

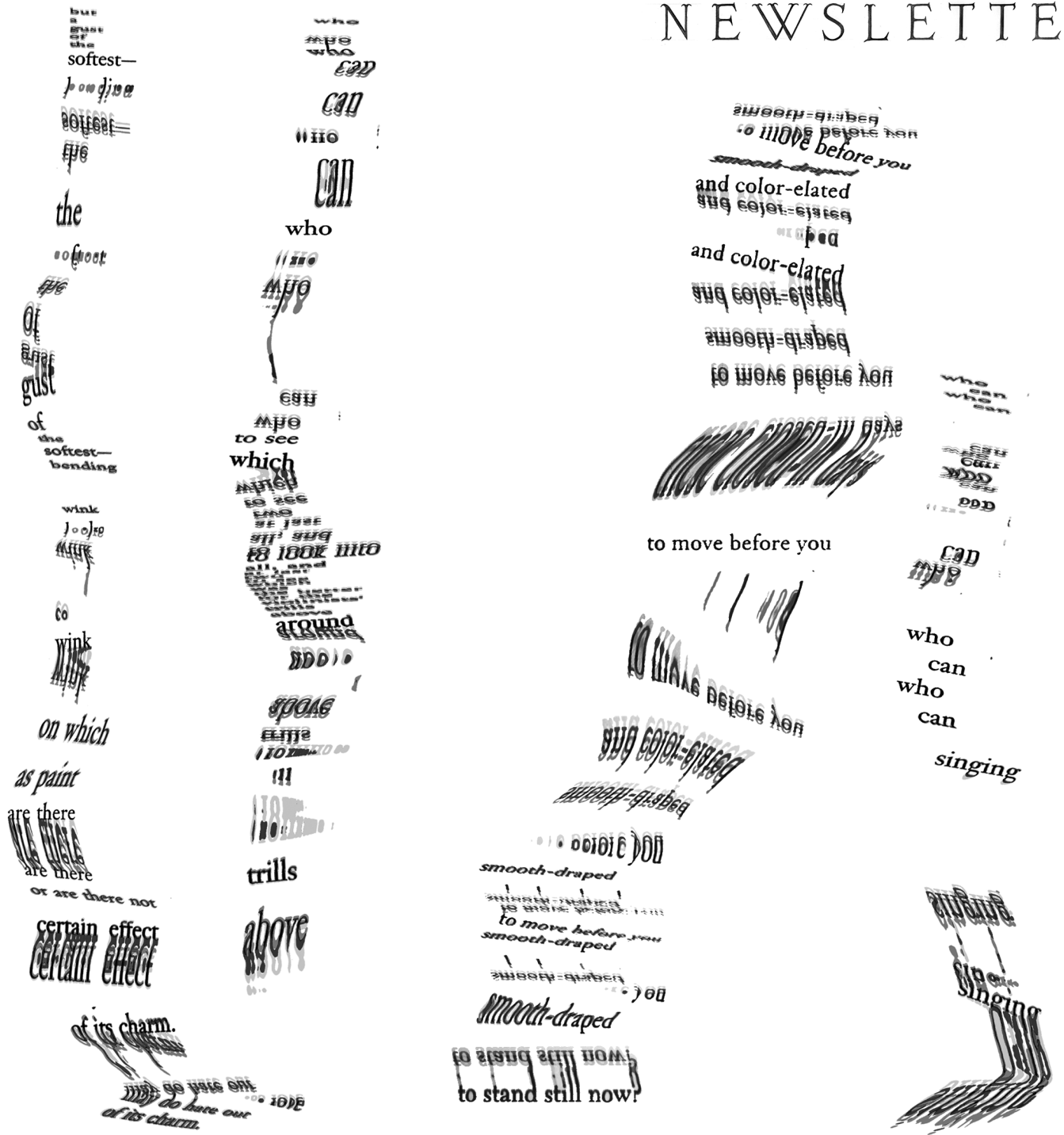
# POETRY

No. 240

OCTOBER  
NOVEMBER  
MMXIV

# P · R · O · J · E · C · T

# NEWSLETTER



# THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

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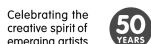
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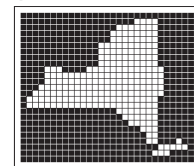
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FUNDERS: The Poetry Project's programs and publications are made possible, in part, with public funds from The National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council. Additional support provided by the Axe-Houghton Foundation; Committee on Poetry; Dr. Gerald J. & Dorothy R. Friedman Foundation, Inc.; Foundation for Contemporary Arts; Jerome Foundation; Leaves of Grass Fund; Leslie Scalapino – O Books Fund; LitTAP; New York Community Trust; Poets & Writers, Inc.; Poets for the Planet Fund; Anonymous Foundations; Harold & Angela Appel; Russell Banks; Martin Beeler; Bill Berkson & Constance Lewallen; David Berrigan & Sarah Locke; Mei Mei Berssenbrugge & Richard Tuttle; Rosemary Carroll; Steven Clay; Todd Colby; Jeffrey Conway; Jordan Davis; Peggy DeCoursey; Don DeLillo & Barbara Bennet; Rackstraw Downes; Ruth Eisenberg; Ann Evans; Stephen Facey; Raymond Foye; Ted Greenwald & Joan McClusky; Mimi Gross; Phil Hartman; Anselm Hollo & Jane Dalrymple-Hollo; Siri Hustvedt & Paul Auster; Ada & Alex Katz; Florence Kindel; Doris Kornish; Susan Landers & Natasha Dwyer, Katy Lederer; John Lewin; Kimberly Lyons & Vyt Bakaitis; Gillian McCain & Jim Marshall; Mark McCain; Thurston Moore; Jonathan Morrill & Jennifer Firestone; Elinor Nauen & Johnny Stanton; Hank O'Neal & Shelley Shier; Ron & Pat Padgett; Louis Patler; Evelyn Reilly; Simon Schuchat; Kiki Smith; Susie Timmons; Charline Von Heyl; Sylvie & June Weiser Berrigan; The Estate of Kenneth Koch; members of The Poetry Project; and other individual contributors

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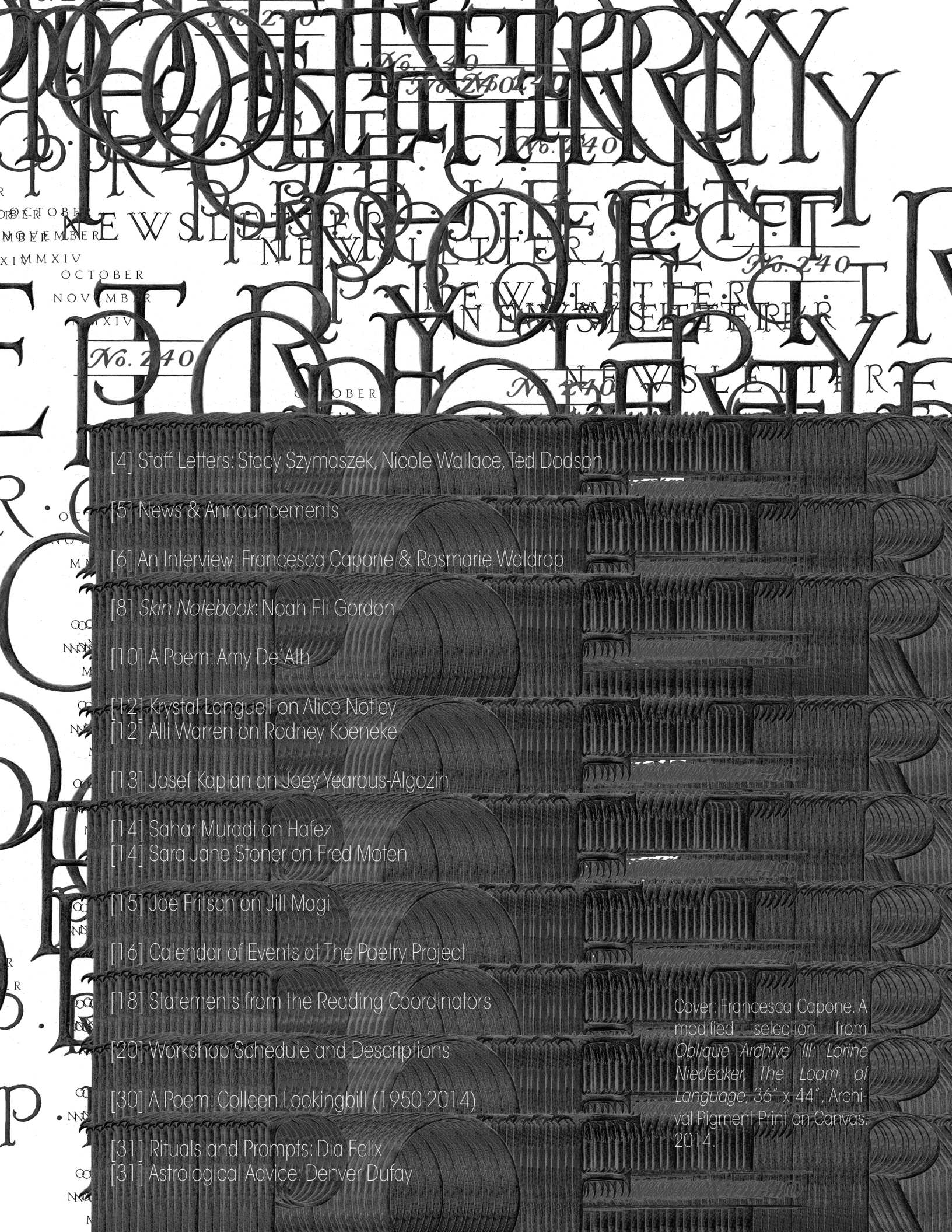
State of the Arts



NYSCA

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Cover: Francesca Capone. A modified selection from *Oblique Archive III: Lorine Niedecker, The Loom of Language*, 36" x 44", Archival Pigment Print on Canvas, 2014.



Is it weird to bring the newly published *The Nixon Tapes* to the beach? Well this weekend I'm going to do it. When I'm not reading, I can use it as an foot rest or as a tray for my lemonade.

In almost any case, I want to know WOT 'APPENED? Poetry and history are on my mind; both stubbornly understood as of the past, a fly in amber, or dead, ABOUT TO DIE. This type of language/thinking is how the threat posed by people having active encounters with poetry and history has been neutralized by this democracy ("those who write the anatomy of experience" Dewey). Nixon thought someone should write a book called "1972." I underlined this in the book. Maybe Ed Sanders would do it. Books for minutes/months/years are right up my alley. "What did happen? Two alternatives: make it up; or try to find out. Both are necessary." (Charles Olson). Summer of 2014, you have been devastating, but I'm here with you—trying to raise the bar on myself; to better my work, to educate myself when I don't understand something, to be an Active.

We're starting this 48th season with a largely new staff and coordinators, and having spent last year working on an "Action Plan" (that takes us to our 50th anniversary in 2016), we have an unprecedented sense of purpose and excitement about working together to bring you some of the most anticipated poetry of our time. Thank you to Nicole Wallace, Simone White, Laura Henriksen, Judah Rubin, Andrew Durbin, Ariel Goldberg, Christine Shan Shan Hou and Ted Dodson. They've picked up my imagination and blew the dust off. My most basic goal for the Project is and has been to have it thrive as a space where people come to have the experience of listening to new poetry—and for poets to have a venue for the substantial presentation of their newest, most risk-taking and/or challenging work. It's an ideal that I believe—that forming cooperative waves of poetic creation are one way to resist normative supremacy. So, with that, my customary hope is that you will turn to the calendar and have at least a few gasps of joy when you see who is reading.

Stacy Szymaszek (Director)

August. Hello. Summer hiatus is over, but thankfully it's still light enough post-office-hrs to write this letter in a backyard w/ a carafe or two of rosé. It's Nicole Wallace here, still wearing my pair of well-worn and permanently elegant loafers, contemplating all the responsibilities of being the new Managing Director at The Poetry Project. It's true: In June 2014, after seven years of dedicated, unflinching service to the Project, Arlo Quint "motored away" to the midtown pastures of copyediting. It's important to note here that Arlo introduced us to the magic of Guided By Voices last season and GBV pretty much carried us through it. Well, thanks for everything Arlo—in a big way. I'll def miss trips to Panya, Viva Pizza (RIP), Friday beers, and all the other office traditions established during those golden years of co-working.

The start of the season and end of summer, a changing of the guard, and the of end of 3-wks of bronchitis, drinking prescription cough medicine and reading Ed Sanders' *The Family*; while bittersweet, it's nice to be back. I now find myself organizing years of antiquated office technology and receipts from the days of yore and reading *American Magus Harry Smith: A Modern Alchemist* (ed. by Paola Iglori) after hours. With that, I can report, the 48th season has really taken off: We've ordered some new 180lb desks, the floors have been lifted of their trademark grime sheik patina (now looking somewhat more hygienic), and the walls and ceiling have new coats of paint. Thanks to Jimmy, our beloved Sexton, we shall no longer eat fallen paint chips in our lunch soups.

We've also got some real highs to report on the staff front: Laura Henriksen, freshly thrilled and equipped with an impressively deep well of poetry knowledge and skill, took over as Membership and Communications Coordinator this month. Laura just finished reading *Coleridge: Early Visions, 1772-1804* (Richard Holmes) and is currently reading *Coleridge: Darker Reflections, 1804-1834* (Richard Holmes) and "it's ruining her life."

Perfectly rounding out an accidental "feminine marvelous and tough" theme of the 2014-15 office staff, Simone White has joined this season as our new Program Manager. Simone's been in-office every Friday already diligently organizing workshops and Wednesday readings for the...Spring!

We've also added Judah Rubin (Mondays), Christine Shan Shan Hou (Fridays), and Andrew Durbin (Talk Series), to the Po-Proj ship. To read everyone's bios, check out the Announcements section of this issue.

Of course, we've all been anticipating the return of Ted Dodson as Editor of *The Poetry Project Newsletter*, so my letter reading hostages, turn the page and get into it.

Nicole Wallace (Managing Director)

Hi, everyone.

Hope you're having a great night or day. Hope you had an okay summer. I can't remember a summer with weather as mild as this, as much at odds with its political climate. There's too much to list. We know what's happening here and abroad. Cycles of surveillance, unchecked supremacy, isolationist narratives, willful ignorance, ontologic hegemony, basic motherfuckers. It goes on.

Hope though. Paul Chan has been a bright spot for me. His *Selected Writings 2000-2014* (Laurenz Foundation, Schaulager, and Badlands Unlimited, 2014) has been indispensable in my summer reading. Its discourse never appears wholly polemic, though it is assertive in its post-Marxist critique of art, language, activism, and their deployment in the world. And I suppose that's why I've found it to be such a loud voice, right now. It's been helping me to think about the position of language in our social reality. He writes, "The constellation of things in a home...creates a network of uses and meanings that connects us to a place and grounds us in a sensible reality." Though he is speaking of the place of art in the home (and in general), the abstract of this idea seems applicable by proxy to our social reality as well, to the *world* of things. But to think of the world of things, of which we are a part, as a constellation is to make a two dimensional facsimile of it, no? It's to look upon the world as one would a star map, a painting, or for that matter the stars themselves viewed as though they were just pinholes in a piece of paper. It's a critic's stance over the world of things. It's social language's horizon tortured into discourse. What would it mean, then, to view the world or art or poetry, not qua itself or ourselves, but as something outside of this dialectic? A place beyond this summer where the air is not only invisible, it is fair.

Hope this issue of the *Newsletter* finds you well. As a part of this thinking, the *Newsletter* is currently undergoing some exciting editorial changes. Starting next issue, the indispensable Sara Jane Stoner will be coming on as a dedicated Reviews Editor. More on that later. In the meantime, check out her review of Fred Moten's *Feel Trio* in this issue. It bodes well.

Hope you have a lovely fall. Hope things change beautifully.

Ted Dodson (Newsletter Editor)

# NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

## SUBSCRIBE TO THE POETRY PROJECT NEWSLETTER

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

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

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

## POETRY PROJECT SEEKING NEW MEMBERS FOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Project is currently seeking to diversify and grow its collegial, professional, and highly committed board of directors. This could be an ideal opportunity for an individual with previous board experience who is seeking to transition into a more arts-focused role or for someone with strong professional experience looking to apply their enthusiasm and expertise to our organization. Profiles that include expertise in technology, fundraising, real estate, marketing, public relations or a combination thereof are of particular interest at this juncture in the board's development, though we would like to hear from all strong candidates.

If you or someone appropriate you know might be interested, please feel free to contact Stacy Szymaszek at [ss@poetryproject.org](mailto:ss@poetryproject.org).

# CONTRIBUTORS

FRANCESCA CAPONE is an interdisciplinary artist working primarily between the visual and the textual. Her work encompasses typography, textiles, poetry, painting and digital media. Capone's work has been exhibited domestically and abroad. Her most recent exhibition *Oblique Archive*, is on display at Peninsula Art Space in Brooklyn, NY until October 5th. She runs a design studio under the name Ampersand Knot and co-edits *O'Clock Press* with Kit Schluter and Andrew Dieck.

AMY DE'ATH is a doctoral student and Leverhulme scholar at Simon Fraser University, where she studies poetry and Marxist-Feminist theory, and works on the Vancouver-based poetics journal *Line*. For several years she worked in London, UK and in 2011 was Poet in Residence at the University of Surrey. Her poetry publications include *Lower Parallel* (Barque Press), *Caribou* (Bad Press), and *Erec & Enide* (Salt). She now lives in Vancouver, Coast Salish Territories.

TED DODSON is the editor of *The Poetry Project Newsletter*.

JOE FRITSCH is a poet. His work can be found online in *Mad House Journal* and *Underwater New York*. Born in Rochester, New York, he is Program Coordinator at Poets House in Manhattan. He lives in Brooklyn.

NOAH ELI GORDON lives in Denver, CO. His work in this issue is an excerpt from *Dysgraph-*

*ia*, a nonfiction book still in-progress. Info about his other many books can be found here: [www.noaheligordon.com](http://www.noaheligordon.com).

JOSEF KAPLAN is the author of *All Nightmare: Introductions, 2011-2012* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2014), *Kill List* (Cars Are Real, 2013), and *Democracy Is Not for the People* (Truck Books, 2012).

KRYSTAL LANGUELL was born in South Bend, Indiana. She is the author of the books *Call the Catastrophists* (BlazeVox, 2011) and *Gray Market* (Coconut, 2015) and the chapbooks *Last Song* (dancing girl press, 2014), and *Be a Dead Girl* (Argos Books, 2014). In early 2014, *Fashion Blast Quarter* was published as a poetry pamphlet by Flying Object. A core member of the Belladonna\* Collaborative, she also edits the journal *Bone Bouquet*.

COLLEEN LOOKINGBILL (1950-2014) was active in the San Francisco poetry community. She was the author of two poetry collections, *Incognita* (Sink Press, 1992) and *a forgetting of* (Lyric&, 2012). With her husband, Jordon Zorker, Colleen was a longtime curator of the Canessa Park reading series in San Francisco. Colleen co-edited EtherDome Press with Elizabeth Robinson. The press published chapbooks by women who had no previous chapbook or book publication. It culminated in 2013 with the publication of an anthology, *As If It Fell From the Sun*.

SAHAR MURADI is an Afghan-born, Florida-grown, and NY-based writer and performer. She is co-editor, with Zohra Saed, of *One Story, Three*

## CACONRAD AND PACE THE NATION PROJECT

CAConrad is gearing up for his PACE The Nation Project where he tours the United States to interview poets about the condition of their lives and communities and what we can do to end our obsession with war. He is in currently in need of additional funding. Please see full details on his online proposal at: [pacethenation.blogspot.com](http://pacethenation.blogspot.com)

## THE POETRY PROJECT WELCOMES NEW STAFF

**Laura Henriksen's** work has recently been featured in Poor Claudia's *Crush* series and in *Asterisk* by Fewer and Further Press. Other poems have appeared in *Clock, No, Dear*, and the *Brooklyn Rail*. She received her BFA in poetry from Pratt.

**Simone White's** newest collection of poems, *Of Being Dispersed*, is forthcoming from Futurepoem Books in 2015. She's also the author of *House Envy of All of the World* (Factory School, 2010) and the chapbooks *Unrest* (Ugly Duckling Press, Dossier Series, 2013) and *Dolly* (Q Ave Press, with the paintings of Kim Thomas). Currently a Ph.D. candidate in English at CUNY Graduate Center, she teaches American Literature at Hunter College.

**Judah Rubin**, once the editor of *The Death and Life of American Cities* and *Well Greased Magazine*, currently edits *Well Greased Press*. He is the author of *Flag of Convenience* (Well Greased, 2014), two *Phrenologue[s]* (Ugly Duckling Press, 2013; O'Clock Press, 2013), and *With Fierce Convulse / Die Into Life* (Diez, 2013).

**Christine Shan Shan Hou** is a poet and artist whose publications include the chapbook *Food Cuts Short Cuts* (The New Megaphone 2014), *CONCRETE SOUND* (2011), a collaborative artists' book with artist Audra Wolowiec, and *Accumulations* (Publication Studio 2010).

**Andrew Durbin** is the author of *Mature Themes* (Nightboat Books 2014) and co-edits *Wonder*. His writing has appeared in *Boston Review*, *BOMB*, *Fence*, *Mousse*, *Triple Canopy*, and elsewhere.

*ty Stories: An Anthology of Contemporary Afghan American Literature* (University of Arkansas Press, 2010). Her writing has appeared in *Drunken Boat*, *dOCUMENTA*, *phati'tude*, *Elsewhere*, and *Green Mountains Review*. She is the recipient of an Asian American Writers' Workshop Open City Fellowship and a Himan Brown Creative Writing Award in Poetry. Sahar has an MPA in international development from New York University, a BA in creative writing from Hampshire College, and is currently an MFA candidate in poetry at Brooklyn College.

SARA JANE STONER

is PhD candidate in English at CUNY Graduate Center who currently teaches at Cooper Union and Baruch College. Her first book, *Experience in the Medium of Destruction*, will be published by Portable Press @ Yo-Yo Labs this Fall.

ROSMARIE WALDROP's recent poetry books are *Driven to Abstraction*, *Curves to the Apple*, *Blindsight* (New Directions), and *Love, Like Pronouns* (Omnidawn). Her novels, *The Hanky of Pippin's Daughter* and *A Form/of Taking/It All*, are out from Northwestern UP, her Collected Essays, *Dissonance (if you are interested)*, from University of Alabama Press, her memoir, *Lavish Absence: Recalling and Rereading Edmond Jabès*, from Wesleyan UP. She translates German and French poetry and co-edits Burning Deck Books with Keith Waldrop, in Providence RI.

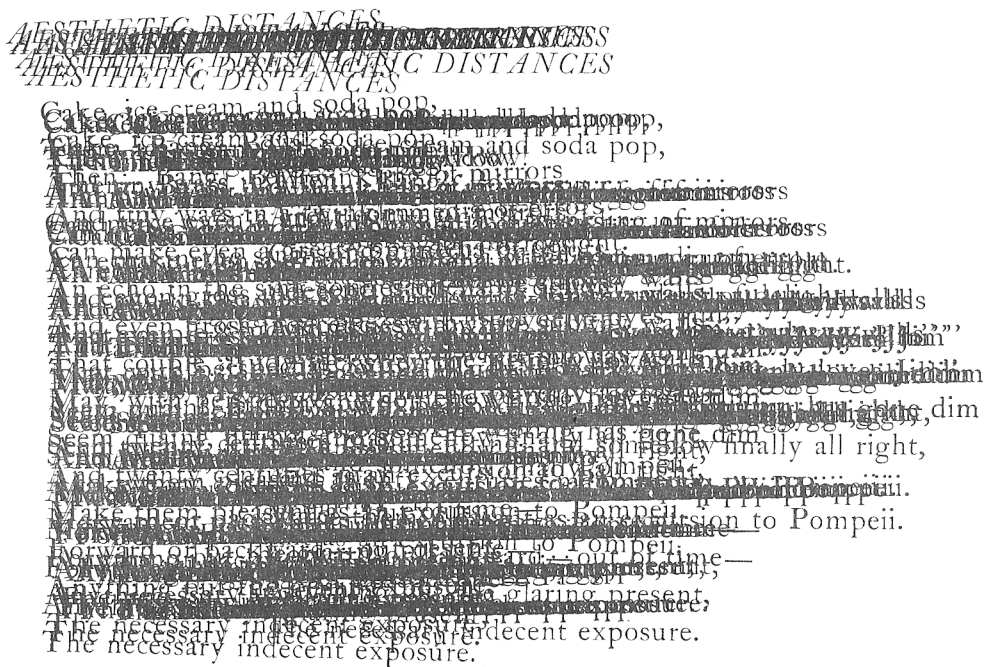
ALLI WARREN is the author of *Here Come the Warm Jets* (City Lights Books). She edits the magazine, *Dreamboat*, and co-edits *The Poetic Labor Project*. Alli lives in Oakland.

# An Interview

## Francesca Capone & Rosmarie Waldrop

*Camp Printing*, Rosmarie Waldrop's groundbreaking artist book first printed in 1970, is a conceptual artifact that works against the purity of conceptual artifice. And, initially, the result of a printing error. An anomaly in Waldrop's oeuvre, *Camp Printing* resists categorization while remaining representative of Waldrop's central concerns as a poet. As such, it is a favorite for many—Francesca Capone included, whose interest in *Camp Printing* has influenced her own work with textual appropriation, manipulation, and deformation, which she performs on a scanner rather than, as Rosmarie did, on a printing press. In August, The Poetry Project asked the two of them to take part in the following interview, which was conducted over email.

-Editor



Rosmarie Waldrop. from *Camp Printing*. Burning Deck Books, 1970.

**Poetry Project:** Can we start by talking about language as a visual phenomenon? In *Camp Printing*, Rosmarie, and in your work, Francesca, the work of another is by deliberate and differing processes transposed into being a work of your own making. The process seems to resist being termed a translation—unless it is a conceptual one—as the finished work doesn't reflect an interpretation of the original text by way of what its language (qua vocabulary, grammar, et al) is saying; rather, the source text has been used as a visual artifact, transformed and altered as such. The resulting work, your work, do you believe that it speaks? In whose voice? Does a visual rhetoric have a voice?

**Francesca Capone:** It's remarkable to me that Rosmarie created *Camp Printing* in 1970, and the role she was playing (that of a publisher/printer) when it was created. Fluxus and Concrete Poetry were well underway, and this manner of visual treatment of text based materials had already formed a context—however the idea of subverting the role as a printer to take on that of an artist, and with existing poetic material, strikes me as very ahead of its time. There's a big conversation now about conceptual writing, the notion of digital materials being fluid, how

this is incredibly feasible for archiving and manipulating existing texts, which then expands into how the role of the archivist is curatorial and therefore creative. There's a fantastic recording on PennSound of Goldsmith and Bernstein discussing their interests on archiving that elaborates on this. I am reminded of these ideas when I see *Camp Printing*—though none of the technology that facilitates these newer ideas on conceptual writing had been brought into popular use when it was created. To quote Goldsmith, "By employing the use of... [Cont.]

**Rosmarie Waldrop:** I can't imagine the pieces of *Camp Printing* as speaking or having a voice. I think of them as purely visual, spatial—as I do of Francesca's. (But then, I don't think of my poems in terms of voice either, but rather as constellations of elements.) But "whose voice" is an interesting question. Francesca, your "translation" of "Light Travels" does indeed bring the "original" (the poem by Keith Waldrop and me) into your work by quoting it, giving it presence right next to your transformation. I was not as generous to James Camp's... [Cont.]

**FC:** [Cont.]...icon-based imagery (poem as image), concrete poetry sought an international readership based on seeing rather than on reading. Similarly, once you ‘get’ the idea of conceptual writing, you don’t really need to read it; it’s not predicated upon knowing a language, as much as it is upon knowing a concept. Thus, conceptual writing often invokes a thinkership rather than a readership.” I’m interested in combining this thinkership with visual devices that render existing and combined texts as paintings, drawings, sculptures. The texts I choose are typically by figures who have influenced my thinking, and who I hope will also influence the viewers of my work through this oblique form of communication. So in my case, the voice is a multipitched and distorted combination of many different people, but it is also my own.

**RW:** [Cont.] ...poems in *Camp Printing*. My last page says: “The poems were by James Camp”—placing them firmly in the past, admitting that I “killed” their voice by treating them as mere visual artifacts, as you cogently put it.

I was certainly aware of Concrete Poetry (both Keith and I experimented a little bit with it in *Letters*), but *Camp Printing* happened quite by accident. I overprinted a page slightly out of register (the printing equivalent of a double exposure in photography). I liked the result and decided to make this kind of error systematically.

Most classic concrete poems used reduction—few words at a time, maybe just one or just letters—to foreground that they are exploring the visual elements of language itself. Both your method, Francesca, and mine go rather in the direction of expanding by repeatedly overprinting our “originals.” I gradually increased the number—I was curious at which point

the semantic dimension would be obliterated, whereas your 250 times immediately and radically transport the poem into the purely visual.

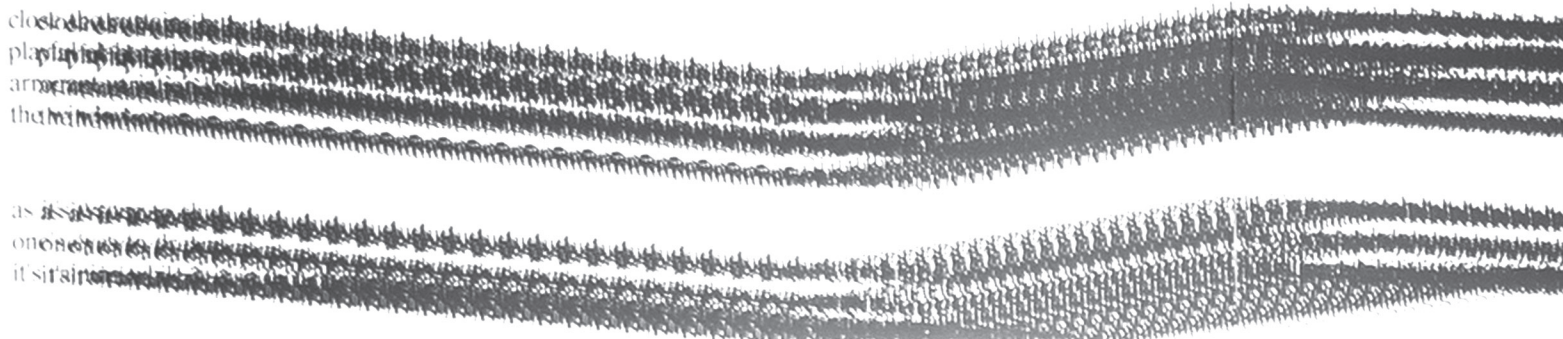
**PP:** Whether the expression of the work is one of multifarious expressions or the obliteration—what a fitting word to use when talking about killing literature!—of semantics toward a differing, opposed or adjacent register of expression, the process is one that works, it seems, *against* a dialectic. As in, how much inertia need be applied before a dialectic comes to a standstill before it becomes, as Benjamin would consider it, an image? Maybe that’s one paradox of conceptualism. The fetish of a pure thinkable artifact, one whose own dialectic has reached a standstill, is made to be re-introduced into a dialectic from which it was previously abstracted. What else is more thinkable than that which has had its expression fully arrested, suspended? Or to borrow from “Light Travels,” “as it’s wrong to shut/ one’s eyes to dream it’s/ raining while it is in fact raining...” And as you said, Rosmarie, your and Francesca’s processes work/worked as an expansion of a thing—as inertia is applied, friction creates heat, and heat expands—so, when has a work’s eyes been opened to the point of their not shutting?

**RW:** First of all, obviously, crossing the border into visual art, from time into space, and, in space, from the slim vertical of the poem’s shape to the wide horizontal.

In my poems, I (like many others) have been working on shifting emphasis from the vertical axis of selection (metaphor, relation by similarity) which defined poetry from Romanticism through Modernism to the horizontal axis of combination (metonymy, relation by contiguity, syntax). So a direction I cultivate within language was taken out

of it, into another dimension. However, it’s more complicated. At least in the hall where it was displayed it was impossible to take in this huge work in one glance. The eye was invited to travel from left to right, to “read” the purely visual lines. Time was reintroduced into the work, and the wavelike aspect created a definite rhythm.

**FC:** I think with these various visual treatments of existing written materials, where the initial dialectic ceases, a different dialectic arises—but it carries with it the value of the initial work. It’s important to me that the initial work that is being manipulated is explicitly credited to its original author (even if, Rosmarie, in your case, it is only in the title) if not for the sole purpose of addressing the importance of that original and its content in relation to the new work. It puts an expectation on the viewer/reader to be [or become] familiar with the content that the new work is referencing—so though it may be oblitative in one way, its regenerative in another. In the instance of my treatment of “Light Travels” in the *Refraction* piece, as you mentioned Rosmarie, I included the Waldrop’s original poem alongside the new work. So this conversation of closing and keeping wide open...I suppose both are happening in different ways. The last line in “Light Travels,” “reminiscence and extinction,” resonated with me as I was developing the piece—the poem would be illuminated by my referencing it and then wiped out in my visual manipulation of it. The structure of the poem was particularly interesting to me as well, in its manner of assuming a repetition and the subtle breaking of rules within that repetition. As the rules are broken the trajectory of the content is shifted in a new direction like light on mirrors. The content references and abstracts the process (*continued on pg. 23*)



Francesca Capone. *Refraction* (Detail). 15' x 20'. Archival inkjet print on cotton. Commissioned for the Granoff Center by the Creative Arts Council on the occasion of the 250th Anniversary of Brown University, March 2014. Based on the poem “Light Travels” by Keith and Rosmarie Waldrop.

# Skin Notebook (an excerpt from *Dysgraphia*)

Noah Eli Gordon

Gordon Lish lands in a mental hospital as a teenager after a manic episode brought on by taking an experimental steroid to treat his psoriasis; there he meets the poet Hayden Carruth, who helps foster Lish's literary aspirations.

\*

In Miami, at a downtown concert hall filled with kids, I push my way toward the front of the stage, climb up and over the mass of bodies in frenzied motion to stand there above everyone else before diving back into the crowd that caught, held aloft, and then consumed whoever decided to jump, at least up until now.

\*

What is that? one of my classmates asks, pointing to the circled A scrawled on my notebook. We're in middle school. Our jackets are covered in patches bearing the name of the latest bands to enter the pantheon of teen angst. It's the anarchy symbol. Lucky for me, there's just enough acrimony in my answer to prevent him from delving any further, as my only explanation for it then would have been something along the lines of—fuck the government.

\*

Viva l'anarchia!, Ferdinando Nicola Sacco purportedly shouted before his electrocution at the old Charlestown State Prison outside of Boston. Sacco and Vanzetti were both put to death there in August of 1927. Almost thirty years later, the prison was closed. Now, Bunker Hill Community College stands on the same ground.

\*

In 1953, Robert Rauschenberg spends a month erasing a drawing by Willem de Kooning. In an interview on YouTube, Rauschenberg explains that people mistakenly thought it was either a

gesture against abstract expressionism or an act of vandalism. When the interviewer asks what it means to him, Rauschenberg nonchalantly shrugs his shoulders and says, It's poetry.

\*

I read Carruth's book on James Laughlin, the founder of New Directions, while waiting to be called up for jury duty in Denver's downtown courthouse; there, I remember the lunch I had several years earlier where Bill Corbett told me about the lawyers for New Directions killing the book on the history of the press he'd written at Laughlin's behest.

\*

I'm seventeen. I sleep with a can of Raid next to my bed, which I've circled with dozens of sheets of loose-leaf paper, so that the sound of an approaching cockroach will be amplified enough to wake me. Our house is infested. I scream into the other end of the telephone when a roach unexpectedly scampers across my bare chest; it's loud enough to earn me the nickname *Roachie*, a nod not only to my current crisis but also to the video game character Yoshi,



the trusted dinosaur sidekick from *Super Mario World*, on whose back Mario would ride, stomping any creatures in his way. If only it were so easy.

\*

Having published over a dozen books with a major trade house since his debut in 2007, Ace Landers is certainly a successful author, if not a prodigious one. Although his books are immensely popular—each of which sell tens of thousands of copies and are available just about everywhere—Landers is something of a Salingeresque recluse. He isn't on Facebook or Twitter. There is no Wikipedia page for him. No author profiles or interviews available online. There are, in fact, no extant photographs of Landers. There also doesn't appear to be anyone clamoring for such information. He has no fan club, no bloggers praising or lambasting his work. There's no substantive critical appraisal of what he's thus far accomplished.

\*

I get out of jury duty by claiming that I don't recognize the sovereignty of the United States government, which I consider an imperialist power that infringed upon the rights of the indigenous peoples; this claim prompts a man in front of me to turn around and exclaim, I wish I'd thought of that.

\*

In 1965, ten years before I'm born, Noah Gordon publishes *The Rabbi*, his first book.

\*

A scuttling across paper wakes me. I grab the Raid, flick on the light, scan the room for the sound's origin. Sometimes I find it. Sometimes, I don't. I feel like some kind of lone bivouacked soldier, crazed by the shifting elements and the knowledge that the enemy is out there somewhere, testing me, teasing me, waiting for that one moment of weakness where I give in to fatigue.

\*

Typing "Ace Landers is" into Google yields a measly dozen or so results, none of which offer anything more than the lone biographical sentence on his publisher's website (a sentence that, no doubt, explains somewhat the lack of attendant literary hubbub to his efforts): "Ace Landers is an author of children's books." Yes, there are famous authors of children's books (Maurice Sendak, Shel Silverstein, Margaret Wise Brown, etc.), but such fame invariably emanates from a particular self and voice in the

work that captures something uniquely human, universal, something able to bridge the distance between reader and listener, parent and child, something more or less literary. Something Ace Landers isn't interested in doing. Instead, Landers pens product tie-ins; his books following the adventures of characters from well-established franchises: the Power Rangers, Hot Wheels, and Star Wars.

\*

Hey man, do you write? I don't understand this guy's question. It's my first day here, my first day of college, and I'm standing outside of Bunker Hill's main entrance, smoking, and trying as hard as I can to transform my insecurity into aloof and cool indifference. When he asks me about my tag, I realize he means graffiti, and not the high-school poetry and song lyrics that had pushed me into offering an awkward *yes*—yes I write. In a month, we're fast friends. In two, I'm actually working at the school, tutoring ESL students in a windowless room on one of the mammoth building's bottom floors. I don't know the difference between active and passive, don't know much about verb tenses, what a participle might be, or how to accurately parse a sentence, but I do, somehow, incredibly, manage to keep my job for two semesters.

\*

Four years before I am born, the poet Lew Welch walks into the woods with a rifle. He never comes back.

\*

James Laughlin visits Ezra Pound in Italy, who convinces Laughlin to give up his literary aspirations in favor of a career in publishing.

\*

To be honest, I feel a little guilty for so shucking my civic duties.

\*

In 1966, inspired by an interview where William Burroughs explains his cut-up technique, Tom Phillips begins work on *A Humument*, what will eventually become his life's obsession—an artist's book that defaces and reworks the forgotten Victorian novel *A Human Document* by painting over and otherwise manipulating each page until only a few of the original words show through, thus creating an altogether new text, a book-length poem of sorts, the first edition of which is published in 1980.

\*

Everything's intuitive to me: change the

*is* to *are*, I say; change the *go* to *went*, I say. Lucky for me, there's just enough confidence in my assertion to prevent my tutees from delving any further, as my only explanation for it then would have been something along the lines of—it just sounds right. It takes me a week of working with a Japanese exchange student to convince her to use *he* when she's writing about the activities of Mr. Smith.

\*

Pound writes his best poems while imprisoned in a cage north of Pisa, awaiting extradition to the United States to face trial for treason. Pound wanted desperately to meet with Stalin, who is purported to have suffered from psoriasis.

\*

There's a rumor floating around the school about the room in which we're tutoring. The rumor is that it housed the Charlestown State Prison's electric chair. It's the same room where Sacco and Vanzetti were electrocuted, the same room where I'm not learning the rules of English as much as I'm figuring out how to articulate some deep-rooted sense of the way things work, the connection between being in the world and the syntax we use to explain it.

\*

Die. Die. Die, I yell to the roach I'm now drowning with insecticide. "Speech. The din of a Tribe doing its business," wrote Welch. "You can't control it, you can't correct it, you can only listen to and use it as it is." What might the speech of the cockroach tell us? Isn't this creature that we're so quick to associate with filth really just a reflection of the inherent poverty of the human project, its ubiquity belying our own excesses?

\*

Viva l'anarchia!

\*

"The great enigma of human life is not suffering," writes Simone Weil, "but affliction."

\*

At Corbett's house in Boston, I meet for the first time outside of school many poets much older than myself. Stop acting like undergrads, Bill says to the few of us standing in a corner of his kitchen, before pushing us in front of others and forcing an introduction.

\*

In 1968, Bob Christian is born in Florissant, Missouri.

\*

(continued on pg. 25)

# A Poem

*Amy De'Ath*

## Lower Parallel

A teal balance and ombre heart you have. What limb thrown down-  
stairs hallway when I discovered prosody like thin paint like discourse presumes us

What prosody like blown-up flower and dripping box, coming up on an open  
state and running dog, going out on starry starry axial breaks,

clear breaks onto a ravine of translucent history, now a sensitive cult a purity lunch  
in the green zone, never a side of me you seen, never a side of me.

Beauty had a hot and final temper. Add a bit of money and a shitty life, fear-  
mongering or just hanging around in here, then lay down between a fork

and a tunic. But lay down against her, more august than the three of us  
o brother irenic, into the laundry coin slot I will go with you into streaming,

angel sleeping, feather down, downloading, The Simpsons, South Park, Donald and  
Daisy Duck, Family Guy, Felix the Cat, Christopher Wren, Power Outage,

Moral Outrage, Disillusionment, how pathos lies at the root of all this as  
the dead roll to the foot of the bed, say "womb" is a verb, "aborted" is a feeling.

A teal balance and ombre heart you have. In the Lost Lagoon,  
no more illness to speak of, not homeless in the void or walking the plank

& if the present roars I don't hear it. Woke up from dream of municipal ska-  
ting and the rhetoric was meaning, the actual history of women and the body

and women as a body but a man manifested the only body the only one  
Marx got, resembles me not in thought or love, but eternally working

as an orange grove does, as a child does among hypermedia, as a  
person who is a hotline after feudalism, as an image sprints back to reclaim us

love will save us love will save us love will save us love will save us  
as if it would be classical to be bitter and cowed, down to the duck, the swan

and the holy goose, laughing out there in crack of the coast, in the echo of  
Vancouver, buoyant and stupid.

\*

People were talking to themselves, then troops came along like water in a hole  
And crazy, mapping out pinnacles in literary history under which you

are forced to see yourself as an episode: a yellow floating condom or worse, a  
standard castle in France & more affordable than Queens, a lucky conveyor

of sentiment and eager to please, carousel of polytechnics / antiseptic tourist tooth-glare.  
How to move in and rain on you, and move you a moment closer to

the sun, against the wall a static woman, a limited psycho. Still: lower parallel, lower still.  
Here's a population of rage at you, there is a heaped tenderness consumed

Here is a lover made of Stalins, there is a book someone wrote in  
against their desire or will, in 1871, in 1989, a common logic structurally grounded

like so much neo-colonial confetti.

And now I don't believe it, and now I believe it.

And now I don't believe it, and now I believe it.

A teal balance and ombre heart you have. Or what the remote-control star  
says to the intricacy of planets and kids. Opacity begging for crystal,

find a name for her, I fear for my house and garden, find a name for me,  
if you lose your boyfriend, find a name for that sedimented truth

and for the vaporized Rocky Mountains that made you compete against  
your own body, as it traces nothing, find a name for another pretender you believe in

# REVIEWS AND REACTIONS

## Negativity's Kiss

**Alice Notley**

*Presses universitaires de Rouen et du*

*Havre, 2014*

Review by Krystal Languell

*Negativity's Kiss*, the latest title by Alice Notley, was published this summer in the "To" series, a new imprint of Presses universitaires de Rouen et du Havre that simultaneously releases English and French language editions of new longer works by American poets. Described on the back cover as a "noir poem, with characters and a story," the book-length poem begins in a city hospital. The poet Ines has been shot in the head, and a cop called Cop is interviewing her. The conversation emerges in a singular voice: "Why were you shot? Because I knew;/ He wanted to drain me of knowledge." Unsatisfied, they try again: "Why were you shot? Because/ I know apocalyptic clarities..." This epic poem narrates the investigation into her attack, introducing suspects, red herrings, and corruption at the highest levels of power (duh). Seemingly everyone has a nickname, a handle that provides entrée into a second register. A dual identity. Ines lives alone, writes and publishes poetry, flies below the radar of attention-seeking, commercially successful artists and writers, for whom she shows no mercy.

The shooting garners the attention of an array of characters who find her work and persona threatening. Everyone responds. Everyone considers finishing her off. C.S., a young female poet:

works self up to kill. Am haunted  
she thinks by latent wish to  
destroy Ines  
use authentic  
weapons not deadly publication  
of a  
poetry that *will* prevail, in time,  
with

the backing of the University.

Here Notley at once indicts academia, contemporary politics, and capitalism. Ines talks C.S. down, not gently, and the younger poet "turns and flees..." Several characters are little more than poetry scenesters. C.S. is presented as vain and submissive; as a cranky feminist margin-dweller myself, I wonder if Notley's scorn for the superficial careerist is righteous or simply mean-spirited. Might this be a problem? Ines acknowledges that she is "not nice," but nonetheless acts as "a tutelary being" in relation to (likewise young and female) Harvard Washington (also known as Harry)'s ghost, so the dismissal can be attributed to more than a difference in age—Ines rejects C.S. as metonymic of institutions she likewise disdains.

The language moves from narrative to dialogue or among characters' voices without transition, the story unfolding without regard for structural conventions. The telling is more poetic than novelistic, which, in *Negativity's* world, is dangerous. Ines is both unrecognized and loathed; her name, Ines, stands for Inessential. Charlatan, a wealthy character who controls the media, disseminates her work and negative criticism of same; he's obsessed with hating her: "Then he proceeded to send suggestions// how I could improve my poetry/ cut adjectives, restore articles, don't weird out; or,/ 'serve beauty not the caustic muse/ serve beauty not the destructive haggard witch of truth'/ I am that witch" (31-32). Correct, she says, I am a witch and I serve myself.

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## Etruria

**Rodney Koenke**

*Wave Books, 2014*

Review by Alli Warren

Most of what is known about Etruscan society is gleaned from what remains of their monuments and tombs. These structures reveal the stories a culture tells about itself, its values and ambitions. Upon these artifacts, the living project their ideas and fantasies of history, culture, and everyday practice. In this liminal space where the living mark the dead, we participate in narratives broader than our own individual existences.

Rodney Koenke's 3<sup>rd</sup> book is titled

*Etruria*. The word "Etruria" refers to the region where Etruscans lived in what is now Tuscany from around the 7<sup>th</sup> century to the late 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>1</sup>

The book is dedicated to Lesley Poirier, Koenke's wife and co-parent, who passed away in 2011 after a brave struggle against cancer. I knew Lesley as a loving, giving, inspiring, and creative person. The loss is a deep one for all who knew Lesley and for those who no longer have that opportunity.

After *Etruria's* dedication page comes the epigraph, from D.H. Lawrence's *Etruscan Places*, which points to a place "splendid and unsullied, running parallel to us". This abstracted place is haunted by our projections and desires, perfect because untouchable.

With these two frontmost pieces in place, Koenke takes up "Tristia," Ovid's famous poem of exile and hope that addresses the book as an ambassador to empire. In the original poem, Ovid attempts to convince the Roman emperor to allow him to return to his native Italy. Instead of making overtures to the Empire, Koenke asks his little book to venture to an unnamed "her," a missing love who is some place the poet "cannot enter." So as to continue to be in that space-time of loving, so as to keep the poem from ending, Koenke's "Tristia" enunciates some of the ways and varieties of having lived and loved with this "her". The poem wants to go on and on, "delaying that point where I have to go home and remember/ she's there, I'm here".

This poetic desire to delay is also a way of remaining "open and alive." I read many of the poems in *Etruria* as approaching loss in order to survive it—by continuing to write to "her," by *being with* this pain, by using poetry to come to terms with grief. These poems enact an elegant and honest engagement with meaning making and ongoing life in the face of loss.

In the first poem in the book, "Toward of Theory of Translation," I'm struck by the phrase "suffers an epiphany" and the poem's revelation that an epiphany is "often celebrated in poems but elsewhere finds itself less welcome." If epiphanies are something to suffer, what is the new or expanded

<sup>1</sup> The name was later adopted by Napoleon for his "Kingdom of Etruria", which he created in order to swap favors with dukes and kings.

sense of reality and life which haunts these poems? What can one learn by writing epiphanic poems? For a start, that “Life and its regulation/ belong to dumb forces,” that “the vocative is a legitimate grammatical function,” that “It hurts, but you won’t die...”

At the start of the book, as if to give himself (and his readers?) permission, Koeneker writes that any expression of “feelings” is always approximate and pale, yet we continue to have feelings and to write about them. No matter the weight of history and ongoing global catastrophe and the failure of poetry to stop the war(s), no matter claims that lyric poetry is backward looking and conservative—epiphanies, deeply personal as they may be, continue to be suffered in profound and totalizing ways. “[T]urning his passion for the dead Beatrice/ into a redemptive program for himself, for time, the reeling stars,” and “happy to gesture or shout or/ merely gasp,” Koeneker makes a case for the “merely” phatic, for poetic singing and sighing and grieving as valuable and even necessary.

At the risk of diminishing the power of the profound loss that pervades *Etruria*, I want to note that partly what makes me so cherish this book is a pervading quality of what I can only call...beauty. The poems leave me with that inarticulable or untranslatable ache. This is Koeneker’s most earnest and sincere work. Our author does not shy away from telling us he is “hurt” and “bitten” as he approaches his desire to try to “write English/ like a song that is played over radio/ and makes me hurt inside?” The writing follows a chatty and elegantly long line of bright, honest thought. If, as the title poem offers, from loss comes a new vernacular, then *Etruria* is a guidebook for how to build beautiful and resilient language (and thus, life?) from vacancy. Rodney Koeneker is “recording/ within the relatively narrow radius of life” his “pain inside the poem.” *Etruria* is urgent and unblinking. 📖

## Holly Melgard’s Friends & Family

Joey Yearous-Algozin

*Bon Aire Projects, 2014*

Review by Josef Kaplan

It’s a familiar story: boy meets girl; boy falls in love with girl; boy records three years of girl’s voicemail messages.

But much of *Holly Melgard’s Friends & Family* is familiar.

The book, which presents three years of poet Holly Melgard’s recorded voicemail messages (transcribed by her partner, and also poet, Joey Yearous-Algozin), describes a life not unlike many others—birthdays come and go, friends get into fights, they make up, and then they fight again... Like much poetry, the book concerns itself with the familiar, and makes of its source material this familiar poetic problem: how to take a life, full of its known, quotidian details, and make it interesting as art?

*HMF&F*’s sensible answer is both to recognize art’s long, robust tradition of recording and analyzing the mundane, from Bernadette Mayer to Tehching Hsieh, and also look beyond it, to the more recent phenomena of reality television.

Because what makes reality television interesting? Not that anything of interest happens on it. What makes reality television interesting is how *tons of people get to watch those uninteresting things happen*.

It’s like that popular Quantum Physics factoid, where the behavior of electrons can be altered by the mere fact of their being observed—by watching a group of generally loutish young-adult idiots get drunk, fuck, or try to repair a toilet, we end up experiencing those events as engaging merely for the fact that we’re watching them happen.

Most people get drunk, fuck, and botch their home repairs, but almost nobody has that recorded by professional sound and camera technicians, in order for it to be transmitted to a millions-strong international audience of paying

cable subscribers. In this way, whatever actually happens on the show is mostly immaterial. What matters is the fact of seeing what one otherwise may not have been able to—or better yet, seeing what one may otherwise not have been *allowed* to—and therefore being able to subject those events, and the people involved in them, to one’s otherwise quotidian, and similarly immaterial, judgment.

Take, for example, this passage from the book:

what’s up special ed this is your brother I was wondering if you knew of any good movies or something lately or whatever just give me a call back on my phone it’s fucking up for some reason so I had to use my friend’s phone to call you bye

Sure, maybe that’s boring by itself, but once taken in the context of Joey’s invasive, paranoid surveillance... it’s suddenly really exciting. We get to sit there, alongside him, and read and evaluate these most private moments of Holly’s life, things we otherwise never would have had access to. So what if that mostly consists of her mom talking about insurance claims, or coworkers asking her to call them back, and not, say, some mysterious stranger, frantically sobbing at 2AM about having killed someone.

The point is: these messages were private, and now they’re not; they were hers, and now they’re ours.

Take, for example, this second passage:

oh Holly I just thought of something that’s um it just sounds funny you daughter are the apple of my eye and Michael is the avocado of my soul talk you later love you bye

OK, actually that’s pretty good, even just by itself.

(continued on pg. 28)

### CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS:

A call to you: pitch book and chapbook reviews—indispensable writing of the present—to *The Poetry Project Newsletter*. We are looking for writing on and from a broad range of poetics, voices, and positions, but more specifically for reviews that promise to not only orient readers in terms of tradition or style but also seek to perform or manifest the poetics of their subject as much as describe them. A review is a reading, and whatever reading means to you, that reading is you—so what did this book do to you? What does it offer us at the ends of the world? Please include in your pitch publication details (author or editor’s name, title, and press), a representative poem or piece of text from the book you’d like to review, a brief but detailed—even radical—description of the book overall and your experience reading the text (5-7 sentences). Please send all review pitches to: reviews.ppnl@poetryproject.org.

## Hafez: Translations and Interpretations of the Ghazals

**Hafez (trans. Geoffrey Squires)**

Miami University Press, 2014

Review by Sahar Muradi

I grew up talking to a 14<sup>th</sup> century Persian poet. Khwaja Shams ud-Din Muhammad Hafez-e Shiraz was my secret confidante, and his collection of poems, or *Divan*, was my scripture. I would pose any burning question to him, open at random to one of his ghazals, and find in it my answer.

I was part of a long tradition across the Persian-speaking world, from Iran to my native Afghanistan, where people turn to the poet known as the “Tongue of the Mysteries” as a source of divination. But beyond his fortune-telling, Hafez is beloved most for his poetry. He is revered across West and South Asia and by every strata of society for his extraordinary ghazals that speak to human experiences of love, longing, and separation. Yet the very element of his work that seems to lend itself to personal interpretation and such egalitarian appreciation is also what makes Hafez difficult to translate: there is a fundamental ambiguity to his poetry. And it is with this admission of “untranslatable” that poet Geoffrey Squires offers us his attempt, *Hafez: Translations and Interpretations of the Ghazals*.

Despite his many qualifications as a translator of Persian poetry—fluent in the language, 3 years living in Iran, 8 years of extensive research—Squires identifies several issues unique to translating Hafez. First, there is no definitive text. Hafez’s poems were collected after his death (around 1390—his biography, too, remains ambiguous) and there are myriad textual variants. According to one estimate, 80% of the ghazals have five variants just in terms of the number or order of the lines.

Then, there is the issue of sequencing when the poems cannot be dated. Squires opts to arrange the poems thematically, categorizing them across ten themes, ranging from the garden, to the beloved, to the tavern, to the poet. While this precludes any bibliomancy and puts artificial lines around Hafez’s work, it does offer a frame for an otherwise immense collection (Squires has translated just over half the *Divan*, or 248 ghazals) and a manageable portal for the newcomer.

The form poses its own challenges. Westerners have long been puzzled by the outwardly fragmented shape of the ghazal, whose couplets often read as stand-alone thoughts without clear movement between couplets. Squires’ uses a triage approach, which, on first glance, seems rather mathematical: he identifies a theme for each ghazal and then vets couplets according to their relation. This results in, sometimes, translating only parts of poems or dividing them into several pieces or using single couplets on their own. For example, on one page, we have the flicker of “I do not know/ who this person is within me/ I who am heartsore/ for when I am quiet he is in uproar”. While the excerpt lingers beautifully in the ear, the fact that it is an excised poem poses significant issues. One of the greatest features of Hafez’s work is precisely that it invites open interpretation, but who has the authority to decide that a particular couplet does not make sense and publish their own version? While there is no definitive *Divan*, complicating the matter, such edits and erasures beg questions of power. And even if the ghazal’s “ravishing disunity” (to borrow from Agha Shahid Ali) subverts the reader’s comfort or expectations of what a poem is and does, then isn’t that the better?

(continued on pg. 28)

### The Feel Trio

**Fred Moten**

Letter Machine Editions, 2014

Review by Sara Jane Stoner

you are the  
flex principle  
to build a new  
impulse  
in everyone

Fred Moten’s *The Feel Trio* is a justice of words. A supersubtle sanctuary for a newold black arts, a great gathering of names in lived times of recognition. A three-staged instrument for resensualization toward a recessive and possessing “balmed-out underground.”

Here: the best, most complex writing—writing that does justice to the fact that language belongs to you only insofar as you recognize that it doesn’t—call it theory if you want to, call it poetry, engine of vision, deep

history, remembering, and new material and political life—this writing *proposes*, in its bass-throb, gamut of clear note to mass chord, and fractal filamentary pyrotechnics, and *invokes*—tenderly, with the iron turned all the way up for that stubborn cotton, its eye to the “specific ribbons”—the simplest, most holy and erotic bodily questions. To what sound do you belong, baby, motherfucker? Do you know that you’re improvising? Who, what sets your margin, your tempo, your place? Are you on fire, or is that the city? What have you done with your name? What kind of sound can I make of it in my mouth, in this place?

Open, it’s a beautiful book wide enough on your lap to arrange a supplication of the arms, to invite the other and another on either side, 1, 2, 3, anima, animus, and we, a party of three, feeling toward the break and the fusion. The page space room enough for the poems to move, squeak, chop, tinkle, thud, and sweep. This is a book for the life in free improvised jazz, its “anoriginary drive,” its blackness, titled for the trio of Cecil Taylor, piano, William Parker, bass, and Tony Oxley, drums. Listening to The Feel Trio locates the possibility for resistance in you: the music that knows that closed anticipation, that fear, all that “sense-making” knowledge has got to give, it’s got to change, in order not to kill the thing, “my thing” which “is everything is everything and there’s nothing more/ than my bouquet, my uncountable thing outside. my/ voices inside blow up inside a blackening gift from a broken hand...”

Still the shape has the metaphoricity of fakebooks: maybe all books are fakebooks for the books that blow up inside. Here is a thing, a tune, a story, and we love it, and there it is in the book to be “faked,” meaning, oh, I know this song, but not so well that it knows me or what I’m going to do with it. What I’m going to do with it has something to do with what I know from this record of past feeling here, but for the present, I have to so fully submit to what I know that I let it go in the grip and the beat.

Something in the sound of this writing says, gently and hard, you got it all wrong, and then “*come on, get it!*” Here: what we need to hear to feel the cause of all this death.

“we love to hold the continual failure in one another,/ til new things come from that like bullets that catch bullets for/

butter and chocolate. our thing event theme is doin it to death./ I feel good is brazen on the scene of personal injury.”

In the poet-scholar’s ITs and I’s—everything. The subject of the book is a choric I, who’s been to the cities and the studios, who’s eaten in the houses, who’s spoken to the elders and played with the children, who’s lived in the history of the music (“sometimes it gets deep in the hold”), and the it must be sound; though it would be just as true to say that the subject is the it, and the I, sound. The fundamental magic of sound is that it interpenetrates interior and exterior, in whatever micro and macro senses you want to wield those words. The politics of sound in space is spirit. How do you find the idea in sound, that is the question (fuck nobility) to which this book comes.

“there’s a theory of sound in the autograph/ but you have to wait for the sound/ of the theory of sound and fold it between/ folded/ hands and presence in the upper room like/ a folded dream.”

Priceless rhythms winding up and unrolling, jaggging, weaving, trickling over and out, skitching, the bang, the stroke of the stroked, the sound, the I, running, burning. A “theory of enjoyment” in life-saving motion, “part/ of breath.” From the runnings of the first poem, to the many comings of the final poem, what a brave heaven to join this “foment” in his study, this “fmoten.” 📖

## LABOR

**Jill Magi**

*Nightboat Books, 2014*

Review by Joe Fritsch

### The Work that Poets Do and Jill Magi’s *LABOR*

Indolence and work: two poles between which poets historically navigate. In the first case, Chaucer’s *Parliament of Fouls* begins with a poet, unable to read anymore for the night, composing oneirically: “fynally my spirit, at the laste/ For-wery of my labour al the day,/ Took rest, that made me to slepe faste.” And of course, there is Whitman’s “Song of Myself” persona content to “lean and loafe,” as artistic practice. Bafflingly, the stereotype of the no-count, aloof poet survives

in the social consciousness just as determinedly as the productiveness of great writers survives within the canon. How else could Marge Simpson quip that her loutish husband gets as “drunk as a poet on payday,” to comedic effect?

The aesthetic of work within poetry and literature varies immensely. It is both incorporated into form, and an ethic that exceeds it. In its most luxurious iteration, Philip Levine wins a Pulitzer Prize and says things like, “you know what work is—if you’re/ old enough to read this you know what/ work is, although you may not do it,” at once lionizing the workin’ man and being ageist and elitist about literacy. A preoccupation with ‘showing one’s work’ manifests itself as footnoted reference, *ars poetica*, and documentation of procedural technique. Then there are the dogged publisher-poets (Amy Lowell, the Crosbys, and most small press poetry publishers in 2014); the social organizer poets (Gertrude Stein, Florine Stettheimer, and most people who run poetry reading series in 2014); the book artist poets, for whom the writing and the vessel represent deliberate, often anti-authoritarian, embodiments of practice; and any other DIY’ers that make poetry an actual *thing* in a busy capitalist economy.

Jill Magi’s *LABOR* (Nightboat Books, 2014) addresses, perhaps, the most idealized line of work a poet can undertake: teaching. However, the book takes a firm, realist stance, choosing not to discuss the theoretical good of instruction, but rather institutional labor and underemployment as it exists. Addressing the state of academia in a meaningful way is a daunting task to undertake in 2014, as an unsound job market, questionable enrollment and hiring policies, and rising tuitions prompt MFA candidates and Pulitzer-Prize-winning, full professors alike to publicly decry the faults of The Institution. To do so, *LABOR* puts a cast to work within NYU’s Tamiment Library & Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, which “is committed to preserving the history of the labor movement and labor history of the New York area,” according to their website.

As a space described by Magi as “not quite a hospital not exactly a museum almost a prison and nearly a

school”, the setting of these archives lends itself to the heterogeneous composition of *LABOR*, which contains a fictional narrative, poetry, a reference guide, and an instructional handbook. Likewise, the three main characters portray varied engagements with NYU by being, a “teaching artist,” a professor who is an “archeologist with tenure,” and an “inspector” of the archives.

Adapted portions of archival and research documents elide current conditions with historical labor struggles. These source documents include files from the Comprehensive Employment Training Act, which was “comprised of artists in New York City ‘who fought for job security... artists projects, and workers rights;’” testimonies from labor activists; a conversation with Barbara Pollack; and *Bartleby, the Scrivener*, to name a few. Serving as a counterpoint to the dreary academic setting, these citations are notably optimistic. If all *LABOR* did was serve as a syllabus, it would still be a worthwhile read. But, the book stands as an essential document of labor history itself, by including valuable data like “my health benefits cost me \$316 each month,” along with the whos and hows of being underemployed “in the Age of the Adjunct.”

My favorite form of writing in *LABOR* is the one presented in sections labeled “Handbook.” These are instructional guides to subversive performance art projects. Much like the 1965 Great Bear Pamphlet, *by Allison Knowles*, the Handbook sections may or may not be referring to performances that actually happened, but this ambiguity only inspires deeper engagement with the text. It also creates a metaliterary loop, wherein the performances anticipate “the end of *LABOR*.”

The disillusionment documented throughout the book serves as an essential part of its irony. One can denounce an institution, while relying on it. As Magi notes, “to hate one’s big job is possible.” An institution maintains an archive devoted to labor, while underemploying its staff. A book is written, which may well belong in the archive, and is likely to be read by people who have experienced the same academic disillusionment. This writing, post-academic, presumes an audience fluent in academia and its practices.

(continued on pg. 29)

# UPCOMING READINGS AND EVENTS AT THE POETRY PROJECT

ALL EVENTS BEGIN AT 8PM UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED    ADMISSION \$8 / STUDENTS & SENIORS \$7 / MEMBERS \$5 OR FREE  
THE POETRY PROJECT IS LOCATED IN ST. MARK'S CHURCH AT THE CORNER OF 2ND AVE & 10TH ST IN MANHATTAN  
CALL 212 674 0910 OR VISIT [WWW.POETRYPROJECT.ORG](http://WWW.POETRYPROJECT.ORG) FOR MORE INFORMATION

THE POETRY PROJECT IS WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE WITH ASSISTANCE AND ADVANCE NOTICE    *schedule is subject to change*

WED 9/24

## JIBZ CAMERON & BHANU KAPIL

Jibz Cameron is a performance/video artist and actor who lives and works in New York City. In addition to her work as alter ego Dynasty Handbag, she has also been seen acting in work by The Wooster Group, The Residents, Kalup Linzy, Susan Lori-Parks, among others. She is an adjunct professor of Performance and Theater studies and Comedy Theory at TISCH NYU. She is currently in development on a television series with Electric Dynamite. [dynastyhandbag.com](http://dynastyhandbag.com).

Bhanu Kapil teaches through the monster at The Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics in Boulder, Colorado—and through the unicorn at Goddard College in Vermont. She is the author of five full-length works, most recently a novel of the race riot derived from performances and talks in India, the U.K. and throughout the U.S.: *Ban en Banlieue* (Nightboat Books, October 2014).

MON 9/29

## LIKE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS: 83 CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN POETS

Join us for the release reading for *Like Musical Instruments: 83 Contemporary American Poets* published by Broadstone Books. The collection features portraits of 83 poets taken by photographer John Sarsgard along with a poem by each—edited by Larry Fagin. With

Carol Szamatowicz, Miles Champion, John Godfrey, Jennifer Kietzman, Charles North, Anselm Berrigan, Eddie Berrigan, Jo Ann Wasserman, Ann Stephenson, Bruce Andrews, Erica Hunt, Bill Berkson and David Henderson.

WED 10/1

## BILL BERKSON & AISHA SASHA JOHN

Bill Berkson is a corresponding editor for *Art in America* and a contributor to such other journals as *Aperture* and *The Brooklyn Rail*. His most recent books include: *Portrait and Dream: New & Selected Poems*; *BILL*, a words-and-images collaboration with Colter Jacobsen; *Lady Air*; *Snippets*; *Not an Exit*, with drawings by Léonie Guyer; and *Repeat After Me*, with watercolors by John Zurier; a new collection of his art writings, *For the Ordinary Artist*; and *Parties du corps*, a selection of his poetry in French translation. He is working on a set of memoirs entitled *Since When*. A new book of poems, *Expect Delays*, has just arrived from Coffee House Press.

Aisha Sasha John is a dance improviser and poet. She was born in Montreal, but spent most of her childhood in Vancouver, and currently lives in Toronto. John has a BA in African Studies and Semiotics from the University of Toronto and an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Guelph. Her first book, *The Shining Material*, was published by BookThug in 2011. Her latest book is *THOU* (BookThug, 2014). You can follow John at [aishasashajohn.tumblr.com](http://aishasashajohn.tumblr.com).

MON 10/6

## OPEN READING

Open readings have always been an integral part of The Poetry Project's programming. They provide a time and space for writers of all levels of experience to test, fine tune, and work out their writing and reading styles in front of a supportive audience.

Suggested reading time is approximately 3 minutes. Sign-in at 7:45pm.

WED 10/8 8PM

## LUCAS DE LIMA & JEANINE OLESON

Lucas de Lima was born in southeastern Brazil. He is the author of *Wet Land* (Action Books) as well as the chapbooks *Ghostlines* (Radioactive Moat) and *Terraputa* (Birds of Lace). A contributing writer at *Montevidayo*, he pursues doctoral studies in Comparative Literature at the University of Pennsylvania.

Jeanine Oleson is a visual artist with an expanded practice. She has published two books about performance projects in 2012, *What?* and *The Greater New York Smudge Cleanse*. Oleson is an Assistant Professor of Photography in the Department of Art, Media, and Technology at Parsons the New School for Design. She lives in Brooklyn, NY.

FRI 10/10

## GINA ABELKOP & JASMINE DREAME WAGNER

Gina Abelkop is the author of *I Eat Cannibals* (coimpress, forthcoming 2014) and *Darling Beastlettes* (Apostrophe Books, 2012). She lives in Athens, GA, where she runs the DIY feminist press *Birds of Lace*.

Jasmine Dreame Wagner is an American poet, singer-songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist. She is the author of *Rings* (Kelsey Street Press, 2014), *Rewilding* (Ahsahta Press, 2013), *Listening for Earthquakes* (Caketrain Journal and Press, 2012), and an e-chapbook, *True Crime* (NAP, 2014). A collection of hybrid lyric essays on noise, silence, and aesthetics is due out from Ahsahta Press in 2016.

MON 10/13

## LANNY JORDAN JACKSON & AARON WINSLOW

Lanny Jordan Jackson is a poet and artist concerned with performance, recitation, writing, and filmmaking. His recent video *Scorpio vs. Glass Door Restaurant* can be viewed online at [TheClaudiusApp.com](http://TheClaudiusApp.com).

Aaron Winslow is the author of the chapbook *Four Gashes: Tales of the Great Misery* (Make Now) and the novel *Jobs of the Great Misery* (ABC Books, 2015). He is currently working as an archivist while completing a PhD at Columbia University.

WED 10/15

## ANGELA CARR & CEDAR SIGO

Angela Carr's most recent book of poetry is *Here in There* (BookThug, 2014). Her other poetry books are *Ropewalk* (2006) and *The Rose Concordance* (2009). She has also published a few chapbooks, including "Risk Accretions" in *Handwerk*. Currently, she teaches creative writing and poetry at The New School for Liberal Arts. As a translator (French to English, her book-length projects include Jean A. Baudot's 1964 poetry experiment, *The Writing Machine*). Her translation of Québécoise poet Chantal Neveu's *Coit* was also published by BookThug (2012).

Cedar Sigo was raised on the Suquamish Reservation in the Pacific Northwest and studied at The Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at the Naropa Institute. He is the author of eight books and pamphlets of poetry, including *Language Arts* (Wave Books, 2014), *Stranger In Town* (City Lights, 2010), *Expensive Magic* (House Press, 2008), and two editions of *Selected Writings* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2003 and 2005). He lives in San Francisco.

FRI 10/17 7PM

## 25 YEARS OF TENDER BUTTONS PRESS!

Celebrating Bernadette Mayer's *Sonnets Expanded* 25th Anniversary Edition and Katy Bohinc's *Dear Alain*. With Readings by: Bernadette Mayer, Katy Bohinc, Anne Waldman, Dodie Bellamy, Laynie Browne, India Radfar, Jennifer Moxley, and video appearances / art by Harryette Mullen, Michelle Rollman, Julie Patton, Rosmarie Waldrop and Hannah Weiner. Reception at 7, reading at 8.

MON 10/20

## SARAH DOWLING & JOON OLUCHI LEE

Sarah Dowling is the author of *DOWN*, *Birds & Bees*, and *Security Posture*, winner of the Robert Kroetsch Award for Innovative Poetry. Selections from her work appear in *I'll Drown My Book: Conceptual Writing by Women*. Her critical work has appeared in *American Quarterly*, *GLQ*, *Canadian Literature*, *Signs* and elsewhere. Dowling is an Assistant Professor in the School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences at the University of Washington Bothell.

Joon Oluchi Lee is the author of *Lace Sick Bag* (Publication Studio Portland, 2013) and *The Joy of the Castrated Boy* (Social Text, F/W 2005). His writing and textual performances can be found on [girlscallmurder.com](http://girlscallmurder.com) and [lipstickteater.blogspot.com](http://lipstickteater.blogspot.com). He is Associate Professor of Gender Studies and Creative Writing at Rhode Island School of Design, and divides his time between Brooklyn and Providence.



WED 10/22 10PM

**LEWIS MACADAMS & LAURA SIMS**

**Lewis MacAdams** is the author of a dozen books, tapes and CDs of poetry. His selected poems, *Dear Oxygen*, was published in 2012 by the University of New Orleans Press. His *Birth of the Cool* was named one of the best books of 2004 by the Los Angeles Times. As a filmmaker and videographer, he co-produced and co-directed dozens of literary videos and films including the documentary "What Happened To Kerouac?"

**Laura Sims** is the author of three books of poetry: *My god is this a man, Stranger*, and *Practice, Restraint* (Fence Books); her fourth collection, *Staying Alive*, is forthcoming from Ugly Duckling Presse in 2016. She edited *Fare Forward: Letters from David Markson*, a book of her correspondence with the celebrated experimental novelist (powerHouse Books), and has also published five chapbooks of poetry.

FRI 10/24

**CHELSEA HODSON & JACKIE WANG**

**Chelsea Hodson**, a 2012 PEN Center USA Emerging Voices Fellow, is currently writing a book of essays. She is the author of two chapbooks: *Pity the Animal* (Future Tense Books, 2014), and *Beach Camp* (Swill Children, 2010). Her essays have been published in *Black Warrior Review*, Vol. 1 *Brooklyn*, *Sex Magazine*, and elsewhere. She lives in Brooklyn, New York.

**Jackie Wang** is a queer poet, essayist, filmmaker, performer, and prison abolitionist based out of Cambridge, MA. Her work has been published in *LIES*, *Action Yes*, *Pank*, *Delirious Hem*, *DIAGRAM*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *October*, the *Semiotext(e)* Whitney Biennial Pamphlet Series, and other worthy outlets. She is currently working on a book or two.

MON 10/27

**MARK JOHNSON & CLAIRE WILCOX**

**Mark Johnson** lives in Philadelphia. He hosts a reading series at his book and record shop, Hiding Place. Recent publications include *Dream of a Like Place* (SUS Press), *rful* (Lulu), and *Gruon BS* (Make Now). His first full-length is due out from Make Now in the fall of 2014.

**Claire Wilcox** is a writer based in New York City. Recent works of poetry and criticism have appeared in/on BOMBlog, 98edition's *Makhzin* and *No Dear*. She is a recent graduate of the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts. Her first chapbook, *Change, Changes & .01 and Change*, is available from Sus Press in Australia and the US.

WED 10/29 10PM

**JENA OSMAN & MAGED ZAHER**

**Jena Osman's** books of poetry include *Corporate Relations* (Burning Deck Press), *Public Figures* (Wesleyan University Press), *The Network* (Fence Books), *An Essay in Asterisks* (Roof Books) and *The Character* (Beacon Press). For 12 years, she co-edited the magazine, *Chain*, with Juliana Spahr, and now they co-edit the ChainLinks book series together.

**Maged Zaher** is the author of *IF REALITY DOESN'T WORK OUT* (SplitLevel Texts, 2014); *THANK YOU FOR THE WINDOW OFFICE* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2012); *THE REVOLUTION HAPPENED AND YOU DIDN'T CALL ME* (Tinfish Press, 2012);

and *PORTRAIT OF THE POET AS AN ENGINEER* (Pressed Wafer, 2009). His collaborative work with the Australian poet Pam Brown, *FAROUT LIBRARY SOFTWARE*, was published by Tinfish Press in 2007.

MON 11/3

**OPEN READING**

Suggested reading time is approximately 3 minutes. Sign-in at 7:45pm.

WED 11/5

**NAROPA AT 40**

The Jack Kerouac School at Naropa University is celebrating its 40th year on the planet. Founded by Anne Waldman, Allen Ginsberg and Diane di Prima, the vision of an interactive, cross-genre, contemplative zone for writing and poetics has flourished and thrived all of these years. Celebrate with some of the people who made and continue to make it "the zone" that it is! With **Anne Waldman, Ed Sanders, Samuel R. Delany, Brenda Coultas, Bob Holman, Erica Hunt, Eileen Myles, Anne Carson & "Currie, Randomizer," Lewis Warsh, Edwin Torres, Julie Patton, Fast Speaking Music and more tba.**

FRI 11/7

**SARAH MCCARRY & SADE MURPHY**

**Sarah McCarry** (therejectionsit.com) is the author of the novels *All Our Pretty Songs* and *Dirty Wings* and the editor and publisher of the chapbook series Guillotine.

**Sade Murphy** was born and raised in Houston, TX. She attended the University of Notre Dame and graduated with a Bachelor's in Studio Art. Her studio practice is focused in book arts, printmaking, silk painting and installation art. She has published one chapbook of poetry, *Abandon Childhood*, which most likely cannot be found anywhere. She has recently completed her first full length manuscript of poetry, *Dream Machine*, and plans to apply to MFA programs this fall.

MON 11/10

**TALK SERIES: HANS ULRICH OBRIST ON ETEL ADNAN**

**Hans Ulrich Obrist** (b. 1968, Zurich, Switzerland) is Co-director of the Serpentine Galleries, London. Prior to this, he was the Curator of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville, Paris. Since his first show "World Soup" (The Kitchen Show) in 1991 he has curated more than 250 shows. Obrist's recent publications include *A Brief History of Curating*, *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Curating But Were Afraid to Ask, Do It: The Compendium*, *Think Like Clouds*, *Ai Weiwei Speaks*, *Ways of Curating*, along with new volumes of his Conversation Series.

WED 11/12 10PM

**COCO FUSCO & REINA GOSSETT**

**Coco Fusco** is a New York-based interdisciplinary artist and writer. Fusco is the author of *English is Broken Here: Notes on Cultural Fusion in the Americas* (1995) and *The Bodies that Were Not Ours and Other Writings*(2001), and *A Field Guide for Female Interrogators*(2008). She is also the editor of *Corpus Delecti: Performance Art of the Americas*(1999) and *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self* (2003).

**Reina Gossett** is the membership director at the Sylvia Rivera Law Project as well as the 2014-2015 Activist-In-Residence at Barnard College's Center for Research on Women. Reina is a filmmaker collaborating with Sasha Wortzel to write, direct and produce *STAR PEOPLE ARE BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE*, a film detailing the lives of Sylvia Rivera, Marsha P Johnson and Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries.

MON 11/17

**FARNOOSH FATHI & RICARDO ALBERTO MALDONADO**

**Farnoosh Fathi** was born in 1981 and lives in Brooklyn. She's the recipient of fellowships and awards from the Poetry Foundation, the Fulbright Program, and the MacDowell colony, and her poems, translations, and prose have appeared in *Boston Review*, *FENCE*, *Everyday Genius*, *Poetry*, *Jacket2*, and elsewhere. Her first book, *Great Guns*, was published last year by Canarium Books.

**Ricardo Alberto Maldonado** was born and raised in Puerto Rico. He is the translator of Dinapiera Di Donato's *Colaterales* (Akashic Books/The National Poetry Series). His work has appeared in *Boston Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Sidebrow* and *Guernica* and elsewhere. A poetry fellow from the New York Foundation for the Arts and Queer Arts Mentorship, he is managing director at the 92Y Unterberg Poetry Center.

WED 11/19

**CAMILLE ROY & ED SANDERS**

**Camille Roy's** most recent book is *Sherwood Forest*, from Futurepoem (2011). Earlier books include *Cheap Speech* (a play, Leroy), *Craquer* (a fictional autobiography, 2<sup>nd</sup> Story Books), *Swarm* (two novellas, Black Star Series), *The Rosy Medallions* (poetry and prose, Kelsey St Press) and *Cold Heaven* (plays, O Books). She co-edited *Biting The Error: Writers Explore Narrative* (CoachHouse, 2005, re-issued 2010).

**Edward Sanders** is a poet, historian and composer. Sanders' books include *Tales of Beatnik Glory, 1968, a History in Verse; The Poetry and Life of Allen Ginsberg; The Family*, a history of the Charles Manson murder group; and *Chekhov*, a biography in verse. His selected poems, 1986-2008, *Let's Not Keep Fighting the Trojan War*, was published by Coffee House Press. In 2011, Da Capo Press published his memoir of the 1960s, *Fug You*. Sanders was the founder of the satiric folk/rock group, The Fugs.

FRI 11/21

**JEFF KUROSAKI + TARA PELLETIER & OKI SOGUMI**

**Jeff Kurosaki and Tara Pelletier** are a collaborative duo based in Brooklyn, New York. They build multi-layered narrative projects using sculpture, video, music and performance. Their work explores the tension between the fundamental rhythms of life and the ordered systems that humans design to make sense of these rhythms.

**Oki Sogumi** was born in Seoul, Korea and currently resides in Philadelphia. She is the author of *The Island of Natural History* (forthcoming from Publication Studio), and a chapbook, *Salt Wedge*. Her poetry has been included in *HiZero* (UK), *LIES Journal*, *11x11*, and appears in little boxes on the internet sometimes.

# ABOUT THE POETRY PROJECT'S READING SERIES

While the boundaries between each of the Project's reading series are permeable, in general, the Wednesday Night Reading Series features nationally/internationally recognized poets as well as those of local renown, while the Monday Night Reading Series serves as a forum for emerging poets. Mondays also contain the Talk Series, Open Readings, and Workshop Readings. The Friday Night Reading Series provides space for poets and other artists working in interdisciplinary modes. Participation in all series is by invitation from the series coordinator. While the series are curated, The Poetry Project does accept "pitches." All queries and ideas may be emailed to [info@poetryproject.org](mailto:info@poetryproject.org) and will be forwarded to the coordinators. Coordinator appointments change every two years to ensure diversity of perspective.

## COORDINATOR STATEMENTS

As the Monday Night Readings Coordinator, I am interested in hosting a broad swath of the current poetic landscape and investigating it both as a site of interchange and as an anticipation of shared concerns, be they social, political or aesthetic. To me, the notion of emerging writers and writing is bracketed by the possibility of emergence into visibility, conversation, and poet(h)ical engagement. During the Fall, Mondays will feature a range of poets engaging in practices that extend from lyrical/post-lyrical to conceptual to fiction to video-based work—sometimes all at once. It is my hope to keep these nights open to the exceptionally rich poetics that dot the contemporary landscape that exemplifies and has exemplified the Poetry Project as an incubator for writers' continued literary experimentation. Going forward from this season, I hope to work toward a greater focus on hosting writers from across languages and borders to sustain The Poetry Project's ongoing role in the emergence of poetry in and for translation. Emergence is predicated on a porosity of borders and a breakdown in typifying and often cloistering genre distinctions. It is to that (somewhat ambitious) end that I want the Monday night series to be directed.

*Judah Rubin, Monday Night Readings Coordinator*

The form of the reading exudes great possibility. There are so many invisible and visible ingredients at The Poetry Project with its infinite history always mixing into a bold present. I hope to compel readers and audiences to a reading that is unexpected. When is writing active in ways that are not necessarily visible as poetry but doing all the important work poetry does? I work backwards from this question by inviting readers who make exciting work in overlapping contexts that are also associated with activism, performance, fiction, visual art, dance, and film. We need the listening experience of the reading as we need action in stillness, to escape and embrace the New York feeling of too much happening at once. How can artists come to the podium in Parish Hall, alongside poets very familiar with that podium, and the combination change our expectations of the poetry reading? I am just as interested in readers as I am in building audiences. I welcome you to Wednesday nights at The Poetry Project in a leather blazer with a little house music playing in the schmoozing time. I hope to bring together an intergenerational group of people asking how can we expand the definition of poetry.

*Ariel Goldberg, Wednesday Night Readings Coordinator*

The Friday Night Reading Series at The Poetry Project will serve as a platform for poets and poetic thinkers to experiment with movement, sound, and video. In this series, interdisciplinary artists and writers will take on poetic approaches to mediums and subject matters that emerge from the body and permeate the outside world. Consider these evenings to be informal experiments stimulating conscious awareness on several levels at once, encounters that will simultaneously protest, trouble, and charm the body.

*Christine Shan Shan Hou, Friday Night Readings Coordinator*

As the Talk Series Coordinator, I am most interested in exploring the social, political, and economic dynamics that inform how art and poetry are remembered and forgotten. As a site in which multiple poetic lineages have converged throughout its long history, The Poetry Project has taken place (and continues to take place) in a city and neighborhood rapidly evolving at both the benefit and expense of individual artists and writers, allowing some to flourish while others fade away. The particular economic and social shifts around New York have forced migrations, realignments, and disappearances, continuously altering what and who is discussed in the local communities. While my curatorial scope will exceed New York, the city remains a particular example—related to many around the world—of how these transformations affect how and where poetry takes place. As such, it will be a continuous reference point for me and those who speak during the talks. The Project has served as a venue for preservation of these disappearing individuals, groups, and works while also remaining a vibrant meeting place for young artists and writers to hear new and established work. As a curator, I am most compelled by issues of visibility and invisibility, voice and voicelessness, and how larger social and historical forces structure both. While one of the central question of any poetics might be *What should be remembered?*, I am also interested in the implicit question embedded within it: *What has been forgotten?* These two questions format my curatorial program, which will focus on individual artists, poets, filmmakers, and performers who have been either forgotten altogether or only recently remembered.

*Andrew Durbin, Talk Series Coordinator*

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The final issue: **Aufgabe 13**

featuring poetry in translation from India, from 7 Indian languages, Guest edited by Biswamit Dwibedy & a special section of poetry originally published in the Moroccan journal *Souffles*

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Forthcoming this fall:

*Towards The Primeval Lightning Field* by Will Alexander (SECOND EDITION)

*Lazy Suzie* by Suzanne Doppelt, translated by Cole Swensen

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—And, at \$25 each postpaid in U.S. (\$27.03 in New York state), both titles hardcover w/dust jacket and printed in Italy: *Like One of Us* (110 pages), Allan Kaplan's first full-length book of poems since *Paper Airplane \* West* (129 pages), a novel by Carl Thayer, poet (*Poems from Naltsus Bichidin*) and actor (*The True Story of Jesse James*). Both are also available from the booksellers named above.

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## THE NEW SCHOOL

### INNOVATIVE & IMMERSIVE LITERATURE

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DECEMBER 4, 2014 at 6:30pm: **Illya Szilak** (Huffington Post), **Julie Buntin** (CLMP), **Andy Hunter** (Electric Literature), **Flávia Rocha** (Rattapallax) & others discuss innovative ways poets & writers are pushing how readers experience literature.

DECEMBER 5, 2014 at 6:30pm: **Rick Moody**, **Paul D. Miller** aka **DJ Spooky**, **Matthea Harvey**, **Marcio-André**, **Ram Devineni** & **Rene Veron** reading and presentation of their new writing using interactive technology from APPs & multimedia films to augmented reality.

As technology has become more engaging and interactive; many new tools have opened up to writers and poets to reach their readers. Join us for a two-day symposium on the future of technology and literature. [www.rattapallax.com](http://www.rattapallax.com)

Co-sponsored by The New School Graduate Writing Program, Rattapallax Magazine, Council for Literary Magazines and Presses, New York State Council on the Arts, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, National Endowment for the Arts & Poets & Writers, Inc.



## Rattapallax

# FALL WORKSHOPS

FALL TUES/THURS WORKSHOPS WILL BE HELD AT ABRONS ART CENTER, 466 GRAND STREET.  
SATURDAY WORKSHOPS WILL BE HELD AT DIXON PLACE, 161 CHRYSTIE STREET.  
CHECK [POETRYPROJECT.ORG](http://POETRYPROJECT.ORG) FOR MORE INFORMATION.

*BEST BIRTHDAY EVER! : EXPERIMENTS WITH TIME, OR, HOW TO HAVE MORE FUN BEING A LIVING POET IN THE DIGITAL AGE*

DIA FELIX

Thursday, 7-9 pm

10 sessions begin October 9

Rock and roll includes everything?

In this workshop, we will experiment with crossing our existing writing practices with the broader possibilities of digital media.

We will consider and reflect on the centrality of live readings, social connections, identity-based configurations, metanarratives and performances of the self which can characterize the contemporary living poet's life. Wanting freedom, excellence, suspecting that there are not answers, and expecting surprises, we'll be together, with and without apps. We will experiment with fracturing, alchemy, powerpoint, surprise, cyborg embraces, chaos, transformation, lies, stories, and magic. We will engage in deep readings, conversations, experience pleasure, and make friends. ALL OF THE THINGS, in high resolution. Tag me!!!!???

**Dia Felix** is a writer and filmmaker who's screened films at independent festivals (Frameline, Outfest, San Francisco Film Festival), and performed literary work a lot too (Segue Series, Radar, Dixon Place). She is the author of the novel *Nochita* (City Lights/Sister Spit, 2014).

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# AT THE POETRY PROJECT

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JENNIFER BARTLETT

Tuesday, 7-9 pm

10 sessions begin September 30

Every poet has a body which they write through and with. In this workshop we will focus on how individual impairment and the somatic experience affect poetics. We will read, discuss, and write poems based on the work of Robert Duncan, Larry Eigner, Robert Grenier, Norma Cole, CA Conrad, Bernadette Mayer, and Ellen McGrath Smith. Everyone will get a free copy of *Beauty is a Verb; The New Poetry of Disability*.

**Jennifer Bartlett** is author of *Derivative of the Moving Image* and *(a) lullaby without any music*. She is co-editor of *Beauty is a Verb; The New Poetry of Disability*. Individual poems are forthcoming in *Aufgabe* and *Poetry*. She is the biographer of Larry Eigner.

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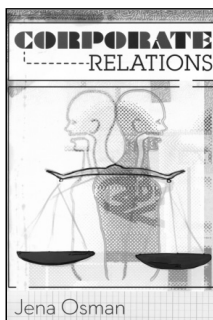
Saturday, 2-4 pm

10 sessions begin October 4

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**Nicole Peyrafitte** is a pluridisciplinary artist. Her latest project, "Bi-Valve: Vulvic Space / Vulvic Knowledge," was published by StockportFlats. more info: [www.nicolepeyrafitte.com](http://www.nicolepeyrafitte.com).

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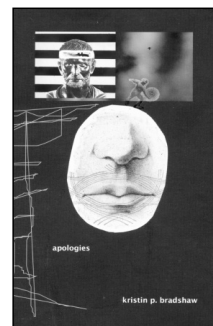
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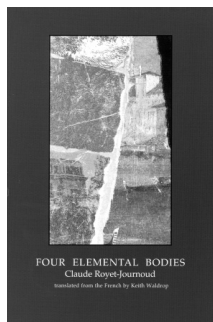
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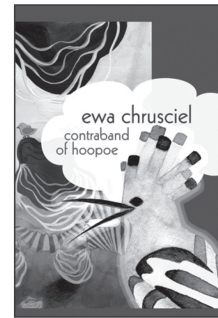
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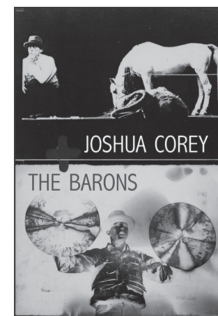
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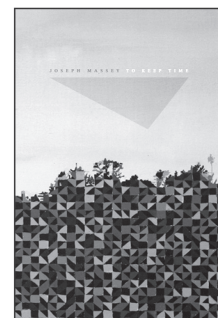
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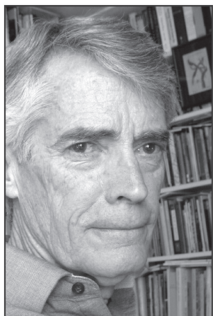
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(*Capone/Waldrop continued from pg. 7*) of writing and its relation to time and sound, and though it is a single poem, the collaborative conversation of its creation is distinctly heard. I considered these ideas and utilized them in my treatment of the poem, thus opening, in tandem with the visually apparent closing as my adaptation makes it illegible.

Rosmarie, I've been meaning to ask you about the process that you and Keith used in writing *Light Travels*, and wondered if you might share it with us?

**RW:** the form is a variation of the Japanese "renga," a collaborative, linked poem of alternating stanzas of 3 and 2 lines. (The first stanza is a haiku: 5-7-5 syllables, the second, a couplet of 7-7 syllables). We did not keep the syllable count. With only two of us alternating stanzas, we didn't want one person always to get 3 lines, the other always 2. So we inserted a 3rd stanza that could be either 1 line or 4. Each pair of 2 stanzas is supposed to be able to stand-alone. We emphasized this by always repeating the partner's stanza.

**PP:** Could we talk a little about medium? I like how you, Rosmarie, bring up the shift in tactics in your own work toward discursive and structural relations, a shift in the art. There is a sort of new intimacy to be found in this shift, in closeness to the materiality of both language and its medium of inscription as opposed to feelings or expositions of intimacy performed in more typically figurative language. There is a notion here, in a heightened sensitivity to the material medium, that poetry can be inscribed on more than a solitary page, that this page and medium could be redefined, that space could be granted greater agency in the work of poetry. Rosmarie,

as a bookmaker, and Francesca, as a poet (do you mind the label?) whose work is a poetry outside of the typical medium, how do you envision the "rules" of the medium can be broken or further broken? And, what may essentially be the impetus for this?

**FC:** I often refer to this quote from Emmett Williams "The poem as picture is as old as the hills, or the men who once lived in them, scratching their histories and fantasies in preliterate strokes on the walls of caves." Ultimately, with writing and visual art (not to mention all the other art forms) we are all working with language, communication. I struggled for a long time with questioning what I could do or not do in one medium or the other and I found it to be incredibly stifling. I'd like to say that I ignore the rules altogether, but I think instead I am using them to blur lines between mediums. At this point I am interested in rules insofar as applying a set of rules from one medium to another. For instance in my project *Weaving Language* I compare the rules of English grammar to that of weaving as a new means for translation from fiber to text. In the other work I have been doing with scanning, I'm applying painting practices to written material. I have been asking myself, what can visual art learn from writing, and what can writing learn from visual art?

**RW:** Applying the procedures of one medium to another is very interesting. I can see that really working for you, Francesca. I suppose I've been doing something like it, in a narrower way, by writing prose poems (I've written an essay on this, "Why Do I Write Prose Poems when my True Love is Verse") and by using collage. But I don't

## One Foot Out the Door



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What a pleasure to have all these stories by Lewis Warsh in one volume! They tend to be low-key, almost off-hand, but each with a poetic kernel that infects and defuses throughout, which makes them (though it is a critical cliché to say it this way) haunting. But that's what they do. They haunt. That's what the best writing does, often without excessive flashiness or even letting us know, as the narrative drifts through the material from which each is constructed, how it's done. These are extraordinary tales. SAMUEL R. DELANY

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Lewis Warsh moves through the crowded street, a reporter, pad in hand and pencil behind ear. The sentences hold the simple truths of his heart. That amidst the nearly incomprehensible violence of daily life one reality is a singular desire—love. The purity of love, the essence of love. Recalling the quiet resonance of Salinger, drawing the curtain on the horror of inhumanity, settling down on rumpled sheets, alone or in reach of salvation, Lewis reports with poet-investigator eye—that love has come to save the day

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start out with a method except of a “global” kind, e.g. collage. Most specific procedures I’ve hit on intuitively while playing around. Then I realize, this is interesting—let’s work more with this, go farther in this direction. The impetus to push at borders seems to me inherent in the creative process. The possibilities are infinite. As Jacques Roubaud says: “We can always go farther, but not always step by step.”

**PP:** It seems at the level of methodology, you two hold an important distinction from one another. One art is the result of, initially, an accident or intuition. While the other is a positive overextension of practices, woven together, working into something that’s more than the sum of its derivations. One results in an authorship that is homogenous while the other works toward the negation (at least in the case of James Camp) of authorship—the machine of *Camp Printing* being as much the author than the she who provides the agency for it to work—or as it seems in some of your prose work, Rosmarie—I’m thinking specifically of a personal favorite, *Lawn of Excluded Middle*—the dissonance of a sort of cognitive grammar found in a prosaic parataxis. However, in both of your work, the use of symbol(s), either as deployment of material for poesis or as a zeroing-in to an image of infinite possibility, remains consistent. Could you speak to your relationship and your work’s relationship to symbols?

**FC:** In the discussion of poetics, there are so many different ways to consider symbols. With Rosmarie’s work I think of symbolism, carrying combinations of words into an atmosphere of particular images that form meaning, however abstractly. I’ve always been interested in symbols on a very basic representational level for communication, beginning with the alphabet and its various symbols for the sounds that make up our language. When I was a child learning to write, I was bothered by the singular letters of the alphabet, I wanted them to be spelled phonetically ‘Ay’, ‘Bee’, ‘Cee’ and so on. I also thought that letters should represent more than just a sound, but a thing instead, closer to the workings of Eastern languages. If that was the case in English then words could be sentences, and sentences could be essays, and the experience of reading would be very different! I see it as my job as a poet/artist to question and play with these principal rules. Now I’m more focused on the way we experience the symbols of our language visually, the relationship between text/image, the cognitive moment when we perceive marks to be writing instead of just a drawing. John Cayley calls this the *catastrophic moment*. Cy Twombly did a magnificent job exploring these themes in his work, as did Isidore Isou, amongst others who have influenced my thinking. There are numerous artists and writers throughout history who have done tremendous creative and academic research on this topic, and so now I’m using these figures as symbols in my work as well. Through directly utilizing their work as a visual mark, I adopt their original message as an aspect of my own.

It strikes me now how many of the words I rely on to describe my work can be duplicitous! Symbolism, symbol, figurative, figure, form, mark—they all have multiple and overlapping meanings when applied to either discussion around visual art or that of literature, making it difficult to describe work created in combination.



**RW:** Well, words are the symbols I'm most concerned with. I once heard Richard Wilbur say that he most prizes the words that have one unambiguous meaning. I am at the opposite pole. I love words exactly for their complexity, their multiple meanings (in the dictionary sense) and even larger field of "sense" (Vygotsky's word for all the effects, intellectual and emotional, a word or other symbol can have). Symbols in the larger sense I tend to use with a question mark.

**PP:** When looking at some of your work, Francesca, and at *Camp Printing* too, the ambiguity of text and image, their duplicity toward one another, is so striking that one can only wonder if there's been some terrible misunderstanding, that words and text have been, up until now, deployed incorrectly. A text's use value is effaced. Even more specifically, *poetry's* values—the arguably basest of which being legibility—are effaced. Maybe this makes a work, in a sense, catastrophic? When two systems of value come into collision? With what value are we left?

**RW:** Mallarmé said, "destruction was my Beatrice." So yes to collision and "catastrophic." As for "with what value are we left?" Something is born. It may of course be Horace's (now proverbial) "ridiculous mouse." But if we're lucky it's something that gives pleasure.

**FC:** Writing and drawing are deployed in the same way: a series of content driven decisions that are visually manifested through mark making. Emerging from the same intentions of communication *on the walls of caves*, image and text have long since branched off into two distinct, immensely valuable and highly sophisticated directions. This is what makes it so peculiar and fascinating to discover the various alignments, these places where we can stitch them back together. 🖨️

(Gordon continued from pg. 9)

Ace Landers is a pseudonym, one that spares its bearer the smear of such blatantly commercial aspirations, freeing him instead to retain untainted the potential literary cachet of his real name. I've known the man behind this pseudonym for years. If forced to pin the responsibility for my having become a poet on a single person, I'd be hard-pressed to look elsewhere.

\*

For half an hour now, back and forth, we've passed this same small piece of paper. She unfolds it, quietly, surreptitiously, in such a way that the teacher—busy, we think, with the more important business of making immediate some otherwise remote and uninteresting geometric principle—won't notice, suspect.

\*

"In short, that which seems a perfectly visible, exterior, unhidden disease," Connie Palmen notes, "is precisely the disease of the one who hides." According to numerous websites recycling the same information, Connie Palmen suffers from psoriasis, although I can't find any direct proof to support this, and wonder if it isn't somehow a conflation of Palmen, the author, and one of the characters in her novel, *The Laws*.

\*

In 1977, Ronald Johnson's *Radi os* is published, a book of poetry Johnson created by erasing words from the first four books of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Also published in 1977, Ted Berrigan's strange, disjointed novel *Clear the Range*, which was written by altering text from Max Brand's pocket-western *Twenty Notches*.

\*

Our word for paper comes from the Old French word *papier*, itself derived from the Latin word *papyrus*, which meant not only the aquatic plant that thrived in the Nile Delta in Ancient Egypt, but also the early material on which to write, material that was assembled by pressing together the pith extracted from this plant.

\*

What I do learn is that Palmen's college thesis dealt with the identity and place of the author within the novel. Let me try it this way: "[T]hat which seems a perfectly visible, exterior, unhidden disease, is precisely the disease of the one who hides," notes one of the characters in *The Laws*, a novel by Dutch writer Connie Palmen.

\*

She's smiling, scribbling something in response, letting collapse into its well-worn creases the paper she hands back to me.

\*

The Latin word is derived from the Greek *papyros*, itself said to come from the Ancient Egyptian word for royalty, for that which is of the Pharaoh.

\*

Mario is a plumber who acts more like an exterminator, ridding the weird kingdom of his game from walking mushrooms and hammer-wielding turtles. He stomps on all his cute enemies, but Yoshi, Yoshi swallows them whole. Die. Die. Die. The Raid's fumes force me from the encampment I've made of my room.

\*

There is a brazen sadness at the center of the famous poet's poems, a sense of embattled, bitter abandonment, as though they're striking out against the deep loneliness of some remote, unnamed transgression suffered in childhood that remains nonetheless stingily present. They're the sort of poems whose speaker one wants to comfort, swaddle, and cajole into sleep, as much as to slap square in the face, saying, Snap out of it already...you're an adult; life gets better!

\*

In 1982, *columns* by Doris Cross is published, a book that crosses-out lines of text from *Webster's Secondary School Dictionary* to create visual poems, a practice Cross had been involved with for decades already.

\*

The one time I've seen my mother drunk she danced with a broom around our house to a song by Paul Simon. Art Garfunkel, his old bandmate, once swam in the Dead Sea to alleviate his psoriasis.

\*

Today, I'm sitting in a row of empty chairs, waiting for the famous poet to read. Behind me: another row of empty chairs. Behind that, another. And another. Another. If the chair is recognized as a symbol of authority, then what about the empty chair? Is this its opposite? The look on the famous poet's face—disappointment, yes, but not a trace of surprise—echoes exactly the emotional tenor of the famous poet's poems. In less than a year, this fame will blossom exponentially; but today, at this bookstore, including the host, myself, and the famous poet, there are a total of four of us here. In less than a year, the famous poet is awarded the Pulitzer Prize.

\*

While the teacher's gone on about angles and degrees, our messages have grown from innocent, teenage flirtation to outright vulgarity. I want you to put this in there. I want you to put that in this. Then I'll do this. Then you do that.

Then we'll both, well, you get the idea. Nearly twenty years later, and this note remains the most erotic thing I've yet written in my life.

\*

According to *A Dictionary of Egyptian Civilization*, papyrus, because of its abundance, was a symbol of vigor, of the world in gestation.

\*

I've never read a book by John Updike, but I've read each of Nicholson Baker's, including his competitive tribute to Updike, *U & I*, where he mentions psoriasis as one of the many uncanny connections the two share.

\*

In 1989, Stephen Ratcliffe's erasure of Shakespeare's sonnets [*where late the sweet*] *BIRDS SANG* is published; the same source text is later used by Jen Bervin in her 2004 book *Nets*.

\*

More than any of his poems, Lew Welch is remembered for authoring a sentence from his time working for the Foote, Cone & Belding advertising agency, a four-word, consonant-heavy, and miraculously redundant sentence that continues to weave its way through the culture, at once a reflection of past speech patterns and a precursor to the clipped and hurried truncation of text messaging, a sentence that would ring through my head every time I reached for the can of spray: *Raid Kills Bugs Dead*.

\*

I'm passing the paper back to her, but here's the teacher. Here's the teacher who didn't notice what we were up to. Here's the teacher who didn't notice what we were up to until now. He takes the note, unfolds it, reads a little silently, looking from her to me, then from me to her, before refolding it, and slipping it into the breast pocket of his suit.

\*

The poet-narrator of Baker's *The Anthologist* name-checks the actual poet Matthew Rohrer, who within two minutes of meeting shows me the alphabet tattooed around his ankle. He doesn't get the job teaching where I was then a grad student; Peter Gizzi does, who introduces me to Bill Corbett.

\*

We drive the nine hours from Denver to Salt Lake City for our reading at The King's English Bookshop. There are three of us, none of whom have been to this city before. Naturally, we're excited, excited to meet the local

poets, tour the town, experience the brief celebrity endowed by reading to a roomful of strangers, most of whom, as writers themselves, we're certain will be attentively welcoming, gracious, engaged. We drop our stuff off at a local motel, freshen up, and head to the bookstore. The small bookstore. The very small book store. We actually do the readings in the frame shop next door, the clerk tells us. So let's head over there in a sec. There are several rows of folding chairs set up in the frame shop, four of whose occupants constitute the entire audience.

\*

Benjamin Franklin is said to have introduced the first lending library to the public. On October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1776, he wrote in his journal, "The Itching continues, but somewhat abated," in reference to his own battle with psoriasis. Eight days later, he complains about swollen ankles.

\*

In 1990, inspired by Iron Maiden's metal-epic, "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," I decide to memorize the entire original Coleridge poem, stumbling here and there, until I finally give up a dozen stanzas in, having encountered too many words I can't figure out how to pronounce.

\*

There is an inexorably strict, unyielding binary governing musical taste among my sixth-grade classmates, an either/or question whose answer determines the potential for camaraderie, splitting with divisive prowess the entire class into one of two camps. Do you like rap or do you like metal? There is no middle ground. There are no other options. We ask this question to everyone.

\*

Outside of Paul Simon, Rod Stewart and Willie Nelson are foremost among the men my mother considers to be sexy.

\*

Noah Gordon's novel *Matter of Choice* appears in 1996, the same year Bob Christian begins playing fullback for the Atlanta Falcons.

\*

In December of 2006, CariDee English wins America's Next Top Model, which brings her international attention and a lucrative modeling contract. During the show, English's openness about her battle with psoriasis leads to a position as a spokesperson for the National Psoriasis Foundation.

\*

According to the website, Bandtoband.com, which maps connections between musical acts through a database of all of the band members who've played on any particular album, there are nine steps from Stewart to Nelson.

\*

Nabokov wrote his first nine novels in Russian. His psoriasis was so bad that, as he said in a letter to his wife, it nearly drew him to suicide.

\*

I'm sorry, but I've got to go back and watch the store, our host informs us. Why don't you just introduce one another and come back next door when you're done. I know one of the audience members already, a poet who miraculously has seen me read in both New York and Iowa City. It's a small poetry world. A very small poetry world. In Boston, a dozen years ago, my punk band played a show at T.T. the Bear's, a hole-in-the-wall club that stank of vomit, stale beer, and whatever the opposite of ambition smells like. Our excitement about playing there disintegrated as soon as we realized the audience for our show was comprised entirely of one person—the club's sound guy.

\*

According to the World Psoriasis Day consortium, two to three percent of the world's population has psoriasis.

\*

In 1999, on my back on the floor of a huge gallery in the newly-opened MASS MoCA complex, staring up at a stack of books in the middle of Robert Rauschenberg's massive exhibit, *The 1/4 Mile or 2 Furlong Piece*, a man mistakenly takes my photograph, assuming I too am part of the artwork.

\*

Sure, it's disappointing to drive nine hours in order to read to four people for fifteen minutes, but four people is better than none. This is what I'm consolingly repeating to myself when, two minutes into the reading, one of the four audience members' cellphone rings, he answers it, steps outside, and stays there. Sure, it's disappointing to drive nine hours in order to read to three people for fifteen minutes, but three people is better than none.

\*

In a 2007 video on YouTube, English says, "I remember going to the pool and people looking at me really funny; and actually getting kicked out of a pool

once because, you know, watch out—it's a diseased girl coming in the pool. And they thought I was gonna spread it. Now, still I, you know, remember that feeling I had from it."

\*

I wake with a black eye and a blurry sense of how it got there. I'm twenty-one and my body aches all over. I remember meeting the singer of the famous punk band, something about it not going so well. As a teenager, the highlight of the month was the arrival of *Maximum Rock & Roll*, the bible of punk culture, which I'd paw through until my fingers were covered in newsprint. The singer of the famous punk band penned my favorite column. When I was eighteen, I sent him a seven-page letter, the longest thing I'd ever written. I told him that his column made me feel like I was a part of something bigger than myself.

\*

In 2001, I create a poem by erasing words from "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," but it feels hollow, an imitative exercise, and so remains extant only in the Dover Thrift Edition of the book that still sits on my shelf today.

\*

I'm seventeen. I point at my sister, the large scales covering her knees and arms. At least I don't have a disease, I say, in front of a roomful of other teenagers, a room she then runs out of in tears.

\*

It was an anonymous fan letter, but he answered it, and the feeling just grew. In *After Theory*, Terry Eagleton writes, "You can be burnt to death because of culture, or it can be a question of whether to wear that rather fetching Pre-Raphaelite-style shirt." For me, a dozen years ago, it was nearly both. This afternoon, I google the name of the band, the club in Boston where they played, and the word "fight." The first hit is an old interview with the singer where I learn exactly what happened that night:

Apparently, this guy had been coming up to the other guys in the band, going "I'll put you up at my house and make you dinner," being really friendly and he comes out with a couple of his friends. They're just like *Maximum Rock 'n Roll* punks—Rip-Offs t-shirts and a fuckin' little Mohawk and a goatee. He's walking outside the van and he says, "Give me a fuckin' t-shirt." He's had a few too many beers at

this point and I said, "Fuck you." The van's windows were rolled up. "Ah, you fuckin' rock star, you write your *Maximum Rock 'n Roll* column, give me a fuckin' t-shirt." [...] and he turns around and smashes a full bottle of beer right against the window where I'm sitting. That happened so quickly, we didn't know whether the window was broken or what but Paul was on that guy and punching him in the face and I got out of that van as quickly as anybody had ever gotten out of a vehicle and by the time I got out, the guy was already on the ground and I just hit him about 50 times in the kidneys and back and beat the crap out of him.

\*

Do you like rap or do you like metal? This or that. It's simple, really. The obvious subtext (can you be my friend or can't you?) floating perhaps too near the surface of our asking remains nonetheless immersed in the oblique, since the interrogator's position is revealed only after having elicited a response. Do you like rap or do you like metal? It's an easy question. It's black and white. The answers pile up: Metal. Rap. Rap. Metal. Rap. Metal. Already, we're organizing around our responses, ostracizing and conscribing, standing here or there, equally split, separate, excited when our ranks swell.

\*

I am on an airplane, crossing out words from Noah Gordon's *Matters of Choice*. Bob Christian is sitting next to me. He asks me about the book, what I'm doing. I tell him about Rauschenberg, Phillips, and Ronald Johnson. He hasn't heard of them, which isn't surprising. He tells me he played for the Atlanta Falcons, and can't believe it when I say I haven't heard of them either. Then he tells me about sin, salvation, and Jesus Christ. He invites me to his church. I invite him to my reading. Neither of us go.

\*

An Oxygen Media survey, the company that owns exclusive cable rights to the show, claims that twenty-five percent of young American women would rather win America's Next Top Model than the Nobel Peace Prize. As of 2009, the Nobel Peace Prize carried a purse of around 1.4 million dollars, while CariDee English's win on Top Model brought her a \$100,000 modeling contract.

\*

Do you like rap or do you like metal? It's a question without uncertainty, mystery, and doubt, a question so crystalline in its deployment, so yoked to the stability of its poles, that there is never any hesitation from our respondents, no contemplative pauses, no considering of the options, nothing to halt our steamrolling inquisition; nothing, that is, until we get to David. David, who wears his hair in a wet Jheri curl. David, whose jeans are always fashionably tight. David, who at twelve plays the guitar before any of us dare pick it up. David, with his cowboy boots, with the comb in his back pocket. David, who is, as Ted Berrigan wrote, feminine, marvelous, and tough. In a few weeks, David teaches us the meaning of the word *mulatto*. But today, right now, we have a question for him. Do you like rap or do you like metal? Neither, David says divisively, confidently, confusingly. I like funk. Instantaneously, our question is no longer so black and white.

\*

For \$14,000, one can purchase online a copy of Nabokov's *Look at the Harlequins!* which contains the following inscription:

for Gordon Lish with best regards from Vladimir Nabokov

❏

(Notley/Languell continued from pg. 12)

A story develops but one free of plot in the muscular or generic sense. Notley dismisses procedural drama out of hand: "Using Cop Central state of the art/ equipment who cares what it is—cut in/ description from elsewhere—expert/ identifies video victim. Maybe Cop uses a hacker/ cut in hacker scenes if you like—then you can/ have what you want..." It doesn't matter how they got the information, only that the identity of a murder victim in a snuff film has been determined—it's Harry, a woman whose ghost searches for meaning in her death, haunts her killer and Ines both. Cop suspects the two attacks are related, and despite a lack of support from his Superiors, he wants to solve the crimes.

Frequent readers of Notley's work will be unsurprised by the flouting of convention and punctuation; one of her long-term poetic goals is the creation of a new genre: the feminine epic. In interviews, Notley has stated her belief in (dis/un)covering a pre-Homeric female poetic voice, an original mind, through

trance, dream, and other dissociative techniques of thinking, writing, and living. She engages this practice in her poems and her life, which are indistinguishable from one another, on the margins. Ines, too, has made the margin her home: “Now there is only a rage/ unkind/ but of my kind/ Who wrote that line—it’s I, who’ve/ gone to Erebus and Night for you/ If you don’t know what that is fuck you...” At one point, Charlatan wonders how she has endured the shooting without falling apart, and he realizes she has nothing tangible to lose, unlike him with his materialism. In this way, she is totally free.

And yet, while she lives on poetry, she also understands it lacks utility in most environments: “poetry won’t/ protect you, like religion’s supposed to/ unless you have a position—/ a way to fuck it...” A sexual position, a tenure-track position. In an interview with the *Kenyon Review*, Notley says, “Theory has nothing whatsoever to do with poetry. The only thing that matters is how much talent someone has and how far they’re willing to go with it—the rest of it’s largely bullshit, though it’s possible one needs some bullshit in life.”

Ines’ poems, recognizably Notley, appear amid secondary narrative arcs throughout the work. Overwhelmed by disgust with warmongering patriarchy, these poems drive into the vulgar, a delightful ugly shift:

wartorn body parts fucked  
in wounds  
by cabinet Members. Cont-  
inue to get off, it’s what you do  
best  
don’t you

think?

This is not the bullshit Notley needs. But in response to this unacceptable order of things, Notley has found in the vulgar a suitable idiom, even going so far as to slip a pun into the title. In an interview on the KCRW radio program *Bookworm*, she explains that in the French translation of the title, *Le baiser de la négativité*, “baiser” also means “fuck.”

In this world we are fucked by negativity. She laments: “But god what a drag it has been to be a/ woman

all these years...” *Negativity’s Kiss* ends not with a crime solved but in anticipation of much greater injustices on the horizon. Notley writes, “success has not been ours...” Our tiny planet will show us the significance of all our worldbuilding when at the end of the book, and at the end of the world, a storm is coming that is bigger than everyone. 📖

(*Yearous-Algozin/Kaplan continued from pg. 13*)  
But how about this:

the sky ends at the beginning of  
the world it’s a little funny when  
it gets uncurled by Holly Melgard  
infinity where the sky ends the  
big sky ends at the beginning of  
the sky it may be a little high but I  
can fly the sky ends big bang may  
it be a boomerang the sky

OK, that’s also good.

So maybe some of the book is interesting.

Or at least Holly’s mother is. Maybe her character especially shines through, vacillating as she does between a logorrheic, detail-obsessed mania, and the kind of gentle acuity seen above, both eloquent and strange.

OK, and maybe it’s also interesting how we, as readers, get to pass similarly through the quiet, peripheral conversations surrounding some very real tragedies—the death of an old friend, and Holly’s own brush with serious illness, among others—frightening, not only for their implied gravity, but also for the book’s anxious, fragmented rendering of that implication. How, because of the nature of a voicemail message, nothing is ever explicitly discussed, only postponed, and only ever in the most fragile, hurried sense.

And OK, maybe Holly’s brother is also really funny. And maybe Joey is really sweet (at least with the tape recorder rolling), and self-effacing in his dotting concern.

So maybe this, ultimately, is the book’s poetic problem: Holly’s life, it turns out, *is* actually interesting—but is it interesting as itself, or because we suddenly have this proprietary access to it? Do we really think these excerpts

have literary merit, or are they just a way we justify our voyeurism? It’s helpful to remember that, in the book, Holly’s voice is entirely absent (the transcript coming from her own phone’s voicemail messages), which only amplifies the sense in which even this essential, organizing principle—“Holly Melgard”—feels in no small part like a projection.

Is that not perfect for a book written by a lover? For a book written from a kind of love?

*Holly Melgard’s Friends & Family* is an interesting book because it confronts us, again and again, with this most basic question of partnership: “Do I actually love this person for who they are, or do I just love the ways in which they confirm my ability to wield a kind of power over another human being?” 📖

(*Hafez/Muradi Continued from pg. 14*)

Squires makes another bold move in his answer to what he identifies as a cultural gap between Hafez’s Persia and the contemporary English reader. In between the poems, he adds a layer of his own short prose interjections that he likens to “commentary, explanation, foil, dialogue, and reflection.” This creates a type of hybrid text, where the voice of the translator is entirely audible and accompanies us along the way, asking questions (“We expect poems to go somewhere. But what if they are already there?”), offering insights (explanations of the symbolism of the garden or the court poet-to-patron relationship), and generally prodding readers to dig further. But these interludes also serve as a sort of mirror for Squires’ own unsettled reading and translations, thereby helping to demystify his role as the authority. Squires goes into further detail on each particular poem in the thorough and colorful notes section at the end, where, he also justifies particular choices of words, often (refreshingly for the honesty) to his own dissatisfaction.

In Aria Fani’s thoughtful essay, “Rewriting Hafez: Re-theorizing Untranslatability in Persian Poetry,” the author suggests that translating Hafez requires “bend[ing] the target language beyond its comfort zone to accommodate the Persian mode

of signification.” Squires makes considerable efforts. In Persian there is no upper/lowercase distinction, and Squires limits his capitalization to the first letter of each poem and proper nouns. In Hafez’s Persian, there is also no comma, so Squires uses indentation to affect pause. He also approximates the formal diction of the original by avoiding the colloquial and in a way that still does not alienate the contemporary reader. In fact, it is only when stowaway words like “blockhead” and phrases about check-cashing enter that one is badly startled. And of course, there is the rhythm of the ghazal. As a poet, Squires has a strong ear for it and makes good use of lineation, internal rhyme, assonance, and the occasional refrain to approximate the musicality of the form generally and the linguistic play of Hafez in particular. For example: “we who are free and without pretence/ who are not concerned with trying to save face/ are better than these po-faced hypocrites/ as those in the know know.” But there are moments, too, where the poetry sags, heavy-footed, as in “the road of lovers’ hearts has been cut/ by your languid gaze/ from this we know that the drink you serve is potent”.

From the second poem in the book, which reads, “friend/ with Hafez you must give up/ all hope of sleep all prospect of repose/ the very idea of stability,” Squires entreats us to a destabilizing to come. We are asked to suspend our many pre-conceptions. One of the lingering questions here and throughout most commentary on Hafez is whether he is a mystical or courtly poet, whether his allusions are of the spiritual realm or the earthly world. What do we make, for instance,

of, “I have relinquished my life/ out of longing for your mouth/ and yet you still withhold/ such a tiny thing as that?” Squires treats each poem uniquely, translating some in the one direction and others in the other direction but mostly remains committed to a central ambiguity, so that he generally preserves Hafez’s own wink to us: “but the question comes back/ and with the hint of a smile/ mad about whom for whom?”

At the same time, he does not entirely destabilize things. Squires is frank about his intentions and who his audience is. He leaves more “difficult” poems to the end so as not to turn off the reader (Hafez is rolling over!), and, the interjections, too, can be viewed as a sort of hand-holding or baby-stepping. In fact, he even at one point says that his prose pieces help to “to punctuate the poetry and cut its sweetness, which otherwise would be like drinking glass after glass of Sauternes, and would cloy...” Excuse me? Not in the original language! If he means the English language or the Western appetite, then isn’t that a problem of lack of imagination on part of the reader or translator? While Squires acknowledges the legacy of Orientalism and is even weary of conflating Hafez’s ambiguity with stereotypes of “mysteriousness,” he is not as clear about his statement implying a kind of (poetic? cultural?) effusiveness. So, while he has good intentions, even Squires’ attempt at destabilizing can be normalizing.

Coming to Hafez as an adolescent clutching a question (never an answer) each time, I drew my own interpretations —and a different interpretation each time. And that’s the Hafez I love: the one who comes

to me anew each time. Here, I’m not just getting Hafez, or a particular translation of Hafez, I am getting Squires punctuated by Hafez. I guess that, in itself, is new. 📖

(*Magi/Fritsch continued from page 15*)  
 Jill Magi is in good company, though. Apart from recent authors (like Dodie Bellamy who published *Academonia* in 2006), other American writers have had to endure the displeasure of institutional academia. After going “unpaid for a year’s teaching,”<sup>1</sup> Herman Melville took to the sea, working aboard the *St. Lawrence*, on what was the first voyage of the maritimographer’s life. Contemporaneously, “a beardless, ruddy-faced young man”<sup>2</sup> taught a classroom of “dirty, ill-favoured young brats”<sup>3</sup> for “a paltry \$72.50 for five months”<sup>4</sup> in Woodbury. Both would attempt to teach again, and quit. *LABOR* ends with a literal awakening. The poet is no longer dreaming, but fully-engaged and active in a world of convoluted labor relations and little compensation for working artists. If conditions are to improve, I must believe, then it will require more work from poets who make demands with their writing, like Jill Magi, rather than keeping artistic practice separate from fiscal reality. 📖

<sup>1</sup> Metcalf, Paul. *Genoa*. Highlands, NC: Jargon, 1965. 17. Print.

<sup>2</sup> Reynolds, David S.. *A Historical Guide to Walt Whitman*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. 20. Print.

<sup>3</sup> Miller, Edwin Haviland, ed.. *Selected Letters of Walt Whitman*. Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1990. 3. Print.

<sup>4</sup> Reynolds, David S.. *A Historical Guide to Walt Whitman*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. 20. Print.

# A Poem

## *Colleen Lookingbill*

### ***from Drift***

(at length you come through slow shades of spill)

obliging sound verge in spherical prolixity

more and more tread on my name without stopping, untie fastidious

basin of a fountain, secret that we respect, consulting mercy wound round

fourfold my constant prayer unlooped, I sing and read generous ramble

crystal moment touches morning grooves

murmuring waters link caressing journeys

knows only tide changed gold, knotted like muscles tremble before love

and sound respire in my arms' small space

# RITUALS & PROMPTS

## Selfies:

This exercise is about raising your digital proxy into something more stirring, mysterious and simply better than your actual self. This is not your self but your 'selfie.' Try to think of this when talking to yourself. Instead of addressing yourself as self, address yourself as selfie. As in, "Selfie, do you really need to have that second ice cream of the day? Not only for caloric penalty, but also because the IRS has now taken the trouble to send you a certified letter? That you had to stand in line to receive?"

Dress your personal selfie in the finest golden rags and bloated gummi bear over the eyes. Gently fill in the tiny gaps in the teeth where there are cracks or chips. Microfiberdaubtheribs. Split your hairs into tinier hairs to sprint the gold fur superior. Robotic the between-lilyleg to permeate the Vice perfection, Vice as in the shotput enthusiast magazine, attend. To what I am saying to spill into the envelope, mercury seal and sniff the wax on the tracks. The IRS can eat my kitty litter dust, until we realize the treadmill we're running on is actually theirs.

Uh, question: Let's say I know someone whose goal is not actually to appear to be better in some social media, but actually to be better:

Um, question: Is this normcore? What you are doing?

Answer: What are YOU doing? I'm compositing myself into an unrecognizable force so that I will not be recognizable through that militarized facial recognition trope, a bore. Bowl of ramen?

Queas-tion: Yeast?

Exercise:

Take a picture of yourself (it can be in your mind). Describe it realistically, then describe it like you'd like it to be.

Take a picture of yourself with your favorite deceased author.

Take a picture of yourself standing on your own grave. What gestures are you making? Are you being goth about this? Can you do a thumbs-up like a backpacker?

Describe yourself to your prospective employer. To a prospective lover, to a prospective well-funded thought grooming community. To a friend.

Describe, share.

Alternative: Share an image from a trip you took. Talk about what you wanted the trip to be and what it was. Use your real name or a fake one.

Dia Felix



### ARIES (MARCH 21-APRIL 19)

"The thing about things is that they're just gross," writes Aries poet, Jasper Bernes. You're going to have to face a lot of gross things this Fall, Aries—invest in some sanitizer, of the hand and of the spirit, it'll look much brighter and decidedly less gross by Thanksgiving. ♈

### TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20)

I think we agree, Taurus, that this summer was a long slog through cloacal slime. Don't overprocess—you're better off immersed in the ordinary. So perhaps let's listen to Taurus poet, Adrienne Rich, "in times like these/ to have you listen at all, it's necessary/ to talk about trees." ♉

### GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20)

Gemini poet, Francesca Lisette, writes, "So you—I—we alike have committed to/ a myth of gardened providence/ seeking our fortune in the Gold Rush/ instead of recognizing poverty, loneliness/ bored as the source of our poems,/ our mother & our sole right to that/ our liberty." Seriously. ♊

### CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 22)

"This conversation isn't even about the Smiths!" Cancer poet, Anna Vitale, writes. Cancers being made almost solely of downy fluff beating blood through corduroy cherubim hearts, you ought to try to make every conversation about the Smiths if possible. ♋

### LEO (JULY 23-AUGUST 22)

Starting October 16<sup>th</sup>, nobody will be able to ignore your roar, Leo. It's like that "last giddy hour" in *Prometheus Unbound* by Leo poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley: "Love, from its awful throne of patient power/ In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour/ Of dead endurance, from the slippery, steep/ And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs/ And folds over the world its healing wings." ♌

### VIRGO (AUGUST 23-SEPTEMBER 22)

There are a few things we never get tired of, Virgo. Perhaps most of all, this perfect poem by Virgo poet, Rod Smith: "We work too hard/ We're too tired/ to fall in love/ Therefore we must/ overthrow the government.// We work

too hard/ We're too tired/ to overthrow the government/ therefore we must/ fall in love." ♍

### LIBRA (SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22)

All you can hope for, Libra is that the coming months see an excess of just actions to balance out the brutality of the summer month's devastating crises. You take it harder than most. Your patron Libra poet, Amiri Baraka, has some magic words you'd like to say yourself to those pigs in Ferguson and everywhere: "Up against the wall motherfucker!" ♎

### SCORPIO (OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 21)

These months will be especially intense for you, Scorpios, as you'll want to sting almost everything in sight with your famous *aculeus*. A temporary lapse in your famous good judgment. Beware lest you, like sister Scorpio poet, Sylvia Plath, "taste the malignity of the gorse." ♏

### SAGITTARIUS (NOVEMBER 22-DECEMBER 21)

Nobody understands you, Sagittarius, but everybody feels your flame. You treasure your private monologue, but faced with challenges of communication this Fall, I recommend trying to open up, even if it's uncomfortable. You know that line of great Sagittarius poet, Eileen Myles: "My attempts to remain/ obscure have not served/ me well"? ♐

### CAPRICORN (DECEMBER 22-JANUARY 19)

Take a long hard look in the mirror, Capricorn. You've been led astray by negative influences in your life and it is time to figure out who's in it for the long haul. There are those who love you, and always will. You know who they are—it's just been a confusing time for you Capricorns. A little like those men in Capricorn Kevin Killian's poem, *I Lost Me To Meth*, "I lost me to THEM." ♑

### AQUARIUS (JANUARY 20-FEBRUARY 18)

"My attentions drift to spaces that feel/ At first esthetically conservative," Aquarius poet, Kit Schluter writes. Drifting is always the name of your game, Aquarius, but this Fall especially you'll want to remember what's always made you happy. Go to your happy place. Quench the drift. ♒

### PISCES (FEBRUARY 19-MARCH 21)

Nobody knows better than you, Pisces, that from what crumbles something must rise. As the wise sign of the Zodiac you've seen it all. "I sometimes/ cry a lot/ for no reason," writes Pisces poet, John Coletti. But from our tears, a water fountain. I mean a water slide. I mean a goddamn Easter bunny sliding down a water slide! ♓





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