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introducing

Introducing

Natalie Scenters- Zapico

Jose Angel Maldonado

by Dana Levin

“I work to consider a more conflicted space,” writes Natalie Scenters-Zapico about the U.S.-Mexican border, “where definitions are dynamic and violence is caused and greeted with extreme desire.”

A daughter of the sister cities of El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico, Scenters-Zapico grew up straddling borders of all kinds: geographic, economic, political, racial, linguistic. Raised by a Spanish mother and Anglo father, bilingual, and married to a Mexican national, Scenters-Zapico stands both inside and outside the magnetized psychic space of the border cities. She writes from and about the neither-here-nor-there; her poems tightrope-walk along and swing across lines that are meant to separate male and female, brown and white, Mexican and American, Spanish and English, the living and the dead. “He draws lines across her body in pen—” she writes in “Because They Lack Country.” “...squiggles, dots, // and mapped curves. He draws cursive that says: / *our we, our we...*”

You’ll rarely find a classic lyric in Scenters-Zapico’s poems, one narrated by an I who wonders about self, life, and time as it wanders alone through landscapes inner and outer. The classic lyric is an essentially

borderless country: Its speakers are nearly always “in the midst” rather than “on the verge.” Instead, Scenters-Zapico’s poems are richly peopled, and she is interested in how boundaries and borders converge and diverge. Drawing lines that curl, include, and move in all directions, the “he” of “Because They Lack Country” seeks to erase borders between bodies, between “he” and “she,” even though he knows this private act too will be surveilled: “The whole room dyed // red, he whispers: *night vision goggles / will always stain us—*.” Mergence, in the context of the border, is a crime.

Yet, if you do make it to the other side, you must trade your mother tongue. The mouth in “Mouth in My Kitchen” is a Spanish-speaking one, and because of that, the speaker says, it is a wound without cure. Scenters-Zapico engages politically and personally charged material here with signature intimacy and fairy-tale strangeness: that Spanish-speaking mouth is an “id mouth,” a stubborn and inscrutable wild mouth that stays silent and then spits when told



Dana Levin

“Learn English.” In return, the speaker tells the mouth it’s stupid, starves it, then feeds it “paper towels and mop water / over the sink,” as if to say, “See what will happen if you don’t assimilate?” The pressure to pass, linguistically, and the frustration and self-loathing of speaking Other makes the mouth an adversary, a trickster, the bad penny the speaker tries to shake; yet “it will never leave”: tied by blood, by synapse, by culture, by mother, the Spanish-speaking mouth floats above the speaker, an anti-halo, “an uneven hole.”

There’s often a sense of blood thirst and blood magic in Scenters-Zapico’s poetry, a sense that chthonic forces thrum under every border encounter and experience, where violence is “greeted with extreme desire.” If the U.S.-Mexican border is the *genius loci* for Scenters-Zapico’s poems, their titular deity must be Santa Muerte, Saint Death. Unsanc-tioned by the Catholic Church, Santa Muerte is a folk saint with a long history and an Aztec pedigree. She was worshiped clandestinely for most of the twentieth century, but around 2001 her cult exploded, expanding exponentially across Mexico and now into parts of the United States. It seems no accident that this expansion coincides with hegemonic gains by drug cartels, increased governmental and vigilante policing of the border, and extreme and shocking

violence in Mexico and in the borderlands of the United States. Sometimes called the Skinny Lady (*La Flaquita*) and the Bony Lady (*La Huesuda*), effigies of Santa Muerte feature a bejeweled skeleton draped in feathered boas and a sequined gown, a dark saint who welcomes gifts of chocolate and tequila, a dark mother who will hear supplications for vengeance and wealth, the prayers of the criminal, the forgotten, the dispossessed. Such figures populate Scenters-Zapico’s poems, for example, the man who is “made of what is missing” in “Because They Lack Country” and the hundreds of victims of femicide in “Placement.”

“Placement,” like many of Scenters-Zapico’s poems, offers a meditation on the intersection of art and violence. Since 1993 hundreds of women have been slaughtered and buried in the desert around Juárez, mostly young workers from *maquiladoras*, the factories that hum along the border producing goods for the United States and beyond. From the poet who breaks lines “like severed limbs across the page” to the documentarian who proclaims she’ll solve the murders as “opera music bellows over photographs of women found / beheaded,” the characters in the poem serve to exemplify the way artistic engagement with massacre troubles the line between expression and exploitation. For so many of the artists in “Placement,” the Juárez femicide seems pure topic, muse, a sensationalistic prod for sensationalistic art:

The novelist says, *hell must look like Juárez.*

He says,
*bodies are buried in the walls of abandoned
buildings.*

But this violence wasn’t enough, so he
fictionalized it.

The poem and the poet ask, “What can art do in the face of such brutality and death?” It’s a question that threads through all of Scenters-Zapico’s work. Propelled by love and horror, Scenters-Zapico writes a rich, dark poetry of witness: “Some say, you have no right to talk about the dead. / So I talk of them as living, their bodies standing in the street’s bend.” ★

Poems by **Natalie Scenters-Zapico**

Because They Lack Country

1.

He goes to desert bars and searches every stranger's pocket
for the plastic heart, the stork that made him. He kisses

bathroom stall handles and eats the ice in the urinal.
Not Mexico, not Canada, not United States, or the coat

made in Honduras, but the cloth of open sky
is what he wants. He is hungry as a bare flag-pole

on a windy day. The streets moan when border patrol
finds him. He says: *don't arrest me because I lack country.*

Plastic wrist ties, serial number, toothbrush, shampoo
in a plastic bag: he is made of what is missing.

2.

She hitchhikes down the freeway in a dust storm and covers
her ears as cars honk past—*qué mujer*, they holler.

The place where land and road meet, her body collapses.
Skin lifts to the sun in sheets, such thirst is only found

in those that cannot ask for water. She carries herself
to an abandoned outhouse; by night, border patrol finds her

with infra-red scanners. They point their guns and the smell
of urine fills the room. *Filthy*, one agent spits to the earth.

They take her body in a paddy wagon and drive for days.
It doesn't matter the country—this desert is all the same.

3.

In bed she asks him: *Will you marry me?* He thought
she asked: *Can I give you country?*

His teeth are stars, and the stars are teeth,
and there is nothing to mark the difference.

He draws lines across her body in pen—openings
for respiration. He draws lines in squiggles, dots,

and mapped curves. He draws cursive that says:
our we, our we. The whole room dyed

red, he whispers: *night vision goggles*
will always stain us—

Mouth in My Kitchen

Mouth was split roja—my wound que no curaba. Era mi boca, pero mi boca ya no hablaba.

Acaricié sus labios, esta boca opened itself, two branches cut into a sky. *Mouth, it's true,*

I speak another language. Lips, the bumps lodged along its tongue, I said:

Tell me I am lying. I stared at its cracked—it was silent. I asked: *Mouth, are you dying?*

I asked: *Mouth, why have you come?* I asked to fetch a dish. I asked: *Mouth, are you alien?*

Every time I creaked through the kitchen, I told mouth it was stupid. Mouth:

pages from books it couldn't read.
I starved mouth, only to feed mouth

paper towels and mop water
over the sink. I told mouth: *Learn English.*

Mouth, like a child, pursed its lips and spat.
I asked: *Mouth, where is your body?*

I asked: *Mouth where could your delicate hands be?*
Mouth floated above me, an uneven hole.

It would never leave me, this mouth. My id mouth, this mouth—my mother's.

Placement

1.

In the New York gallery the shoes hang by red ribbons. A storm of high heels, of wedges, of flat sandals. This is for the women gone missing. *This is tribute*, the artist says, *this is for awareness*.

2.

A book of poems about the women found in pieces. The line breaks, disjointed like severed limbs across the page. I ask the author if she's ever been to Juárez. She says, *It's terrible what's happening*. She doesn't face me.

3.

In the film, opera music bellows over photographs of women found beheaded. The documentarian says she'll solve the mystery of the murders. She says she only spent a year in Juárez and never returned.

4.

One poet says he doesn't know about the women but wrote about the men—pacing the hotel lobby, talking about sand. *The border*, he says, *I can't imagine having to go back*.

5.

Another poet says he keeps returning to the border. I tell him I wish I had the same curse. He says, *it's hard to leave the violence; some days I feel we never can*.

6.

The novelist says, *hell must look like Juárez*. He says, *bodies are buried in the walls of abandoned buildings*. But this violence wasn't enough, so he fictionalized it.

7.

I write of the boy I loved gone missing, his father found with no teeth in an abandoned car. Some say, you have no right to talk about the dead. So I talk of them as living, their bodies standing in the street's bend.

Poem by **Dana Levin**

A Debris Field of Apocalypticians — A Murder of Crows

The fact of suffering is not a question of justice.

Belief in God is not a disease.

Our father projections met and disaster ensued.

Earth is our only time machine.

Our mother projections met and disaster ensued.

Everyone is sick from what we made.

He wanted you to ask him how he felt—

he didn't give a shit about your *umwelt*.

But your heartburn, biome, phone bills, research—

your temperature, heartbreak, dust mites, checkbook—

your live ones, loved ones, languishing spider mums—:

they just needed some shit

to make them grow—

The fact of suffering is not a question of justice.

Everyone is sick from what we made.

You watched monks change sand into a Palace of Time,

wheeled through an age of unpardonable crimes.



award

*Hannah
Sanghee Park's*

The Same- Different

*Winner of the 2014 Walt Whitman Award,
given to publish a poet's first book.*

JUDGE: RAE ARMANTROUT

Gabriel Cruz

by Rae Armantrout

A reader encounters Hannah Sanghee Park's debut collection, *The Same-Different*, as a sonic event, what is called “sound-play.”

The Same-Different is divided into three parts; the book begins with a sequence of gnomic, unconventional sonnets (assuming a group of fourteen-line poems is a group of sonnets despite being written mostly in couplets). The poems, so full of half rhyme, chiasmus, and variously deployed word stems, suggest an echo chamber, a house of mirrors, a labyrinth. But, as in the labyrinth of Crete, this is not all fun and games. When unexpected and even opposed meanings leap out of related words, how can we tell friend from foe?

In the book's first part, titled “The Same-Different,” Park is playing a kind of epistemological Russian roulette. Binary logics are undermined. The second poem, “Another Truth,” is followed by “And a Lie.” There we encounter these lines:

The asking was askance.
And the tell all told.
So then, in tandem

Anathema, and anthem.
The truth was on hold,

I love the way a reader may find the plea “ask” latent in “askance” and also the word “theme” as it appears—and perhaps takes wrong turns—in “anathema” and “anthem.” The music of the repeated sounds may lull readers, while the meaning of the words tells us to question what we hear.

In the poem “T/F” Park continues her punning, giving us a twist on the familiar nursery rhyme “There Was an Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe” that is, perhaps, a response to the spin of corruption and disaster in the daily news cycle.

I have so much bad
faith in our future
I don't know what to do.

This statement is false.
This falsity true.

Like the old woman in the nursery rhyme who “had so many children she didn't know what to do,” we humans have produced and reproduced our way into a dire situation, while our politicians and pundits play shell games. In her subtle, cautionary

deployment of nursery rhyme, fairy tale, and riddle, Hannah Sanghee Park finds ways to point at danger without becoming didactic. In this she reminds me a bit of a modern-day version of San Francisco Renaissance poet Helen Adam.

Since the poems in the book's first section disassemble and reassemble words so obsessively, it seems quite apt to find that, in the second section, "A Mutability," each sonnet is named for a different chimerical creature. There are shape-shifters, doppelgangers, and demon-lovers from a variety of cultures. The collapsed binary is no longer true/false (as it was in the first section) but self/other and also human/nonhuman. It seems the monster in Park's labyrinth is love (or sex). In "Q," she writes, "May I master love, undo its luster / do in the thing that makes us lust?" The answer to this question appears to be a resounding no. Lust is too protean for that. In poem after poem the lover (who may or may not be the speaker) is either deceptively human or inhuman. In "Naga in July" (the Naga are demigods and serpents) Park writes:

I admit, I do not know where you cease
into scales, where your body joins and coils

its partings into one uninterrupted
unit.....

letters repeated
in your absence. Left a ghost's husk of skin
to trace back, knowing:

This may be archetypal lyric poetry with its sonic loveliness and its address to an absent beloved—but it is much complicated by the fact that this beloved is dangerous, formally incoherent (she doesn't know where he/she/it "ceases" into scales), and, ultimately, not really distinguishable from the poet (herself) or indeed the poem (itself). We begin to see the poem's self-referential quality as it continues:

All monsoon season, letters repeated
in your absence. Left a ghost's husk of skin



Rae Armantrout

you'd long outgrown, a tunnel of O's as the trail
you trace back knowing:

Surely it is the poem's own tunnel of O's (like those in *monsoon*, *ghost*, *outgrown*, and *knowing*) that form the beloved monster's abandoned "ghost husk of skin." These poems haunt themselves and the reader, and thus the last section of the book is aptly titled "Fear." The poems in "Fear" slip beyond the sonnet form into long, untitled sequences. Here Park drops the logic games and the mythological personae and writes a bit more directly of a failed or failing relationship in a toxic world:

We joke of thinned air
leaked gas, breathing things
that only impair.

Now I think if I push a little bit harder you
will stay.

But by now the reader suspects nothing will stay put. Hannah Sanghee Park's lines seem somehow both shiftily and extremely precise. Can precision exist in a world where binaries like true/false or self/other break down? Apparently, in poems as lapidary as these, it can. Art may be said to be serious play, and Park's poems are serious play of the first order. They combine a fine ear, a sharp intellect, and a questioning spirit. This is exactly what a poet needs. I can't wait to see what Park will do next. ★

Poems by **Hannah Sanghee Park***Bang*

Just what they said about the river:
rift and ever.

And nothing was left for the ether
there either.

And if anything below could mature:
A matter of nature.

It may have been holy as scripture
as scribes capture

meaning all that was there and only
(one and lonely)

is all that is left, and wholly
whose folly.

The sky bleached to cleanly
clear, evenly

to have left the world,
to what is left of it—

Could you have anything left to covet?
Covertly met: coverlet. Clover, bet. Come over *et*—

Strip

Like a frame within a frame the fossil
carried a carcass, a carapace,

and its own casket in another casket,
its own natural sarcophagus.

I never told anyone this story:
in a summer like this I ate a nectarine

until its rough corduroy pit, continued
rolling and chewing it until it hinged

open, and an inert spider, sitting
in white wisp, was inside like a small jewel.

How does a thing feel real. The layers
comprising me are, reductively, soft

hard, soft, an easy sift to the truth
but the hard sell and swallow done anyway.

Dear Sir—

Two things
To think about.

Desire:
sires Eris,
ire.

On longing:
Ongoing
Log: *I long*.

Know nothing's worth
The strife and fire.

The end as *un*—
The on and on.

Poem by **Rae Armantrout**

Trance

We know our dreams aren't real
because in dreams
there is no difference

between the will
and the unwilling.

*

And God divided "the"
from "the" and
placed an angel's
sword between
them and

*

We know the real
by its reluctance.

Still,

such inertia
looks a lot like
trance

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award



Jillian Weise's

The Book of Goodbyes

*Winner of the 2013 James Laughlin Award,
given to celebrate an outstanding second poetry collection.*

JUDGES: JEFFREY MCDANIEL, BRENDA SHAUGHNESSY, SUSAN WHEELER

Donald Vish

by Jeffrey McDaniel

Illian Weise's compelling and energized second collection of poems, *The Book of Goodbyes*, winner of the James Laughlin Award, is loosely structured as a theatrical performance. There are four sections: parts One and Two, separated by an Intermission and followed by a Curtain Call. Parts One and Two include voice-driven, dramatic poems, many concerning a love triangle between a male partner, playfully named Big Logos, his unnamed and unknowing girlfriend, and the speaker. In the Intermission we are greeted with a trio of longer, allegorical narratives, delivered in unrhymed quatrains, centered on the relationships between several finches at Iguazú Falls in Argentina. In the Curtain Call we find a collage-style lyric essay/associative prose poem doled out in several dozen small paragraphs, structurally reminiscent of *Bluets* by Maggie Nelson and *The Balloonists* by Eula Biss. The Intermission's three allegorical narratives provide a break and a shift in perspective from the one offered in the voice-driven poems of the preceding sections in terms of their language, tone, and pace, yet there are thematic connections—it's almost like looking at a diorama of the human world of romance in which the reader was immersed a few pages earlier.

Many of Weise's poems are persona poems, but they're also infused with dialogue. In "Café Loop" (the title is a pun on the New York City restaurant Café Loup, popular among writers), Weise brings to life a couple of venomous young poets who are having an envy-filled go at the author herself. Louise Glück has a series of poems in *Meadowlands* where an internal heckler rushes out onto the page for a few lines (like a streaker on a football field), hurls a few jabs at the author, and then vanishes. Weise, however, gives her hecklers their own poem. There's something so darkly delicious and incriminating about the shifts in tone, when the sniping poets break out of their mean-spirited mode of discourse to switch seamlessly into a polite one when addressing the waiter. Weise is an expert at such sudden shifts in address and tone. The line: "My friend said she actually believes // her poems

have speakers" is full of irony, as the young poets themselves have become speakers in a Weise poem, a clever move indeed.

Some of the other speakers we encounter in this book include a jeering moth ("Ha, little cripple"); an appropriated academic voice; a random man named Pete; the speaker's mother; a 911 operator; the father of Zahra Baker, a ten-year-old amputee who was murdered by her stepmother; and an unnamed ex who makes unannounced visits. But even as this book is multivoiced, in the end there is really just one speaker—a poetic variation of the author herself. It may be a slightly skewed, fun-house-mirror version at times, but this is her story. A heckler asks: "How can she write / like she's writing for the whole group?" Weise does not pretend to be doing that, but the book does illuminate potential innovative paths and strategies for poetic storytelling. These poems are not delivered as a sincere first-person narrative that we might associate with the second generation of Confessional poetry popular in the 1980s and '90s, where the speaker is clearly the hero (and perhaps also implicitly the victim), and others are clearly the villains. There is a hero in this book, and there are villainous characters, but it's not so cut-and-dried; this is a complicated, witty, vulnerable, adulterous, edgy, smart, multilayered hero.

One especially interesting aspect of the book is the speaker's fascination with the other woman, Big Logos's main squeeze, who is evidently also a poet. Weise's poem "Poem for his Ex" is a pleasing and sinister endeavor. It's both perverse and enthralling, yet also a nearly traditional love poem. This is not the clenched fury of Anne Sexton's "For My Lover, Returning to His Wife." This is the other woman brazenly and unapologetically addressing the dupe who has had the proverbial wool pulled over her eyes. It's as if the speaker has ripped the Scarlet Letter off Hester Prynne's chest and is boldly donning it for kicks. The speaker doesn't just address the hoodwinked girlfriend, she mocks her: "Last I read your poems were lower case // with capital content." This is romantic hardball. If I were going to edit an anthology of cold-blooded poetry, I might

start with this poem. But the poem is more than just mockery. Underneath the dark humor are shards of sincerity, as the address swerves away from the girlfriend to the self: “Does it make you feel better / to know he cheated with a handicapped / girl? I wonder if you have // any handicapped friends. / I don’t know why I’m using that word. / It demoralizes me.” Suddenly the sarcasm has vanished, and we’ve been let into the inner chamber of the speaker’s mind and heart.

After the Intermission, the relationship with Big Logos has hit the skids. If the relationship was fertile territory for poetry while they were dating, the break-up is even riper. One cannot read the poem “Be Not Far From Me” without thinking of the answering-machine scene from the film *Swingers*, as Big Logos impotently leaves a string of obsessive messages on the speaker’s office voice mail over a period of months. His verbal missives are more nuanced than the messages in *Swingers*, but ultimately no less pathetic. It takes courage for an author to slow down and let a character dangle so helplessly. We almost empathize with him as he confesses his creative dysfunction: “I’m not writing. I haven’t written since / I saw you. I can’t write.” The irony here is that he is in fact “writing,” as he is being written into Weise’s poem but just doesn’t know it, so the joke is on him. Unlike most stories about adultery, in this case the other woman wins. Not because she ends up with the guy; she doesn’t. And not because she has moved on, though that is satisfying. The ultimate victory here is not romantic, but artistic.

If the whole book has been a theatrical performance up to this point, then the last poem, “Elegy for Zahra Baker,” is less a curtain call (as the section heading suggests) and more of a humanizing visit backstage with the speaker: makeup wiped off, the bright lights of the stage replaced with a simple lamp, the tone more introspective. We rise above the speaker’s life as the poem shines a spotlight on the world at large, specifically on an actual website called Gimps Gone Wild and a commercial that uses “a potbellied man with a missing leg” to advertise a video game. At times, the



speaker directly addresses Zahra Baker. And then the address swerves and the reader is addressed directly, in a way that may make some think of Sylvia Plath’s “Lady Lazarus,” as Weise’s speaker says: “How much would you pay me to say the name of the condition I have? Would I just need to say the name or would you require an examination? How much for the box of legs in the attic?” Then the address shifts inward: “I start calling myself a cyborg.” There are numerous moments in the book when we get glimpses of the speaker’s navigation of the external world. For example, the line “when I am in front of twenty-four legs in a classroom” uses synecdoche to convey a sense of jarring alienation.

One of the ideas coursing through Weise’s *The Book of Goodbyes* is how hard it is to make a real connection with another person, and how technology makes it harder for people to connect, even as it paradoxically makes it easier for us to share information. Yet despite the book’s title, there is a subtle, deep connection that is made in its pages, as the text is in fact dedicated to “Josh,” and a Josh gets referenced several times in the final poem. His is not a two-dimensional, caricature name like Big Logos. He has a real name. And the speaker shares her deepest, most honest thoughts with him, humanizing herself even more in the process. So if this is a painful book of goodbyes, it is also a triumphant journey toward intimacy. ★

Poems by **Jillian Weise***Café Loop*

She's had it easy, you know. I knew her
from FSU, back before she was disabled.

I mean she was disabled but she didn't
write like it. Did she talk like it?

Do you know what it is exactly?
She used to wear these long dresses

to cover it up. She had a poem
in *The Atlantic*. Yes, I'll take water.

Me too. With a slice of lemon.
It must be nice to have *The Atlantic*.

Oh, she's had it easy all right.
She should come out and state

the disability. She actually is very
dishonest. I met her once at AWP.

Tiny thing. Limps a little. I mean not
really noticeable. What will you have?

I can't decide. How can she write
like she's writing for the whole group?

I mean really. It's kind of disgusting.
It's kind of offensive. It's kind of

a commodification of the subaltern
identity. Should we have wine?

Let's have something light. It makes
you wonder how she lives with herself.

I wouldn't mind. I would commodify
and run. She's had it easy.

I can't stand political poetry.
She never writes about it critically.

If it really concerns her, she should
just write an article or something.

I heard she's not that smart. My friend
was in class with her and he said

actually she's not that smart.
I believe it. I mean the kind of language

she uses, so simple, elementary.
My friend said she actually believes

her poems have speakers. Oh, that's rich.
I'm sorry but if the book is called

amputee and you're an *amputee*
then you are the speaker.

So New Criticism. Really I don't like
her work at all. I find it lacking.

Poem for His Ex

So what's up? Where are you these days?
 Last I heard you worked at a bakery.
 Last I read your poems were lower case

with capital content. I used to like
 to read them in the dark. It's weird
 you're not his girl anymore.

You were the picture in a snow globe
 on his desk that I'd go to, shaking,
 when he left the room. That room.

Do you remember it? The Dr. Seuss
 sheets read: "This is not good.
 This is not right. My feet stick out

of bed all night." We tried not to talk
 about you. When we had to do it,
 I made him go to a dyke bar

so everyone would be on my side.
 In my mind you were so good
 at everything, like walking.

I asked him if you had two legs.
 What was I thinking? Of course
 you have two legs. I asked him,

I guess, so that the possibility
 of me would exist. He said yes
 as if he was ashamed to admit it.

Does it make you feel better
 to know he cheated with a handicapped
 girl? I wonder if you have

any handicapped friends.
 I don't know why I'm using that word.
 It demoralizes me. Or if you don't.

Or if you've seen somewhere,
maybe in the bakery, a woman
with a limp and felt sorry.

Once in the dyke bar he said
he was waiting for you to
stand on your own two feet

and it was hilarious to me,
though it was a serious conversation,
so I could not laugh.

We never talk about you now.
It's not allowed. We have to act all
that-never-happened.

I always liked you and thought
you were cool
and sometimes I pretend

you're in the room
and you forgive me and say
you always knew.

Goodbyes

begin long before you hear them
and gain speed and come out of
the same place as other words.

They should have their own
place to come from, the elbow
perhaps, since elbows look
funny and never weep. Why
are you proud of me? I said
goodbye to you forty times.

I see your point. That is
an achievement unto itself.

My mom wants me to write
a goodbye poem. It should fit
inside a card and use the phrase,
“You are one powerful lady.”

There is nothing powerful
about me though you might
think so from the way I spit.

I don’t want to say goodbye
to you anymore. I heard
the first wave was an accident.

It happened in the Cave
of the Hands in Santa Cruz.

They were drinking and someone
killed a wild boar and someone
said, “Hey look, I put my hand
in it.” Saying goodbye is like that.

You put your hand in it and then
you take your hand back.

Poem by **Jeffrey McDaniel**

The Appraiser's Dilemma

The day started like any other Friday: a VW bug
with a deer-crunched fender, then a flipped Volvo

flat-beaded back from the desert, then a two-martini lunch,
then a RAV₄ with dings on four panels. I plug

the damage in, the machine spits the numbers out.
There was some pot in the happy hour parking lot,

and a sunset that looked like listening to Joy Division
in a bathtub, as a trio of birds circled the dark pink sky,

like a dog chopped-up into three parts, Damien Hirst-style,
but still alive and chasing its tail. Anyway back in the bar

I overheard a snippet of a couple's argument,
and I was just high enough to stick my nose in and tell them

who was at fault. No one knows the burden I carry,
this being born with a Ouija Board in my chest, this ability

to read wreckage like an alphabet. You just see a car on its side
and blood on the pavement. I see narration

in the guardrail's streaks, alliteration in the length of a skid,
and foreshadowing in the subtle punctuation of an oil leak.

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.

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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.



award

Translation Awards

Luigi Bonaffini's

The Bedroom

Winner of the 2014 Raiziss/de Palchi Book Prize, given for the translation into English of a significant work of modern Italian poetry.

JUDGES: BARBARA CARLE, LUIGI FONTANELLA, GIUSEPPE LEPORACE



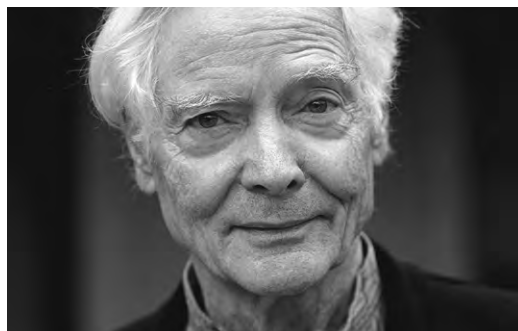
"The Bedroom [by Attilio Bertolucci], brilliantly translated into English by Luigi Bonaffini, one of the best American translators of contemporary Italian poetry, is a tireless, complex 'hymn' to the multifaceted aspects of life, from the joyful to the most painful. It is a long narrative poem unique in modern Italian literature, written in a language that is clear and apparently unadorned, yet brimming with lyric intensity."
—*Luigi Fontanella*

W. S. Merwin's

Selected Translations

Winner of the 2014 Harold Morton Landon Translation Award, given to honor a published translation of poetry from any language into English.

JUDGE: DAVID HINTON



"W. S. Merwin's art is ravenous, and this award celebrates its hunger. To translate is to inhabit another voice, which in turn enlarges one's horizons as a writer; and Merwin's huge *Selected Translations* represents a lifetime spent feeding his own art with other voices. The book is a museum of world poetry, an aggregation of artifacts from a vast range of cultures and times. Its core comprises work from languages that Merwin knows: French and Spanish. From there the collection radiates outward to include poetry from Crow, Russian, Chinese, Quechua, Sanskrit, Urdu, German, Persian, and on and on. This year, in addition to the *Selected Translations*, Merwin published a voluminous translation of one of Japan's greatest classical poets, a major acquisition to his world-poetry museum: *Collected Haiku of Yosa Buson*. And so continues Merwin's lifelong gift, helping to satisfy our hunger for other voices." —*David Hinton*

Translations by **W. S. Merwin**

Autumn Night

by **Tu Fu**

The dew falls, the sky is a long way up, the brimming waters are quiet.
On the empty mountain in the companionless night doubtless the
wandering spirits are stirring.

Alone in the distance the ship's lantern lights up one motionless sail.
The new moon is moored to the sky, the sound of the beetles comes to
an end.

The chrysanthemums have flowered, men are lulling their sorrows
to sleep.

Step by step along the veranda, propped on my stick, I keep my eyes on
the Great Bear.

In the distance the celestial river leads to the town.

Parting

by **Jorge Luis Borges**

Three hundred nights like three hundred walls
must rise between my love and me
and the sea will be a black art between us.

Time with a hard hand will tear out
the streets tangled in my breast.
Nothing will be left but memories.
(O afternoons earned with suffering,
nights hoping for the sight of you,
dejected vacant lots, poor sky
shamed in the bottom of the puddles
like a fallen angel...
And your life that graces my desire
and that run-down and lighthearted neighborhood
shining today in the glow of my love...)

Final as a statue
your absence will sadden other fields.

Autumn Returns

by Pablo Neruda

A day dressed in mourning falls from the bells
like a fluttering veil of a roving widow,
it is a color, a dream
of cherries sunk in the earth,
a tail of smoke restlessly arriving
to change the color of water and of kisses.

I am not sure that it understands me: when night
approaches from the heights, when the solitary poet
at his window hears the galloping horse of autumn
and the trampled leaves of fear rustle in his arteries,
there is something over the sky, like the tongue of an ox,
thick, something uncertain in the sky and the atmosphere.

Things return to their place,
the indispensable lawyer, the hands, the oil,
the bottles,
all the signs of life: the beds, above all,
are filled with a bloody liquid,
the people deposit their secrets in sordid ears,
the assassins come down stairs,
but it's not that, but the old gallop,
the horse of old autumn, which trembles and endures.

The horse of old autumn has a red beard
and the froth of fear covers his cheeks
and the air that follows him is shaped like an ocean
and smells of vague buried decay.

Every day a color like ashes drops from the sky;
the doves must divide it for the earth:
the rope which is woven by oblivion and tears,
time which has slept long years in the bells,
everything,
the worn-out clothes, the women watching the snow fall,
the black poppies that no one can look at without dying,
everything falls into the hands that I raise
into the midst of the rain.

From *Selected Translations* (Copper Canyon Press, 2013) by W. S. Merwin.
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Poem by **Attilio Bertolucci**
Translated by **Luigi Bonaffini**

The Hut

“Let Springher’s¹ violin screech in the Italian night
and let it guide us as we walk huddled
and blind under the vault of the intertwining holm oaks.
The sea cannot be far if our lips
feel its salt when they touch: this
is the day on which for the first time
we used *tu*,² became united.
Another time begins for me for you suddenly coming out
into the moonlight, the last bitterly joyous exertion
of a generation destined to immolate itself for an unjust cause.
It’s 1933, a year of calm
for the youth of the Italy in which we live
as involved as strangers: those who have finished high school
if they have not chosen
to get rid of the course for reserved officers training, if they belong
to a well-to-do family they spend
at least a month on one of the beaches
that line up twin-hull boats and bathing huts, umbrellas and tents,
along the coasts that mark the peninsula...
Lovers are alone in the world, but maybe
we two who embrace each other still
are not the only ones, even if
we entered the Viale Morin
lighted by patient and rare lamps,
to have chosen
the gilded and resonant cocoon
of a love affair in order to get away
from the sordid and triumphal routine of collective life.
From the flagpoles of elegant baths, while the sea swells,
small banners flap about and go limp,
they have the colors of nations, the red and blue
of *France la douce*, the red and white
of beloved England...Our tricolor
is like a poor relative among them, tidied up and neat,
incredulous to exist. The violin
that had been silent strikes up again

¹ Springher was a violinist who in the thirties played jazz in the style of the Italian-American Joe Venuti.

² Instead of the formal *Lei*.

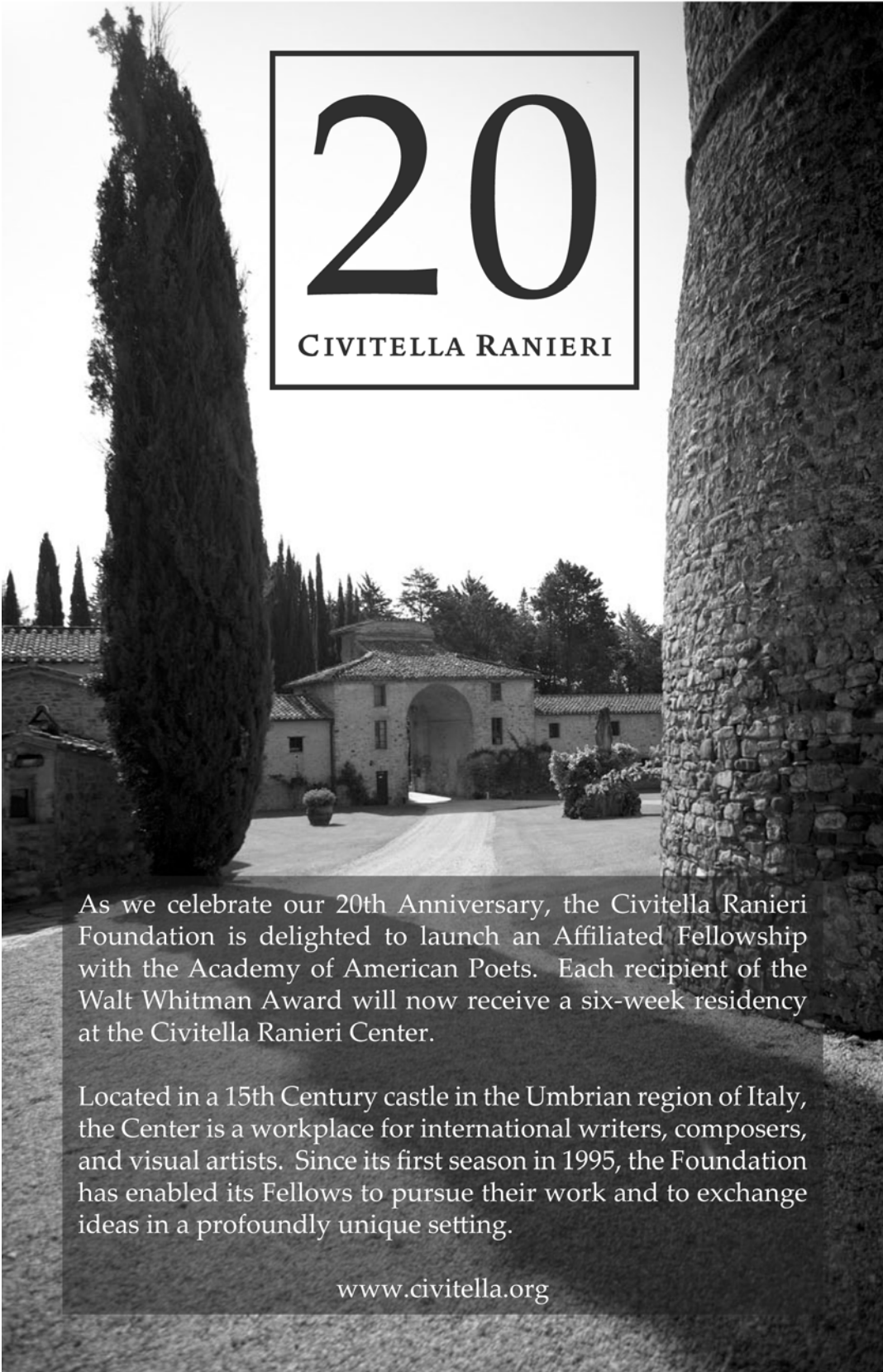
because the night must not end: “*Man*
from the south—with a big cigar in his mouth.” I accompany
 you home, but you are the strongest,
 you who have given in, bloodied and tranquil amazon.

A.’s adolescence cannot die this way in an underbrush of pine trees,
 the pact of staying faithful to her has not been betrayed. N. maybe
 realizes that but accepts it: the following morning—
 let these words contain as much
 accumulation of time as the captions of a silent movie—
 she is awakened early by his voice
 that crosses dark and cheerful the green-striped
 barrier of the French door,
 mixing blood with the oblique gold of the sun.
 N. answers with the *tu* she has just learned to use:
 the family must know; must know everything,
 acknowledge her irrevocable choice. She does it
 with her understatement and the strength
 of a young woman, by now, even against him
 who wants her to be a *jeune fille* for life.
 He has brought her, writing down his name and place and year,
 Katherine Mansfield’s *Journal* in the French translation
 that bears a portrait of the writer with a bang
 over her grave face, her lips clenched in the strain of living.
 New Zealand is not far from New South Wales
 where N. was born to an Italian father and
 an Australian mother of Irish origin, and A. wants
 there to be some thread between the two expatriates,
 both with short hair, dark skin,
 not easily integrated into this
 Europe without verandas blanched by innocent suns. The book
 will not be totally N.’s, who in a few days,
 half of it read, stained on the crumpled cover
 by the walnut oil spilled from the half-open vial,
 testimony in future years
 of a dead summer...But still droning today
 with the small advertising plane
 that trails in the violet evening sky—
 over people lying on the sand in this hour
 given to maids and drowsy children, to quiet lovers—
 a kite in flight and perdition toward the west already cold.

“Another calm night is coming...I have time
 to feel it growing outside and inside myself,
 stretched in the *chaise longue* under the vine sprayed

with verdigris, holding unripe grapes. The bower
 is not lighted—I didn't want to do it—the kitchen is,
 brightly, in which N. gives a helping hand
 to mother and housemaid.
 It is an interior of infinite and remote charm, disturbed
 at times by discreet voices, by words incomprehensible here.
 At twenty-two I am engaged
 to a girl of twenty-one, a schoolmate:
 an ardent and perhaps judicious choice...
 You have to accept the mosquitoes if you want
 crickets and frogs to hasten with mad iteration
 the rites of earthly night
 that takes iodine from the sea.
 N. knows that the little
 family comedy, the raspberries
 she insisted on buying out of pity for the one descended
 from the Apennines onto the unchaste beach
 with a mountain scent,
 the fake weariness of the legs bent
 under the marble table (widely used here
 in contrast with the naturalness of wood
 and the humble plasters)
 will be followed, in the destined place, by love.
 She knows that while my mother ravages herself so as not
 to reach the age of white hair and young grandmothers,
 she has to welcome me in her arms, she has to
 save me from the voids opening around me. She has
 to let my seed be lost,
 she who is already prepared
 to generate and rear."
 The southwest wind tortures the sandy shore deserted by everyone
 but not by N. and A.
 who stay quiet, or so it seems, on the small raised terrace
 of the hut: she with her long legs exposed
 to the wind and the sprays, he
 leaning against the tiny closed door, his head
 grazing the rusty key eaten by the brackish air.
 A. remembers that this evening will be devoted to a movie,
 there isn't much to choose from
 with two theaters in all (but it does happen
 that un hoped-for films arrive, later destined
 to the autumn in the city, with the first rains
 and the first spectators returning with a great urge
 to start keeping their tan again
 as long as possible). And she doesn't want

this whitened and grim day to go by
without fulfilling the rites of love,
the caress, the back as naked as
the black woolen Jantzen will allow. Then
why not take advantage of the green
exhausted hut, of the key so troublesome yet so useful
in this circumstance, in this pressing occasion? She
insisted on going in first, getting ahead of him,
leaving him alone, it seems to him, for ages,
waiting (or being on the lookout?). She is naked
as he has never seen her, the marks
of the bathing suit on the small breasts, on her back.
That's how she receives him, small and steady
harbor of peace, while
the sprays of the southwest wind, growing in intensity,
turn the bowed tamarisks gray.



20

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As we celebrate our 20th Anniversary, the Civitella Ranieri Foundation is delighted to launch an Affiliated Fellowship with the Academy of American Poets. Each recipient of the Walt Whitman Award will now receive a six-week residency at the Civitella Ranieri Center.

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Recommended Reading

In addition to highlighting some of this fall's most exciting new poetry books, we thought to ask our Chancellors what books they'd recommend reading. Seven Chancellors each chose two books of poems—a volume often revisited for continuous inspiration and another beloved book more readers should know about.

Toi Derricotte

Essential Book: I go back to *Pictures from Brueghel* by William Carlos Williams. I am always mystified by how lines with only one word in them—lines like “and” and “it”—can have such authority and momentum. I come away awake and refreshed.

Beloved Book: I hope Giovanni Singleton's book, *Ascension*, continues to increase its circle of fans. She describes the first section of the book as “A daybook composed during musician and spiritual leader Alice Coltrane's (Swamini Turiyasangita-nanda) 49-day transition through the bardo (the intermediate states between death and rebirth).” I like its size. It's a pocket book that compresses a lifetime of humor, wisdom, and skill.

Marilyn Hacker

Essential Book: Hayden Carruth's *Collected Longer Poems* includes work published between 1957 and 1983. The poet's formal inventiveness, catholicity of concerns, and wide register of discourse are evident everywhere. There is a jazzy six-page Chicago night-song halfway between haiku and terza rima, a humorous rumination on Vermont in thirteen pages of loose blank verse, and a shorter evocation of a northern winter that prefigures Carruth's interest in classical Chinese poetry. There are three sequences in Carruth's invented form, the “paragraph,” a fifteen-line poem or stanza with

intricate rhyme and stress scheme, including the entirety of “The Sleeping Beauty,” written between 1970 and 1980. This 125-part poem sequence uses the fairy/folk-tale figure as a focal point for a meditation on history with several fugal, contrapuntal themes: the narrator's dialogue with Amos, an old Vermont farmer—or his ghost; and a series of monologues in female voices—Lilith; a foot-bound Chinese lady of sixteen; a Puritan poet whose husband burns her writings; Bessie Smith. “The Sleeping Beauty” is also a profound consideration of gender and its permutations, its wounds, in every human being, and our response to the “opposite” within each of us, whatever our gender or sexuality.

Beloved Book: Suzanne Gardinier is at once one of the most politically astute and engaged contemporary poets, and one of the most thoughtfully lyrical. *Iridium* is a new and selected volume, including poems from the fugal *The New World*, radiating from the geographical center of mid-Manhattan, and from *Today*, her book of ghazals. The new work shows an even more innovative and personalized formal



Pictures from Brueghel
William Carlos Williams



Ascension
Giovanni Singleton



Collected Longer Poems
Hayden Carruth



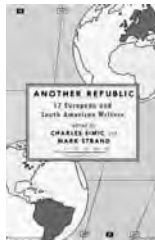
Iridium
Suzanne Gardinier



**The City
in Which
I Love You**
Li-Young Lee



Drive
Lorna Dee
Cervantes



**Another
Republic**
Charles Simic
and Mark Strand



**The Steel
Cricket:
Versions
1958-1997**
Stephen Berg

Edward Hirsch

Essential Book: The anthology *Another Republic* was a gateway for me to a group of international poets who have companioned me ever since. In their brief introduction the editors, Charles Simic and Mark Strand, distinguish between the mythologically oriented poets (Henri Michaux, Francis Ponge, Vasko Popa, and Octavio Paz) and

the historically oriented ones (Yehuda Amichai, Johannes Bobrowski, Paul Celan, Zbigniew Herbert, Miroslav Holub, Czesław Miłosz, and Yannis Ritsos). I would soon add Ingeborg Bachmann and Wisława Szymborska to my pantheon. The mythic mode has its origins in Surrealism, and the Surrealist poets (André Breton, Paul Éluard, Louis Aragon, Robert Desnos) also wrote powerfully erotic poems. Constantine P. Cavafy was the precursor of the historically minded mode, and he also wrote erotic poems with a startling religious force. Certainly there is a lesson in that. I adore the mythologists, but I was changed by the late-modern consciences, sometimes tragic, sometimes comic, who deeply humanized poetry.

Juan Felipe Herrera

Essential Book: The book I return to is Li-Young Lee's *The City in Which I Love You*. The unfamiliar leaps, the dream-soaked realities of a "wanderer's heart," the revisions of memory, the illuminations on the demolished crossings of nation and self to the upper trigrams of sensual becoming and the knife-sharp divinities of being; all this, all the whispered line-work—takes me back to Lee's pages.

Beloved Book: The underrated book: *Drive* by Lorna Dee Cervantes. Here is a Chicana poet writing since the early 1970s—with elegant power and a devouring mind. She "drives" with woman family, Sarajevo, San José, California, homegirl turf and most poignantly stops and touches the work on display in the Varian Fry exhibit at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Vast knowledge, a hungry heart, a fearless voice.

the historically oriented ones (Yehuda Amichai, Johannes Bobrowski, Paul Celan, Zbigniew Herbert, Miroslav Holub, Czesław Miłosz, and Yannis Ritsos). I would soon add Ingeborg Bachmann and Wisława Szymborska to my pantheon. The mythic mode has its origins in Surrealism, and the Surrealist poets (André Breton, Paul Éluard, Louis Aragon, Robert Desnos) also wrote powerfully erotic poems. Constantine P. Cavafy was the precursor of the historically minded mode, and he also wrote erotic poems with a startling religious force. Certainly there is a lesson in that. I adore the mythologists, but I was changed by the late-modern consciences, sometimes tragic, sometimes comic, who deeply humanized poetry.

Beloved Book: Stephen Berg had a special gift for fusing his voice with other voices, and his book *The Steel Cricket: Versions 1958-1997* brings together a dizzying array of poets from different times and places—from Bankei to Giacomo Leopardi, from Octavio Paz to Innokenty Annensky. I love his reinventions of Aztec, Tlingit, and Eskimo songs, his haiku perceptions, his versions of the Hungarian poet Miklós Radnóti, which are necessary twentieth-century poems. *The Steel Cricket* belongs on the shelf next to Ezra Pound's collected *Translations*, Robert Lowell's *Imitations*, and W. S. Merwin's *Selected Translations*. Berg took great license with his sources, and his adaptations operate in an ambiguous literary space. The ambiguity is even greater in his marvelous book of dependency *With Akhmatova at the Black Gates*. Berg's driving need, his quirky poetic intelligence, his relentless self-scrutiny, and his great freedom of expression enabled him to create poems of startling beauty and deep spiritual quest.

Marilyn Nelson

Essential Book: I've been reading around in *Song of the Simple Truth* by Julia de Burgos, translated Jack Agüeros, since 1997. The subject area of my PhD is American ethnic literature yet I'm ashamed of the fact that every one of the poems I've read by de Burgos via Agüeros (as a translator myself, I know how much a translated poem depends on its translator) comes as a surprise and blows my socks off. I'm ashamed of that surprise: that I'm not familiar with more of the poems; that I don't recognize the poems by a poet who is considered by many to be one of the greatest Puerto Rican/New York poets.

Beloved Book: In the spring of 2012 I had the privilege of spending a day with Joe Gouveia, who was my host for a reading at the Cape Cod Cultural Center. What a gift that day was, what a reinforcement of my wavering sense that poetry matters. Born and raised on the Cape, the son of working-class Portuguese immigrants, Gouveia had a bottomless commitment to poetry. Robert Pinsky describes him as a poet with "ever widening gaze." Martín Espada applauds his "clarity and courage." He rode a motorcycle. He loved his wife. He wrote fearless, wise poems. He died in May 2014. Everyone who reads his poems will regret his early death. I recommend his book *Saudades*.

Naomi Shihab Nye

Essential Book: I recommend *The Way It Is: New & Selected Poems* by William Stafford. It is a generous gathering of Stafford's poems from a rich life of writing, opening with a handwritten facsimile of his last poem, which was written on the last day of his life. Although we are lucky to have other necessary

Stafford books available—*Every War Has Two Losers*, for example, and *Ask Me*—this thicker volume is worth keeping alongside them as a general reference for every day, mood, need, and concern.

Beloved Book: I also recommend *Braided Creek: A Conversation in Poetry* by Jim Harrison and Ted Kooser because the poems are so tiny and so succulent, each one a transporting hinge for the mind's happiest refreshing movements. I think every person needs to own this book. It easily brings you back to writing when you have felt far away or confused. It clarifies your spirit. Take a quick dip into the mixed back-and-forth voices of these two masters and delight. I have given more copies of this book away as gifts than any other book. And I know for certain that many people have appreciated it greatly. So, why not everyone?

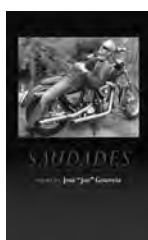
Arthur Sze

Essential Book: I continue to return to the collected poems of William Butler Yeats as a writer, reader, and thinker. I love poems from many different stages of his writing life, and I like to consider his transformations and growth. His late poems are a remarkable accomplishment, but I find the entire journey of his writing an inspiration.

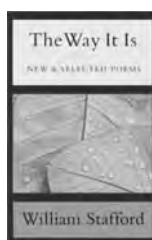
Beloved Book: I am surprised at how often I mention Inger Christensen's work to writers and readers of poetry and they draw a blank. I recommend *alphabet* (translated by Susanna Nied). Its structure is based on the Fibonacci sequence, and from the opening line—apricot trees exist, apricot trees exist—the poem sways and unfolds with singular rhythmic and incantatory power. I find this poem breathtaking. ★



Song of the Simple Truth
Jack Agüeros



Saudades
Joe Gouveia



The Way It Is: New & Selected Poems
William Stafford



Braided Creek: A Conversation in Poetry
Jim Harrison and Ted Kooser

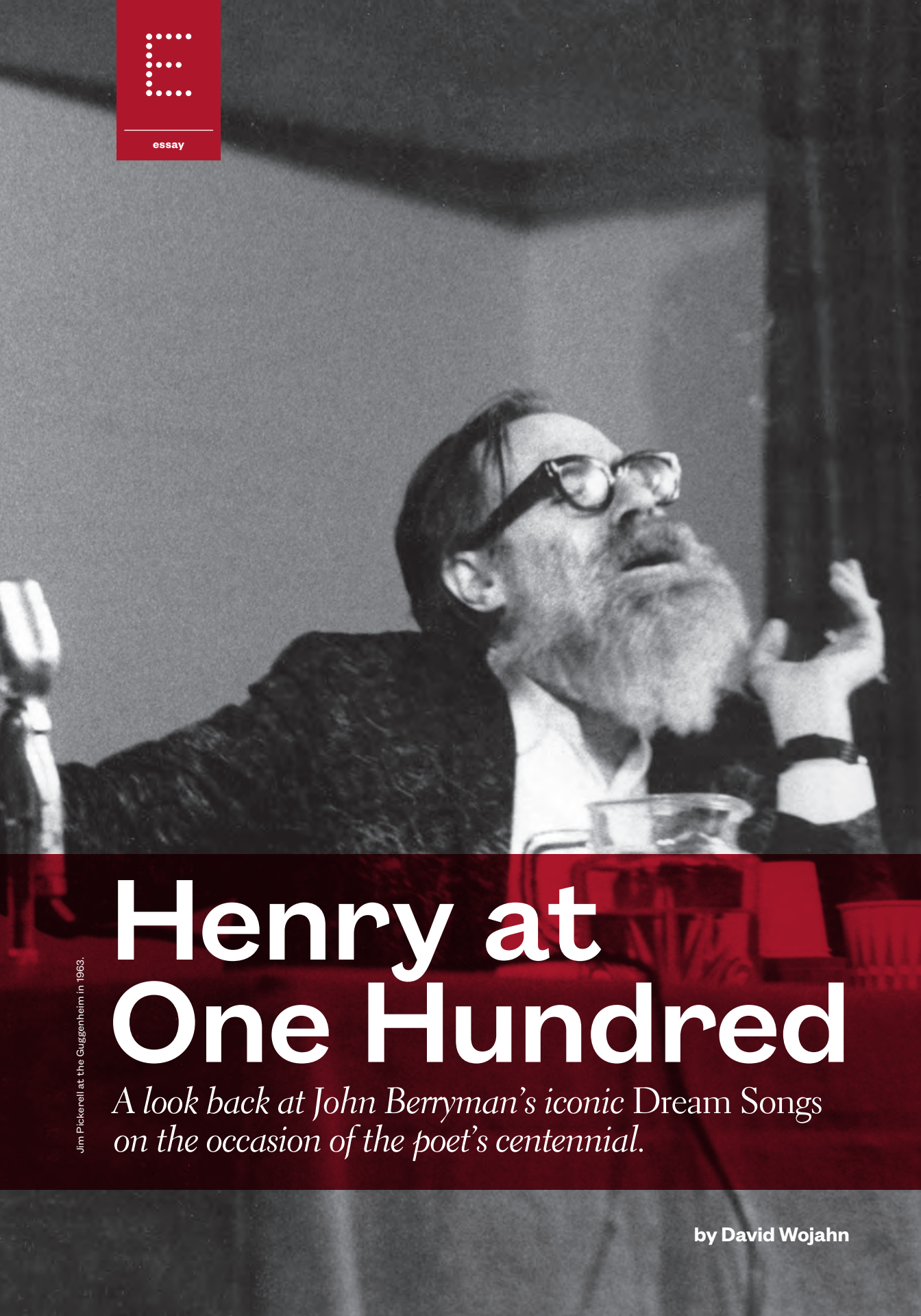


Collected Poems
William Butler Yeats



alphabet
Inger Christensen





E

essay

Henry at One Hundred

*A look back at John Berryman's iconic Dream Songs
on the occasion of the poet's centennial.*

Jim Pickrell at the Guggenheim in 1963.

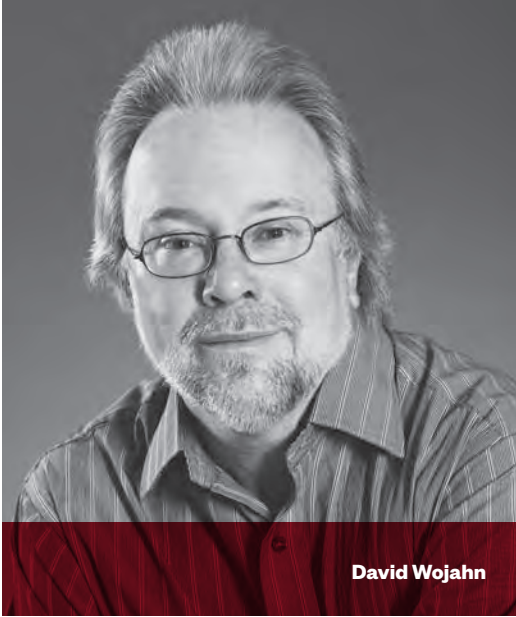
by David Wojahn

It's hard to believe that 2014 is John Berryman's centenary, in part because his best work is of such consummate strangeness that it seems to exist outside the confines of any period or style, and almost outside literary and historical time altogether.

We think of Berryman's fellow Middle Generation poets—Robert Lowell, Robert Hayden, Elizabeth Bishop, and Randall Jarrell, among others, all born between 1910 and 1920—as very much products of their era, who all, in various ways, forged poetic styles that seemed especially reflective of the culture, politics, and vernacular of mid-twentieth century America. Lowell and Hayden were above all poets of personal and public memory, witnesses to the turbulence of their times who were canny in their ability to intermingle the topical with the historical. Bishop and Jarrell strove to perfect a limpid version of the American idiom—what Marianne Moore famously called a plain American English that cats and dogs can understand—that was at the same time memorable, exacting in its prosody, and imbued with heartbreak. Indebted though they were to the poetics of their modernist forebears, the poets of the Middle Generation eventually came to

reject what they saw as the grandiosity of modernists such as Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and Wallace Stevens. But Berryman's career follows a different trajectory, one that continues rather than rejects the tradition of modernist complexity, allusiveness, and dissonance. Although Berryman (who took his own life) shared all the psychological traumas that troubled his generational peers—like Bishop and Lowell, he was afflicted with alcoholism and mental instability—and wrote about these sufferings with unsettling candor, it does a disservice to Berryman's legacy to see him largely as an autobiographical or Confessional poet. Yet readers and critics have saddled Berryman with this reductive label for more than half a century.

Perhaps the Berryman centenary—which Berryman's publisher has commemorated with a judiciously chosen new selection of his poetry, edited by Daniel Swift—will help readers see a different



David Wojahn

sort of Berryman, a writer more in keeping with the way Berryman himself wished to be seen. And Berryman above all aspired to be a kind of grandly *dramatic* poet in the mode of William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe, or the Eliot of “The Waste Land,” a poet of multiple voices, intricately layered dialogue, and a keen awareness of how the comic and the tragic can commingle. With the creation of Henry Pussycat, the protagonist of his masterwork, *The Dream Songs*, Berryman came very close to achieving his goal. True, Henry is Berryman’s alter ego in countless ways. But readers owe Berryman the courtesy of seeing Henry as Berryman himself intended him to be seen. In his prefatory note to *The Dream Songs*, Berryman scrupulously set forth his aims for the poem. It is “essentially about an imaginary character (not the poet, not me) named Henry, a white American in early middle age sometimes in blackface, who has suffered an irreversible loss and talks about himself sometimes in the first person, sometimes in the third, sometimes even in the second; he has a friend, never named, who addresses him as Mr Bones and variants thereof.” For generations, readers have blithely regarded this statement as disingenuous, although the suicide of Berryman’s father, the “irreversible loss” that haunts the poem, is a subject whose importance no one can underestimate. Still, if we step back and take Berryman’s disclaimer at its word, we can see with much greater clarity just how artful, nervy, tragicomic, and inventive Berryman’s great poem can be. And make

no mistake, *The Dream Songs* is a great poem, its flaws and infelicities notwithstanding.

Admittedly, appreciating *The Dream Songs*—at least those sections besides anthology chestnuts such as sections 14 and 29—requires some training and forbearance. Henry’s diction can wildly careen from Elizabethan-isms and wacko syntactical inversions to outmoded slang and disarmingly bald abjection. His relentless shifts in person can bewilder us. His fidelity to the three rhyming sestets that comprise the individual sections of the poem is often indifferent: sometimes Berryman abandons the rhymes completely, while at other times he invents oddball neologisms in order to blunderingly offer up a rhyming mate. We can sometimes tire of Henry’s despair, and sometimes the ways in which alcohol and libido seem to write the poem can grow numbing. Furthermore, Berryman’s appropriation of blackface and the minstrelsy tradition has always been problematic for readers. Yet Berryman loves and respects that tradition, just as he loves the elegant pentameters of the Jacobean and the blues recordings he also references in the poem. Most importantly, the fact remains that the eccentricities of *The Dream Songs* arise not from artistic failure or indiscretion but from design. Unremittingly—and I would go as far as to say courageously—Henry entreats the reader to share in his unease. As Kevin Young sagely notes in his introduction to his 2004 Library of America edition of Berryman, we are “coerced into collusion with the poetry, laughing uneasily with Berryman at death or fate or desires that had always seemed unspeakable.”

I can think of no better example of this strategy than one of the lesser-known sections of the book, *Dream Song #46*. [See page 51 for the full poem.] Berryman’s characteristic hodgepodge of allusion and diction are abundantly on display in the poem. One commentator claims that the opening line alludes to a passage in *Sadism and Masochism* by the Austrian psychoanalyst Wilhelm Stekel, but I suspect Berryman instead had in mind a passage in one of Hopkins’s “terrible” sonnets, in which the melancholy Jesuit bemoans an exile both physical and spiritual: “I am in Ireland now;



now I am at a third / Remove. Not but in all removes I can / Kind love both give and get.” Henry starts the song, as he does so many others in the poem, in the outer dark, the “third remove,” of isolation and alienation, brought on not just by himself but also by the ruthlessness of mankind—whose folly seems to grow greater as the poem goes on. We have a street person becoming a Christ figure and shopkeepers who seem to be enacting a perverse version of the *Supper at Emmaus*—but these disciples do not recognize their god. And when Henry notes that “man has undertaken the top job of all,” he seems no more happy about the ascendancy of secular humanism than is the Christian right. But the poem isn’t entirely pessimistic. “The funeral of tenderness” may have taken place, but the closing of the poem may be (may be, for the ending is finally ambiguous) cautiously hopeful. Charity may persist, though in an imperiled state, lingering “like the memory of a lovely fuck.” And it is a classic Berryman gesture to juxtapose the earthiness of the f-word with a high-sounding passage in Latin—*Do, ut des*: “I give, that you might give,” a term deriving from Roman law, and describing the principle of reciprocity, an ancient equivalent to the golden rule. Yet the words seem at the same time to evoke the liturgy: “This is my body that is given to you.” Then again, “to do” someone is a synonym for “fuck.” A cheap translingual punch line? Definitely. But also something far more profound than that, which is the Berryman M. O. Has any other American poet had the chutzpah (or hubris) to attempt to play Lear as well as his Fool—both together, in the same performance? Lowell, his friend and most ruthless competitor, wrote a review of the book’s first volume, 77 *Dream Songs*, which seems to have tested their friendship. To the hypersensitive Berryman, Lowell’s listing of the book’s shortcomings in an otherwise awestruck appraisal—Lowell spoke of “the threat of mannerism, and worse, disintegration”—had damned the book with faint praise. But the end of the review suggests that even Lowell had been humbled by the invention and pathos of the volume. “All is risk and variety here. This great Pierrot’s universe is more tearful and funny than we can easily bear.”

Lowell, his friend and most ruthless competitor, wrote a review of the book’s first volume, 77 Dream Songs, which seems to have tested their friendship.

Berryman has always found avid readers, but too frequently he has found them for the wrong reasons. His centenary offers us an opportunity to both reappraise his work and reaffirm his importance. In *The Dream Songs*, Berryman forged a style quite nearly as original and as impassioned as that of his great poetic ancestors, Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson. This is a risky claim to make, I know, but if you read his great poem seriously, it is quite possible that you will reach a similar conclusion. ★

Visit Poets.org to listen to John Berryman reading from the *Dream Songs* at an event sponsored by the Academy of American Poets held at the Guggenheim Museum in New York City on October 31, 1963.

Poems by **John Berryman***The Spinning Heart*

The fireflies and the stars our only light,
 We rock, watching between the roses night
 If we could see the roses. We cannot.
 Where do the fireflies go by day, what eat?
 What categories shall we use tonight?
 The day was an exasperating day,
 The day in history must hang its head
 For the foul letters many women got,
 Appointments missed, men dishevelled and sad
 Before their mirrors trying to be proud.
 But now (we say) the sweetness of the night
 Will hide our imperfections from our sight,
 For nothing can be angry or astray,
 No man unpopular, lonely, or beset,
 Where half a yellow moon hangs from a cloud.

Spinning however and balled up in space
 All hearts, desires, pewter and honeysuckle,
 What can be known of the individual face?
 To the continual drum-beat of the blood
 Mesh sea and mountain recollection, flame,
 Motives in the corridor, touch by night,
 Violent touch, and violence in rooms;
 How shall we reconcile in any light
 This blow and the relations that it wrecked?
 Crescent the pressures on the singular act
 Freeze it at last into its season, place,
 Until the flood and disorder of Spring.
 To Easterfield the court's best bore, defining
 Space tied into a sailor's reef, our praise:

He too is useful, he is part of this,
 Inimitable, tangible, post-human,
 And Theo's disappointment has a place,
 An item in that metamorphosis
 The horrible coquetry of aging women.
 Our superstitions barnacle our eyes
 To the tide, the coming good; or has it come? —
 Insufficient upon the beaches of the world
 To drown that complex and that bestial drum.

Triumphant animals,—upon the rest
Bearing down hard, brooding, come to announce
The causes and directions of all this
Biting and breeding,—how will all your sons
Discover what you, assisted or alone,
Staring and sweating for seventy years,
Could never discover, the thing itself?

Your fears,

Fidelity, and dandelions grown
As big as elephants, your morning lust
Can neither name nor control. No time for shame,
Whippoorwill calling, excrement falling, time
Rushes like a madman forward. Nothing can be known.

The Heroes

For all his vehemence & hydraulic opinions
 Pound seemed feline, zeroing in on feelings,
 hovering up to them, putting his tongue in their ear,
 delicately modulating them in & out of each other.

Almost supernatural crafter; maybe unhappy,
 disappointed continually,
 not fated like his protégé Tom or drunk Jim
 or hard-headed Willie for imperial sway.

How I maneuvered in my mind their rôles
 of administration for the modern soul
 in English, now one, now ahead another,
 for this or that special strength, wilful & sovereign.

I had, from my beginning, to adore heroes,
 & I elected that they witness to,
 show forth, transfigure: life-suffering & pure heart
 & hardly definable but central weaknesses

for which they were to be enthroned & forgiven by me.
 They had to come on like revolutionaries,
 enemies throughout to accident & chance,
 relentless travellers, long used to failure

in tasks that but for them would sit like hanging judges
 on faithless & by no means up to it Man.
 Humility & complex pride their badges,
 every 'third thought' their grave.

These gathering reflexions, against young women
 against seven courses in my final term,
 I couldn't sculpt into my helpless verse yet.
 I wrote mostly about death.

Dream Song #46

I am, outside. Incredible panic rules.
People are blowing and beating each other without mercy.
Drinks are boiling. Iced
drinks are boiling. The worse anyone feels, the worse
treated he is. Fools elect fools.
A harmless man at an intersection said, under his breath: “Christ!”

That word, so spoken, affected the vision
of, when they trod to work next day, shopkeepers
who went & were fitted for glasses.
Enjoyed they then an appearance of love & law.
Millennia whift & waft—one, one—er, er...
Their glasses were taken from them, & they saw.

Man has undertaken the top job of all,
son fin. Good luck.
I myself walked at the funeral of tenderness.
Followed other deaths. Among the last,
Like the memory of a lovely fuck,
was: *Do, ut des*.

Poem by **David Wojahn**

Jefferson Composing His Bible

"I composed the operation for my own use by cutting verse by verse out of the printed book and arranging the matter which is evidently his."

Candlelight, straight razor, ruler, an umber King James.
 Nearly midnight: unwigged, in his nightshirt,
 He's set his pantograph away & the house

Slave Ursula has brought him port, a bit of stilton.
 Jefferson is raising Lazarus, four days entombed—
 O take away *take away the stone*. Mary redacted,

Who goeth to the grave to weep there. Redacted too
 The one that was dead, the one bound head & foot
 with gravecloth, his face bound about with a napkin.

The one who in Giotto stands flanked
 With a crowd who mask their faces—not to hide their awe
 But to endure his stench. The one who

Caravaggio props naked in the arms of thugs,
 rigor-mortised to cruciform, but goldening as
 the wonder-working arm reaches out. *Lazarus come forth*.

& Jefferson's razor commences its business. Along the ruler
 The slicing begins: John 11 entire. The gash extended,
 Acute & violent as Open Heart, though when he cuts

His index finger, three drops of blood—it must be the port!—
 ensanguine the chief priest & Pharisees
 As they plot in the temple to take Him away.

& the operation is complete. He sets his hexagon
 Of superstition down, one more blow for reason,
 For the reason that shall free us from

The mere abracadabra of the mountebanks
Calling themselves the priests of Jesus. Marginal,
 Illiterate, a barefoot rabbi who spoke some truths.

June at Monticello, the window by his desk stands open.
Sussurant click of cricket & peeper, a slather of fireflies
Darting the okra & broad beans of the kitchen garden.

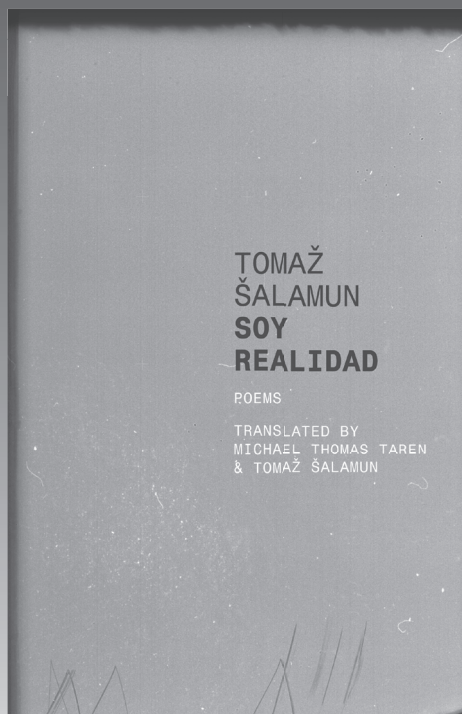
Candle flicker. The night wind gently turns
the Good Book's pages, its vellum windows shorn of miracle.
The words remaining—*sublime, benevolent, & easily distinguishable*

As diamonds on a dunghill. O boundless are the mysteries
Of the visible world. Pantograph, the quill pen
Tempered, the rubied port & its quickening thrall.

The razor on his desk sits locked.

—for the Rev. Alane Cameron Miles

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—Andrei Codrescu, author of *The Poetry Lesson* and *New Orleans, Mon Amour*

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Carl Adamshick

Everything That Happens Can Be Called Aging

I have more love than ever.
 Our kids have kids soon to have kids.
 I need them. I need everyone
 to come over to the house,
 sleep on the floor, on the couches
 in the front room. I need noise,
 too many people in too small a space,
 I need dancing, the spilling of drinks,
 the loud pronouncements
 over music, the verbal sparring,
 the broken dishes, the wealth.
 I need it all flying apart.
 My friends to slam against me,
 to hold me, to say they love me.
 I need mornings to ask for favors
 and forgiveness. I need to give,
 have all my emotions rattled,
 my family to be greedy,
 to keep coming, to keep asking
 and taking. I need no resolution,
 just the constant turmoil of living.
 Give me the bottom of the river,
 all the unadorned, unfinished,
 unpraised moments, one good turn
 on the luxuriant wheel.

From Saint Friend
 McSweeney's Poetry Series

One

i'm going in for
a CAT scan i
mean an audition
for an opera
will it finally
break into
Two paths
this suffering One is tiresome
every gentle piece
of marble in
the sun was
once beaten
into shape
this doesn't
work with people
take many deep
breaths maybe
breathing can help
Jesus didn't
need balance
he had nails

From *ECODEVIANCE*
Wave Books

Olena Kalytiak Davis

SONNET (*silenced*)

with her unearned admixable beauty
 she sat up on the porch and asked for (f)light;
 answerable only to poetry—
 and love—to make it thru the greyblue night

blew smoke into words and even whiter ghosts
 that could see what others in this broad dark
 could not: she set to make of nothing most,
 better: an everenlightening mark:

ghost gave her this: a piece of flint: that if
 you rubbed the right way,
 the lightlessness would come down, give up, lift—
 and then there would be nothing left to say.

o sterilize the lyricism of
 my sentence: make me plain again my love

(my ghost)
 (and dumb)

From The Poem She Didn't Write and Other Poems
 Copper Canyon Press

Diane di Prima

City Lights 1961

Going there for the first time
it was so much smaller then
that crowded downstairs full of poetry
racks of tattered little mags against the wall
those rickety white tables where folks sat reading/writing
Vesuvio's was like an adjunct office

Arriving again a year later, two kids in tow
Lawrence gave me a huge stack of his publications
"I've got books" he said "like other people have mice"

And North Beach never stopped being mysterious
when I moved out here in 1968
that publishing office on Filbert & Grant was a mecca
a place to meet up with my kids if we got separated
during one of those innumerable demonstrations
(tho Lawrence worried, told me I shd keep them
out of harm's way, at home) I thought they shd learn
whatever it was we were learning—
Office right around the corner from the bead store
where I found myself daily, picking up supplies

How many late nights did we haunt the Store
buying scads of new poems from all corners of the earth
then head to the all-night Tower Records full of drag queens
& revolutionaries, to get a few songs

And dig it, City Lights still here, like some old lighthouse
though all the rest is gone,
the poetry's moved upstairs, the publishing office
right there now too & crowds of people
one third my age or less still haunt the stacks
seeking out voices from all quarters
of the globe

From *The Poetry Deal*
City Lights Books

Louise Glück

The Past

Small light in the sky appearing
suddenly between
two pine boughs, their fine needles

now etched onto the radiant surface
and above this
high, feathery heaven —

Smell the air. That is the smell of the white pine,
most intense when the wind blows through it
and the sound it makes equally strange,
like the sound of the wind in a movie —

Shadows moving. The ropes
making the sound they make. What you hear now
will be the sound of the nightingale, *Chordata*,
the male bird courting the female —

The ropes shift. The hammock
sways in the wind, tied
firmly between two pine trees.

Smell the air. That is the smell of the white pine.

It is my mother's voice you hear
or is it only the sound the trees make
when the air passes through them

because what sound would it make,
passing through nothing?

From *Faithful and Virtuous Night*
Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Kimiko Hahn

Cherry Stems

I'm not too happy that fruit flies have brains
since I swat them whenever I see them or think I see them.
I know about their brains because I met a scientist
who tinkers with their "learning circuitry,"
"the actual mechanics
of how a memory trace is laid down in a nerve cell or neuron."
All this proxy—dissecting the behavior of an insect—
to figure out how the brain works
for something like typing at which my mother was a pro
and me, fairly miserable because of some disorder
which it seems my daughter has inherited
since she also exhibits left/right confusion. However,
she can twist a cherry stem into a bow with her tongue
an ability no doubt from an ancestral brain
but which also reveals something about a summer in Florence.
In other words, too-much-information regarding memory trace.

For Miyako and Reiko

From *Brain Fever*
W. W. Norton & Company

Edward Hirsch

from Gabriel

The evening with its lamps burning
 The night with its head in its hands
 The early morning

I look back at the worried parents
 Wandering through the house
 What are we going to do

The evening of the clinical
 The night of the psychological
 The morning facedown in the pillow

The experts can handle him
 The experts have no idea
 How to handle him

There are enigmas in darkness
 There are mysteries
 Sent out without searchlights

The stars are hiding tonight
 The moon is cold and stony
 Behind the clouds

Nights without seeing
 Mornings of the long view
It's not a sprint but a marathon

Whatever we can do
We must do
 Every morning's resolve

But sometimes we suspected
 He was being punished
 For something obscure we had done

I would never abandon the puzzle
 Sleeping in the next room
 But I could not solve it

From *Gabriel*
 Alfred A. Knopf

Ted Kooser

Splitting an Order

I like to watch an old man cutting a sandwich in half,
maybe an ordinary cold roast beef on whole wheat bread,
no pickles or onion, keeping his shaky hands steady
by placing his forearms firm on the edge of the table
and using both hands, the left to hold the sandwich in place,
and the right to cut it surely, corner to corner,
observing his progress through glasses that moments before
he wiped with his napkin, and then to see him lift half
onto the extra plate he asked the server to bring,
and then to wait, offering the plate to his wife
while she slowly unrolls her napkin and places her spoon,
her knife, and her fork in their proper places,
then smooths the starched white napkin over her knees
and meets his eyes and holds out both old hands to him.

From *Splitting an Order*
Copper Canyon Press

Dorothea Lasky

The Rain

What is going to happen
Is that it's going to rain

Rain my love
A poem not about sex

But love
The true kind

You talk of things
To myself and others

You think of things
Her long tanned arms

You will realize you love me
But it will be too late

You will cry out for me
I will be long gone

This is not a wish
But what I knew to be so

This is what I knew to be so
Under the pouring sun

This is what I knew to be so
Under the pouring sea

Where they will find us
You and me

From *Rome*
Liveright Publishing Corporation

Claudia Rankine

from Citizen: An American Lyric

A woman you do not know wants to join you for lunch. You are visiting her campus. In the café you both order the Caesar salad. This overlap is not the beginning of anything because she immediately points out that she, her father, her grandfather, and you, all attended the same college. She wanted her son to go there as well, but because of affirmative action or minority something—she is not sure what they are calling it these days and weren't they supposed to get rid of it?—her son wasn't accepted. You are not sure if you are meant to apologize for this failure of your alma mater's legacy program; instead you ask where he ended up. The prestigious school she mentions doesn't seem to assuage her irritation. This exchange, in effect, ends your lunch. The salads arrive.

/

A friend argues that Americans battle between the “historical self” and the “self self.” By this she means you mostly interact as friends with mutual interest and, for the most part, compatible personalities; however, sometimes your historical selves, her white self and your black self, or your white self and her black self, arrive with the full force of your American positioning. Then you are standing face-to-face in seconds that wipe the affable smiles right from your mouths. What did you say? Instantaneously your attachment seems fragile, tenuous, subject to any transgression of your historical self. And though your joined personal histories are supposed to save you from misunderstandings, they usually cause you to understand all too well what is meant.

From Citizen: An American Lyric
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Books Noted

Slant Six

by Erin Belieu

(Copper Canyon Press, November 2014)

In her fourth book of poems, Erin Belieu reaffirms her status as one of our most charmingly frank contemporary poets, with a populist bent toward the “Americanness” of “driving / around a frowsy Gulf Coast city with its terrific / mini-marts like Bill’s, the very best of all marts!” There’s no high-low dichotomy in Belieu’s poems—Nietzsche and Costco make appearances two lines away from each other—just a winsome sense of humor that’s highly intelligent while never erudite. “When at a Certain Party in NYC” pokes fun at the ridiculousness of New York’s cultural capital—“Wherever you’re from sucks, / and wherever you grew up sucks”—but never becomes mean-spirited. Belieu is, even at her most distressed, a poet of celebration and praise; in spite of (or because of) this, one of the book’s most triumphant poems grapples specifically with unkind impulses. In “Time Machine” an aggressive fellow driver briefly transports the poet back to an earlier, angrier self, “this mostly / unsympathetic girl, who doesn’t know / how soon she’ll be fired for sleeping / with the boss.” There’s no shortage of bad things yet to happen in Belieu’s latest (the book concludes with the darkly apocalyptic “Après Moi”), but in her poems, when “the world’s saddest thing shakes you,” it does so “like a magic eight ball...” She writes like the friend you want with you when it does.

The New Testament

by Jericho Brown

(Copper Canyon Press, September 2014)

Jericho Brown’s second book fulfills the promise of its audacious title, offering updated gospel dealing with race and sexuality in contemporary America, where “[e]very last word is contagious.” This is a collection of precise language and startling emotional clarity, yet its narratives—of dead brothers and dead lovers, of crime, disease, and passion—resist singular readings; here, roles are always shifting, the boundary between the real and the metaphoric is as blurry as in the Biblical stories to which Brown looks for inspiration. “The woman who raised me referred to Jesus / As ‘our elder brother,’” Brown writes in an early poem, and later, addressing a classroom: “Tomorrow, I will explain the word *brother* // Is how we once knew black as someone // Frowns, raising his freckled hand: *So, you don’t / Have a brother?...I’ll say, No, I don’t have a brother // In the world.* Myth is not make-believe...This, / My brother, is a metaphor. I am the tenor. // *Brother* is how you get to me if you are black.” In these poems suffused with loss, sex, and anger, Brown moves between an irrefutable, sometimes winking authority (“Everybody / Who eats loves an athlete / Naked and newly showered”) and a lack of agency (“The painter did the damnedest / Job pulling your lips close to mine”). The people in Brown’s poems, like his heavily enjambed lines, are exquisitely broken, but redeemed by “love—love / Being any reminder we survived.”

Deep Code

by John Coletti

(City Lights Books, November 2014)

Deep Code is an apt title for Coletti's fourth book, an experimental exploration of the border between meaning and meaninglessness. Here, Coletti allows the refracted language of text and Twitter shorthand ("plz," "b/c," "@," etc.) to reverberate in all its strange, ecstatic music: "I don't want much, but I want ALLLLLLL the experience / put on Charlie Rose / eat cupcakes / HELMET SMASH / read the birth story / over iPhone / & it felt like / it was / the end / & beginning of writing." Such momentum is typical of Coletti's poems, which often comprise short-lined single stanzas, plummeting down the page with an intense, insatiable urgency ("I want ALLLLLLL the experience"). Coletti's work—frequently agrammatical, with a freewheeling relationship to punctuation and capitalization—is very much of our time, both in its language and its references:

Gel-haired American Apparel lump
nut down gumdrop
syllable breakdown
oh lobe lobe lobe splash splash purge
Kodiak haute bug Gump tooth dip

Deep Code finds Coletti at the height of his artistic project, in full command—or embrace—of the unruliness of language. "Holy Cow," he exclaims at one point, "I *do not* like / how plain yr tenderness is"—and so he's arrived to show us tenderness, and its opposites, in all their splendid, complex forms.

The Poetry Deal

by Diane di Prima

(City Lights Books, November 2014)

The Poetry Deal is the first new full-length collection in decades from the feminist Beat poet Diane di Prima. Written before and during her tenure as San Francisco's poet laureate, di Prima's latest confronts the world around her—and the city she adores—with a steady gaze, at once stern and loving. These poems

encourage us to "[u]nplug one day a / week: stay home, tell stories, make love," and caution against our increasing reliance on social media: "she doesn't say 'stay in touch' and mean Facebook or LinkedIn / stay in touch means you touch each other, lovers or not / you crash on his floor, or bring her your old sofa..." In many ways, this book, framed by two prose pieces, is a love song to San Francisco—and a plea for the city to live up to its past and potential. "...I let this stardust, these cataracts, the dust or bus-exhaust or whatever it is...convince me that I live in the place I dreamed of when I came here," di Prima writes. "City Lights 1961" commemorates her first visit to the bookstore, while other poems mourn writers, artists, and other beloved friends (there's even one about visiting Ezra Pound at "St. Liz."). Above all else, di Prima is a generous poet: "I'd like my daily bread / however you arrange it," she asks of the muse in the title poem, "and I'd also like / to *be* bread, or sustenance, for some others / even after / I've left. A song they can walk a trail with."

The Blue Buick: New and Selected Poems

by B. H. Fairchild

(W. W. Norton, July 2014)

This generous volume brings together work from five collections spanning over thirty years in the career of B. H. Fairchild, recipient of a National Book Critics Circle Award and a William Carlos Williams Award. Fairchild's lucid poems vacillate between deep observation and imagination to provide a vivid cross-section of American life in the late twentieth century, whether finding the poet "In a Café Near Tuba City, Arizona, Beating [His] Head against a Cigarette Machine," or thinking: "*I am lucky, I am lucky, to live in a country / where the son of a machinist can piss away his time / writing poems.*" The value of Fairchild's verse, however, needs no defense—the titular poem, elegizing the amalgam character Roy Eldridge Garcia ("the only man my father hired again / after he showed up drunk"), is a near-thirty page epic, in which "all things seen

and unseen and all kingdoms / naked in the human heart [rise] toward the sky.” Roy, a failed writer, reappears as a speaker throughout Fairchild’s oeuvre. His other new poems swell with the gravity (and occasional minutiae) of history, transporting us to a baseball game in 1946 and a warzone in Guam in the space of the same poem; the tenth anniversary of September 11th, or relaying an old story in solidarity with the Occupy movement. “This is where the story ends. And now you know, / this is also where it begins...” Fairchild is a poet of insight and wisdom.

Blood Lyrics

by Katie Ford

(Graywolf Press, October 2014)

The third collection from Katie Ford finds the poet in a state of panic, and alchemizes her terror into taut, considered language. The book opens with the trauma of a premature birth (“our daughter weighs seven hundred dimes, / paperclips, teaspoons of sugar”) and, throughout its first section, charts the desperation and uncertainty of loving a newborn who may not live. “After a while, I stopped asking whether my child would survive, / although everything I asked in its stead / could be heard as this question,” Ford writes—and this is indeed the relentless, stricken question of her book, as she turns her attention to wars in the Middle East in the second section, and the idea of bringing a vulnerable child into a world of turmoil. The poems’ high stakes and sense of scale undergird Ford’s tendency toward the high lyric register, which in turn suits her religiosity and interest in transcendence. The luminous “Snow at Night” (“I prefer it even to love”) follows in the tradition of poems riffing on Rilke’s “Archaic Torso of Apollo”: “...the snow I love covers / my beasts and seas, / my ferns and spines / worn through and through. / I will change your life, it says, / to which I say *please*.” If there is terror on one side of Ford’s tribulation, there is awe and gratitude on the other. Witnessing the miracle of her daughter’s growth, she marvels: “Such are the wonders I saw.”

If the Tabloids Are True What Are You?

by Matthea Harvey

(Graywolf Press, August 2014)

Kingsley Tufts Award-winner Matthea Harvey’s newest book combines her love of poetry and visual art to reinvent the forms as we know them. The book’s opening section—a series of mermaid prose poems accompanied by cut-out silhouettes—feels almost like an artist’s statement of sorts. These mermaids, like Harvey’s prose poems, are already hybrids on the surface, yet stranger still. In silhouette, these creatures are revealed to have household tools for tails, and the poems describe “mergirls” all named for their dispositions or unusual conditions (“The Morbid Mermaid,” “drawn to maggots as if by a magnet,” and “The Inside Out Mermaid,” who’s “fine letting it all hang out,” to name a few). Like her “Straightforward Mermaid,” Harvey’s work often “feels like a third gender, preferring primary colors to pastels, the radio to singing.” Harvey is also capable of conjuring pathos from the most delightfully absurd conceits—a Ray Bradbury text erased into an encounter with a “multitentacular” Martian, William Shakespeare trapped inside the Michelin Man (and delivering a perfect sonnet), an extended family of fabulistic animals and other fancies of image and imagination. The book’s final work, “Telettrofono,” mashes up the real-life misfortunes of Antonio Meucci, the original inventor of the telephone, with a doomed mermaid love affair and embroidered illustrations of patents.

Revenance

by Cynthia Hogue

(Red Hen Press, August 2014)

Cynthia Hogue’s eighth collection is a palimpsest-like book of impressions, visitations, and looming figures—whether spirit or impending environmental destruction. Its invented title plays on *revenant*, the French word for ghost (literally, “the returned”), but also conjures *reverence* and its holy connotations. Appropriately enough,

Hogue has taken on the role of poet-seer with dedication; her undertaking is “[t]o seek the source, / that steep alley of / stone, // to make the long / climb to thatched hut to find what’s / what, // to encounter / reality’s / prised: // a window of light, corner of fire...” Often, like “The Woman Who Talked with Trees” Hogue is acting as medium, putting supernatural encounters into words, sometimes led by a guide named Blake on a global-warming tour, or transposing other artists’ work into ekphrastic poems. The book’s striking second section, “Interview with a Samizdat Poet,” is an erasure of sorts, of a poorly recorded interview transcript abandoned years earlier. In its short prose introduction, Hogue writes:

I want the reconstructed piece to confirm, by the very fact of its existence, that something that is no more once took *place*, bodied *forth*, returning like a *revenant*: not whole, but changed. Struck by an absence at once partial and absolute.

This is the pervading spirit of Hogue’s newest work: a communion with that which is no more, be it memory, ecosystem, or loved one—to create a space, safe from time, in which to do this work, when she’s “so often woken to a voice, / a vibration, saying over and over, // *You have a few minutes. This is a test.*”

Red Juice: Poems 1998–2008

by Hoa Nguyen

(Wave Books, September 2014)

Nguyen’s second volume from Wave Books collects work from the first decade of the poet’s prolific career, bringing together poems from two previous small-press collections (and several more chapbooks) to form a welcome archive of Nguyen’s voice. With a talent for the associative leap and for “telling it slant,” Nguyen crafts brief, arresting poems full of mind-bending inversions: “I’m aiming my mouth / for apple pie,” she writes, shifting our expected focus with the grace of an experimental cinematographer. In contradiction—“Magic lifts my hair (That’s the

wind)”—she finds an improved reality: the wind is magic and magic is the wind in the Wonderland of Nguyen’s mostly unpunctuated lines. Though she shies away from traditional narrative, the mosaic details of these poems do offer a record of a time and culture. “Strangely touched that Vili and Mary Kay tied the knot,” she admits in “Strangely Touched,” a poem that concludes, “The phone rings / ‘It’s me’ ‘I love you’”—offering a gesture (entirely private, unexplained, yet also universal) that captures the joy of Nguyen’s work. So much is strangely touching in just this manner. Each poem is a moment, recorded and enacted, an opportunity to step outside our usual experience of consciousness. There’s also plenty of humor and few tidily reducible truths. After all, “Life’s message / is life an excellent / practical joke.”

Digest

by Gregory Pardlo

(Four Way Books, October 2014)

In the follow-up to his APR/Honickman First Book Prize-winning debut, *Totem*, Gregory Pardlo concerns himself with age-old philosophical questions in the context of modern life: What does it mean to be a son? Father? American? African American? What does it mean to be in a body at all? The collection’s opening poem, “Written By Himself,” introduces this inquiry with a series of anaphoric lines: “I was born still and superstitious; I bore an unexpected burden. / I gave birth, I gave blessing, I gave rise to suspicion.” From there, Pardlo tries on different trappings of identity—including autobiographical narratives about the poet’s life in Brooklyn, a quartet of persona poems in the voice of Gayl Jones’s seminal character Ursa Corregidora, and many poems engaging with the lives and works of great philosophers throughout history. “Problemata” borrows its title and concept from an Aristotelian collection of problems written in question-and-answer form, but updates the matters at hand: veterans’ rights, what’s admirable about “the dear evangelists who canvass our homes / Saturday mornings,” an estranged brother, and neighborhood boys setting off illegal fireworks. The chilling multisection prose poem “Alienation Effects”

The Tame Magpie

(Hanging Loose Press, April 2014)

Once in the West

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, September 2014)

So much life in this poem
so much salvageable and saving love

but it is I fear I swear I tear open
what heart I have left

to keep it from being
and beating and bearing down upon me

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Contributors' Notes

Carl Adamshick's most recent book of poems is *Saint Friend* (McSweeney's Poetry Series, 2014). His first book of poems, *Curses and Wishes* (Louisiana State University Press, 2011), received the Walt Whitman Award from the Academy of American Poets. He lives in Portland, Oregon.

Rae Armantrout is the author of numerous books of poetry, including *Just Saying* (Wesleyan University Press, 2013). She is the recipient of the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Pulitzer Prize. Armantrout teaches at the University of California in San Diego, where she lives.

John Berryman won the Pulitzer Prize in 1965 and was a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets between 1968 and 1972. Farrar, Straus and Giroux recently published *The Heart Is Strange: New Selected Poems* by Berryman. He died in Minneapolis in 1972.

Luigi Bonaffini has translated over fourteen books, including Attilio Bertolucci's poetry collection *The Bedroom* (Chelsea Editions, 2012), for which he received the 2014 Raiziss/de Palchi Book Award from the Academy of American Poets. He is Tow Professor of Italian language and literature at Brooklyn College and lives in Brooklyn, New York.

CAConrad is the author of several books of poems, including *ECODEVIANCE* (Wave Books, 2014). His awards include a fellowship from the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage. He lives in Philadelphia.

Olena Kalytiak Davis is the author of several books of poems, including *The Poem She Didn't Write and Other Poems* (Copper Canyon Press, 2014). She is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and lives in Anchorage, Alaska.

Toi Derricotte is a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets and the author of numerous books of poems, including *The Undertaker's Daughter* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011). She is a cofounder of the Cave Canem Foundation and a professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh.

Diane di Prima is the author of *The Poetry Deal* (City Lights Books, 2014) as well as over forty books of poems. In 2009 she was named the Poet Laureate of San Francisco. Di Prima is the recipient of a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and has taught at the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at the Naropa Institute. She lives in California.

Luigi Fontanella is the author of more than ten books of poetry, including *Disunita Ombra* (Milano: Archinto, 2013). He is a professor of Italian at Stony Brook University and divides his time between Long Island, New York, and Florence, Italy.

Louise Glück is the author of numerous books of poems, including *Faithful and Virtuous Night* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014). She was the Poet Laureate of the United States from 2003 to 2004 and a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets from 1999 to 2005. Glück is a recipient of the Pulitzer Prize and teaches at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut.

Marilyn Hacker is the author of numerous books of poems, including *Names* (W. W. Norton, 2011). She is a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets and a recipient of the National Book Award and the Lamont Poetry Prize (now the Lenore Marshall Prize). She divides her time between New York City and Paris.

Kimiko Hahn is the author of numerous poetry collections, including *Brain Fever* (W. W. Norton, 2014). She is the recipient of a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Writers' Award. Hahn is a Distinguished Professor in the English Department at Queens College and lives in New York City.

Juan Felipe Herrera is the author of *Senegal Taxi* (University of Arizona Press, 2013), among other poetry collections. He is a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets and a recipient of the National Book Critics Circle Award for his book *Half of the World in Light* (University of Arizona Press, 2008). Herrera is the current Poet Laureate of California and lives in Fresno.

David Hinton's most recent book is *Hunger Mountain: A Field Guide to Mind and Landscape* (Shambhala Publications, 2012). He was the 1997 recipient of the Harold Morton Landon Translation Award from the Academy of American Poets. Hinton's other honors include a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. He lives in East Calais, Vermont.

Edward Hirsch's most recent book is *Gabriel* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2014). He has received fellowships from the Guggenheim and MacArthur Foundations, as well as an Ingram Merrill Foundation Award. Hirsch is currently the president of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets. He lives in New York City.

Ted Kooser is the author of numerous poetry collections, including *Splitting an Order* (Copper Canyon Press, 2014). He was the Poet Laureate of the United States from 2004 to 2006. He lives in Garland, Nebraska, and teaches at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Dorothea Lasky is the author of four books of poems, including *Rome* (Liveright, 2014). She is an assistant professor of poetry at Columbia University's School of the Arts and lives in New York City.

Dana Levin is the author of several books of poems, including *Sky Burial* (Copper Canyon Press, 2011). Her honors include a Guggenheim Fellowship. She teaches creative writing at Santa Fe University of Art and Design in New Mexico.

Jeffrey McDaniel's most recent book of poetry is *The Chapel of Inadvertent Joy* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014). He is a recipient of a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. McDaniel teaches at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York.

W. S. Merwin is the author of numerous books of poetry, including *Selected Translations* (Copper Canyon Press, 2013), which is the recipient of the 2014 Harold Morton Landon Translation Award from the Academy of American Poets. Merwin was the Poet Laureate of the United States from 2010 to 2011 and was a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets from 1988 to 2000. He lives in Hawaii.

Marilyn Nelson is the author of numerous books of poems, including *Faster Than Light: New and Selected Poems, 1996–2011* (Louisiana State University Press, 2013). Her honors include a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and two Pushcart Prizes. Nelson is a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets and a former Poet Laureate of Connecticut. She teaches at the University of Connecticut.

Naomi Shihab Nye is the author of numerous books of poems, including *Transfer* (BOA Editions, 2011). Her honors include fellowships from the Guggenheim and Lannan Foundations. Nye is a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets and lives in San Antonio, Texas.

Hannah Sanghee Park is the recipient of the 2014 Walt Whitman Award from the Academy of American Poets for her book, *The Same-Different* (Louisiana State University Press, 2015). Her awards include a 2013 Ruth Lilly Poetry Fellowship. She lives in Los Angeles.

Claudia Rankine is the author of numerous books of poems, including *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Graywolf Press, 2014). She is a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets and was the recipient of the 2005 Academy Fellowship from the Academy of American Poets for distinguished poetic achievement. Rankine is the Henry G. Lee Professor of English at Pomona College.

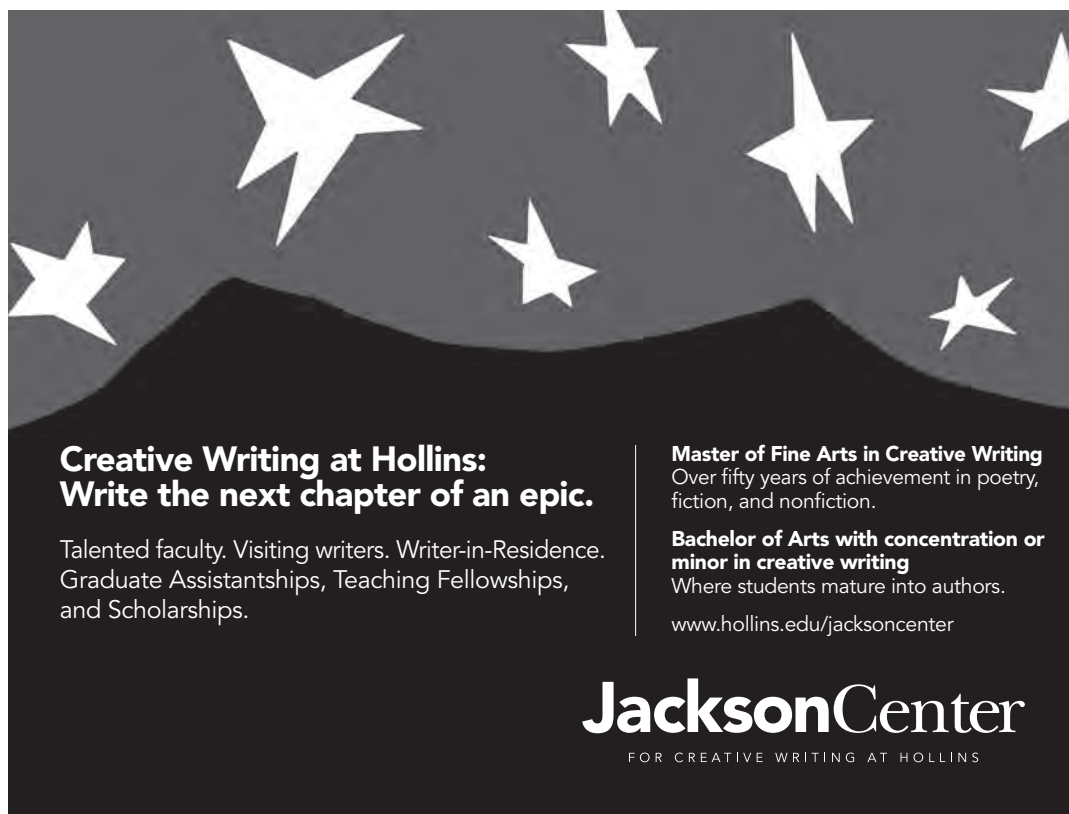
Natalie Scenters-Zapico's first book of poems, *The Verging Cities*, is forthcoming from the Center for Literary Publishing. She has taught at the University of New Mexico, the University of Texas at El Paso, and Santa Fe University of Art and Design. Scenters-Zapico lives in El Paso, Texas.

George Schneeman was an American painter known for his collaborations with poets. His honors include the Rosenthal Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. He died in New York City in 2009.

Arthur Sze is the author of numerous books of poems, including *Compass Rose* (Copper Canyon Press, 2014). His honors include fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. Sze is a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets and lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Jillian Weise's second book of poetry, *The Book of Goodbyes* (BOA Editions, 2013), received the 2013 James Laughlin Award from the Academy of American Poets. Her other honors include the 2013 Isabella Gardner Poetry Award. She teaches at Clemson University and lives in Greenville, South Carolina.

David Wojahn's collections of poetry include *World Tree* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), which received the 2012 Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize from the Academy of American Poets. Wojahn teaches at Virginia Commonwealth University and lives in Richmond, Virginia.



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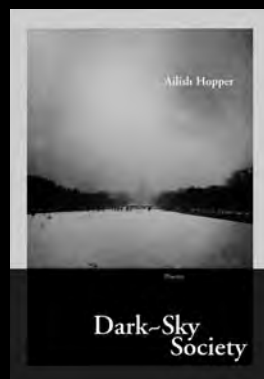
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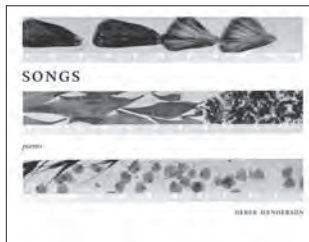
The Logan Notebooks, by Rebecca Lindenberg



Clouds, mountains, flowering trees. Difficult things. Things lost by being photographed. Things that have lost their power. Things found in a rural grocery store. These are some of the lists, poems, prose poems, and lyric anecdotes

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Songs, by Derek Henderson



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tenders the visual experience of Brakhage’s films—films of the domestic and the wild, the private and political, the local and global—into language that insists on the ultimate incapacity of language—or image—to fully document the comfort and the violence of intimacy. Like Brakhage’s films, these poems carry across into language and find family in every moment, even the broken ones, all of them abounding in hope.



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George Schneeman,
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“This work is part of a series of round collages, each using only two pieces of paper. George asked me to give them titles. This one is *Hypnotic Tomato*.”

—Ron Padgett

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