing—“wild medflies after their kinds, sassy potatoes/ with corn dogs and buttermilk after their kinds/ and all koalas that clutch according to their kinds”—there is Whitman’s earthy materialism (and that of Oppen and Rukeyser). In the psalm-like nature of the poems (though all the animals feel more Genesis than Book of Psalms), there’s Whitman’s lusty divinity. But there’s none of Whitman’s acquisitiveness. This isn’t Manifest Destiny; everything, from the barnacles to poor demoted-planet Pluto holds its own. “Lingcod play the role of 15 million unemployed in this story,” Coleman writes. But they also play the role of lingcod.

There is a powerful respect here for the non-human things of this universe. And there’s an urgency. To make another poetic comparison, *Psalms* is like Elizabeth Bishop’s “The Fish,” as seen from the perspective of the fish, that battle-scarred survivor. Only, now the threat isn’t just the next hook. The threat, as the book’s final poem, “Collapse,” would have it, is far more sneaky and absolute. It is the “tiniest of collapses...that begins/ microscopic and ends with the end of life.”

“Then the little fish,” writes Coleman, “do collapse.”

Then they do collapse there in  
the column of water,  
the water column so deep and  
unseen by the creatures  
up there on land that so  
depend on the little fish  
being little zombie apocalypse  
fish but no bit of feed  
for a bigger fish on which to  
feed, on which the world  
feeds, on which the people  
with the space between  
them see one another but not  
as a whole  
but as people parts and that is  
the problem  
with the collapse.

And we’re doomed.

Where, then, does hope lie? In holism. Rich again: “The tall, foot-poised creature had a life, a place of its own in the manifold, fragile system that is this coastline; a place of its own in the universe. Its place, and mine, I believe, are equal and interdependent.”

This interdependence—this messy, sad, but potentially healing togetherness—Coleman has down cold. The critters descend: “In Manhattan today a moray eel wanders”; “Gee, is that really a mountain lion,// on the Downtown 4 train”; “Five thousand honeybees/ swarm on the Epoch Times/ yellow newspaper box.” It’s like Psalms 37:11, with its meek inheriting the earth, and enjoying abundant peace: “...a bee-bear brings tidings of joy to the earth the beginning the end-all is bumblebee bumblebee too.” It’s the congregation in Coleman’s not-so-simple sea water:

...The single celled critters  
alive one in another, each  
building  
a halo in the sea-mind.

Following their teeny-tiny lead, just as “another kind takes after another kind in kind,” perhaps, together, we will all survive. 🐟

People

**Danny Hayward**

Mountain Press, 2013

Review by Thom Donovan

### What Now of the Lyric Elect?

“What now of the lyric elect?,” Danny Hayward asks in his forward to *People*? This would seem *the* question of a Marxist-Hegelian Anglophone poetic discourse at the moment, which more than ever is distinguished by a wide array of technical practices and semi-localized discourses. Who speaks for the history of ‘the Left’ and what is the relation between (poetic) practice, theory (poetics, criticism), and an ‘outside’ of autonomous aesthetic labor—where the poet’s principal occupation may be as an activist or a pedagogue, a social worker or organizer, etc.? Which is to say: writing something recognizable as poetry; theorizing (however informally) poetry’s function within a larger socio-political discourse; and living-out the burden of one’s relationship to political and economic realities in which the aesthetic may seem to be able to play little or no part.

This book enacts a certain relationship between theory and practice, allegory and articulation as it shifts between lyric, play, essay, and fable. It is impressive how these different modes inform and articulate one another. For instance, in the concluding essay of the book, “By Impossibly Popular Demand,” Hayward writes:

Brecht’s simplest thing was the “abc”, a triplet that even we, at the very xyz of capitalist history, do not have to consider too carefully before we identify it with Bukharin’s and Preobrazhensky’s *The ABC of Communism*, and

therefore with the people’s theatres, left books clubs, and the Neukölln Karl-Marx-Schul in which Brecht’s earliest pedagogical plays were tested against the reactions of a proletarian audience. (171)

In the poem that precedes “By Impossibly Popular Demand,” “Don Discontinuity,” we would seem to encounter a revision of Brecht’s didactic lyricism (the poem is organized by sections distinguished by the letters “A,” “B,” and “C”); one in which, as Hayward explains, the effects of (lyric) sloganeering cannot be predicted by those elect who would attempt to write them. Where to project what should be ‘popular’ is as much a fantasy as imagining who the people are who would express it. In a similar way, in his essay “Transitional Poetry,” Hayward considers Trotsky’s use of bridges as utopian figures of capitalism’s transition to communism. Here, as in “By Impossibly Popular Demand,” predicting the particulars of such a transition betrays the fantasies of an intellectual elect.

Reading the concluding essay of *People*, I recalled Gramsci’s “organic intellectual,” the “general intellect” of the young Marx, and the many cultural products that are truly popular—top 40 rap songs by multi-millionaires, for instance; many big-budget films that I have enjoyed—and how these cultural products may embody a transitional (social) realism and/or retroactive sloganeering. And how “simplicity” (another term that Hayward deconstructs) is variously posited through the collective enunciations of subaltern and emergent subjectivities (nation language) or the mediation of communal processes and self-representation practices (metadiscourse). This digression, which I realize may miss the main point(s) of

Hayward’s essay, speaks to a difference conceivable between *People* and many of the anti-capitalist poems currently being written in North America, wherein the latter present a clear desire to level cultural production and integrate forms, techniques, and content that might otherwise appear circumscribed by the ‘culture industry’ or be framed as populist in the negative sense of one failing to obtain sufficient critical self-reflection.

How to exit the prison house of certain historical circuits between Marxist-Hegelianism and poetry (from Shelley to Symbolism to Objectivism and Lang Po to post-Occupy)? Or, twisting the words of Stuart Hall, what would a Marxist [poetry] “without guarantee” look like? Guided by a spirit of mispris(i)on, Hayward’s critical-theoretical reflections often yield to the hypertelic, gestural, and aphoristic, such as in the following:

No. Life, writes the Nazi mortician Gottfried Benn, is bridge building. In the precincts of bourgeois interiority, a bridge is built, arched in cathexis towards a plateau made of blood. On top of it, to the point to which your maximum demand carries you, there is a lozenge. Climb through it. On the other side of the lozenge you discover your minimum demand. (153)

*People*, in its global consideration for the fate of the laboring subject under capital, offers tremendous insight into the ongoing circumstance of financial capital, challenging while embodying the despair many of us feel: “where autonomy is, autonomy not as joy,/ but as pain: the pain you give up.” (11) ■



# UPCOMING READINGS AND EVENTS AT THE POETRY PROJECT

ALL EVENTS BEGIN AT 8PM UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED      ADMISSION \$8 / STUDENTS & SENIORS \$7 / MEMBERS \$5 OR FREE  
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WED 4/2

## CELEBRATION FOR AN ETEL ADNAN READER

A celebration (readings, projected images, food and wine) of the publication of *To look at the sea is to become what one is: An Etel Adnan Reader* (Nightboat Books), a landmark two-volume edition of Adnan's work from the infernal elegies of the 1960s to the ethereal meditations of her later poems. Etel Adnan was born in 1925. She is a recipient of a 2010 PEN Oakland-Josephine Miles National Literary Award, the 2013 California Book Award, and a 2013 Lambda Book Award. She lives in Sausalito, California and Paris. Readers include: Ammiel Alcalay, Kazim Ali, Jen Benka, Thom Donovan, Robert Kocik, Caitie Moore, Stephen Motika, Stacy Szymaszek, Anne Waldman and more!

FRI 4/4 @10PM

## WILL EDMISTON & JENN MCCREARY

Will Edmiston is a poet living in Brooklyn. He is the volunteer archivist for The Poetry Project. He is a co-editor of ütterram press. Recent works are out with *Fence* and *The Highwaymen* and have appeared in a collaborative chapbook with Nicole Wallace entitled *chanson d'animal*. His own chapbook entitled *effie* was published by 3 Sad Tigers Press. Jenn McCreary's new full-length collection, *& now my feet are maps*, is now available from Dusie Press. Other works include *The Dark Mouth of Living* (Horse Less Press), *:ab ovo:* (Dusie Press), *a doctrine of signatures* (Singing Horse Press), *& Odyssey & Oracle* (Least Weasel Press). *worrywort*, a collaboration with Pattie McCarthy, will be published by Little Red Leaves Textile Editions in 2014.

SAT 4/5 @2PM // In the Sanctuary

## A TRIBUTE TO AMIRI BARAKA

Join us in honoring the life, work and legacy of poet and activist Amiri Baraka. Ammiel Alcalay, Steve Dalachinsky, Toi Derricotte, Latasha Natasha Nevada Diggs, Cornelius Eady & Rough Magic, Thomas Sayers Ellis & James Brandon Lewis, David Henderson, Bob Holman, Oliver Lake, Tracie Morris, Julie Patton, Greg Tate, Quincy Troupe, Anne Waldman & Ambrose Bye, and others read work by and about Baraka (including a new poem by Diane di Prima) and celebrate him with music and stories. Co-presented with Cave Canem and co-sponsored with St. Mark's Church. This event is free and open to the public.

MON 4/7

## JEFFREY PETHYBRIDGE & LYTTON SMITH

Jeffrey Pethybridge is the author of *Striven*, *The Bright Treatise* (Noemi, 2013). His work appears widely in journals such as *Chicago Review*, *Volt*, *New American Writing*, *The Iowa Review* and others. He's the North American Editor for *LIKESTARLINGS*, an archive of collaborative poetry and poetics. Lytton Smith is the author of two collections of poetry from Nightboat Books, most recently *While You Were Approaching the Spectacle But Before You Were Transformed by It*. He also translates Icelandic fiction for Open Letter Books and writes a monthly column on British poetry for the *Los Angeles Review of Books*.

WED 4/9

## JUDY GRAHN & JACK WATERS

Judy Grahn is internationally known as a poet and cultural theorist. Her writings helped fuel second wave feminist, gay, and lesbian activism, as well as women's and queer spirituality. Her latest collection of poetry and prose is *The Judy Grahn Reader*, and her memoir, *A Simple Revolution: the Making of an Activist Poet*. Judy is a professor in the Women's Spirituality Master's Program at Sofia University in Palo Alto, Ca. Jack Waters was a founding writer for NYC's premier queer weekly *Gay City News*. Jack currently writes for the magazines *Color Life*, the periodical for lesbian bi, gay, trans and two spirited communities of color; film reviews for quarterlies *Jumpcut*, (L.A.) and *Fuse Magazine* (Toronto); and for the German language periodicals *Starship* (Cologne) and *Springer* (Berlin).

MON 4/21

## TRISHA LOW & LILY MAZZARRELLA

Trisha Low is committed to wearing a shock collar because she has so many feelings. She is the author of *THE COMPLETE PURGE* (Kenning Editions, 2013). Remote controls are available at *Gauss PDF*, *Against Expression: An Anthology of Conceptual Writing*, *TROLL THREAD* and others. Lily Mazzarella was co-editor of *Fort Necessity*, an annual poetry journal which published the work of Eileen Myles, Jennie Portnof, Maggie Nelson, and Suzanne Snider, among others. In 2006 she received her Masters of Science in Herbal Medicine from Tai Sophia Institute. Lily is now core faculty at the California School of Herbal Studies. Her most recent peer-reviewed publication is *Modulation of Nitric Oxide by Medicinal Herbs*. Last year she completed her first book of poems, *Elestials*.

WED 4/23 @8:30PM // In the Sanctuary

## WSB100

WSB100 is New York's month-long celebration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of William Seward Burroughs, the iconic writer of *Naked Lunch*, *Queer*, *Junky*, and many other experimental works of great American literature. Join us for a reading featuring excerpts from throughout Burroughs' oeuvre, including readings by Anne Waldman, Penny Arcade, Jack Womack, John Ventimiglia, Bob Holman, Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, Iron Dog, JG Thirlwell, Lydia Lunch, Elliott Sharp, Oliver Harris, Quintan Ana Wikswo, Sam Mickens, Adam Tobin, Shelley Hirsch, Simon Pettet, Steve Dalachinsky, James Ilgenfritz, DJ Ray Velasquez, and many others! For more info: [www.wsb100.org](http://www.wsb100.org).

FRI 4/25 @10PM

## KICKS BOOKS LAUNCH: PROPHETIKA: LOST WRITINGS OF SUN RA (VOL. 1)

Kicks Books presents the new "Hip Pocket Paperback" *PROPHETIKA: LOST WRITINGS OF SUN RA (Vol. 1)*. In this centennial of Sun Ra's birth, Kicks Books delivers a new collection of lost parables and polemics. At this celebration, expect to hear from a unique coterie of musicians, artists, and writers, including Barrence Whitfield, Mick Collins, Mike Edison, Freddie Patterson, Michael Anderson, and surprise guests.

MON 4/28

## TALK SERIES: THE DAY I WILL BE FREE: LAWEN MOHTADI ON KATARINA TAIKON

Katarina Taikon (1932-1995) was an author and prominent public figure in Sweden, where she is widely regarded as the most active voice for the equal rights of Swedish Roma. Her first book, *Gypsy Woman* (1963) was followed by a lifelong role at the forefront of the Swedish civil rights movement, as well as the writing of her 13-part childrens' book series, *Katitzi*, which has become one of the most popular of its genre in Sweden. *The Day I Will Be Free* (Natur & Kultur, 2012) details the life, work, and lasting impact of Taikon's voice. The author Lawen Mohtadi will discuss her research into Taikon's legacy as she presents her award-winning book for the first time to an anglophone audience. Based in Stockholm, Lawen Mohtadi is a freelance journalist and critic at *Dagens Nyheter*, Sweden's largest daily paper. She is currently working on a documentary film about Taikon and the Swedish-Roma civil rights movement.

WED 4/30

## RENEE GLADMAN & TRISH SALAH

Renee Gladman's writing and drawings explore the intersections of language (a desire for narrative) and various kinds of architecture. She is the author of eight works of prose and poetry, including the first three novels of the Ravicka Series: *Event Factory* (2010), *The Ravickians* (2011), and *Ana Patova Crosses a Bridge* (2013), all published by Danielle Dutton's Dorothy Publishing Project. Trish Salah's recent writing appears online at *The Feminist Wire*, and in the anthologies, *Selling Sex: Experience, Advocacy, and Research on Sex Work in Canada and Troubling the Line: Trans and Genderqueer Poetry and Poetics*. She has two poetry books, *Wanting in Arabic* (TSAR, 2002), and a new collection, *Lyric Sexology, Vol. 1*, which is out with Roof Books this spring.

SAT 5/3 @8PM // In the Sanctuary

## SPECIAL EVENT: EILEEN MYLES & FRIENDS

Spring explosion of warm and profound power pop. With: Sheila Heti's (*What Should a Person Be?*) wiggly authenticity, Hilton Als's (*White Girls*) knowing insouciance, the jaded incandescence of Mira Gonzalez (*I Will Never Be Beautiful Enough to Make Us Beautiful Together*) and Kim Gordon's and Bill Nace's volatile lyric im&ex-losion as Body/Head. Be there as undeniable newness rears its tawny head to celebrate The Poetry Project's 47th spring. Hosted and curated by our own hot (*Inferno*) and cold (*Snowflake*), ineluctable former Artistic Director, Eileen Myles. For complete bios, visit [www.poetryproject.org](http://www.poetryproject.org). \$25 at the door/\$20 in advance via Brown Paper Tickets. All proceeds benefit The Poetry Project.

MON 5/5

## OPEN READING

Open readings have always been an integral part of The Poetry Project's programming. They provide a time and space for writers of all levels of



experience to test, fine tune, and work out their writing and reading styles in front of a supportive audience. Sign-up starts at 7:45pm.

WED 5/7

### **PETER GIZZI & LEWIS WARSH**

**Peter Gizzi** has published five books of poetry in addition to a number of limited-edition chapbooks, folios, and artist books. His sixth book, *In Defense of Nothing, New and Selected Poems*, came out in March 2014. Gizzi's editing projects have included *blék: a journal of language arts*, as well as several important books, such as *The House That Jack Built: The Collected Lectures of Jack* and *My Vocabulary Did This to Me: The Collected Poetry of Jack Spicer* (with Kevin Killian). **Lewis Warsh** is the author of numerous volumes of poetry, fiction and autobiography, including *A Place in the Sun* (Spuyten Duyvil), *Inseparable: Poems 1995-2005* (Granary), *The Origin of the World* (Creative Arts) and *Touch of the Whip* (Singing Horse). A party for his most recent book, *One Foot Out the Door: Collected Stories* (Spuyten Duyvil) will follow the reading.

FRI 5/9 @10PM

### **STEPHEN BOYER & MONICA MCCLURE**

**Stephen Boyer** is the author of *Parasite* (Publication Studio, 2013), *Ghosts* (BentBoyBooks, 2008), and was a lead compiler of the *Occupy Wall Street Poetry Anthology*. Currently they're part of the Poet's House Fellowship and diligently working on a series of nature-related poems. Their work can be found online, in many zines and an assortment of publications. **Monica McClure** is the author of the chapbooks, *Mood Swing* (Snacks Press) and *Mala*, forthcoming from Poor Claudia. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Tin House*, *The Los Angeles Review*, *The Lit Review*, *Lambda Literary Review's Spotlight Series*, *The Awl*, *Spork Press*, *Similar: Peaks*, and elsewhere.

MON 5/12

### **MATTHEW BURGESS & AMAUD JAMAUL JOHNSON**

**Matthew Burgess** teaches creative writing and composition at Brooklyn College, and he is a poet-in-residence in New York City public schools with Teachers & Writers Collaborative. His poems have appeared in *Lungfull!*, *Court Green*, *Hanging Loose*, and *Ping Pong*, and his new collection of poems, *Slippers for Elsewhere*, was published by UpSet Press. Born and raised in Compton, CA, **Amaud Jamaul Johnson** was educated at Howard University and Cornell University. He is author of two poetry collections, *Darktown Folies* (Tupelo Press, 2013) and *Red Summer* (Tupelo, 2006), selected by Carl Phillips as winner of the Dorset Prize.

WED 5/14

### **CELEBRATION FOR THE COLLECTED POEMS OF PHILIP LAMANTIA**

Join us for a celebration of the publication of *The Collected Poems of Philip Lamantia* (Unv. of California, 2013). The most important surrealist poet to emerge in the United States, and a major 20th-century American poet, Lamantia (1927-2005) was also associated with the Beat Generation and the San Francisco Renaissance. His poetry touches on an astonishing variety of subject matter, including alchemy, ornithology, Christian mysticism, Egyptology, Native American culture, ecology, and psychedelic experience.

Editors Garrett Caples and Andrew Joron will give a brief overview of Lamantia's life and read from his work, along with an all-star cast of readers including Anselm Berrigan, Katy Lederer, Dia Felix, John Coletti, CAConrad, Brandon Downing, Elaine Equi, and Erin Morrill.

FRI 5/16 @10PM

### **SARA JANE STONER & AMANDA DAVIDSON**

**Sara Jane Stoner** is a writer, performer, and teacher who holds an MFA in Fiction from Indiana University and is pursuing a PhD at the CUNY Graduate Center with a focus on performative writing pedagogy and the intersections of feminist and queer thinking, particularly in the context of contemporary experimental writing. Her first book, *Experience in the Medium of Destruction*, will be published by Portable Press @ Yo-Yo Labs in 2014. **Amanda Davidson's** chapbook *Arcanagrams: A Reckoning* is forthcoming on Little Red Leaves' Textile Series. Her fiction chapbook *Apprenticeship* (New Herring Press) was a finalist for the 2013 Calvino Prize.

MON 5/19

### **RECLUSE 10 READING**

This season, our journal, *The Recluse*, debuted in its online format. Please join some of the contributors for this launch reading. Readers to be announced on [www.poetryproject.org](http://www.poetryproject.org) in May.

WED 5/21

### **DODIE BELLAMY & KEVIN KILLIAN**

**Dodie Bellamy** is a novelist, poet, and essayist. Her most recent book is *The TV Sutras* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2014). Her Ugly Duckling chapbook, *Barf Manifesto*, was named best book of 2009 under 30 pages by *Time Out New York*. Other books include *Cunt Norton*, *the buddhist*, *Academonia*, *Pink Steam*, *The Letters of Mina Harker*, and *Cunt-Ups*, which won the 2002 Firecracker Alternative Book Award for poetry. With Kevin Killian, she is editing, for Nightboat Books, *New Narrative: 1975-1995. When the Sick Rule the World*, her third collection of essays, is forthcoming from Semiotext(e). **Kevin Killian**, one of the original "New Narrative" writers, has written three novels, *Shy* (1989), *Arctic Summer* (1997), and *Spreadeagle* (2012), a book of memoirs, and three books of stories. He has also written two books of poetry, *Argento Series* (2001), and *Action Kylie* (2008). A third will appear in February 2014—*Tweaky Vil-lage*, from Wonder Books.

WED 5/28

### **HIROMI ITÔ & ERÍN MOURE**

**Hiromi Itô**, born in 1955 in Tokyo, is one of the most important and highly regarded poets in Japan. Since her sensational debut in the late 1970s as a free-spirited and intelligent female poet with shamanistic qualities, Itô has published more than 10 collections of poetry including *Oume* (Green Plums, 1982), *Watashi wa Anjühimeko de aru* (I am Anjühimeko, 1993), and *Kawara Arekusa* (Wild Grass upon a Riverbank, 2005) which won the prestigious Takami Jun Award. Montrealer **Erín Moure** has published 17 books of poetry in English and Galician/English, and 12 volumes of poetry translated into English from French, Spanish, Galician and Portuguese, by poets such as Nicole Brossard (with Robert Majzels), Andrés Ajens, Louise Dupré, Rosalía de Castro, Chus Pato and Fernando Pessoa.

This event is funded in part by Poets & Writ-

ers, Inc. through public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council.

FRI 5/30 @10PM

### **CASSANDRA GILLIG & MEL ELBERG**

**Cassandra Gillig** has crushes on the following poets &/or Poetry Project employees: Stacy, Matt, Simone, Carrie, Sue, Kelin, Leo, Anne, Alli, Dodie, Thom, John, Josef, Corina, Stephanie, Jenny, both Brandon Browns, Katy, Debbie, Kevin, Michael, Lewis, Anna, Kate, Gabe, Chris, Karen, Anselm, Cecilia, Laura, Brenda, Ben (Roylance), Becca, Cathy, Shannon, Nick, Trisha, Eileen, & the Ted Berrigan tree. **Mel Elberg** believes in the existence and value of many different kinds of thinking and interaction in a world where how close you can appear to a specific one of them determines whether you are seen as a real person, or an adult, or an intelligent person, and in a world in which those determine whether you have any rights.

MON 6/2

### **PETER ORLOVSKY: A LIFE IN WORDS**

Come celebrate the publication of *Peter Orlovsky: A Life In Words* (Paradigm Press) edited by Bill Morgan, with forward by Anne Charters. With Bill Morgan, Anne Charters, Steven Taylor and many others to be announced.

WED 6/4 @8:30PM // In the Sanctuary

### **SPECIAL EVENT: FRAN LEBOWITZ**

**Fran Lebowitz** will hold a question and answer with the audience of The Poetry Project after a brief conversation with Ariel Goldberg. Purveyor of urban cool, witty chronicler of the "me decade," and the cultural satirist whom many call the heir to Dorothy Parker, Fran Lebowitz remains one of the foremost advocates of the Extreme Statement. Lebowitz's first two classic books of essays, *Metropolitan Life* (1978) and *Social Studies* (1981), have been collected in the *Fran Lebowitz Reader* (1994). A documentary film about Fran Lebowitz, *Public Speaking*, directed by Martin Scorsese, premiered on HBO in November 2010. \$10 at the door. Advance tickets available via Brown Paper Tickets.

MON 6/9

### **2013-14 WORKSHOP READING**

Participants in this season's writing workshops will gather to read the work they produced in the workshops of Anne Tardos, John Godfrey, Betsy Fagin, Dawn Lundy Martin, Corina Copp, Marcella Durand and Rich O'Russa.

WED 6/11

### **LUNCH POEMS**

Frank O'Hara's *Lunch Poems*, first published in 1964 by City Lights Books as number nineteen in the Pocket Poets series, is being reprinted in a new 50th anniversary edition. We love a big group reading almost as much as Frank O'Hara. So, to conclude our 47th season, we're hosting a reading of the entire book. With Eileen Myles, Peter Schjeldahl, David Shapiro, Tony Towle, Edmund Berrigan, John Godfrey, Trisha Low, Trace Peterson, David Henderson, Patricia Spears Jones, Edwin Torres, Charles North, Karen Weiser, Simone White, Adam Fitzgerald, Vincent Katz, Erica Hunt, Andrew Durbin, John Coletti, Jacqueline Waters, Sharon Mesmer, Latasha Natasha Nevada Diggs, Arlo Quint, Lisa Jarnot, Justin Vivian Bond, Lee Ann Brown, Marcella Durand and more to be announced.

## New Books from **Hanging Loose Press**

### **Sherman Alexie**

What I've  
Stolen,  
What I've  
Earned



"Fans of Alexie's work will appreciate his characteristic humor, keen insight, and conversational style," – *Booklist*. "One of the major lyric voices of our time," – *The New York Times Book Review*. Paperback \$19, hardcover \$29.

### **Joan Larkin**

Blue  
Hanuman



"I love reading her poems. I love reading them over and over. I salute her," Gerald Stern said of *My Body: New and Selected Poems*, work that Maxine Kumin said was "so vividly revelatory that it gave this reader goosebumps." Paperback \$18.

### **Terence Winch**

This Way  
Out



"Terence Winch's poems are imaginative, soulful, and funny...*This Way Out*" shows him "at the top of his game," – Bob Hicok. "Perceptive and subversive, this book has rhetorical marrow, that rich weird greatness at its core," – Sandra Beasley. Paperback \$18.

### **David Kirby**

A  
Wilderness  
of Monkeys



"His poetry embraces subjects, words and readers of all types in a blaze of ebullience and humility," – *Harvard Review*. "These poems are carefully crafted in their exuberance... and inspire laughter from a deep place," – *Library Journal*. Paperback \$18.

### **Paul Violi**

The Tame  
Magpie



These poems were found after Paul Violi's untimely death and edited by his friends Charles North and Tony Towle. Collected in a book for the first time, they display the same wit, erudition and lyric zest that made him one of the best-loved poets on the New York scene. Paperback \$18.

### **Yolanda Wisher**

Monk Eats  
an Afro



This is a powerful, lively first book by a Philadelphia poet and educator whose work has appeared in *Fence*, *Ploughshares*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and other magazines and anthologies. She's the founder of the Germantown Poetry Festival and a Cave Canem Fellow. Paperback \$18.

### **Hanging Loose Magazine #103:**

Art by Albert Kresch. Words by Gerald Fleming, Caroline Knox, Charles North, Pablo Medina, Patricia Traxler, Bill Christophersen, Caroline Hagood, Michael Stephens, Mather Schneider, Keith Taylor, Simon Perchik, and many others.

**See our backlist  
and much more at  
[hangingloosepress.  
com](http://hangingloosepress.com)**

### **Guillaume de Fonclare**

Inside My Own Skin

This spare account of a man's obsession with World War I even as illness will soon force him to leave his beloved museum about the war, is the winner of the Third Annual Loose Translations Prize, co-sponsored by Queens College-CUNY. Translation by Yves Cloarec. Paperback \$18.



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## WEEK TWO: JUNE 8-15

Reed Bye, CAConrad, Bhanu Kapil & Melissa Buzzeo, Joanne Kyger, Sawako Nakayasu, M. NourbeSe Philip, Michelle Naka Pierce & Sue Hammond West, Layli Long Soldier, Margaret Randall, Julia Seko. Special Guests: Fanny Howe and Zoketsu Norman Fischer

## WEEK THREE: JUNE 15-22

Clark Coolidge, Renee Gladman, Jen Hofer, Jade Lascelles, Tracie Morris, Laura Mullen, Hoa Nyugen, Khadijah Queen, Stacey Syzmaszek, Lewis Warsh, Matvei Yankelevich. Special Guests: Josepha Conrad, David Henderson, Jack Collom, and Bobbie Louise Hawkins

## WEEK FOUR: JUNE 22-29

Caroline Bergvall, Edmund Berrigan, Mary Burger, Ambrose Bye, Douglas Dunn, Erica Hunt & Marty Ehrlich, Thurston Moore, Brad O'Sullivan, Steven Taylor, Edwin Torres, Anne Waldman. Special Guest: Meredith Monk

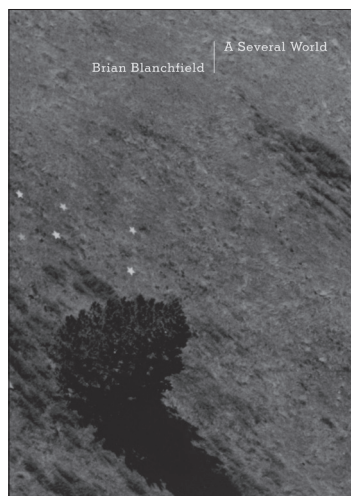
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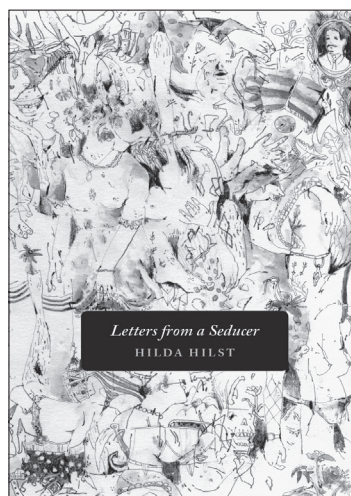


# Nightboat Books

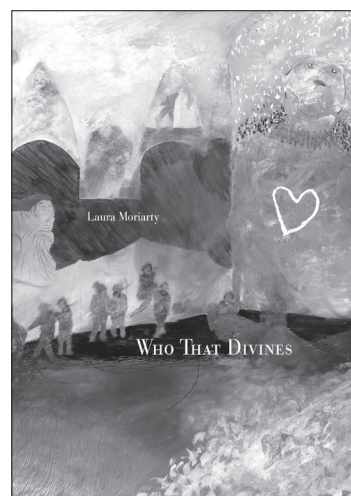
## NEW TITLES



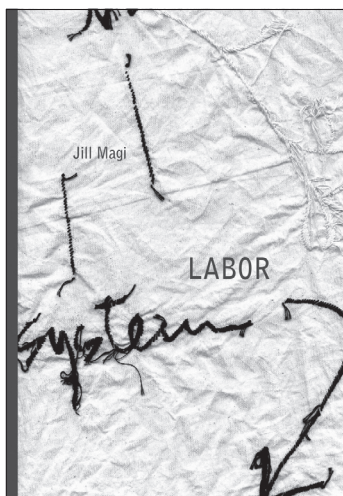
A SEVERAL  
WORLD  
Brian Blanchfield



LETTERS FROM  
A SEDUCER  
Hilda Hilst  
translated by  
John Keene



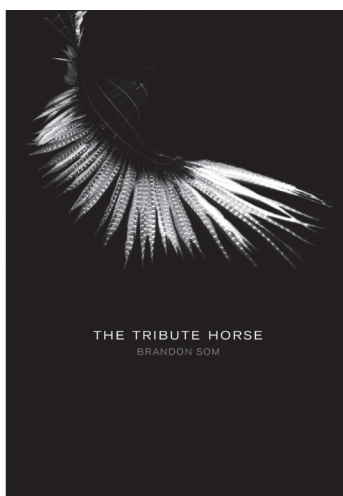
WHO THAT  
DIVINES  
Laura Moriarty



LABOR  
Jill Magi



MONKEYS,  
MINOR PLANET,  
AVERAGE STAR  
Gracie Leavitt



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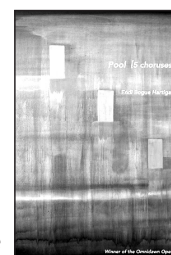


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### PREMONITION by Etel Adnan

premonition  
/  
etel  
adnan

There's always a conductive thread through space for an untenable position. In all respects absence is a porous and arrogant matter. One has to cross one's life again, the one that wants to be ahead. A forest saturated with trees proclaims the existence of a river saturated with reflections. The soul turns into a ghost and runs into the void.



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## Jena Osman: *Corporate Relations*

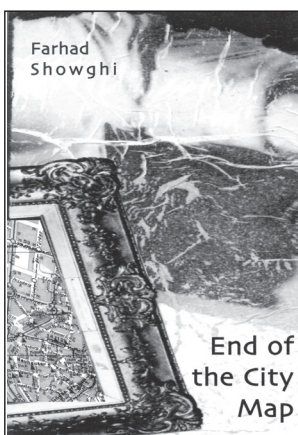
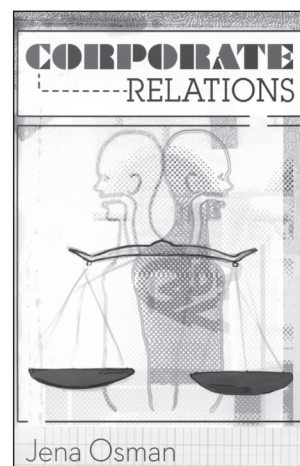
A work between essay and poem that researches the constitutional rights granted to corporations in landmark Supreme Court cases since the Civil War. It also asks: if corporations are persons, what are persons? machines?

"Osman's a canny operator whose intelligence is that of a literary sharpshooter: She never misses her mark, but the damage done is often not (or is simply much more than) the damage you anticipated."

— Seth Abramson, *The Huffington Post*

"Where [the economies of language and economics] intersect is where Jena Osman finds her poetry.... This impulse to write beyond is what distinguishes her work from other writers (including Conceptualist poets of the present moment.)"—Kate McIntyre on *The Network*, *Chicago Review*

Poetry, 80 pages, offset, smyth-sewn, original paperback \$14



## Farhad Showghi: *End of the City Map*

[Dichten = No.15, translated from the German by Rosmarie Waldrop]

Showghi's prose poems take us into a place where apparently simple everyday scenes turn, by a little stretch of language, into the unpredictable und strange. As Showghi has said, he starts working from a word that he respects for its uncertainty and aims for the exact spot (in landscape or thought) where the word can come back to itself, beyond fixed meaning or purpose.

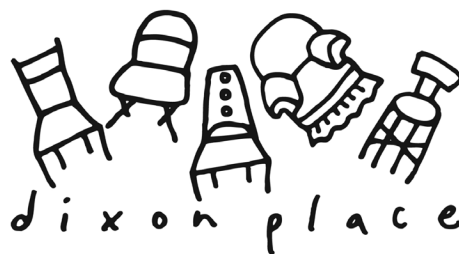
"Cool beauty on fire"—Angelika Overath, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*

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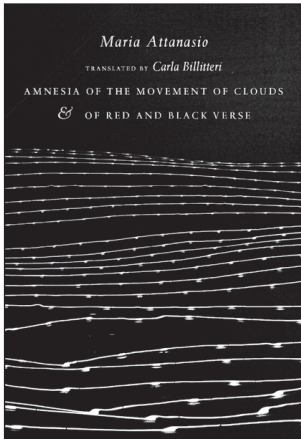
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Maria Attanasio; Translated by Carla Billitteri

These spiked, analytic lyrics are coiled against the turbulence of everyday life: talismans of acidic cognition against a culture that rewards forgetting. In this bilingual edition of two books of Maria Attanasio, Carla Billitteri hews to the poet's knotted chiaroscuro, giving us a labyrinthine series of viscerally charged, haunted studies.

— Charles Bernstein

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(In Pursuit continued from pg. 11)

I judge that this ghost is there to remind us there is always more, an elsewhere, a hiddenness, a secondary form of speech, an eye blink." (*Forces of Imagination* 100) Guest points to the importance that we both experience and acknowledge the depth of experience in language in writing—and these depths come hand in hand with "noticing." In other words, if we allow ourselves to write and think simultaneously, if we honor the *little ghost* even if she remains invisible, then we also welcome the crucial idea that digression and discovery go hand in hand.

5.

John Cage teaches us that "Wherever we are, what we hear is mostly noise. When we ignore it, it disturbs us. When we listen to it, we find it fascinating." ("The Future of Music: Credo") We need noise because within noise we find sounds images music unseen. Ann Lauterbach teaches us that the essay should bear the hallmark of the imagination—"an active mind" (to paraphrase Ann Berthoff), that the road from A to B is not as surprising (rewarding, exciting) as the road that forks and then forks again and again and again. The essay is recursive, it should be an active circuit that electrifies readers just as the writer felt charged when composing. Lauterbach writes,

"Writing is at least in part an act of trust in the fundamental capacity of language to inscribe paths, however circuitous; these paths are ones that we take more than once, sometimes to new observations, new destinations." (*The Night Sky* 4)

6.

What I think draws me to prose that I love is that it occupies a space outside of the normative paginated field. Its "installation has no boundary." By this I mean that the prose takes me on a voyage and brings me back changed. It's like seeing Gormley's statues for the first time confronted with the idea of a body both fixed and unforeseen. The way an inquiry that truly matters takes you in, over and through astonishment. Lauterbach brilliantly writes: "Task: to reconfigure the Open into the normal, a pattern, an *ordinary*: so the extraordinary can be folded into the prior and the yet to come without breaking. Improvisation: to wander." (*Under the Sign* 65)

Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.antonygormley.com/sculpture/item-view/id/256>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/srtolsummary>

<sup>3</sup> "Seneca Review Promotes Lyric Essay" from *Poets & Writers Magazine* (Sept./Oct. 1999).

IN DEFENSE OF NOTHING  
SELECTED POEMS, 1987-2011  
PETER GIZZI

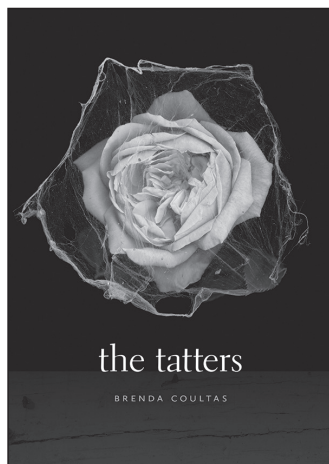
## In Defense of Nothing

Selected Poems,  
1987-2011

**Peter Gizzi**

"Peter Gizzi's disturbing lyricism is like no other—the innermost whirl of the daily curtain rising on outer catastrophe . . . we are 'listening to a life / un-lived any other way'—unmistakably, as poetry."

—Adrienne Rich



## The Tatters

**Brenda Coultas**

"Coultas gathers the debris of our living, sifting through the piles to uncover 'the heat of the keystrokes,' the made world at the center of the hornets' nest or the human anatomy book. In this ethical testimony, occurring at the boundary between the remains and the living, she shows us the only thing that will keep us going: how to share this world."

—Eleni Sikelianos



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(Ward/Waters continued from pg. 12)

In Ward's poem, failure is the inability to stay within the grandeur of a gratitude so effusive it can carry, like garbage at the front of a wave at the Rockaways, all the numb realities that dwindle away intoxication:

Because my own sight is of no consequence alone. Nearly anything I see is like a Bethlehem to me, giving birth to the most divine irruption then the advent adapts & its violence is blunted. Everyday is like Training Day; little red school, vibrant blue sky strobed together, the cherries & berries of its light effects & sweetened vegetation. But I would wage war on everything I've ever written to produce a form of gratitude surpassing what, permitted to return to, I acquire.

Toward the end of the poem the poet, post-liminal, whose "mind, once beset by low drives & frantic detail, has no need of dreaming at all," floats back through his work, like a moth through some futuristically destroyed Beinecke library:

As moths move  
through the dustbowl  
the Beinecke will be so  
the person here  
moves in sadness seeking  
the light they burned up in  
is it me?  
& what's a  
person anyway garbage  
or a demi-god ask someone  
who thinks they know.

You can't ask yourself a lot of questions after death. You get one death, and it could change your life, but you won't know it. Ader's death, a solitary shipwreck, already old-fashioned, idealistic in the extreme, cast a long shadow back over his life, and by extension, his work—suddenly all those falls and failures didn't seem so innocent, so So-Cal, so simple or conceptual. Suddenly you see *drives* everywhere. ■

*from La Torre*  
*Camilo Roldán*

This not working  
outboard motor

sits and won't rip  
any pull cord

but raises it-  
self trailing tail

whose definite  
article the

in answer to  
gentle curve banks

echo with black  
sentences croaked

along river  
when distracted

by fireworks re-  
flection one for-

gets to j-stroke  
and the canoe.



...never seeking to convey the object itself, rather some sense of its structural conceits. Perhaps similar to the way Richard Serra tried to convey the baroque spaziatura of Borromini's *San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane* in a minimalist sculptural idiom. Our affinity with Serra is reinforced by the fact that he named one of his rusting volutes after a Pessoa poem, Pessoa whose multiplicity has always been a dream—what greater fantasy than to be more than one?

Left with the ambiguous notion of the poet having existed multiply, one thinks this ekphrasis procedurally, like the synesthetic variations of Morris Louis. Whereas Pollock was working from a presumed aerial perspective when he deployed a salvo of paint onto his canvases laid flat, Louis allowed the paint to roll down an inclined plane, thus the title of his series *Unfurleds*. On unprimed canvas, banners of color bring forward the flexible materiality of the canvas itself by soaking directly down into it. Because Louis used an older acrylic resin paint, Magna, that was not water soluble and had to be diluted with turpentine or mineral spirits, Louis's *Unfurleds* and other paintings have a matte finish particular to almost all the Washington Color School painters, often reinforcing their corporeality. Where Pollock's later paintings often carry titles that glibly indicate serial production, many of Morris Louis's titles are oddly hermetic. Titles like *Nun*, *Where* or *Dalet Kaf* feel idiosyncratic and untraceable, perhaps descriptions of process or elliptically evocative of the image without telegraphing its possibilities. Take for example *Saraband* (1959). The sarabande was originally a musical form developed in Central America that was then transposed to Europe where it was received with much disdain in certain circles for what were perceived as lewd movements and a brusque, pagan aesthetic. The colors billow across the surface, tongues of rich stain, semi-opaque overlaps reminiscent of approaching and receding folds in a rippling dress as it moves across the dance floor. The Spanish dancer enters then, looking so proud and so pale: from Galicia does she hail? Eventually the sarabande was "tamed" by the French, became a courtly standard and was used by Bach as the aria in his Goldberg Variations, yet here it seems to have returned as a synesthetic apparition of its former glory...

(*Ellis continued from pg. 7*) He could casually do that, just call you something, “something you could feel” because it felt you, something that fit. He could take your Group and Crew and wrapped all of y’all up in a snapped word, as if breaking wind, da doo doo. He did it to me, it seems, every time he saw me. Right before our reading together at the Poetry Project while Camille Rankine was introducing me, he leaned toward me and asked “Is you a Negro or is you Black?” Signifying a challenge at the crossroads and something like Smokey’s Robinson’s separate but equal, agony and ecstasy. I answered “Black” and began the night by word/sax-ing “Valery as Dictator” (with the help of James Brandon Lewis also known as ‘Young Tunes’) as respectful homage, as passport-birth certificate, as thank you to the Vernacular Owl himself, Mr. Whooooooooo and Whoooooooooooo. I did it as a lineage de-sewing of the UnOriginal 13 YouYoungs, the sonic new (not Old) Glory of “What is tomorrow/ that it cannot come/ today?”

Best, I guess,  
to end where I began,  
with the last,  
his-face-to-my-face,  
real voice thing  
he asked me.

“Why they shaped like triangles?”

Back at the hotel restaurant after his reading with Pearl Cleage at Albany State University, poet Mariahadessa Ekere Tallie and I ordered Shrimp and Grits; and the white, Southern chef shaped and fried the grits into six brown pyramid-like wedges, and set them in an ashy, brownish-grey fishy sauce, surrounded by what looked like tightly curled, orange roaches of the sea. Ask Ahi. Amiri looked at the dish, brow-owl’d, and named it “The Shrimpy-Grits,” then we all laughed, Black Hines&Hughes Laughter, and signified on triangles, the Black Atlantic and the slave trade. Unwilling to eat (aka digest) anything that he didn’t over-stand, amirib had steak. Shaking his head, he wasn’t in the mood for any vampire foolishness or fang-food attempt. To make the Blues, democratically, edible, such as poorly masked stomach-glues like “The Shrimpy-Grits,” which are often used solely for the purpose of holding the United Squares together. Have you see the famous photograph of Amiri dancing with Maya Angelou—swinging, jooking and slicking the air, floor, room like one hyphen-removing razor (like how we imagine monks’ fingernails on the days no goddamn nutty key could piano him)? That’s called cutting loose, them moving something out of the way of things, re vote lution!

---

## Y’all All Ban Knee Negros Shld Gro Y’all Own Grits

*for Dr. Jes’ Free Mack*

what  
it is,  
what  
it ain’t

First thang, they cost. And money being green true that

all greed contains corn.  
what it is, what  
it ain’t

Just because it ain’t Crack or Heroin or Coke or embalming fluid  
that don’t mean a ghost didn’t cook it

what  
it is, what it ain’t

Before they ghost you, ghosts eat them, the Shrimpy-Grits.

what it is,  
what it ain’t

Something, probably a godernment, reformatted the grits into  
little bite-size, slave trade triangles just like they done the Atlantic.

what it is,  
what it ain’t

Soft and warm one minute, cold and stiff the next like hate.

what it is,

The Shrimpy-Grits.

what it ain't

You can throw anything in them—cheese, bacon bits, Guiliani, Bush 1,  
Bush 2, and they still won't change.

what it is,

what it ain't

Is it a soft, perishable souvenir pyramid scheme or hominy  
held together by a hoe cake of hope?

what it is, what it ain't

It ain't progress or processed but someone said you can put  
peanut butter in it  
and make Dior dorant.

what

it

is,

what

it

ain't

Watergate like a stomach ache. CIAin't telling the court what I ate.

what it is,

what it ain't

The Shrimpy-Grits.

If you put them in a movie, the ratings will change, so it's better to lynch one instead.

what it    what it

is,        ain't

Sticky and stays on your television and your tongue a long time,  
very Evangelical.

what it is,

what it ain't

Like the N Word the Shrimpy-Grits got they own corner store  
But nobody know who own it.

The Shrimpy-Grits. The Shrim py Gr its. The Shr impy G rits.

It aint shit, government issued. It ain't.

Thomas Sayers Ellis  
San Francisco, 2014





# A POEM

*Diane Ward*

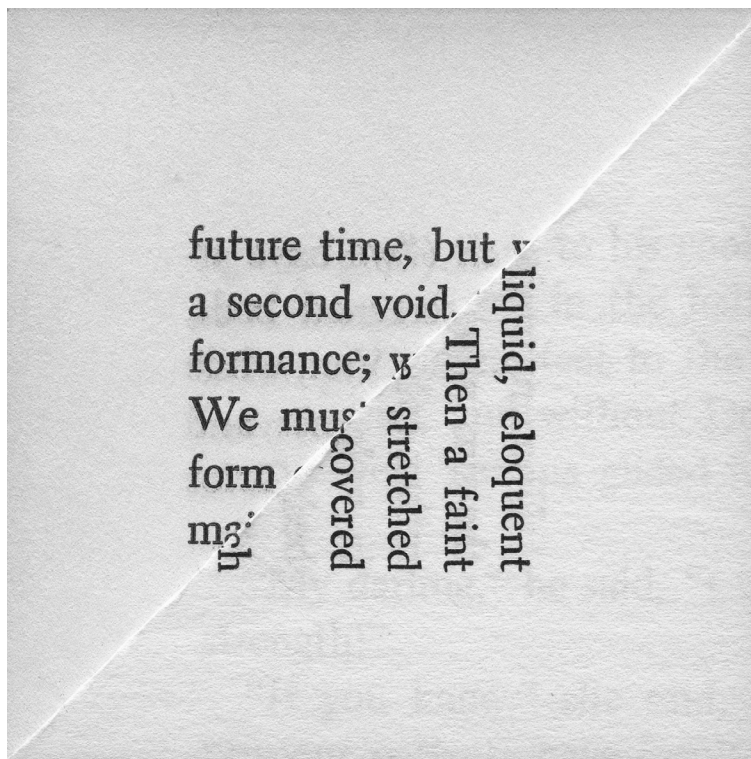
love pivots

our opening, to dwell along involuntary tuning  
one body's axle power, upended and delved, out spin  
ning mere place of absence, you are not here but this is the axis around  
    which you revolve  
we know we don't speak ourselves but narrate *as if* we are the central  
    rotation  
a spindle frees its thread, wordless, displotted  
from our grasp, what we grasp

but it is all unanticipated wind's effect  
whisper thrown back against itself

span around

*for Sophie Iannaccone  
November, 2013*



Erica Baum. *Void*, 2013. Photograph.



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