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IN MEMORIAM

kari edwards

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given the news

there will be rocks
that remember me
in perfect order
along the sea

allowed to float
atop sunset breeze

how many times
must I die
to know
I need not reach
to touch the sky

for I breathe heaven’s
last hours of perfect reflection.

– kari edwards

November 2006
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One of the most striking moments in Danielle Collobert’s *Notebooks 1956-1978* (Litmus Press, 2003) is in the commentary on her time working for an activist network supporting the National Liberation Front (FLN) during the Algerian War of Independence and her difficulty reconciling political activism with the act of writing:

> these months speak years – many new things – to be completely current with present events – living the news as it happens – with no time lag – now it’s difficult to become a spectator again –
> what counted was the immediate – objective justification was impossible – for what I was doing – theoretical questions useless – when I make theory for others – I end up not believing it – immediate action justified immediately in its entirety – uncomfortable position but real –
> for months no writing – impossible to reconcile the two – (31)

I love this passage precisely because it infuriates me. It infuriates me because in a sense it is impossible to reconcile these disparate manifestations of personal conviction, but the position that these things are irreconcilable (and why must they be reconciled?) is itself impossible – impossible to live with. But we do, we write also and anyway (Collobert did as well, for a time: this was written in 1961) because writing is often the most potent and effective response to an “uncomfortable position.” Collobert is making a distinction between immediate, direct action and the remove inherent in writing, of stepping back or out in order to observe and compose. Poetry may not be activism per se, but it is an act that contributes to the world at the very least, and potentially such acts become “points of resistance in practice” that create a momentum cumulatively.

kari edwards first submitted work to *Aufgabe* in 2001 and was an important contributor to the journal for me as both a writer and an editor. Hir writing plunges headlong into these uncomfortable positions – articulating, teasing out, reconfiguring and tearing into the material of our current conditions – whether physical, political or poetic. In the *Poethical Wager* (University of California Press, 2003), Joan Retallack writes: “Noticing becomes art when, as contextualizing project, it reconfigures the geometry of attention, drawing one into conversation with what would otherwise remain silent in the figure-ground patterns of history” (10). So given the daily news, or one’s position as other in terms of gender and/or in relation to, as edwards puts it, the “passive mangling order,” noticing then drawing into conversation – this is art. edwards’s art/work is comprehensive, including three blogs
(“in words,” “transdada,” and “transsubmutation”), which functioned as sites (“nonlocation locations”?) for her reporting and commentary on news/current events, poetics, community and literary resources. These blogs are still accessible online and the conversation is most certainly not over. In Bharat jiva, an unpublished manuscript, sie writes:

...trying to fix my attention on what is so rigid to distort the ever changing changeless access apparition of myself drifting in soundless weight, measured by nets, writing fire, erasing the without end

“erasing the without end” is gut-wrenching and takes aim in both a positive and negative direction – there is the imperative to end the potentially endless “war on terror,” but there is also our world (without end?) facing irreversible environmental damage. This is an uncomfortable position. What is also present in this passage is the internal struggle inherent in “writing nonlocation location”: the body as microcosm writing itself outward. “No Gender” is an uncomfortable – and admirable – position. What edwards consistently tackled in hir work is the difficult task of writing these various positions into being. This kind of embodiment is “uncomfortable but real” and an act of no small consequence.

It is in this context – drawing or being drawn into conversation – that we may directly counter any notion that “to write in Portuguese is to be mute to the world,” or any language for that matter. The writers in this issue are concerned with (re)configurations, correspondences and translations, and collected here their work demarks a location where muteness is not a possibility.

– E. TRACY GRINNELL
Brooklyn, March 2007

NOTES

2. kari edwards, editor’s note, ibid.
3. In an obituary for edwards, Stacy Szymaszek wrote: “If you asked kari to sign one of her books she often scratched out the title and wrote in ‘No Gender’” (Poetry Project Newsletter #210, February – March 2007)
4. See Raymond L. Bianchi’s introduction to the feature section of this issue, page 11.
guest edited by Raymond L. Bianchi

WANTING

TO MUTATE ALL
I MUTATED ALL NOW POST ALL EX ALL
I MUTATE

Augusto de Campos, “Post All”

Translations from the Portuguese by Raymond L. Bianchi, Odile Cisneros, Claudio Daniel, Cyana Leahy, James Mulholland, Akira Nishura & Steven Buttermann, Idra Novey, Claudia Roque Pinto, and Virna Teixeira
Paulo Leminski, one of Brazil’s great avant-garde poets, said “to write in Portuguese is to be mute to the world,” in describing the conundrum of Brazilian poetry. Brazil – a nation that offers so much due to its fusion of cultures and languages – strangely remains ignored globally. My aim in this section is to showcase both established and emerging poets who are diverse in region, class, gender and race to give the reader a sense of the complex, unique realities in Brazil.

I have included poems from Brazil’s most influential Concrete poet, Augusto de Campos. Concrete poetry, or visual poetry, is everywhere in Brazil and is regularly seen in advertising and theater productions. I am honored that Seu Augusto is sharing his poems here.

The poetry of Régis Bonvicino bridges a divide between the international poetic community and Brazil. In the past 20 years, no poet has done more to bring Brazil to a global audience.

I was also fortunate to collect poetry from many avant-garde poets whose work is not well known in the United States, some being translated here for the first time, such as Maria Ester Maciel. Claudia Roque Pinto’s poetry is filled with verve and is slowly moving onto the world stage. Josely Vianna Baptista’s meditative, reflective poems have been very influential, and her work engages with innovative poetic traditions in France and the United States. Virna Teixiera is at once a poet, neurologist, and painter exemplifying a Brazilian jeito, or “way of being.” Sérgio Medeiros is from Mato Grosso and is partly of Guarani Indigenous origin. His remarkable work Catarata is about the most important feature of the Brazilian landscape – water, and most particularly the Iguacu Falls.

It is important to acknowledge the immense loss of Laís Corrêa de Araújo, one of the most important Brazilian avant-garde poets of the 20th century, who died at the end of 2006. She and her husband Affonso Ávila were teachers and mentors to a generation of Brazilian poets. Dr. Araújo was from the Minas Gerais region of Brazil, known as a wellspring of cultural production in the nation. Minas is the birthplace of Brazilian Baroque and is known as a center of visual art. Araújo was born in 1928 and lived a full life as a poet. She was close to the great Brazilian poets Haroldo de Campos and João Cabral Melo Neto; she was also in dialogue with and translated André Breton, bringing the avant-garde to Brazil and Brazil to the global avant-garde.

Generations of poets and writers were fueled by her work as a teacher at the University in Belo Horizonte, and in 1963 she helped organize the Semana Vanguardia of Poetry in São Paulo. She also fought against the
brutal dictatorship that came to power in Brazil in 1964 and lasted until 1985. During this dark time her work was not published and she was imprisoned for her writings. I wish to dedicate this collection to her memory.

Lastly, I want to recognize the other translators whose work made this selection possible: Chris Daniels, Idra Novey, Akira Nishimura, Steve Butterman, Odile Cisneros (for the translations and the essay), James Mulholland and Cyana Leahy. I also want to thank Waltraud Haas for her help in this effort – she is the thing I most love about Brazil.

— RAYMOND L. BIANCHI
Chicago, 2006
Novos Olhos sobre a Poesia: Brazilian Poetry Journals of the 21st Century

The last few years have witnessed the explosion of a number of literary journals in Brazil. This is hardly an unprecedented trend, as there exists a long-standing tradition of Brazilian literary and poetry periodicals, particularly in the 20th century. However, the sheer volume and quality of the more recent publications— including *Inimigo Rumor, Et cetera, Cacto, Coyote, Oroboro, Ácaro, Sebastião* and *Sibila*, to mention just a few— are phenomena worth pondering, as Kathrin H. Rosenfield suggested in an article published in the *Folha de São Paulo* in August 2003. This essay will briefly examine a variety of these print magazines, comparing and contrasting their aesthetics and implicit ideological programs through an analysis of content and layout. I will also offer an assessment of what this “inflation of the genre,” as Rosenfield calls it, might mean for the current situation of poetry in Brazil.

Perhaps I should begin by mentioning that the basic precedent when it comes to Brazilian poetry journals of the last few years is *Inimigo Rumor*, a poetry journal begun in 1997 and currently edited in Rio de Janeiro by Carlito Azevedo, Augusto Massi, and Marcos Siscar. Since its inception, *Inimigo Rumor* (which borrows its title from the second book of poetry by the Neobaroque Cuban writer José Lezama Lima) has devoted its pages to a consistently rigorous selection of poetry, both in Portuguese and foreign languages and in translation. This now well-established publication, a sometime recipient of support by Portugal’s Ministry of Culture, has a substantial presence across the Atlantic and currently publishes annual or biannual issues in book format (hardbound and paperback). A full discussion of *Inimigo Rumor* lies outside the scope of this essay, however, it’s fair to say that it remains, if not an important model, then a clear point of reference. The trajectory and content of the issues can be surveyed online at http://www.7letras.com.br/inimigomenu.htm.

*Et cetera: Literatura & Arte*, published in Curitiba by A Travessa dos Editores, released its first issue, number “zero,” in 2003. According to the publisher, this journal’s program is “abrigar as mais variadas vozes e manifestações do continente americano: prosa, poesia, tradução, ensaios dos mais variados gêneros e entrevistas” (“to shelter the widest variety of voices and expressions of the American continent: prose, poetry, translation, essays of all kinds and interviews”). Its large format (25.5 x 27.5 cm) and visually seductive layout are reminiscent of art books or exhibition catalogs. Issue no. 1 includes much visual material: on the cover, a rendering of an Haroldo de Campos poem by the Japanese-Brazilian artist Tomie Ohtake; black-and-white photography by Curitiban artists Michele Müller and Nego Miranda, and poems in elegant
Japanese calligraphy by the contemporary Japanese poet Tanikawa Shuntaro. The visual plethora seems to freely juxtapose original contemporary works with commonly recognized pieces such as Goya’s *Maja desnuda* to Kahlo’s self-portraits, as well as popular religious iconography, such as the Sacred Heart of Mary. In general, it is not always clear to what extent the visual is meant deliberately to interact with the verbal – whether as illustration or contrast – except perhaps in the case of drawings by poets printed next to their own poems or visual poems (such as “La acima o céu” by cartoonist Solda, in the issue mentioned). The artsy design of the first issues is indebted to the work of artist, poet, and translator Jussara Salazar, one of three original editors along with poets Claudio Daniel and Rubens Campana. *Et cetera* has undergone some changes in its directorship and frequency since issue 5 (Fall, 2005); it is now published bimonthly with Fábio Campana as main editor and Rubens Campana as coordinating editor.

The verbal content of this eclectic publication also covers a very wide spectrum. Issue 1 includes established figures like the recently deceased poet Haroldo de Campos, mid-generation writers, such as Régis Bonvicino, Antônio Risério, and Frederico Barbosa, enfant-terribles of the new blog generation, such as Clarah Averbuck, and journalist-provocateurs, such as Paulo Polzonoff. The contrast here is stark. While de Campos leans towards a universal, almost cosmic view of poetry in his last years, the new generation of young prose writers adopts a blasé, irreverent, and self-deprecating attitude towards “literature.” They also evince an unmediated and urgent approach to writing, perhaps an allergic reaction to the lasting legacy of rigorous architectural and engineering paradigms in the history of the Brazilian literary avant-garde. Interestingly, the open-ended and improvisatory quality of their texts fits in more with the relaxed editorial work of the journal. In poetry, among the most interesting younger voices in the issue examined here (No.1) are Joca Reiners Terron, author of poetic narratives in lineated prose which employ medical vocabulary, and Rodrigo de Haro with his haunting child-like poems, *Andanças de Antônio*.

Another important feature of *Et cetera* is the considerable presence of Spanish-American voices, including established poets such as José Kozer and Eduardo Milán and young Argentine poets. Curiously, for the most part, poetry in Spanish is printed as is, without Portuguese translation. The connection with poetry in Spanish is mostly due to Jussara Salazar’s longstanding dialogue with poets in Argentina, which enables *Et cetera* to circulate not only throughout Brazil, but also in Hispanic America. Until recently, Hispanic American and Brazilian poetries had turned their backs on one another in certain ways. Along the lines of *Et cetera*’s promotion of poetry in other languages, issue 5 contains an extreme case of linguistic “xenofilia”: “Kelita Batsak,” Hebrew poems by the multilingual Brazilian poet Moacir Amâncio, are printed in Hebrew with no corresponding Portuguese translation.
Contrasting sharply with *Et cetera*'s colorful visual and literary eclecticism, *Cacto*, a journal founded in 2002, evokes instead the sharp, rugged qualities of desert flora, which fit its visually sparse aesthetic. The Spartan, almost minimalist cover of the first issue humorously echoes the motto of the associated book collection, “cacto: áspero, intratável” (“cactus: rough, intractable”), as well the Concrete poetry aesthetic on the covers of the 1960s issues of *Antologia Noigandres*. This is hardly a coincidence – the journal, edited by Eduardo Sterzi and Tarso de Melo in São Paulo, inscribes itself in a tradition of high modernist aesthetics. In lieu of a manifesto, the “Apresentação” (“Foreword”) explains that *Cacto* (whose original title was to be the more psychoanalytic-sounding “totem”) was deliberately launched to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Semana de 22, as well as the centenaries of the modernists Carlos Drummond de Andrade and Sérgio Buarque de Hollanda. Furthermore, the entire first issue is symbolically (and literally) framed by the Concrete poetry legacy: it opens with an unpublished poem by Augusto de Campos and closes with an interview with him.

What is *Cacto*’s program? In the words of its editors, to present living foreign authors such as José Kozer and Michel Deguy as well as “inéditos dos mais significativos poetas contemporâneos brasileiros” (“unpublished work by the most significant contemporary Brazilian poets”) (“Apresentação” 5). The selection clearly focuses on Brazilian poets, interspersed with translations of canonical works by Heinrich Heine, François de Malherbe, Alfred Jarry, Dante, James Joyce, and Langston Hughes, and contemporary Mexican and Chicano poets Coral Bracho and Tino Villanueva. About one quarter of the issue is devoted to essays on poetry and poetics including the Italian philosopher Giorgo Agamben’s “O fim do poema,” (“The end of the poem”) a study on the endings of poems, and other essays on translation and on established figures such as Carlos Drummond and Augusto de Campos. In its apparent rigor and conciseness, this publication implicitly proposes a poetics under the sign of high Modernism and the Concrete legacy, even if some of the poets included do not adhere to or react adversely to it. Another significant feature of *Cacto* is that it is financed by subscriptions of collaborators and friends, instead of being subsidized by a successful publishing house, as is the case with *Et cetera*. In this respect, it seems to be conscious of targeting a specific audience and creating a committed community of readers.

One may speculate about the effect that the sources and amount of funding may have on the production and program of literary magazines. For instance, the journal *Coyote* (which released its 12th issue in 2005) is subsidized primarily by the Municipal Ministry of Culture and the City of Londrina. Despite its expensive printing format and public funding (which may account for its didactic aims), *Coyote* appears to be a relatively low-budget publication, which nonetheless pays relative attention to graphic design. The cover of the issue considered in this essay, No. 7, is printed in color while the rest is
of the issue is black and white and is a mere 51 pages. This may be due to its frequency, as it is published quarterly. The editors of this journal are Ademir Assunção, Marcos Losnak, and Rodrigo Garcia Lopes, who don a variety of hats as interviewers, translators, and writers of the introductory notes to the material, but don’t feature their own original work prominently.

As regards the visual aspects of the journal, the layout is appealing, but not groundbreaking or significant in its own right, seeming rather to attempt a balance between an “artsy” look and a functional use of space. To that effect, in issue 7, the original poems of Frank O’Hara are printed in a smaller font with slashes indicating line breaks, whereas the translations by Rodrigo Garcia Lopes feature prominently on the page. Also, as seems to be the case in a number of Portuguese language publications, the translation is published to the left of the original, rather than the traditional (left-original, right-translation) format. Other aspects of the graphic layout are the inclusion of photographs of some of the authors, but there is hardly any original artwork.

The content of Coyote reflects a certain didactic and disseminatory eclecticism, showcasing translations and short essays of the work of high Modernist and other renowned international works. Issue 7 features Frank O’Hara, William Burroughs, George Bataille, the Marquis de Sade, and the contemporary Uruguayan poet Víctor Sosa, as well as the work of living Brazilian writers. For the most part, the Brazilian writers and artists, such as André Sant’Anna, Claudio Daniel, and Maria Esther Maciel, were born between 1961 and 1979, but space is also granted to writers from previous generations, such as the poet Luiz Roberto Guedes (b. 1951) and the playwright José Agrippino de Paula (b. 1940). Geographically, contributors hail from Goiânia (Caio Mera) to Paraná, passing through Minas Gerais and, inevitably, São Paulo. There is however a very clear consciousness of the geographical setting of this publication, reflected in a statement by the playwright and poet Maurício Arruda Mendonça. He claims that Londrina “tem uma poesia de excelente qualidade, surpreendente até” (“has an excellent poetry, even surprisingly so”), quoting as evidence writers such as Mário Bortolotto and Miriam Paglia Costa (34). Arruda Mendonça goes on to argue that, because of their setting, writers in Londrina have developed “um certo cosmopolitismo, não uma poesia que se filia umbilicalmente ao modernismo de Oswald e de Mário, por exemplo” (“a certain cosmopolitanism, not a poetry that has an umbilical affiliation with the modernism of Oswald [de Andrade] and Mário [de Andrade]”). He also notes that local poetry exhibits “um namoro firme com a poesia oriental” (“a steady love for East Asian poetry”) due in part to the sizable Japanese community of Londrina.

Oroboro: Revista de Poesia e Arte is another fledgling magazine hailing from the state of Paraná, also sponsored by the government of the City of Curitiba and special municipal legislation devoted to the promotion of culture. Launching its first issue in the third quarter of 2004, Oroboro, edited by
Eliana Borges and Ricardo Corona, exhibits a format, length, and content not unlike Coyote’s. The 52-page inaugural issue also features a color cover and black and white artsy design with illustrations. The content also features interviews, essays, poems, and translations, and perhaps takes greater risks by including, for example, the work of multimedia performance and spoken-word artist Edwin Torres, an idiosyncratic personality straddling both the more erudite American avant-gardes and the more socially conscious and marginal Nuyorican poets. The appearance of this poet’s work in a small Brazilian magazine seems particularly notable because, although Brazil’s Tropicalist movement in the 60s and 70s also questioned the high/low divide and disciplinary boundaries, most avant-garde poets in Brazil took their cue from canonical high modernist models, not paying much attention to work of peripheral scenes, such as that of the Nuyorican Poets Café. Another surprise is also the inclusion in issue 5 of Oroboro (Sept.-Nov. 2005) of a dossier on the work of poet Ricardo Aleixo, a black poet from Minas Gerais who has occasionally collaborated with Edimilson de Almeida Pereira. Aleixo, who began publishing in 1996, explores the rich mine of African elements in Brazilian popular culture, in particular the religious cult of the Orixas and Yoruba language, to produce an avant-garde poetics with a consciousness of racial issues, another controversial topic that Brazilian avant-garde poetry has traditionally shied away from.

Another young publication, Ácaro (“mite,” or “tick”) currently edited by Chico Mattoso and Paulo Werneck (both under 30), is notable for its visual qualities and its amusing content. This journal has an appealing format – the slim magazine is enclosed in an elegantly printed sleeve – with a sleek graphic design: it contains numerous illustrations and is printed in different colors and on different kinds of paper. The content displays a programmatic and irreverent sense of humor: a number of short narrative texts (mostly dealing with fantastic, funny, or erotic topics5), a selection of poetry by Alexandre Barbosa de Souza, Heitor Ferraz, Sérgio Alcides, João Inácio, Rafael Pelota, Luiz Ruffato, and Tatiana Belinky, a satiric take on fast food (a regular column titled “Reflexões do Senhor Ótimo”), and a series of illustrated rebus-type poems, “Charadinhhas simplórias.”

The main parodic feature of this small, São Paulo-based magazine is the insert “Menas!” a humorous twist on the Estado de São Paulo’s supplement “Mais!” The texts in this “suplemento,” printed on a different-sized paper, are signed by fictitious authors who do not appear on the list of credits at the end. These entertaining little texts include “Bacanal (Pentalogia monovocálica)” (“Bacchanal: Monovocalic Pentalogy”), a witty short story written using only words with the vowel “a,” an experiment continued in issue 3 with the letter “e,” which recalls Oulipian texts based on self-imposed literary constraints. Finally, the “Menas!” supplement of issue 2 closes with a homage to Carlos Drummond de Andrade’s celebrated and oft-parodied poem “No meio do caminho” (“In the Middle of the Road”). Ácaro is also characterized by
the tongue-in-cheek self-referentiality of early modernist magazines. One could parallel, for instance, Ácaro’s credits section titled “Acareação” (literally “confrontation, challenge, encounter,” but also an obvious phonetic play on the title) with Klaxon’s call to be a “klaxista” (Klaxist) or Revista de Antropofagia’s reference to its issues as “dentições” (dentitions). In a more serious work, Paulo Henriques Britto contributes an illuminating essay on the use of the second- and third-person pronouns in Nelson Rodrigues’s skillful portrayal of the colloquial in his plays. Ácaro also features excellent translations of modern and contemporary poets such as Apollinaire, Supervielle, and Juarroz.

Sébastião, a journal edited by Matias Mariani, Paulo Ferraz, and Pedro Abramovay, published its second issue in 2002. No new issue has since appeared. The idea of this journal (whose name pays homage to Sébastien Gryphe, a 16th-century typographer and printer from Lyon) was grifar (“to put in boldface type”), i.e., to showcase the variety of contemporary Brazilian poetry. The first issue’s eclecticism, both in terms of content and graphic design, gave way to a fairly programmatic second issue where a number of critics were expressly invited to write on a specific poet chosen by the editors. The editors presented this dialogue they deemed necessary and unlikely to happen otherwise as the (anti)program they expressly lay out in their editorial: “O que queremos é fomentar o debate, ouvir lados opostos, abrir espaço para métodos diversos de análise e de criação, e não necessariamente eleger um paradigma crítico e poético como o ideal, tanto que a revista traz poetas que não estariam juntos se o critério fosse outro. Damos espaço para que se defendam as correntes que houver” (“What we want is to encourage the debate, hear opposing views, open up a space for diverse analytical and creative paths, and not necessarily pick a critical and poetic paradigm as an ideal, so much so that this review brings together poets that would not be together if the criteria were different”). Each essay thus appears in dialogue with a set of poems, a feature ingeniously illustrated on the cover of issue 2, which shows a fictitious map where a street with the name of the essayist intersects with that of the poet. The quality of the essays varies, sometimes giving way to impressionistic parallel texts that fail to closely examine the texts at hand, spinning out into independent, tangential tales. Whatever the result, the idea was to provide an open and flexible discussion within a structured format, or “Novos olhos sobre a poesia brasileira” (“New eyes on Brazilian poetry”), an expression I borrowed for the title of this essay.

Last but not least is the journal Sibila, whose founder was São Paulo poet Régis Bonvicino along with Brasilia-based essayist Romulo Valle-Salvino. I was invited to collaborate as editor starting with the second issue. Currently, the two co-editors are Bonvicino and Alcêr Pécora, a literary critic and professor at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp), with my occasional editorial assistance. It might seem that given my involvement in Sibila, I might not be in a position to impartially examine its merits and shortcomings. But leaving Sibila outside of the discussion would probably be an artificial omission, a fault greater than whatever bias may stem from
a lack of critical distance.

*Sibila* has clearly evolved from the roughly 80 pages of its inaugural issue (Number Zero, Spring 2001) to over 200 pages in a double issue (8-9) published in November 2005, which also includes a CD of sound poetry. It is a handsomely designed magazine that, graphically speaking, stands in the middle—featuring original artwork and illustrative photography as well as striking covers, but not allowing the visual to interfere with or distract from the verbal. Images are almost never printed next to or as illustrations of poems. *Sibila* has a number of semi-regular sections, for instance “Pares contemporâneos” (“Contemporary Pairings”), which features interviews with international and Brazilian intellectuals of the stature of Marjorie Perloff, Michael Hardt, Eliot Weinberger, Carlos Zilio, Arkadii Dragomoshchenko, Jerome Rothenberg, and Charles Bernstein. The presence of international voices in *Sibila* is abundant and noteworthy. For one thing, world poets are given as much space (if not more) than local ones. Russian, Peruvian, Mexican, German, French, Italian, Argentine, Cuban, American, Swedish and Czech poets, among others, have appeared in its pages. It is *Sibila*’s editorial policy to almost always print the poems in the original and in translation, even in the case of a language as close to Portuguese as Spanish. Another policy has been to give space to other manifestations of Portuguese outside Brazil and Portugal, with a couple of contributions from Macau. *Sibila*’s main mandate has been the question of innovation. However, as with most publications, the content has occasionally fallen short of this ideal. Still, it has often sought to feature little-known authors and unpublished or hard-to-find materials (a note by Lúcio Costa, a short story by Mário de Andrade, drawings and texts by Flávio de Carvalho, etc.). One notable piece published in *Sibila* No. 7 (2004), is the essay by Alcir Pécora “Momento Crítico: Meu Meio Século” (“Critical Moment: My Half-Century”), where the critic, on the occasion both of his 50th birthday and a coincidental invitation to participate in the launch of a textbook of contemporary literature published by *Folha*, does his own rigorous stock-taking of the high and low moments of Brazil’s current literary scene, using the new textbook as an example.

After this whirlwind tour of some of the main little magazines of Brazil at the moment, it might be a bit premature to offer weighty pronouncements, but a few concluding observations might be in order. One would be that quantity is not necessarily reflective of quality. The literary explosion might well be significant in that a wide and abundant variety of work has emerged of which a great deal may prove expendable with time. Another trend is the deliberate affiliation that some publications seek with models from the past. Even if it seems impossible nowadays to affirm the kind of uncompromising rupture that the historical vanguards such as *modernismo* and *concretismo* effected in their day, the current environment evidences not Harold Bloom’s “anxiety of influence” but a “pride of influence” a concept coined by the critic Paulo Franchetti and quoted in a recent essay by Ademir Demarchi.6
The question still remains of how this unavoidable trace of influence may be transformed into something new, original, worthwhile and effectively responding to the current circumstances of its production. Although in hindsight we might now see this as somewhat naïve, it is not useless to recall that Concrete poetry emerged partly as a response to the climate of optimism under Juscelino Kubitschek and the slogan “Brasil, o país do futuro” and alongside new technological trends in cybernetics. It also arose in opposition to outdated models employed by the Generation of 1945. The subsequent generation of so-called “Poesia Marginal,” was also highly aware of the climate of repression during Brazil’s 20-year military dictatorship. Accordingly, it might make sense to ask how the poetic production published in these magazines is reacting to the current artistic, technological, social, and political climate. Is the question of creating a groundbreaking diction a real preoccupation for the young poets in these publications? In many cases, one would be tempted to respond in the negative. However, the work of a new generation of bloggers and poets not discussed in this essay but who incorporate digital media is a clear indication that the content and style of literary production is not immune to changes in media and the social and political environment.

Finally, it appears that rather than promoting a single line of poetics, most magazines prefer to negotiate a variety of influences. This may be a salutary change from former trends perceived as rigid or militant. However, in promoting this “openness,” magazines also run the risk of diluting their criteria and falling instead into an amorphous eclecticism or a certain naïve didacticism. Despite these shortcomings we must admit that there is a new and exciting publishing dynamic in Brazil today worth keeping an eye on.

— Odile Cisneros
2006

NOTES

1. The early phase of the Modernist period in the 20s and 30s produced such celebrated and important periodicals as Klaxon, Estética, A Revista, Revista de antropofagia, Verde, Terra roxa e outras terras. A revival of this avant-garde impulse is evident in the high modernist Concrete movement with the journals Noigandres and Invenção. Reactions to these both by emulators and foes in the following generations yielded magazines such as Poesia em Greve, Navilouca, Polem, Código, Artería, Qorpo Estranho, among others.


3. Although I have decided to focus on print magazines, it should be noted that there are a great number of poetry publications online where a lively debate occurs as well.
Given the different possibilities that electronic publication affords, such production deserves an altogether separate treatment.

4. One notable exception to the long-standing poetic divide between Hispanic America and Brazil are the exchanges between Octavio Paz and Haroldo de Campos in the 60s and 70s. Throughout those years there was sporadic interaction between Argentine and Brazilian poets, but for the most part it is safe to say that not much contact between these parallel literary universes existed. This has dramatically changed in recent years with collaborations between poets from Mexico, Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil becoming particularly intense. The ease of electronic communication might, in some ways, be credited for the increase in this bilingual and bicultural barter.

5. Issue No. 2, published in June 2003, includes a detective mystery piece where the main character witnesses the murder of women who curiously resemble film stars such as Rita Hayworth, Ava Gardner, and, finally, Marilyn Monroe, whom he manages to save and make off with to a beach house. They enjoy a brief period of bliss before Monroe, as her predecessors, falls victim to the specters of other classic film stars and evaporates, reiterating the inevitable view of contemporary life as mere simulacra. Another story features a child narrator who enters and wins a Lego contest, enjoying his literal 15 minutes of fame on a children’s TV show hosted by Xuxa.

6. In “Síntomas e remédios da poesia contemporânea” (Symptoms and remedies of contemporary poetry) Ademir Demarchi notes that: “the relationship of many contemporary poets with canonical models seems to have been particularly sensible […] so much so, that it is possible to arrive at a formulation like the one coined by Paulo Franchetti […] that almost seems like a joke. He said, parodying Harold Bloom’s book, that the relationship of many poets with their chosen canonic models had not generated an anxiety of influence, but rather its opposite, a pride of influence. In turn, the poet Fábio Weintraub, going further, created a variation he called the ‘furor of influence.’” http://www.germinliteratura.com.br/literatura5.htm (accessed Oct. 30, 2005, my translation).
During a drunken argument in Brussels, Verlaine shot at Rimbaud, hitting him once in the wrist. On 10 July 1875, in a drunken quarrel in Brussels, Verlaine shot Rimbaud in the wrist, and was imprisoned for two years at Mons. Together again in Brussels in the summer of that year, Verlaine shot Rimbaud in the wrist following a drunken argument. Verlaine, drunk and desolate, shot Rimbaud in the wrist with a 7mm pistol after a quarrel. At one point, the tension between them became so great that Verlaine shot Rimbaud in the wrist at about 2 o’clock, when M. Paul Verlaine, in his mother’s bedroom, fired a shot of revolver. The subject of various books, films, and curiosities, ended July 12, 1873 when a drunken Verlaine shot at Rimbaud and injured him in the wrist. Verlaine shot Rimbaud in a fit of drunken jealousy.
As a magnet attracts iron filings
and the trees collapse into leaves
suspended in light,
when he speaks
the air sheds its petals over our heads
in underground, reverse flowers.
Ideas neither clash,
nor compromise
– they turn, entwined,
in a landscape that expands, unravels,
never reaching its convulsive end.
This is how silence dwells in his speech:
moving forward, in rolls of smoke,
over any resistance to let us be known.

* 

Dark dawn of the body,
under faint light.
What, beyond me, awakens
in this vacant room, roams
between the radiant wave
hovering over the hydrangea
and thoughts, opaque:
another day to cross from inside out,
eating of the edge
the cold porridge of talk,
watching dull, rubber faces
stuck flat onto my own sky
(where real things keep floating by:
whirlwinds of fire,
your mouth against mine,
the words in the dream, now lost).
Death disturbs me,
I shall endure the suffering
of not checking it
before publishing.

Dismayed in a cold tomb,
who will change my linen?

Will my disembodied self wake up,
deprived of the eyelids’ alarm?

Till when will I be what I comprehend?

***

I dusk with no emphasis
I cannot close a book
or lock a sentence.

Confessions are made up.
My characters have been larger
than the script.

***

All the letters read by the fire. The ultimate ear.
It picks up drafts, what we hide in the cave.
It unweaves lovers, foes, crimes.

Fire is doomed to blow ashes. We are doomed to rest in them.
I may annihilate love
just to see what lies underneath.
The world is alien, we behave like guests.
The shame of my doubts expands.

I try aggression in small things
like hitting my cigarette till it dies. Goodness
comes from good terms with the living
and that is impossible.
My own kin doubts me.
in the strange junk room
in a scene in the tropics
between old sheets hanging up

backyard

background
discreet

someone that can stay

a long time silent

submersed in all the opaque agitation
among material desires

and left-overs

intense need to take notes

lie down a while

not to sleep

just let it be

exhaustion dripping to the very end
Sad Demon

The demon has a sad look that dwells with heavy
daydreams brothers of all the things that my brothers hammered. To beat the iron an
eternity of words and thin legs cross your rash. Seat of curved shoulders over lungs of
expression fire of desire. Lights dimmed the hair of old veins
Like fountains where love does not enter again.
Again I beg not to remove love Don’t enter the air don’t leave and take more your
groans And over the promised body of lime and clay. Imobilized finally the intransitive
happiness God is your hospital.
Agate Bowl
from Fiction of Origin

You closed the window, descend the steps and said in prose that you are ok. Below, the patio is open close to the door. You threw out the trash and looked at a bird; playing blind goat with children on the patio. Then you asked me to serve you a soup in the agate bowl. Painful death is not worth a soup in the agate bowl. The world is reduced to the essential. This is what makes for death or laughter. The essential you said, fits in an agate bowl. What do you want to say with this? The essential does not have, or has very little, in the depth; it is not important, or what is in fact in this agate bowl? Until then the doubt impedes you telling me my name. With only two feet looking for the earth under a swamp of wood. Every time that you ask me what depth this is, I miss the frozen, the discrepancies invade me. I feel the depth of him jolting me. All is like an earthquake. Travel without desire. In all places for where this passes. In every place for where this passes, I want new courage.

Certain times, you beckon from afar, with your feet on the platform with red eyes. You have never cried. What exiles me from you? Maybe I will stay here, in this bar with yellow lights, in the middle of Amazonia, until the end of time? But don’t think of this, the cock is not crowing, and you extend lengthwise my body and spill over me. You fill me so completely. Listen to your weak voice almost lost in the throat. The poem should be written with blood? But with which blood is a love, red peach, turquoise, emerald. It was because you lost your voice and looked to the side closed, mute. And over the eyelids veins of a fast blood. Tell me? When is blood necessary to placate your silence?
Etc

Feeling a mortar
& its range
the radar’s plate
& its scope

supple
probing the secret
soul, of a helmet
& its toil

aim & scope
under the sunlit arch of daybreak
feeling alone
to the sound of piano keys

pointing to the sky
quiet light, distant
seeing, only,
arms

on the wall of the room
light bulb resting
space
horizon & capsules

sigdasy sucking heads
severed & the memorable star
blotted out
in dull shades
Etc (2)

Trying to seize the flower
half-wall
arm between bars
trying
to reach the green
trunk of the cosmea
solar consolation or miosotis blue
on my fingertips

white petals of a daffodil
intact in themselves
beyond the wall
a stem flaunted gigantic leaves

•

beating on a constellation
useless, firetalk,
with the semblance of a dune
perhaps it was a panther

& not simply an idea
that transfigures
& touches its own center
solid, stars alighted

on my eye, as an accrual
stabs on a body
palette, stain
& burst of galloping
Etc (3)

Trying to follow, steps
voices, on the marble
red, maple, leaf
on this wall, of The Art

in the garden of
Frank Lloyd Wright’s house in Oak
Park, of green, faint
blue-green, to capture

the color of the sky
trying to understand the sun
yellow leaves
luxuriant still with sap

observing in a street
any really color of gold
in contrast
soon dry

competing
with autumn, red
like a portable
sunset

in a rustproof frame
before falling
a red-headed girl
perhaps Nolde

Chicago, October 2000.
Etc (4)

Trying to understand the shape
of the yellow horse
in the Art Museum …
morning, in the Park

(red flowers moving forward
beyond the wall, another street
leaves of blood)
trying to capture, the possible

star, hooves-ablaze
wolf & squirrel
single & mutual
& almost a type of buddha

horse sniffing around
cloud, attentive eye,
vacillating with streaks
of red, in the sky, petals

of the flamboyant
trying to understand the light
& its tall horse
the color & its mute horse

in a painting
by Nolde
outside the window
perhaps there’s rain, perhaps sun

São Paulo, November 2000
Sixth Poem

under the wrath of vipers
in the agony of curtains
where they cast stones

on the embankment of myself
months on a shoestring
the poison of aconites

in the kindling of fire
in the instigation of a mellow core
wanting something more from the dunes
Seventh Poem

for Claude

silence is form
counting an act
free, unforeseen
trace of light

he quiets down
contrast & shape
that suddenly breaks
into another vespers

•

the voice of the rosary beads
in the free course
petunia lily,
physiognomy

mute, from shadows,
& the glass beads
cutting fingers
at each count
Mines, muffler, the previous dissolution of the body, nix, flame, recondite, sundevil, Lexis-Nexis, harp, sard, see-saw, carmine, satcoma, satellite, portraits on the wall, Capricorn, blast, gamma, gorizon, ISSO, parasite, morgancanine, mantis, ionosphere, reflex, and burst of other shapes, front-line fighter, white noise, sex, inlets, Speakeasy, canine, blurry target, emergency opiates, and a wind, indigo, mania, gases useful for the daily practice of life, window, Bubba, the Love Sponge, where at daybreak, the breeze would alight.
Two Poems

PauloHenriques Britto

Translated by Idra Novey

Symmetrical Sonnet

Surprised by what? Not necessarily
by what a thing of beauty’s supposed to be
forever-Götterfunken kind of stuff.
No way. Lightning like this strikes (if at all)
but once, and only when you’re young enough,
when you still have the spark, the wherewithal.
And yet, long past lo mezzo del camin,
there’re moments when it feels as if a pall
of fog lifted, and a sight long unseen
lay suddenly before your eyes. You say:
It’s that, again. Well, nearly that. I mean,
as near as it gets, this late in the day.
Breathe in deep. The moment’s not over yet.
And make a mental note: Not to forget.
Bacchanal

Armed with pencils, apples, and matches,
we’ll conquer all of Nineveh in the morning—
unless it’s a beach day, or we’ve had no sleep.
At this point there’s no day that isn’t golden,
every hour is like matins in this season
of cool water, madrigals, and sex.

So many mouths, hands, chances for sex,
so many reasons to light a match;
in such a horizontal season,
what a fantasy our idea for morning.
Why not drink it directly, the sun’s gold,
before we’re overtaken by sleep?

These ideas murmured from lack of sleep,
distracted by hunger for this much sex.
In the meantime, Nineveh, golden,
awaits combustion from our matches
leaving a mess of coffee and matches.

will erase all trace of sleep and pillaged gold.

Of this season nothing will remain but the sex.
Sonic Sonnet (#17)

It’s nice to see a politician dying
of cancer, either from the prostate or the rectum, and, for my complete
pleasure, having a tumor on the tongue, in addition.

If he’s a minister of state, then, I don’t regret being more than an enemy
to him, wishing him dead like an insect suffering in the hands of kids.

But the best of all is to have the president being demoralized by laughter
from those who make poetry like us.

He fucks us at each stroke of the pen,
but I, only using the power of mind,
impale his ass with my sword.
Masochist Sonnet (#18)

Politicians only want to watch us dying in the gutter, helpless, voiceless, homeless. They amuse themselves by scheming new taxation laws which will garner them more profits.

They’re such complete motherfuckers! They’re even capable of enacting a decree which makes the poor, the blind, the illiterate give more than what they’ve been earning.

If things remain like this, I will end up reduced to a shoe-shiner to any senator or to any So-and-So too.

Unless I kill myself, I’ll be subjected to the lowly duty of loving toejam, licking like a dog that doesn’t bark.
Futurist Sonnet (23)

George Orwell says that the image of the future is the boot on a face, eternally, and the clear impression we feel is that we already live in dark times.

Burgess, for his part, was also hard when he took his juvenile delinquent and converted him into a subservient being who only licked soles, a mere robot.

Glauco here, who lives in the past, nostalgic for an oppressive childhood (I was always abused by the kids),

He is the same Glauco now, and licks the floor stepped upon by the same sado type; before he used to see, but now he doesn’t.
Historical Sonnet (#24)

I have been told that the foot for which I am searching the one which has its big toe shorter than the second toe, was very common in the Ancient World and today its shape is called “Egyptian.”

I tell you, not afraid of being wrong: the foot of Brazilians is ordinary.
And when I search deeply into this subject, I realize that I am nothing but a wretch.

Who told me to be a fetishist, if the most available foot does not satisfy me?
The solution is elementary: I’d better give up the aesthetics, which mean nothing.
Besides, whoever has lost his eyesight should lick a size fifty sneaker!
Circus Sonnet (#66)

Those who feel on their skin know true pain. 
It’s easy to laugh at the tragedy of others, and nothing more amusingly appropriate than the pain of the blind in their Dantesque blackness.

My case is certainly more grotesque, 
because I subject myself to shame without fear: 
I humiliate myself by licking ugly, 
stinky, dirty, crooked or simian feet.

To ridicule me comes to be 
the great joy for those who see me, 
while I, who cannot see, provide them with pleasure.

A joker type like you 
will laugh if I lick your shoe, 
as cheerfully as you read this verse.
Imperfectionist Sonnet (#401)

Now I’ll describe you the foot I adore:
Bigger than mine, thus masculine,
even though it belongs to a kid,
sweated, copiously from all its pores.

Stinky of toe-jam: never odorless.
Shoe or boot: made of thick leather.
That way, abusing and sadic, I imagine it, like the ones I recall from childhood.

Lengthier the second than the big toe,
flat on the sole, not of the arched type.
You see where, after all, I wanna get?

The foot I idealize, I kiss and wash
on the tongue, when excited, when tasting it, is the one who treats me as a slave.
Situation #1

Four of us enter into words saying

“buy”
“the situation or the following”
and one says “I don’t believe et cetera”
“the cinema is going to change all of this” for now we eat potatoes and
the words do not sound right.
Ask the waiter to turn off the tv. He does not believe in God, but Jesus
existed in one the bar’s walls.

Passing a boy in boy in the street saying:
“Boy I am hungry and et cetera” my mother and my sister. I fold the 10-
real note six times and hide it under the palm of my hand.

“How to get to Henrique Schaumann”

Forget to breathe, but the pollution reminds me. None remember the
converse assumption. I broke the silence saying: Et Cetera.

“etc etc”

Others contest.
Situation #2

In an old house, someone spoke of Maria. I agree. My head trembles.

“the truth of what Brazil is”

They for the moment forget that I exist. Go to the sink and wash hands.

“Forget the house that someone wants to show to you all” The bathroom has a narrow window for the sun. They speak of the personality of Joaquim. The love eats my address. The most beautiful of them commences to speak about some disinterested theme. I think of the Guggenheim occupied for a dirty favela. Think in blacks urinating against white walls. Someone lifts up the chair. Emit a strident scream. A Liter of Gas costs R$ 1.80.

A little later, I have some pennies in my pocket.

The night falls
The Needle’s Eye

Tattoo Silences like Ants
Suffocate the Clocks
In an Eyelid
Dress the scream with skin
Of the Scarab
Twist the muscles of the face
In Perplexity
Cross the absurd way
Of disoriented nails
Obscure and recurved
Over the backside
Know that all flowers are ridiculous.
And the same cultivated
Ore
Pain
The deaf epilepsy
Forget the right name
Work the earth
To exaustion
(Maybe a little song of the Harvest you can direct love to other easy words)

With the stupid rice of the peddler
Voyage to an eye
Of a needle
Insane labrynth
Believe that all history is an acid
After cauterizing the wound
Accept the reflex
Camouflage
remember
the seed before the bread
Tayata gate gate
paragate parasamgate
boddhi soha.
Two Poems

Virna Teixiera

Translated by the author

The anchored boats
rock quietly
at the pier

The sky –
a purple velvet
carpet
beyond their eyes

Reflected on the water
the tide down
late
midsummer night

Mendelssohn’s
symphonies

Echo

through this inhabited
Scottish
valley of light
Paula Rego’s Paintings

language struggling

intonations, rage

laughter

words behind the

silence, behind the

iris

sorrow, resentment, words

we do not use

abandonment, fear –

she exposes

faces

colours, scenes
Catarata: The Absurd Paranaeses

Sérgio Medeiros

Translated Raymond L. Bianchi

A,B,C,D

// fine rain a disequilibriated wind
what a wind
disequilibriated

// leaves that balance
on the vase/// and leaps of em-us

// a button
opens
the helix
open air

// crepuscule,

Lungs

Pale

Two Dry Wings
Striated

Without hunger
E, F, G

// the liquid
Obese

// c
l/
(n v /
c) /
c
n /
s / s
volume

H, I, J, K, L
// pink nostrils

flowers/breathe

the wall

// ~

~ / ~

~~~

// a ; soup;

thick;

pool

escaping

// the clean house

throat of glass/

do not swallow the leaves

light/around

// Red leaves

(Lose the Lushness)
immbolize the lair/
Big closed beaks,

Without hunger

\textbf{M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T}
\texttt{// the hardness (the heighth) curls}
-- nails; and a heavy cluster of laying

green dirt (Below); the red and the lilies (Above)
Popped/

na flor rígida: rosa; cascas

the ridged flower: Roses; peels

thick: (Below)

\texttt{// the high bush}

against the wall /

an arrow

\texttt{// dry wind /}

the seeds

the dirty leaves

\texttt{// bromelias covering}

the Tucan’s beak

-- a knot smeared
\texttt{// // / u}

r
q d
se /

r,
o a /
v,
p,
s i /

m a

-- your colors

// colors

the ground /
steps not inflated /
slide
the
twilight-enlight

// a abajour
the room/other

Outside: blushing buildings

Of pallid yellow

// fiber hammock
rolled
on the bench /
wave crest
brown,
water cut
U, V, W, X, Y, Z
// land point /
only a finger, dirty /
without leaves over the patio /
the pool
the docile bed
// eyes of a cat
circulate /
a white target / perforated
erased stains
// bicycles /
pass the shoreline,
over,
noses descending /
round glasses
//stem picking/the air vacant
// the blister
blanched /
descends
// dogs (look at the
scraping /
of dark water)
// deserted boats /
stopped
in the same place /
// great lashes of plastic
the water; / closed eyes /
over the clear
pain
// the cyclist passes pallid /
throw; over a fish
the sand: brilliant humidity
// humid stain, stranded
mountain reflex://shelter
(the late tremble//)
// Smoking,tree;
like smoke /
move the bush
// foaming light /
a wrinkled
tree / go shrink
in the water
// calm water / shaggy /
body sandy and
dry

// drop

humid curved aluminum

submerge/

// // // //

///brilliant pupil/

of an open eye

cover the slow cataract:

Blast!
Antônio de Gouveia, cleric in Pernambuco (circa 1570)

gold’s priest, necromancer
well versed in magic and mine,
came to Brazil in banishment,
celebrated strange masses,
murdered imprisoned natives,
stole young women from their loves

in an attempted defense
of his far-flung exploits
he drafted with depraved fist
a testimonial to customs absurd
on this other side of the world

he plunged his nib into a pool of anatto
(that they might suppose i dight
in blood this bitter tract),
mixing the ruddy juices
with resin from a fine cedar
(let no scribe lack sealing-wax for sour vomit)

he made tea from the fennel
he carried in a purse
and made fierce discourse
against witch doctors’ works

(o bird of ill omen,
take this thy canting flight
and any elsewhere alight)

infused with thought,
he crept into brush,
and waking in grass,
tossed his habit in the bush
after shooing a scarab
with his leather sandals
and cleaning his shit
from his shoes with a cob
(good as any for manuring)
— ora-pro-nóbis thorns,
noble gold of the converted! —,
without pardon for perjury,
did sign the soiled paper:

From a Pernambucan hamlet
In this controverted October month,
I remain yr hmbl & obt child in Christ,
Father Antônio Gouveia.

NOTES

ANTONIO DE GOUVEIA. 1528-?. Azorean Jesuit priest, physician, astrologer, alchemist, vaticinator, magician, slaver, jailbird. Claimed to converse with devils. Exiled to Pernambuco in the early days of colonial Brazil, he became an assiduous seeker of riches, for which he was called “Padre do Ouro.” He was arrested for the third and final time in 1571, not because he extirpated the Viatã, or because he raped a free Indian woman and tortured her European “custodian” in order to discover her whereabouts after she’d fled, but because in doing all these things, he ignored Jesuit proscriptions and had become a great embarrassment to the clerical state. Probably killed by the Inquisition soon after he was returned to Lisbon.

Ora-pro-nóbis. Pereskia aculeata.
Pablo Vera

The salvages doe credyte
a thynge that groweth gourde-lyk.
—HANS STADEN
The True History of his Captivity

men in a circle
fumigate a rattle
in the form of a face
with burning tobacco
while the old one

(on white hair a headdress
of cotton and bromelia fiber,
shot with japu’s topaz
tailfeathers and the blood-red
feathers from pavó’s breast
and one orange-striped
from the throat of a black-beaked
toucan)

with a mask all smoke
and a child’s voice
(a god speaks through him)
recalls a future
of jubilo and fright

NOTES

PABLO VERA. ?-1958. Mbyá-Gurani spiritual leader. He and other caciques recited Mbyá creation myths and sacred songs for the Paraguayan ethnologist Leon Cadogan, who was allowed to transcribe, translate into Spanish and publish Ayvu Rapyta: Textos míticos de los Mbyá-Guaraní del Guairá (Asunción, 1956, 2nd ed. 1992).

Japu. Pied crested oropendola.

Pavó. Scutated fruit-crow.
Passion does not Amuse
A Sphinx with Closed teeth
Crushing the dense unpleasantness
The intert mandible of magma
The stones forewarn they are ready
No, no I understand the code
None from him is sealed

Immune and clever wax
Repugnancy or asceticism
Simulation surcharge
Propicious omen
Dense as to not laugh
Face reverting to the
Sight of a Dantean purgatory
Two Poems

Laís Corrêa de Araújo

Translated by Raymond L. Bianchi

Everyone’s Poem

Do not know streets without signs
We stay along the shore
The immense cold of the sea

Open the hands of nights
We crave nights
Of nights without jasmine

We know how to caress poor faces
Without size and without bitterness
Caress the lost faces

Now we simply stay
Around their tender daughters
If we have daughters someday

Now we stay sitting with tranquility
Inside the lost eyes
Sweet histories of disillusioned stars
**Participants' Song**

I did not want more that day  
Wet with sun and hot  
I want a cold night  

Pain to be human  
I dont want this calm anymore  
The island of indifference  
What laurels my soul  

Pain to be human  
Follow the Birth Star  
Of my innocent hand  
And return forgetting  

The pain to be human  
I want to scream, the voice?  
I want to respond “here!”  
But I pretend the others  

The pain to be human  
I am the futile foreigner  
Without words that are growing  
The hands of a companion  

The pain to be human

Like a whip of water  
Salty and bitter  
Whip of love a bruise  

The pain to be human  
Learn my address  
A spear to find me  
Lament my offering  

Bring more
Two Poems

≡  Dora Ribeiro

Translated by Raymond L. Bianchi

from Systema Naturae

(Your weapon of Looking
a pomegranate broken
open in a
decorous red
almost fresh)

(Ripening in Pieces
Japanese bed
That invented
A thing of the ground
Ground
Without intermediaries.)
from *Comecar e o Fim*

*The Theory of Seas* observes innumerable retreats
*Many that are few the voyages*
*Comings and goings*

*In this game waters are incessant*
*Seas do not exist*
*Existed*

*This theory*
*The importance of this is not to have virtues*
*Existed never the less dry nevertheless returning*
Favorite Words

Maria Esther Maciel

Translated Raymond L. Bianchi

Now is the time. It is worthless to try to hide under your armour of scales the inert. But, the Keeper warns us, the hour will be panic – this one that retains in its hands all hours of life up to here, like an exhausted exercise. In vain we walk over scaffoldings and wardrobes, our souls of madmen – sometimes of rhinestone; other more, low fabric of weakened color. Meanwhile we insist, penitent of a path of shard and crystal.

Office of the Keeper, the clock hardly rings the irrevocable hour, he will knock at your door, long, silences, and so like without asking for permission will be entering, demanding from you, late at night, without sitting him in the humble room, rescue the very pine nut of your leftovers.

He is the Keeper, the owner of the time and of the hour. This scar here, on the left side of the face, do you see? It is left from that war in the dark, that without even speaking of the small way, aloof, the timid manner and these nervous hands with which, lord of almost impossible patience, restores the thread back to the bobbin. Insensate game the game with which you play certain final blow.

You got the wrong friend, mother, wife, son, parents, century, you are mistaken in a grimace the Keeper, imminent werewolf that still keeps in the bottom of its devoted heart to fugacious things, the tenderness that, being of an animal that reminds, is so superiorly exemplary, more than faithful to a rooted feeling. No, the Keeper is not faithful, rather betrays his life like scorpions do it, the old elephants, the suicidals.

It will always be through the memory, the exercise, the novel-diligent artisan whom the guard rapidly offers a revolver for panicked moments. No, Never, I never want to encounter him, in the early morning, the eye accesses the darkness, grieved the point of your company.

The guard is more, much more than a solitary animal and in his melancholic back, place of embraces, my love, in your hard heart all are mean and all are humanity.
yes
the poet
infin
itesí
(tmesis)
mal
(a thesis)
exists
and
still
is
mani
fest
in
this
ani
(dis)
mal
species
that
is
his
funerai
find
ing
him
self
pursued
buffalo
hides
hot-house
flower
his
ton
gue condemned
to go
out
a para ly tic para site an equi (con dor) t able libr (bree zing) ist (in f light) on the thin stripe of a zebra in a zoo
when
hunger
strikes
he
eats
fame
like
a
chameleon
eats
air
f
a
l
f
b
f
f
t
s
i
i
t
t
large
lower than the trash man that smells like trash but at least has a smell the poet lizard in the dark inodorous and solitary animal in his laboratory with no sun or salary
this
is
the
official
cate

gory
of
the
bard
for
whom
as
just
reward
— after he starves —
one carves
an
august
bust
No excuse for what appears explains
Spending hours on gas carriers and poems
Being dumb share no reason no answer

For what’s occurred keeps on calling us
Here when seeming not to be ourselves
Recalling the violence as your signs go on

Appearing immediate lost and the grave
Exorbitance survives and gives and keeps
On giving this undoing proper kinship

Frames the fantasy now an obscure gift we
Enter truth being the emptiness queerness
Names our sad selves ruins rubble fire feeds

This lack of product being the only work
To reason not the need to negate the world
Meaning meaning’s pure excess localizing

Sounds engendering a riot in sense and not
Sensing communion scandalizing death
In words with no future we seek portals

And faults hew our new relations quicken
Chasing that persistent and ongoing no!
the question requires several centuries, requires several shared things, several things that question the essence of the question, of the shared sense of the question, a collective sense of the question, thinking as one thinks of a job at hand, integral as a garage door opening, sensing a thought of a door opening, opening the door and again, sensing a thought in the mind somewhere closing a question, several centuries later, thinking the door and closing it, closing it inside two eyes of fear, inside the whirling spirit of fear, inside absolute readability of door intelligence, outside the whirlwind of enchanted slander, outside blasphemy, with little left for satisfaction, with the feet in the wetness of sin, in a sin made of marvelous hallucinogens without the collective thought of sin.
during the centuries as the question arises, during the final epoch, a trace will appear, during the final testimony that will finish a thought with its own limits, a trace will appear, undone in its own doing, a transition object will appear in the collective sense of things, a condition of thinking itself into being, outside mere grasping of common knowledge, outside the horizon’s endless unsensibility, dissolving on the retina, posing as doubtless but seen, the relational and undone, the now without discourse, the now with the usual alphabetic inspired diffraction, patterns plotting transmission into a transposed medium, gazing into the abysses of the seen, a fusion of the other, being the other as neither the self or the other, senseless in a similar, a self outside the self, being a thought of you or me, exchanging the exchangeable within exchangeable oxymoronic slashes, the unintelligible apprehension as global warming on the body in the museum of free parking.
centuries later a mosquito with an occasion to inscribe writing on the
body, undermines the essence of being, closes in on a sentence, an abstraction
of something, anything not being being, that doesn’t exist, that transmits a
quality and property, grants a succession to logic, a matrix to the rational,
listlessness to a ground of groundlessness, hot with the glory of cold, under
a choice frame of nothing, situated in the frolic of everything, giving birth
to an appropriation of the self into the other, being the senseless moment
of death, the self in the function of sound, functioning in the function of
sound, harmonics on a chandelier possessed by moonlight, clear as swans
evolving in the morning blooms, on a sea of green, glistening in a pattern
of neutrality, beyond the loosened gills and spangling mist, delving in a
nakedness, a transfiguring green, dying in dying, in the extremities being
something always dying, a death with a welcome or replayed on a final end,
only to begin again.
every time time begins time, making a place in time, a look, a breath, 
a breeze, more or less, having time when time makes up time, understanding 
the scream of seasons, understanding the potential obedience for waging 
accumulation, binding the cracks of nothing at the threshold, open to the 
thresholds of pain, a torn departure, experience as departure, absences as 
presence, again and again, sometimes a question, sometimes an answer, 
sometimes presence without language, divided and abandoned, deposing 
the private in the frozen air of public, frozen in things among other things, 
a stream of gestures, electrical burst, no reason, falling for no reason, a 
hundred ways to divert a hundred ways to divert telling a story, on nothing 
in a moment, made constantly inconsistent, grasping the no longer question, 
in space and the presence of space.
this could be a series of singulars busting forth, points of grand realignment, instantaneous realignment, bringing life to the mud and the slime, entertaining a continuum in something multiple, segments and singularities, colors on the waves with a certain distance, conversation with a theatrical subtext, an end hoping for action, a majestic image carried in the air, in the way the air is the air, next to the dear reader, this is you reading this or this is you listening to this, this is the sound the air makes creating form, creating a moment in language, dependent on a false prophet, that drops a name in the motion of a touch, in the light of sound, dear reader, I understand the way the clock is wearing, the way a thought knows the way a hand knows, the voice on the other side of the wall that will never know, talking incessantly, never a moment of suspended never can know, suspended in a portal, leaning into an end without an instant, taken for limits, every look constrained by limits, every word a splinter in a kind of cold vacuum, trying to be an occasion in a storm.
trying to be an occasion in distress without being a condition, breathing through gills, trying to find a slice of air, trying to be before, trying to deny the face of misery and being forsaken in the face of fear, trying to immobilize the branches catching the wind, that becomes sound, a flat line, a fault line, a fishbone laying between a mismatched tectonic plate, an occasion speaking of an occasion, happening in a moment happening in nothing, happening in the wind, without a condition, breathing in sound before it makes sense, before being the branches in the wind, between the sun and the body, between flesh and rock, a rock and hunger, a slight penetration and the night rustling through muted language, naked with power, sensing a touch, touching the horizon, through the self outside the self, a kidnapped eddy of significance seeking nonsense in a field of everything, with nothing leaping from flames of fire to joy, to the sun, to a violet pariah of death, an anagram with a sudden falling, bringing in a sudden farewell, a comedy of windows, nakedness touching nakedness, leaning into the other then back again in fright.
unable to communicate anything, unable to have a thought that responds to nothing, unable to conceive of any reason, knowing there is no reason, just being and no reason, lost in a loosened nothing toward a unidirectional desire, towards nothing, towards the moon being perfect, towards a concept that slips in a moment and falls to the ground, something in a word, something we stand on, a distortion with a common subsidy, dead residue that thinks itself in a vision that has no sight, that walks through the night, peers into the darkness, blundering against comprehension, stopped in comprehension, starting out with all in no reason, just someone leaking in a conduit of everything, crumbling in the rumble in between no reasons, no purpose, and a dark unimpressed otherwise – stripped bare in a memory of a memory, always waiting for someone to speak and being spoken to . . .
1st Friends Quaker Meeting, chapter, something about the mental life being the only life, how the world tells us to do do, the great silence, most people with eyes, I alternated & it’s pretty much like a bunch of people in a movie theater, but there’s no movie, the mind. Then someone spoke about a novel in which someone said: people suffer because they want things to be different than they are, as there are no answers & maybe even no responses, different from the silence of a shark. Then much later a woman, then the guy with the question got up & left. Woman speaks about her grandson being teased for being soft & delicate, her Quaker uncle being tortured for refusing going to war in WWI, she said she prays for men to be allowed & for women to encourage, she talked about Thomas, what you bring forth will save you, what you do not bring forth... I thought about the inevitability. Then a guy spoke about hearing things, across the room, like those rooms where you position yourself perfectly to hear from a distance, about mishearing being the only kind of hearing. What about form & structure, then the silent part was over & people started shaking hands but the people in front of me turned around & looked at me but didn’t shake my hand, but then another woman came over & shook my hand, then they got announcements & I left.
Quaker meeting today, too much noise, difficult to concentrate, wood grain, pink rag pillow in front of me, many people, doors opening, eyes burning when I look at them the older women, their heads raised or bowed, woman spoke about the war, the responsibility, the sadness, the what can you do of it, southern man talked about Falluja and the pictures of the children killed, he talked about Quaker prayer = what can I do, what can we do?, that is Quaker prayer, not intercessional ‘inferior’ prayer, where you ask ‘god’ to do. This I did not know. But then, then a child walked into the house, a child with problems, with glasses, with his mother, limped in, like an answer, to the meeting house, then a woman talked about Palestine, pray for them too, there is nothing else to do, is there nothing else to do? I mean, it doesn’t really matter if there’s a god, the apostle is chosen to speak for god, the genius serves something else, & where were the people speaking? Then the young guy talked about pacifism not being passive, a struggling for justice inherent in the pacifist position, then the woman talked about child abuse, how women have for thousands of years sat back & allowed their children to be abused, how she went to a march on D.C., how what is feminine is crushed, compassion, & this leads to atrocity, war, mass...also, the good morning part, & the potluck, & where were all the people? I wonder what the old women thought of these speeches.
Quaker meeting again today, again no one talked, there were 2 small holes in the wood on the bench in front of me, in the wood in front of me, one pointed holes, single minded & two, breathing was in two, did not go all in for the afterwards, fellowship, not pressed, how to live, not to be told how to live, how to live, how to rhythm & how to live, how to pace, if it’s not a trick then what’s the hurry, what’s the desperate hurry, not to be tricked & the hurry. & saw, saw the sign on the wall about keeping the clutter out, these are the one-thing-a-day signs, there was the construction noise outside & clutter, & here we are inside, how to keep the outside outside & the inside in, there is crossover & penetration, but still, we still all sat in stillness, no one commented on the noise, & it was even forgettable at times, although now at home, still hearing it.
Quaker meeting today, Alejandra’s birthday, red velvet cake, no one spoke today, twice. Twice no one spoke, or is that three now, across the street, shapes of wood, shapes in the wood, that I will catch the dialect, no rage this time like last time at the man the man who stares, Grace caught a firefly in a bag, the mother had no report, Mindy the painter, the women talk afterwards, women talking the woman with the heavy bag, all sound is part of the meeting sound, hammering & buzzing across the street, comes in the room, hits us, is sound, the waiting positions, waiting postures, of sound, more & more no one speaks, heads are arranged downward or up or straight on, I stare at the wood, don’t fight says the room to the roomers, borrowed a book. We all wait together in the room, the cat hisses because he hasn’t been touched in a long time, my human form that is only the Petitioner. Who is that woman our noisy workshop oblation springs, mankind tigered, ‘We are owned men,’ ready to walk and not faint. A more subterranean unceasing orientation, we are perpetual, we are perpetually bowed, cleaving meaning to break as well as cling, a universal obligation, they were quickened and called men, Dear Friends, fitful, so to order, that nothing, would crow. About the springs, a mere belief meant to dwell, is the locus, not a problem. We now address ourselves, a sermon on the self-portrait.
the passage, as
a lack of signature

* 

“but to be”
residual then
over the page

* 

your mouth went
silent, still
variants

* 

in everyday language
tilt of the tablet
“object” or “state”
possibilities, infinities

*

its contents
the evidence of form

*

materials
or recounting

*

her words
two lines that meet
an inversion
prolonged by
plans a & b
an interior

* 
aperture
the reappearance
of blue

* 
belongs to
what appears up close

* 
she returns—
halfway
In the fine grain of this hour

Bruce Covey

Carved out of the spirit of the tuber
Saline designed to shrink & magnetize gulls

There’s one shaped like a fan by that outcropping
& a dead one, fur packed in ice, transpired
By syndicating gnats & oranges

A crystal for someone who doesn’t believe in being healed
A chakra mumbled in absent throes

For this bluffing grass, ribcage collapsing & caught
On film, a fractional rowboat labeled “primary,”
Escape to the nth, & at harmony with the jellyfish
In the bay beyond its granite

What either embraces or repels one foot
Before nine, windy, the key’s soaked, an empty chair

& eating away, staggering fact of lunch again
After all these years, fighting to push
Your tiger face-first into the glass

& shatter into hypotheses, the ones, Janus-
Like, sucking penny to ear, sideways & hyper-vigilant
Suffer a Witch to Live

Christina Mengert

Suffer a Witch to Live

No more a swarm battered flies
up the heel of a foot.
Oh no. A circle of thrown names.

Suffer a Witch to Live

Watch as if
never watched
Suffer a Witch to Live

Not in here a stone’s pelt away
in here, a table claws to stand
a foot
swept back
back on ground legs sawed out from

Suffer a Witch to Live

Burnt porch and small family. Small
Victory! One down,
Suffer a Witch to Live

Wings detest
absence thereof.

Burnt roof now in your space.

Suffer to Live

Floor by floor flies, swollen
Flies, swollen floor by floor

Never again leave the foot sole open
An ellipsis for definition of space, matter
Suffer a Witch to Live

See torch. See tall curtains blazing. See for open body full and humming. See flies. See wing ascending. See rock and hand and fire and hand. See halfway in circle. See wing and grounded body in the same moment from same grounded body. See one side see one side.

Suffer a Witch to Live

The rumor of

excised or peripheral body
from/to tucked space

record both on fire.
Event afire.
“the law says

“the law says

“voice from a lip burned up”
Three Poems

Edric Mesmer

A khimera

In his dream
the vocabulary may begin:

[Cyrillic D]
O{ 91

Though she is muted
he is reading her face;

though he cannot listen
she is thoroughly cursory.

You can take: take Stravinsky.

Lapped
as the conch

is the French
horn’s bell;

tonight
empyrean

symbols
what you will:

analysis

in excess

horny toad.

Of a sudden
there is orchestra—
weren’t allover these chambers alchemic?

4’33” rhyming meaning melodious.

[A saint’s]

apostrophe{

the date?

Tablature

scant tableaux,

the eye on

its nightstand ev-

anesces; nor

composure or

carbon makes them one: rosette.

Defiling phylum

in whose image

your arm foregrounds

mine “and thou art borne.”
Myriad vantage

1

A cube to locute the descant

*and Mother*

As eternal laths trespass in obsidian
couture

*Baby*

*Wife of*

*Erected in Memory of*

A dove melts
over a scroll

`URKE`

`ROURKE`

`O’ROURKE`

Close parens close parenthesis period
in the idiom typography wan topos

1876-1926

1853-1879

1838-1878
Our Mother …

Aged 50 Y’rs 6 Mo’s & 21 D’s

Interests
in sequential
profundity

2

b. / d.

sheathed in ivy

here lies

the calligrapher’s mother

here lies

the calligrapher’s son; the engraver’s daughter

…eternal morning”

Elevating blank squares
separate from

a stone column
of unknown
pediment

because broken
became drapery

below a name
—1855-1911

…following a year’s illness”
Circularity of the template
in chalcedony
overlain—
the temples

*STONE ART*

Bunted wreathing over a parquet panel of marble
or rounded pedestal, the central rectangle
materially reflective to match the mock-
sarcophagus

in exposed matte

“The statue above is imaginative”

Iconography slated

*Forever \ together*

before losing
face

*beloved father*

*beloved*

A-run in quarine
oxidation

*LAUDATE DOMINUM
OMNES GENTES*
is given to
in loving memory of

industrialist & philanthropist
by his daughter

bestilled bell

erected 1890

thence removed \ compatriots

….when I think of my people, so soon to be scattered and forgotten.”

thus this
said/wrote

Red Jacket
Spheric epistle

Purported analysis "pressing fair design; presupposition fluke pattern"

A lifetime to efface ribald technique ergo ego demonstrates dalliance

I am the cloned cypress in Damascus steel defenses I am performance pianissimo

back-to—feckless As like-is-to-like for tautology I quake till false
Three Poems

Carrie Etter

Treeline

What meets behind the trees
(it is the arc of a sigh)
what must, what does, what may
(from the cold tiles of would-that-I-were-not)
faith or science or
(the vice must be adjusted to allow movement without escape)
the shortest article in world news: a new planet, perhaps
(the swum line)
that aery sustenance
(the arc, as in the degrees of perception)
the soul, one assuaging glimpse
Divining for Starters (29)

In the illuminated curtains, in the room’s convalescent light

but for the bruising silence

but for the letter cast on the floor, its granite alphabet

in a mattress-and-blanket comfort, in a vestige of illness

against the letter, its polite calumny

there is or there will be

an apricot on the stem, an apricot in the hand

(the letter)

the tug of harvest
New Hampshire’s New Bishop

after hearing an interview with the Archbishop of Canterbury on BBC Radio 4, October 2003

The archbishop laid out the words like cards for solitaire. But not his words. Is the ear-trumpet still used anywhere in the world? I would talk, talk, talk to see my sentences slide down that flamboyant funnel. The original body has no sexual inclination, the homosexual priest thereby an oxymoron. That was one word: homosexuality. Not his word: the church’s word. The archbishop is an ear-trumpet, but at the small end, only grains of sand emerge. Are mounting.
pious photoramas in the style
of a varallo sunset in technicolor
present themselves in the jargon of demille

movies soothe the glands or catechize
making light of gallows or martyrs
they mime surrogate palestines.
neither fridge nor fuselage nor chains
the high structure does not resolve in germs
but rib to rib the veins encrust

overlooking the raffle of gendarmes
from the top of the gallows the carpal,
the phalanges skewered with irons
if the word (in time \textit{en sof}) sets the limits
why does it change, degenerating in body
rather than in nets or rock cloud or branch?

“on his behalf he rails at the fordist
torments vinegar ropes fists the column
by which he redeems in heaven our sins.”
but if you incarnate yourself in fleeting livery
and turn to the sky the whole of vertebrae
I append *neon illuminatio mea*. 
from *Shaded Series*

≡ *Virginie Poitrasson*

Translated by Mathilde Simian & Virginie Poitrasson

**watercolor memory**

so it is to remember until exhaustion, in the closed latitude of the heart, little paint outside just the facade of the words in watercolor faded, washed out, an aftermath of memory saving nothing, in seamark, in flame the gleams reveal us though an extension of air

so akin to its abode.

**underneath**

under the underneath of pleats, the swamps of silence, beyond indecisive sirens the deadly fragrance of the unnamed, the hidden, the undersides, pleated on the knees, not prosperous and so propitious to an underlying eclosion, in a loop the mouth propagates.

annexed to the body.
from *Ornithomancy*

Robert Fernandez

**Carolina Paroquet**

Invasive territory Carolina,  

*seems to have been given by direct killing . . .*

of ranges studied,  

*ideation’s beads, wing’s weightless hive*  

(Carolina paroquet)  

*woven shade;*  

*trim lunettes of voice aloud in linking cluster.*
Black Vulture

Weakened kind rhapsodic lycée Percival a naked head soars Belinda around ‘yes’
black elegant “a Seine” chlorophyll’s
massed rays [risen] eyes descript
a rainbow, scallop, lofts-
lauds-eludes, mandrill’s *principally carrion* black :
: unhooded circumference (black vulture).
Veery

(Veery) hermit tail rash, hue-slaked
tint and garment

\[ \text{thrush has only head} \]

\& neck reddish

fluent hour,
\emph{an exquisitely pure fluting},

\[ \text{of hours born—} \]

firecoral
“coral’s red,”

lies noticed:

a priest (fuscescens) in the bedded leaves.
The Bone Saw: Little Poetics of Translation

Werner Dürrson

Translated by Rosmarie Waldrop

Free as the swallows
they hardly sing the

poets of poets
in the house of tongues

with windows and doors
wide open

/

Poets of poets
sworn to the word demi-
monk demi-
monde

/

The poem sought out
in silence

take literally
the body and bodily
the letter

conceivably it
speaks in
your tongue

/
Yes, the unutterable
Rilke’s favorite word

translatterly handed
from one
poem to the next
it remains

/

Translatterly seeking
your own in the
foreign you say

the foreign in
your own

thus correspondence

/

But how shall the foreign
find a home through you
to whom home is foreign

/

There are trans- sub-
and dilations

what chants-lations are
I can’t figure out

Yoko Tawada writes
transoceanations

/
Henri Michaux when asked what kind of liberty he connected with the word libérté

Ah Monsieur, vous êtes bien plus exact que moi

/ 

Even the nonunderstood I preserve carefully between the lines

/ 

At home in the open up comes a wind tongue carrying carried I say

translocate

even an echo is much

/ 

But how bring the bright whirl of the piiazza over into my parading Platz

/ 

And where else could you find this Wald that in German echoes: widerhallt

/
Left alone with my
German kikeriki

even the cocks crow
something else elsewhere

cocorico
calls the Gallic cock

the English one wakes you
with cock-a-doodle-doo
help, Saint Balbulus, help

/

Set against sweet sound
is the German tongue

(says Hölderlin)
But lovely on
a prickly beard the murmur
of kisses

/

How metamorphize metaphors
and avoid well-aimed
misses

neither too sharply etched
so it hurts the eye

nor the blurred screen
of the surveillance camera
with its constant
snow

/
Some things however
must remain letter by letter

like the Musical in the
Theater in Melnikov-
Street in Moscow
NORD-OST
   HOPA OCT
letter by letter sayable
must remain many things

/

You, transpoets
don’t be too free
to translate
for instance
*the other Israel*
where there stands *Israel*
would be treason

but where does *Israel* stand

/

Sometimes I’m Kannitverstan
pawning Schlemihl’s shadow
for just one image

/

Whether all Greek to you or all Martian

preserve the riddle
of pure origin

and let it shine through
the palimpsest

/
Or translate the ununderstood
into the ununderstandable

with at least corresponding
blank lines between—

/
Beautiful the grace of
exactness

far from copy

the art of
asides
called poetry

/
(Unimaginable:
translating it back
as a test)

/
Choosing’s like shelling nuts
(pine nuts pain nuts)
Skullnuts. Bite.
Cracked. The brain lies
open. To be rephrased
in content-form.

/
Remains to consider
that at Kleist’s post-mortem
his skull broke
the surgeon’s
bone saw

/
Harun-al-Rachid
Caliph of Baghdad
paid translations
their weight in gold
TRANSLATOR’S NOTES

1. In the word for translations, Übersetzungen, the author punningly finds tongues, Zungen, and Übersee-Zungen, overseas-tongues, in the work of Yoko Tawada, a Japanese writer who writes in German. (No Über-Seezungen, oversoles, though!)

2. Saint Balbulus, from Latin, “Saint Stutterer.”

3. Kannitverstan is a popular story by 18th century writer Johann Peter Hebel. A poor German in Holland always gets the answer “can’t understand you” to all his questions, and so mistakes it for the name of the owner of a mansion, a big steamer, and the name of the dead man who’s just being buried. He concludes to the vanity of earthly riches.

4. The German original contains quotes by, and references to, Goethe, Hölderlin, Karl Krolow, Gregor Laschen, Ernst Meister, Novalis, which have been obscured by the translation.
Two Poems

Juliana Leslie

On the Other Side and Far Away from Here

Flowerless dress, flowerless country
   plus you     Nebraska
moving sideways through honey color

If one of us could follow
the maker of musical things
so the other might become
a real magnolia—
a composition of thoughtfulness,
bioluminescence or whatever

No sound of plum falling
no imaginary friend
The Number One Is in the Flower

Therefore in her arc is lily like
therefore

Her lights   Her hips at a tilt

As figure $l$ she said
in parallel air
and shadow $m$

The total distance
versus the rings of Saturn

We sing in real time before the fire
from a chapter in our book

with leaves in our throats at midnight
fluid vowel $a$

The number one is in the flower
coiled and unflown

In winter form   In movement

In perpetual revolt
First Battle of Thyreae

Pontius Silas

Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book 1, 82

To prevent excessive casualties, Sparta and Argos each agreed to send three hundred soldiers to settle a border dispute over Thyreae and its surrounding plain, but after all but three of the original six hundred soldiers were killed, both sides claimed victory, resulting in a conventional, second battle.

1.

A pointillist paints a hole
so vast its rim is politics,
but to observers the very gaping

seems a kind of camera trick,
wherein these armies are assembled,
awaiting the passage of night

as passages of night themselves,
as space between stars or the geese
here sleeping atop the banks and playa.

2.

Clear night instars still water,
the Spartans and the Argives,
conterminous hefts of war

reflecting in the other’s mirror
and once more in myself,
a closed experience of open-ends,

its sum weighed like a feather
against the soul the way
two mirrors make a million million.
3.

Their encampments spread
like amendments to astronomy,
fires plotting asterism,

monstrosities of constellated beasts.
Night has leveled the land,
not flat, nor fair, but gone,

has planed away the plain
of all topography, away whereby
tools alone remain, plain and level.

4.

A one-eye-open doze looks out,
this spoke of sight.
One goose becomes the gaggle.

Half their birdbrain slumbers
while the other half awaits
a foreignness to fall,

each looking out like a mousetrap
baited with a ping-pong ball;
for millions, the one matters.
Claimed, “Victory,” and the clamor sets off the gaggle in sets, offshoots, volleys of off-shot arrows that fall like the rows of an antiquated army, a sight set in air and on it,

and in the honks and rush I imagined the skeins, their shadows in the water attempting to v.
Methodology

Devon Wootten

The range in which we function

interruption
modulation

flux and reflux

viewed as an integral
part of a larger whole

an analogous expression

the deepest are columnar

rounded apices
a cupped disk
its domed elevation

propagated into three dimensions
chambered radical oblique

You do not arborize

Here it is triadic

I have
a length of rope
quiescent pond
unsilvered glass

a stone modality of form

Your purity is low
my hands sutured

only refraction can be measured
termed transverse meridonal

at the rim it is thickest
fosse limbus
bodied trough
I receive You
Converge at distance
Bearer of light

relux
i.

In all likelihood harmonic,
definite,
a relative number

Process
a requisite particular

ii.

Some are reciprocal
torsion
depth

Accordingly centrifugal
iii.

Now suppose opacity

Implicit motion arc-length

This too a timepiece

Permit me pendulum ether
This divided
Apparent reproduction

An object
Sequential
Point-by-point

As in means and persistence
A finite field

For this to be effective
Eliminate intermittancy

O processes
Deed in-vision

Move something

Enter bent and made

The eye was not different: there are two

Such can be caught
Slid into the other hand

If extended
Say Looking as limit
Possible sharpness

The other defined uniformity as degree
Innumerable Convenient

Being composed contrasts
Prediction:
If I were to carry the whole of this to you
Assuming I
Carry the whole of this to you
Some theory of memory
Gradient
Angle of descent

A simpler expression
Observable
Consequent

We are closer at greatest speed
Dice

Denise Nico Leto

1. SHELL

what is hidden and what is manifest

A gradual form; proportion and ratio
  a capriccio lobe—

turtle, mollusk, insect, egg
  or
small-arms cartridge
  or
elliptical orbits of an electron
  or
to separate, become freed from—

Nevertheless, an interior coast
  habitation, retreat

a way out  a way in
  the
imagination of matter,
  sleeveless and spherical—
  But why not one turn more?

2. RIPS

through
and through her lips:
  serration, mens rea

an involuntary taper
  the loitering, the lovely (words)
3. **METEOR**

Traces of iron, largess
    the anomalous flight.
You have to be careful what you’re seeing:
    the fallen or falling
and where, exactly where to put it

4. **NET**

In shaping the Self, a bead is bigger than a pinpoint.

If caught, wiggle and serenade the bipedal,
slip through lines, wander un-nervously,
blather the madmen, purchase talcum powder,
a stick of gum, comb your hair in a mirror,
madam the mayhem, leave a trail for the Nile, scoop the lord of fish.

5. **AT**

when the lady of aqueducts sings in nautical ravines, the lost stars, lost

6. **EQUIVALENCIES**

She pretends to be a surveyor,
measuring instruments of indication.
The liquid capacity of *hello*
against the voluminous creak of air.
For certain injuries, the pool.
How bone and muscle translate there,
to a blued and watery mouth.
For others, the desert.
How the pink thirsty thunders;
a crow in the genuflecting throat.

Sometimes in the morning, I quiet the errant fin. Breath’s outline on
word’s rim.
I need another way to say this:

All through the moat
the divisions dream
of a water that stays the same.

Maestro, roam the earth.
There are peccadilloes,
pixel in the data,
cobalt blots on botany,
peloria, clusters and hybrids
such as:
a woman living in an old-growth forest
her toes beginning to curl around branches.
11. WANTS

Lothario sweets in the enigmatic o = her lover’s eye,
or down the Grand Canal in a cadmium ladle with no stops.

12. ROTATION

The same week she found the fall line,
her godfather died.
He played the oboe.
There was a great gathering of amps,
she thought she needed them.
But the woodwind,
through the curtains,
was all.

NOTES

The first line of “Shell” is from Gaston Bachelard’s Poetics of Space.
The last line is from Paul Valéry’s Sea Shells.
Two Poems

Michael Slosek

In the Ways of Making and Unmaking Stand Alone

into autonomous —
“the anonymous workings
work themselves out

of nothing” | speared
and sent into winter
an armed faction

of fractured words.
Land is not — root
fact, accessing a field.

a ni, mis — signs a name
as attic mechan
ism – rivered

by things which
return. Turn from
a reflected sun —

Edge along, this path
laught out – of a wooden
frame.

The well kept
brick among us —
resigned to unname
Wolfram von Eschenbach

_for Jerry Bruns_

“I don’t know a single letter of the alphabet”

who comes
and what night
is duration —

can be made to own
not a single letter
of the alphabet, mis

quoted. Later _ for he
had turned in rage
the bulk of the train

crumpled, was walking
away in a form
of translation.

There became
because | rounding this
wall, owned name

“not us in all” but
self-possessed, when
his voice was cleft

as if to scream — absorbing
Three Poems

gabrielle jesiolowski

entry for nan goldin: preservation effort

— so even if the blood has dried into the tongue — i try to carry herbs
— in contemplation my father is made of pollen, his whitening beard, the
threading of his voice, i will protect the moonlight around his hands, we
are lassoed together in the constellation — and i don’t care that the fog is
bringing down the trees — or that my sister sometimes, passing her hand
over her eyes, thinks i do not want what she wants: i want the photographs
to distill but not get the better of — i want her mooring mouth to heal, to
touch the radical swelling of my mother’s cyst — to vine us together, to keep
the lunging chorus, every moon loss hour — every caesura in our skin

entry for fluorescent light

we are in the grocery store in akron, ohio, buying tea and holding peaches
— every aisle, someone cannot help but see us for the first time — i still
hold her hand even though i am also letting go — the boxes of salt — the
flour bags like stone — for a moment the woman gathering tomatoes in
the fluorescent light is akin — then her face abrupt with disapproval — she
has contorted her body now, the tomatoes as well rot into old blood — i
am afraid, though i will not grant myself my fear — she is someone i have
always known why to love — i can’t let her out of my body — even the grocer
should need to know — should move out of himself like moon water from
the highway route tarnished in dead clover
entry for

“the brutality of the white letter on the wash basin”
— SOPHIE CALLE

hands poised like a rabbit’s mouth — again, tinsel, piss, the desire ground up in salt — when i get turned on i put on records — when someone is left sometimes a letter — the dreariness of a letter, all the words stacked up like a chimney — you exhale somewhere in a field — everything out of you — how you begin to see someone who can’t stop saying she’s in danger — it’s not difficult to love
When I am older
I know I will

be sure of
phantom pain approaching
the island. In a lurid turn

in a parenthetical
apparatus

under duress
without any
the regular charm. For fifty years

important, good parts
of an hour with

the technology
of girl infatuated

who go salvaging cans
for a hammer to smash

who were always doing
Magic Johnson and have

an itch about the crotch
entirely toned down
in the feature film.
Two Poems

Michael Farrell

poem like a photocopy

I have this video, passe reverse rewind the joke. float halfway on the wall I struggle to get the fire I work. spin harder, the usual mini-learning to compensate Inspired subtle and over, so turn into muscle the motion guide les pop on the dangerous land really like scary pausing cop-a half-stopped very around. too far level the process too much direction makes my diving flat. spin-sketchy how slippery slide the truck flips them together. days of confidence finally with a version. my place made it out long and slick. my wheels couldn’t get high, but they ride the middle. I was awful. a two-haven’t low-so you axis like a proper often. it is it appears this straight guy gave it a cover, the sun all the way a serious doesn’t naturally I enjoy trying to wonder, but deadly a motivated mind for the room be precise. thought runs, a final antic-perfect. sure thing a different body setting for a minor in Germany, Pete was scared. Nobody make a sequence, ending cracked and crooked for the balance big-ass overall Gold Oasis Potato City Easter Boys, Upland Summer Classic, Battle—Spring Freestyle—Turkey Massacre—Bang Series # 1—Pipeline at the Badlands—King Terror at the Ranch—Shut Up Houston Chicago Holiday in the Desert—Savannah Bluegrass Burnout—Heartland Pacific Open—San Jose Mini Vision Jam Rock Missile Mash Destination X X X
painful, hours in the novel as familiarity of hands this
tried to tend, a richer time remember days casually reading
Why? Virtually a paper play it. dropped normally without other
forms i=n late September their childhood in Hobart, into the
circle the therapeutic a cold April I won’t be here.’
the irony went running to New York, with a European-
Prince good idea, and clear sources nature phoned the effect
could be that. the growth was, very strange the saucer
on the photographs. blue-who pictures? only friendly. split t=r=y=i=n=g
the impression so calm. Some for money a scrape like
a blue-book as well as popular on the milieu,
gently, as a team … a water thing indeed: blue-lines-
look a model building the summer ended. t=h=e living semi-
Pope, Tommy was faking apparently he had no face that
genuine. although a phenomenon a smoothly formal Las Vegas star
in the 1970s nuts-and-mainstream. so cosmological. the wild,
r=e=a=l=i=t=y part culture, Jewish. he was young, the ego, wasn’t
and was transformational and deeper into California. mind-substance
pretty illegal eyes, music emotions, very bliss and infancy. in
that realm a mnemonic tapestry. Siamese slave-light very physical
dream. travel-freeing emergencies flying from t=h=e mythic Jung
wondered UFOs had someone have hypnosis over boxes a handful opened
and read honestly hooked. a trance with scenarios was nice,
sing, and be punctuated limelight a dark true silver evolution:
Figure/Ground

Steffi Drewes

Let whiteness mean audible and unfold evenly, whole currents of fever, an island unwound. Whites without texture, glaring stone surfaces, streams without sources. Let light indelible smear over the almost-empty. Near-white. Snow in flat sunlight. Slow-motion forgetting the fence line. Otherness flares to ache as in earswell to blanket this song.

Smoke-shivering plumes evolve tails. That dog is not my hero. Very light grey. That house is not hollow, another name for nest. Bright cement with first sign of texture, troubled snow, brightest highlights drumming skin. That woman was born a divining rod, dirt-angled, ankles and wrists exposed. Ash tumbles sand or ascends, acutely sidelite. A lesson to be learned in filling dark corners and in waiting and in weight, whatever comes next.

Each body becomes a halo. Hairline sky-scratch. Shadows on snow in a scene with both shaded and sunlit limbs. Sulking, even. How half-light defines us, a temptation of not knowing better of a knot coming to the head of a perpendicular. Gearing up for unmapped maneuvers, poster-plugged tailspin and circus events. Tension like you wouldn’t believe.

A hand is an occasion fit to stir soup and in stirring, not to turn the other cheek, skin shriveled. Very fair skin. Loving intricacies traced on and near a banister that follows with some certainty, call it slope of sun. What engines, bone-fed aberrations. Situate the angle of your elbow on my thigh on my neck on my window sill on a positive note of a drawing well done.
A tinfoil haze or time of electric joy. Medium dark grey. Demanding stone, we are average foliage, shadows on landscapes or portraits of skin. At best, will smolder, partially sunlit. That lake will never name itself or know the difference, go circular sprawling without my generous gaze to acknowledge or create, knowledge, this wasteland, the way hand follows light becomes a new glow grasping. Particles of sun on skin retreat. City skyline after sunset.

Chasing tail, reel me in. Dark grey pooling. Spools like the letter ‘oh’ or some gasp unearths a thimble. Pinhole silhouettes bursting texture. Spinning to save lives or limber digits to lead the way over and under to somebody’s house. Some suggestion of soil, dark-veined detail, bodies threading full texture. Mining for answers.

This is not the shape of a mouth, a place in-wanting. Doorways, unfurled alphabets, bracing unlit buildings. Near-black. Breathe in. First step above complete black. Stutter and swarm. Slight tonality but no visceral texture. Unsolid, unfounded, we are a little amiss, said she from a small crevice growing. Maximum night that paper can produce. If from plaster spreads a permanent curve.

Let this angry dust in knocks too loud sounds too grey. Middle grey. Dark skin, clear north sky. Departures or drawn melody. Gutter each day, gut what is left. To come clean. What is guttural. What wired if any. This thermometer, like your voice, like a vision of hesitation, like minor additions to the same sound, is rising.
Three Poems

Evelyn Ibarra

North


They had not invented the half-moon. But dirt provided. And flat. And grade-school desks marking time. Women were wrapped in precious patterns, their feet compelled in forest.

Call it blue light in summer’s death, a fatal condition. Anopheles in anger, she dives below the surface only when disturbed.

The boy liked reading, but couldn’t afford books. *The hawk and the end* he recited as if his name, as if the corners to his house. He begged his friends to use their crayons. Followed them to tailored shirts.

You may live with no words for adobe. Steps will lead you to the courtyard, risers painted gray. The important room will have a three-foot door.
1807: aged of two decades

If from a kill, a history.
If from a foundry, a river.

This he drew
a map for an unknown purpose.

And the littoral between watermarks became him.
And came
  a tavern keeper
  a shoemaker
  a sealer of weights and measures.

They would decide how a stream bends around a horse’s shoe.
And he would turn bar iron
  turning heels for those knights
    one-two
    two-one
  across the board, of south.

This under boot
compressing some sweetness.
Having Left

1

When the sky shared trees
in orange, the path curved
around Spanish tiles
and they stood, aging.

Plaster troweled in stories
of lath, thin maps
where children had left them
decades and empty verandas.

When we returned under footcandles
drying in ochre, the few were seen
kissing, then scattered
across cardo and decumanus.

2

Sixteen squares became a melancholy.
I had seen these maps.
The farm where she once said,
_Are you envious because I am generous?_

She stood on a plastic stool,
admiring persimmons over a wood fence.
Years had given her scarves.
Rows of dresses filled with silk.

I had seen her wash from buckets.
I had seen them take her hand to their foreheads.

Then drawn diagonal.
Then plenum filled with fog.
The slow loris, bless his heart, is playing the self-hatred card again. By inducing pity in me, by crying those little anodyne tears, he is distracting me from the woman living backwards, the man holding Stupidity on a stick (correct! after so many tries!), the child hungry from sheer prettiness. And I would have to say I resent it, after traveling here in such an upended fashion, most of the trip thinking I was going to lose my monedas to the matamosca that was hovering ever nearer. I mean, just look at the expressway, teetering out there beyond the boundaries of this park. Where I stand, I cannot hear a word the cars are saying. Nor do they know what I might be trading with my speckled friends. I come here for the waters, on a biweekly basis. And the waters are stagnant, reflect the glitter though they might. But for a duck escaping out the back estuary, of course, the reminder that tomorrow is alive, if I might stretch my luck that far? Might I? No? Well, perhaps you might accept this: I was a boy once, and the trips I made had naught to do with their destinations. I did a lot of sifting, if that makes sense, combing for seeds that might someday grow up to be mighty, un-timorous oaks, only to be chopped down and used for apparatus for the ever-growing job of daily wiffle-waffle. And here I stand, the loris blowsy beyond repair, peach ice cream melting, dripping slowly onto my barely sneakered foot. The platitudes, I guess, do not apply.
The classic scientific approach: develop new representations that enable you to see a clear picture...

The night hikes me up on its shoulders.
Want to bear back, far inward,
not like a plant.

clover cactus gas glass sage sea foam
stem little men snowpeas
grasshopper ever-
verdureverdureverdureverdureverdureverdureverdureverdureverdureverdureverdureverdureverdureverdureverdureverdureverdureverdureverdureverdure (proceed)
tea agree algae envy ivy
army aloe avocado
Dino pistachio Osiris mucus cumin cucumber
caterpillar lilypad pine thyme vine
lime slime
unseasoned inside of a kiwi/
a pond
jade slate fennel vernal fertile beryl bile
crocodile kelly Comet Kermit corporate
parrot scarab bulb
shrubs or trees (depending on your height)
Knight hepatitis highway exits
watercress skin stain after wearing some metal-backed jewelry
the ray Beret Bay -brier common in Europe thumb
Mountains
mint viridis lettuce turtle astroturf
“Tropicana”
public mailboxes that are private
root Kool toothpaste Old High German gruoni
Gumby Old Saxon groni garden hose groen (700)
olive oil
chlorophyll
LaCrosse X-mas Venus sprouts -house -est -backs
card chalkboard park bench
to increase in size by assimilation of material into living organism or by accretion of material in a nonbiological process (as crystallization) to assume some relation through, or as if through

Old Frisian gréne
grape leaves pumpkin seeds “1-Hour Parking” garbage bags for recycling Tonka trucks imperial color of the Aztecs 7up seaweed sunglasses subway line bice the numbers branded into an arm to pass into a condition Hibernia in its present form since the 15th Century secondary in jail lingo, target for death wheatgrass hydrous arsenite of copper emerald blind to red and fluorescent silk from a silkworm engineered in 1999 by inserting a jellyfish gene that produces a fluorescent protein

viridity

smell freshly tilled earth viscous punctured I divide in its wound grow into become

•

"a green thought in a green shade"

Pitch the shadow as if it were a tent, Prop open.

Turn back a cloud, Fold some water.
On the horizon hang
Birds who neigh.

Blisters of yellow and blue, then
Daffodils smother the ink.

Start over.

Pitch the shadow against a wall.
Red showers like lice.

Pitch the shadow to its voice.
Pitch the shadow
Again.

Four days before the equinox—
St. Patrick’s day, my father’s birthday;
Comparisons stop
With night brushing heads with day.

A mourning alias morning.

Flash, and so forth
Through the throng
On their way home
After the parade.
Fermented father Patri a combining form borrowed from Latin
patri- from pater Green fathers

Thus began my exploration of green.

*Ambiguous Loss* when the lost person is still physically present but emotionally absent
often helped just by knowing there is a name for the problem

And what about ire?
Two Poems

≡ Lina Ramona Vitkauskas

Burn All Magenta Pleather

Reading the sign on the train
for transcranial magnetic stimulation
I became hypersensually inebriated
with clinical intrigue.

Easier Punctuation

It wasn’t that Raul was late for lunch.
It was that his head had been removed silently and immaculately archived
in the withering center of one of his mother’s hollow and browning bicuspids.

The viscosity of this equation,
the limitless “if then.”

The unilateral un-literal.

Raul fought syllogisms nightly.
Carried a swatch of charcoal felt.
Sweat from the pulp of a beaver’s plum.
No wax contact. No furry tongue unturned.
Keep your rubles, Raul.
The ruby-blessed buttons. The rouge.
The incredible.
Your basement chardonnay.
The prick of five acid-red dollars.
The burn of mistakes.

This is your life, Raul.
No question about it.
Neon Adapts Badly

Rodney Koeneke

soul is degraded and badly eroded … Colonialism adapts to soil. Brutal century rule replaced w/ neo-entropy treatments: you adapt the second law of thermodynamics (the “entropy law”) to Boeing N.E.O. agents.

Laser line skips optic control gate: “We see you, sexxy baby!!!” System adapts well in New Electronic Order (neo), Army wants forgottenness. Red throws Slasher at Bizarro, but Bizarro’s own forgottenness recovers—over quickly. Boing Shield adapts, Iceman greens and shrinks—

are we really losing

that badly? Neo-Lamarckians thought people acted badly because of consciousness, which warps as it adapts. Bandura, Rotter, and some other neo-neobehaviorists prefer now to say “the environment adapts organisms” badly. He who is guided by reality adapts and evolves like neo-Kong cinema to out-of-the-way Chinese theaters on badly subtitled video. Kong swatting Stukas as a model of wealth creation. The result? A stable, highly adaptable system that badly mauls and rules another class.

I felt this monster happening outside me but I also feel mind/brain adapting to its happening within. My friends stand and fight, but they’re beaten up quite badly — you slash it then breathe it, adapt to new air.
What Is Counterpoint

The study of a near fear which effects architecture, as floor to door, door to floor, as floor to more and in an advanced state portico, cupola, balustrade, dormer. Subtended without benefit of a sublime elevation.

In aeternam. In New Mexico a miracle, in New Mexico the mere fact of red is a singular indulgence. As such wary.

A steep reluctance beyond which no pain passes. Yet dwells there.

Every day the advocacy of a standard tone, solfege of distance and dancing. And as act of faith rendered logical, that is visible, this is not difficult, this is merely placement and voice. Redacted for posterior semblance.

How much means one touch.

When I walked out this morning when I walked out when I was I was out walking. An orchid. In shade. In shade made and played.

Who Are Noriko & Coahminan

Misery labors under a sabine enchantment. She shakes her copper locks; they rattle as the ships pass through, one by one. Smaller vessels portage. Potash, scrimshaw, bicarbonate of soda. No willpower need apply.
What Is a Soprano

I call to you as a prism to its oracle denies any prescriptive allure. What is a high sound when a sparrow takes it. When breath snatches. A latch catches. Dear diary, I am home now and affect a suitable disregard.

On a screen everyone is very particular. Does this explain.

It is this bird we want, not that one. This one not that one. Myth is the difference between birds.

Is this a letter for us to open. It is. Red yellow blue green and violet. Pressed between as petals in a bound volume for their proper keeping. Repeat, as necessary. A gift expresses the meek constituency of a recollected pleasure.

Who is happier when blind or blinded. Who says happy now.

What Did Julius Steinberg,
Master Egraver at C. G. Conn Ltd.
of Elkhart, Indiana, Egrave on the Surface
of His Own Wonder Line Tenor Saxophone
in B-Flat, Circa 1916

the Spirit of 1776 / an Indian chief / Leda & the swan / St. George killing the dragon / Mercury / Liberty / Uncle Sam / nudes, cherubs, satyrs / various other mytho-
logical figures playing instruments / miscellaneous foliage
**What Is Ictus**


**What Is Ballet**

A small pebble at the bottom of a swift clear stream. Or, several.

**What Is an Alto**

Classicism.

(The underworld subsists on a bedrock introspection otherwise known as time. Into this frame obtrudes consciousness also a superior penury. Not a fresh agon, unhousing and unhoused, not unlike a similar ploy. Virescent. Stained with salt. Some brushed bower seen.)

**What Is Selah**

Gyroscope and speculum. Anyone’s fireside angel. My actuarial zeal.
Cakobau Rex

A Colonial Audience, in Three Acts

The incorrigible deficiencies of modern wax leave me in symbolic betrayal. Rain that falls versus rain that does not. If it doesn’t fall then is it, rain implies falling, rain is content charged with vector on demand. And imbued with like complacency. I should not have said so. Rorschach of cypress, bolus superimposed on what rare earth element. Favorite sons. Daughters implied in hackwork beneath radial bridge. And dwelt there. Ignorant veridical canopic jars of legumes. Rising (at morning) (& partaking): as if to employ. The shoulders mounted in two dimensions, smoothly, as if in concerto format without benefit of a designated historicity. Turquoise faience. Cosmic objects penetrate foreign lampshade multiplications, I mean ocipitations, qualia of rebarbative shortcoming needle(werke)d into pedantic commensural sublime.

CAKOBAU REX.

In the islands: introduction of heliotrope, of carmine, of lake not so much as shades as concepts, as graphemes, systems of valuation, syntactical accoutrements of the millinery trade. And dwelt (there) (happily; after). In flight from disease. The engraver’s stylus, newspapers in Johannesburg, Bloemfontein, consideration of the salutary effects of maximal concentration in such times of anticipatory strife. Virginal syllabics. From the hills to the “bullpen.” There is not so much memory as formerly, there is no sufficient redaction. Quaint harbor scenes.

CAKOBAU REGEM.

What is meant by “village” in its most common use, currency of habitation, relational, fungible, allopatric. Manipulation of statistics within the census-bank. Slate for parturition: as successor to woad, macular representations of the Godhead. The slow creeping things of the planet uniting in commerce & technologies of verandae qua gaily mixed drinks. A more organic fission: pigments imported from Zambezia. Sexual abuse among the descendants of mutineers caught
off by judges likewise scriven, I mean driven, privilege of a luxury sedan though not without limitations of topography & expertise. Free frank for all servicemen, extended to politicians on national holiday which has not yet diminished despite upsurge of counterfeiting activities in the basement apartments of Nice. Veronica of aqueduct. Sullage of strut channel, intimate apparel for small condiments. Six requisite (cover-ups) (& virtues)—

Blossom of overprint. Creche of the planer’s ink.

VICTORIA REGNAT IMPERATRIX.

NOTE

Retu Seru Eperisa Cakobau (1815-1883) united the Fijian archipelago into a single nation, establishing a centralized government in 1871. In 1874 he ceded the islands to the United Kingdom. Fijian postage stamps printed in 1871 were monogrammed “CR” (for “Cakobau Rex”) but were later overprinted “VR” (for “Victoria Regina”). When British troops seized control of South Africa’s Orange Free State in 1900, during the Boer War, Orange Free State postage stamps were similarly overprinted “VRI” (“Victoria Regina Imperatrix”).
Dark Sonnet

Sychar

(1)

A ball is the same as a world. No fixture substitutes for ambulatory. A sphere must seem the same as a world, a temporary projection. The installation item does not manufacture. The sphere is this same elephant world. The facility project does not make the exquisite substitution of that winding corridor. The sheer concreteness of this elephant world which is identical. The facility project is never the substitution, cold hallway which is that exquisite Ah.

(2)

With an extra string. I had not thought to interpret the laundry. The willow clause brooks no casual deficit. With additional cord. I did not think in order to interpret the laundry. Hooks of the orchard induce no vocational default. With additional cable. Streams of the fundament pasture a systemic inheritance. With additional handle. The n’avais did not need to think, nor end to interpret the laundry. Ribbons of pure clause flank glass past relational dispersion.

(3)

The red-winged blackbird is a volatile node. There is no other repository. The black bird is red where it flew into the volatilization hypothesis. There is no other storage space.

[i. When it flies is the place in which volatility avers. Others have not stored that residence.]

[ii. Where volatility ties the black bird in its flying. No different person would.]
And so in the red-dark, the place where ties of volatility steal the bird back.
And so in the murrey-dusk, the location where slabs of detention, of evaporability steal back black from the bird —

Is the same world, blushing gyre, where location, where the flagstone of detention binds difference from plexure of strict amnesty. The riddle in the laundry, the halting of the theft of that additional lanyard. Is the same world, where the flagstone of evaporability robs blackness from the reconnaissance of a single sparrow, sweet red one of the dark. No bend to recurrent, nor conjugal spell. The diverse person is not harbored in any sector.
Three Poems

Elizabeth Robinson

Explanation

Some idealized violence
does let off fumes which

the speaker of this moment
breathed in. So accounts this

for the twist of the body
into its new sac of

transporting tissue. Only
in this eros of violence

can paradox breathe
easily; you find the speaker

puts two genders into one
intoxicant called the torso

by which a journey or
a sojourn erupt. The honeyed

balance of indecision is
their intercourse, so the

speaker likes to be itself,
as witness with

a scalpel. Incise fumes. Make
the shoes of the moving soul

reside in its gut. Has the voice
made itself clear: the midsection is

viciously disappointed with
this particular manner of
the entangled, would like to
cut away the distinctness

and close carefully around
something else, blurred, hurried,
hastened savor.

Pure

Not at this moment, not this
qualification, or another. See how the beggar
makes the perfect
from the
vague.

No human is transient except that
her need is spilled over with
water. Lostness made dilute,

the hiding place, no longer deep,
whose fugitive pleads its
spaciousness,

a flawless anonymous, this plane.
Strangers, or the Simultaneous

A man loves a boy, but
it is a boy with a face, fine
and, internal, inside a girl. Awkward
this love, this face and
its sweet neutrality. The man
loves that once he was
a boy. Once
he was a girl and how
he loved the impediment
of body on self,
the human house.

He
loves that once the
surgeon came upon him
to open his doorway and
razed his body to the ground.
The man loves a boy who
was his own dereliction of self.
Such things have structure, the
roof, the foundation, the sweet
neutrality of decrepitude. He
took dirty handfuls of his
feminine self and tamped them
onto some other body. Once,
in the end, was a face molded to
a place. Two structures
merge. The face imagines
architecture, as synthesis,
as what it is not. The surgeon
revisits the scene, its
hermaphroditic wavering.

The man who imparted all
this, he was disappeared,
but for his love, the boy, the girl.
Some quiet is catastrophic,
just as their innocence, a faltering
absence, is an avenue of destruction.
The wayfaring man’s sincerity,
reversible and irreversible essences
that demolish
his fine interior affection.
from (a) chiasmus

Albert Flynn DeSilver

balance distended at crests curves billow & cinch—simultaneity—weight & air (f) ire dilates horizon’s eye
rust breath

hung

/torqued lungs/

ironed whole

rolled

whole shadow,

whole cut

facets asked to dance

as awkward

walk fails

pools torn open

into
ears
in the round
a given
voice
so very
stolen
listen
to the ear gone
carnal((

ellipses
eclipsed in half-
step
to

haggard
echo
uncoiled
listen

to the steel

gone

singing
* 

oval

offering

up

time

up eyelets

irises

folded over

ovums

offering to

unsee

unseat...
... what

rust-hinged

pre historic

birds) do

what valence (of)

harmonic cloisters

feathered volumes

in thickets devise

along the dark

tracks

tracheas scratch

at an uncertain

river—

sun

spindles in
Three Poems

═  

Erika Howsare

Song

was a hammer, not
a golden

spike necessarily
finished the track

*

hammer on flax
lead
gingham
ironhorse
creek
and

*

those flowers look familiar they came
from just around the way

those dresses look hammered they came
from under the flowerbed

*

hammer in a hayloft
nobody’s brother
sister

*

can hammer be used
to weave flexible stems of cowslip
* 
no oxygen in hammer
*

hammer floats on collection of skeins remembers coins forgets eyelids
*

bury a hammer
city grows
*

fire
does not bother
claw
built for heat
head
self-possessed
*

birds do not believe in claw of hammer
hammer does not believe anything
*

in hammer are enough feet for parade or the Santa Fe line or a road full of dirges
can a book be reductive
a hammer, like grass

under one flag,
    head
and handle,
    as though

it shuts up it braces
it finds truth in sediment
bonds it erects it
joinders it joist it architects
lays low and razes
and categorizes it strict
it censor it national vitamin
needs no nouns

oh so you
hammer, are
    here

    what
are you singing this time

one little hammer
all that prairie
Bridge: Bridge’s location

for Isabella Bird

The water is very hard here. And everyone has a square here. “mine by right of love,…” a concrete hole with water. Darling prickers underfoot.

There is a horse for companion. The skeleton of \( T. \text{ rex} \), first. Running above the weather as “chosen for their antler-casting” this primordial flat. This flat of brown. The leaves are wider at night.

Meeting others in wagons, et cetera. Second, TRUCK BOMB RIPS THROUGH HILLS. After a hard ride, she put on ladies’ clothes. Here are the matters of the grasses, spiralling, inordinate, pictorial.

Their trouble no trail, patience mine, distance “artistically situated.” In bullets as compared to surface tension, muscles. Third: THERE WAS A FARM. Mountains “swell up uninterestingly” as in outfitter, a large ragged home.

THAT BECAME AN AIRPORT. A plenitude of starting through the woods WHICH ignition, stairs or sockets in plaster CONNECTED and visible from the escalator TO THE WORLD.
Arrows flocking

Flying, no, if triangular they could point three different ways. To make her cough into footsteps.

Figures seek stability, squint: ash settles: we name it light.

Smoke rises from the hay. Or someone dropped competing stable forms on the floor. Such a thing as good shapes forced the eyes to hold them not flames or parallel fences. We saw as immaterial the angle of the match. Is greater than a sum but it began with parts and pages of lines, tests involving lacunary stimuli, whether she or I were in the room or the witness. A lintel falls. The way a wave dips and the air full of paper.

Rival patterns are unstable when they share competing features. To try for rows to break into loops from their circular intention. The space having burned by proximity, we group and a man runs away to dissolve.

Oh for faces that turn into sand—how it resolves, my releasing of you. How it’s wise to just watch. A person more dense than straw or antennae. The brain as blunted the vase as itself. “Géricault painted running horses then died after falling from a horse.”

These conditions of rust open ground and figure into being seized by their outlines. Learned to “see” grey dots at intersections or all fields of study have the same sensations.

The redness of the blood between black and white stripes, perspective’s severity, she walks below my window, invisible, humming.

The body as the finest accretion of cylinders.

“What is an object? Where is it? What is it doing?”
Trowel: The Body Casket

≡ Nico Vassilakis

If

truncated space
opens,

Once to be
would four more become

Feigning a long descriptive here. Subway landscapes ascend to an above-ground concentric swirl. Discarded paper with various font sizes. Then sound. Unending carpets of noise. After that, voice. Gradations of recognition. People from work, strangers, your girlfriend, animals, your son, the phone, the stereo, repeatable music. All people noise.

The creases. The unfolding made to expand space. It’s not the material itself. It’s the creases that flip one to two and two to four. Exponentially. Dimensions change, surface area changes, but the material undergoes no change.

Reading the chest
the finger follows the text
across a continent
travels coast to coast
from margin to margin
nipple to nipple.
The page laying down flat stays flat,
but if it moves.

The next time water comes in view it’ll only be the top of it you’re seeing. The eyes as well. A small radio filling the house. As a swaying tree is at the front of a larger climactic shift.

Speculation says memory is holographic. Easier to store. One miniscule can unravel to more than you care to recall. The commonest denominator. The body. It takes a concerted effort to make it sparse and elegant. That rarely occurs. For instance, here are one hundred threads elbowing their way in. You choose an implement, you express a singularity through the fingers.
And as writing comes to mind the results are constantly in question. Softly in the ear. From the air to head to arm to hand to page. The five places. Stations. Yet it never aligns with the originally intended. And so writing and presumably every art is facsimile of some larger potential.


So how to go about declaring what deserves attention. The far ends of the screen. Not watching the center plot. The peripheral gaze at focus. Bolsters against the onslaught. A movie is looking at one of four walls. And so it can be projected everywhere. A swivel seat. A tapped exuberance. A rehydrated truncation.

One mushroom widens. A trigger makes the symphony a corrupt gathering. How time moves through experience unmonitored.


A happy ingredient succumbs to happiness. A basic magnet that draws you. Without much pomp, without filigree, it’s simplicity, our bodies fit. The march back to once be would four more become.

*

One dispenser — adequate amounts.
Two dispensers — drown you.
Nothing resembles the quadrants you imagine will house what each can hold.
A pigeon hole in the head. The distinct one. Equatorial mirror.

It’s not usual. The relaxed eyeball. The looking down, the looking away. Obsessed by minutiae at this elevation. The look of rock. Attempting greater vision, but who cares about that.

Casualty

Beth Bretl

1.

this invective
on the shoddiness of “suffice”

wears the roof uneven
tattered rain sends the fog

hugely, they bait volcanoes
tally bolls of cloud cover

the room, compliant
the night-moon, gauze

2.

someone has left linens, small
trajectory of forget-me-nots

on this ligature: a silvered
repose, meantime

silt maroons a valley
opportune transcribed

water slaps
absently against the page

what slips the mind
he cannot imagine
Three Work Poems

Rob Cook

full employment

for work the men take turns wiping the sunlight off the sleeping taxis. for work the men follow the cold deeper into the city, where it is never cold. for work the men stay on the subway in groups of three. for work the men lick the color from the skin of a woman made of cantaloupes and vegetable korai. for work the men spread across the river so the crowd-stories can grow into their own country. for work the men call themselves billing managers and hide in crawl-sized offices. for work the men try to read memos inside rooms of leftover night. for work the men hit each other. for work the men borrow the shadows of other men to make themselves more like the past. for work the men become joyous and afraid and are recognized only by the shapes of their bruises.

job hunting

no longer talked about, the men replace their ambition with work that’s already been forgotten. no longer talked about, the men walk far away from their eyes. no longer talked about, the men use manila envelopes to cover up where they’ve stood. no longer talked about, the men sell their childhood for clerical identities and paperclips who want to marry them. no longer talked about, the men stay in the smoke weather and look for their names when there are no longer any names, only a salt-lick where the mouth should be, the face marked by an approximation of sound, wrinkles that started as minor absences of money. the men abandon their houses to give the shadows back their voices. the men hide for days in the air they’ve been bullied and paid to remove.
leadership

there are supervisors who live by picking shreds of their employees out of the telephone. who make scripture out of the one-syllable voice mail. who keep the storms intact by never going home. who know about the sky only through rumors that keep changing. some who take up just enough light and some who reject light as an early and permanent loss of management blood. there are supervisors who encourage 8am’s weak winter. who go to sleep in distant data programs and wake up at the bottom of their bed-cliffs, afraid they haven’t used enough words. there are supervisors who keep busy with only one snail inside their bodies making little sounds that they hate. there are supervisors even where everything is finished and supervisors who stand outside in the pieces of failed typing, blind herds of paychecks following each other through the snowfall that knows about their work, and the wind, torn open, that stays caught in the same naked tree.
Six Poems

Matt Turner

A

Actions are masochistic
there are no interventions
reaffirm a subject-position. This is in
actuality working. The
imperatives with which
are in that case only us,
because they are not; there
is no penchant for pain.

B

We cannot coax
experience in the body or
phenomenologically. No
matter (res extensa) we
move. That is, reduced to
objects of experience, so
that what is not a
grounding of either the
observation of decay, or
an active, according to the
involved (including ourselves).
Positions in
depend not upon we exert
upon how we are as (or
subjectivity, then, lies in
to that).

“Our positions in the
world depend not upon
how we exert ourselves
but upon how we are
manipulated as objects (or
subjectivity, then, lies in
our commitment to that).”
What that means is that
observe what and accept
we will or will have
reactions to it. Our
emotions, but there is
nothing we can do about
them, them as emotions.
And emotions, like, can be
read. That means that
they can (and thus
intervened in). If we
remain can create a of
speculations (the concept).
The point of is not the rote of the writing per se, but redundancy which allows to be recognized not as for (not meaning, but) mediation. That is all that is left (or objects, or texts). The erosion of divisions creates (for “the conceptual”) where cultural meaning can at least be contested. Again, it is of the task that sets it, although it remains interchangeable.

In situ is one of appropriation, then. One has been said many, many times, with a change of tense. It is in that sense a project, though one in which there is an intervention. That affective writing (and the subject position), towards a conceptual apparatus. The conceptual apparatus is a continued: a guard against ossification.
We arrive in Pisco in February. An eye becomes a human eye when its object has become human. You discard the photograph, suspending for a moment the image. Two delegates are missing from the photograph. You think back to the word “Trujillo,” the place and the person. Near the beach, we enter a dilapidated house surrounded by grazing cows. This house is missing its windows, though furniture (a wardrobe, table, and chairs) is visible. Other images of this tower-building-temple-landscape flash onto the world-screen. This is the postcard’s level of involvement.
Post: from the parking lot we examine the lobes
of biography murky at first from the plane
we examine the depth charts: torso, bay, bahia
a place soon enough exchanged
there are already 15,000 squatters in the valley
utilizing 100,000 acres of land
we wade through our loses
and buy a stalk of sugarcane
everyone loves a ticket:
for instance, we use a public restroom,
receive a slip of paper
with a number in the thousands
and an image of the toilet

which is missing his hands
Bus or the litmus of civil society. Before entering Bolivia, we deboard the bus. Curiously, from the checkpoint’s hill, we can no longer locate the lake we’ve been following. A border incident. Nothing happens suddenly. A sleepwalker delivers the mail, making haste. We finally shake the land’s dark cloud, the shadow of waterbirds and aboveground powerlines. We happen hastily to unfold our documents, to document an unfolding scene in which you have lost your papers, suddenly.
sold off power and gas : sold the night

the instants       a dot

a visible dot hardly visible  

twice
folded

slipped
under
doors
Post: here on earth everything has been traded in.

this head other translation of erasing teeth

t.v. blares erasing tongue — dubbing tongue

we are encountering a tunnel lie still

address: a la palms san fran with his wolf in the catacombs
from **the Alps**

Brandon Shimoda

the mountain is not one               it is                     a reign
between the faded hazel                                    and lunch
and lemon

and bred between the piedmont steps

a girl                      a thumb                         a kettle of tea

they drank their tea                  between cliffs

the men between her                                         managing

an agreement to die old                    on the peak
polishing their lodestones                        together
which desperate thing the cyclamen 
cows underfoot the grape arbor studor 
the ground close to fifth-and-lake 
a long time lake gone primitive basically 
  little coppers stabbing the lake gone with the principal chain 
to the spirit under the influence of 
the treeline provisional close to the ground 
cottages of stone key of time eyes on band
below the high peaks braved

two spirits in diptych mountain clouds

two spirits hostile light bronze two brave in defect

a phase of ice the ground enwedding

ice to suffer Karen the news

your children are in the attic below the ingot

muddled in the crystal plants

narrowing their last spiritus
you wish to prolong your hunting

your hunting with the rachitic chamberlain

chains three crosspieces apart

*with its dumb cataracts and streams of ice / A motionless*

mass piled above a layer of kept sky

was dark because he is

handsome mortal and yellow

kept only by the clouds and fallen to a far away

inn by his holes inside the far away inns
pinks of three from crimson to a pale mauve
primrose colors stunted
seek in vain among the turf for your hand
at the head of the column natives working
for your hand within their stations
of concealment the pointer touching the thumb
a junction effected between two halves
and me in the circle
back amongst the natives down-turning
**The Brahmin’s Divorce**

*Trey Sager*

**Prologue:**

I, the savage form, endured all this time, in this place, but always stayed transparent in my death dog, waiting; my howl seeping through the variation of Latin households, a continuous deep wailing of incontestable signs — the roof a screech and above the roof, a sky rhymed with desert black and iridescent dots. I was just an actress, pretending to occur as a journey, as a fugue state; not the individuals you and I were — eyes, bees, and seas — long ago effaced within this emblematic notion.

1.

[I] began when the crowd dispersed, a cliff singing breeze offstage. Full of that wind, [I] brushed the scene with many bayonet-like flowers, and watched the stars make physical their plan. Years passed before [I] sailed again, to Lisbon in absurdity’s unharmed opera, wifeless where [I] summoned temperamental nature — will was by my fortune, a waxwing by my side. The Portuguese had restored the west with selves, and [I], the world’s vulgar counterpart, a poorly written letter
addressed to you — in milligrams of an undeliverable text
[I] was a door between
nexus and anon.
[I] camped near the gypsy tents, ate dried meat
and waited. For months
you ignored my tresspass, had [I] not set fire
to the capital... alas,
[I] took refuge in our warfare, and the deer
completely vanished; [I] was pelted,
a nativist,
with trains; and like a wolf ran out of luck.
My last performance [I] called
Imitation of an Envelope,
[I] opened with fresh fall
and killed the distinguished tenor with my suicide.
[I] closed felicity’s door.

2.

Then [I] became the future,
an unexpected triangle among Babylonian queens,
a starlike light before the Chinese coin
fell. [I] fell
into time travel, only to become a painter
in Egypt, 1962, of a complex, meaning-based heaven.
This is where [I] leaked information,
when
to melancholy, [I] said “start.”
Among a pair of long stem losses, [I] could not leave the grounds.
“Who broke my grievous heart?”
[I] wanted to know
before bloodshed,
between these symbols overflowed.
Unanswered, [I] could not contain myself,
[I] ran to the sea, but saw only you
near a shore of palm leaves, my left palm waving in your hand,
eye-shaped. Then,
[I] drowned.
The Chinese sailor [I] next became
had read about the mariner, his fog
formed albatross
on long salt avenues; for [I] too was a voyage
on a warcraft named Dionysus
with a crew of mosquitos and chippy
British spatter. Few times did [I] encounter
the American torpedo, or an Italian-style
mermaid; instead, [I] formed a tranquil
tempest, and like a petrel ill wandering,
spilled into storms;
[I] deepened in the water, to disprove the explanation
that this was [I], that this
[I] was [I].
But clouds of sharks ignored their prejudice
to eat /
this poem’s scrap of meat —
a hammerhead swallowed
this gibbous moon whole, a night nurse
laid folly
to my jinxed starboard planks.
[I] floated back to shore
on flotsam, where English twigs and burning grass
welcomed me. As [I] could not remember
my wife’s birthday, her moles, her color eye.
At sea [I]’d grown detached
from names, the wind did wash away —
for in my shipwreck, be it folklore or actions past,
[I] became [] —
[I] had been betrayed.

But [] was Schrödinger’s cat
inside the suitcase, brought to outer space in the gentle
foxglove hands of an effete
piano. Though [] continued to recite
to plants, the plants began to pave themselves
with mass communication. No one was starving
in the star-poisoned darkness. And so [] became transparent
with no outsourced thought
of you, my delphinium.
For [ ] was a part of [you], the ear muff part, the clothes
inside the closet —
in the apartment, in eastern Kentucky
wearing beer knives — in Ohio, some Spanish dress.
[ ]’d become unnecessary,
as useless as the scientist upstairs.
Nearby, the townspeople
referred to themselves generically, and in the lake
your reflection began to look like
    ] you [

5.

Still [ ] remained too significant,
the gorgon spell
of a commercial, and so fled
the northeast as a wryneck
banded in a cloud of blackbirds.
Supperless, [ ] thinned in the air, and strayed from the flock
to find
    a thimble of cake.
But in the country sleeves
the seductive Juno greeted me
with her right-legged verse, and said
[ ] was “a husband to the mirrors in virgins”
and would “not be morning”
    until
[ ] “receive the night.”
Into her cottage
[ ] carved my uncertainties
with a rosemary branch
and waited for dawn.
Supine, Eve lay against the sweating grasses,
    bored with youth.
Rhymes intertwined.
Barely, [ ] remember you saying
[ ] was the first person.
Never friend to constancy
(though scorn will say of barenness)
[ destabilized, fissured on an aeroplane
over mawkish June, and agreed
to separate; in vinelike raindrops
from Japanese clouds, [ was October in September,
a child bride’s handcuffed mind,
a thought the ocean
 kidnapped, only to then parlay.
Or rather, ] became the divorcée
and stayed upon the plane, chain smoking
 like Vulcan. In Madrid,
alighted from the craft, ] took a cab
to the Pearl Frost Hotel,
in Spanish. All day, the sun disguised its intentions
vanishing
 slowly, a signal to the masses
to gown themselves as subjects,
as bachelors —
 yo tengo soledad.
[ symbolized a kitchen table, estranged from chairs,
perpendicular
to its purpose;
] mimicked a pastor’s cheek, kissed
 by common sunlight.
On the telephone,
our conversation looked like ][,
or ][ was a sound coming through the receiver,
and with good reception,
 there was no space between us.
trámá/nticos

Martha Oatis

trama:
1 (textile) weft, woof
2 (argument) plot

be dazzled

crime

elicit

and shame

a listener

becoming

becoming

quite wrong

quite true

sensation

to be true

could it
test

wrong

idiot

comforter

 tipping

glancing

over an edge

hang

over

wrong

humor

laughing

meaning

embarrassed

criing

meaning

scared

listening

meaning

sacred
no more alleluias

boundary ied languages
or border ones
eliciting strangeness or that which
comes from within
ann noun ounce
ments
corruptions
stop trying to tell me
this
this

this abandoned
the dusty intersection
the camel's back on the horse
the caballero on his bici
cleta climbing estral tones
wish I wouldn't but can't change a thing have to keep get
gone
be wilder
ment
having no judge
ments
just
terminologies
terminó
al fin
de
facing me
alleluias
choir
coral
quell
this is not the right word
marred
martyr
máximo
sentencing
sentence
sitting in

oblivion
prison
window washing
the brief disclosure
of face to reflection
brief blurring
of self
to surface
beg your pardon
question mark
alleluias galore
inklings and packagings
and trinkets and turning
two plates
turtle neck
how much time in
between each object
question mark
To Be Opened after My Death

Julie Doxsee

I saw the plurals rise, I said
I saw the plurals rise
to describe them as you see them
hovering above the toll-
measures

hand through drawer, small pieces of
splinter go

where the leg goes
widespread

a drape on the

swum-to
tower.
No door on the chorus
“disappear” & “follow” at the same time

she is
bricked behind a tower with no door

holding dank
strands of grass by the thousand,

minutes of trial time
under hand
below hedge space

“in the window in
the shape of a face.”

Leave.
Far off, a stone meadow
unsuitable for prisoners’ tomorrow evenings

will metal-coat all yells
& will try to bore

a vacuum of sun-form
bleeding dark

buoyancy the gentlest sight.
I was run in the gut by a ghost

bandaged by

shucked pearl of mother
& hard tooth.
edited by Mark Tardi

notes

essays

reviews

Artwork: Anne Tardos
A couple of years ago E. Tracy Grinnell sent me a copy of the lecture Norman O. Brown gave at Wesleyan University on the occasion of John Cage’s 75th birthday and asked for my impression and feedback. Like her, I was captivated by the lecture – its audacity, insight, how visibly and sharply it wrestled with its subjects, most notably Cage. Over the next several months what eventually became Aufgabe # 5 took shape. The relationship between Brown and Cage – their creative and critical differences; friendship; tensions – became an accidental but incredibly relevant starting point for some larger questions that have been steeping in the back of my mind for years.

I’ve always been impressed with the creativity and sheer range of critical work that has appeared in Aufgabe over the past five years, and after being involved with the Brown/Cage issue, I was invited to join the staff as the review editor. Like many respected publications, we’re not exercising prior review over the opinions of our editorial contributors (excepting remarks that are racist, homophobic, or sexist). And because I firmly believe that they both perform a vital function, it should come as no surprise that favorable and unfavorable reviews and essays will appear in upcoming issues.

Many of the reviews in this issue are economical—most are 2-3 pages, and under 1,000 words. They don’t purport to be exhaustive or authoritative. They’re part of a conversation, and conversations offer insights and opinions rather imperfectly. Of course I don’t agree with every point in the essays or reviews, but I do support the critique—positive or negative. I’m not interested in a Jerry Springer brand of poetic discourse, though I am wearied by the charade of plastic politeness among us poets because we’re all angling for the same publications.

Writers like Viktor Shklovsky, Witold Gombrowicz and Jennifer Moxley have been outspoken advocates for critical integrity and unflinching commitment to their art, and I’m no doubt indebted to their example. My hope is that a new degree of critical openness can be fostered, and collectively we can push each other to become better artists.

— Mark Tardi
Chicago, February 2007
Not By Wonderment Alone:
John Ashbery’s Influence on Bohdan Zadura

Kacper Bartczak

For about two decades now, Polish poetry has seen a great inflow of new styles and talents. Although highly diverse, these novel poetic stances find their common denominator – in a vast majority of cases – in their opposition to the lofty tones and high styles that characterized Polish poets of moral witness and their immediate successors. In Poland, critics have been referring to these emerging artists as “new” or “young” poets, and most frequently, the labels concern poets born in the 1960s and ‘70s.

Among various stimuli responsible for this recent burgeoning are two American influences. Chronologically earlier is the influence of Frank O’Hara, which is much better recognized by critics, both in Poland and the United States. More or less at the moment when the wave of fascination with O’Hara exhausted its potential, John Ashbery’s poems began altering the styles of a few poets and translators in ways that now appear crucial for growing numbers of other young writers. And yet, Ashbery’s presence in Poland is usually glanced over by critics and scantily mentioned by the poets themselves. This is paradoxical – if not disquieting – since Polish poets have absorbed much more from Ashbery than they have been able to take from O’Hara. While O’Hara’s energetic free verse has shown his Polish readers how to refresh the stylistic surface of the poem, the deeper sources of his poetics – primarily its pragmatic implications – have not been able to make a mark. Ashbery’s influence, in contrast, might be called structural. Although it concerns a selected group of writers, they are major poets, important for many others, and in their case the significance of Ashbery’s offer goes deep below the stylistic or formal layer of the poem.

One of the more remarkable influence is found in a major Polish poet, Bohdan Zadura. Born in 1945, his poetic beginnings were shaped by the styles that fall rather far from the avant-garde experimentation that, at least for some readers, is immediately brought to mind by the name Ashbery. Zadura took his early cues from the mainstream tradition of Polish post-war poetry, most notably the classicism of Zbigniew Herbert. Yet, maturing as a poet, never satisfied with the safety of the already achieved voice, Zadura has felt the need to look for new modes of expression, and it is this flexibility that links him with the group of the “new” poets in Poland. Ashbery, who has influenced many poets around the world, has proved one of the happy turns in Zadura’s artistic career, a major one, although by no means an end stop. Zadura’s interaction with the American is a case of a fruitful and friendly
poetic struggle, bearing little resemblance to the anxieties described by critics like Harold Bloom, but also differing widely from wholesale absorption revealed by hosts of Ashbery’s other admirers. By examining the course of the influence and showing its liberating results, it is possible to obtain an insight not only into the rationale behind Zadura’s poetry of the last two decades, but also into various potentials of “Ashberian” style, some of which have not been realized by Ashbery himself. By attending to this transatlantic connection, we can also understand more clearly the position in which the later Ashbery has found himself recently.

Since his book debut in 1968 to the moment he met John Ashbery, Bohdan Zadura’s poetry remained within the loose purview of classicism. His prosody and forms in that period reveal all the characteristics of a classical poem. He practices the sonnet in a number of its varieties; his diction and syntax are elaborate and crafted with a lot of grammatical inversion. The tone is reserved, emotions balanced, and the figurative layer contains classical allusions. In a manner of Zbigniew Herbert, Zadura refers to classical mythology or to the history of antiquity. Among his other tradition-oriented devices is the use of diction that he borrows from Polish baroque poetry. In brief, within the tradition that maintains the division between the aesthetic and the ordinary, Zadura’s poetry in the 1960s till the early 1980s – when he met the American poet – uses language that is immediately recognizable as poetic: it has all attributes of literature as convention.

Already in this early phase, however, there are internal pressures in Zadura’s poems that will work against the safety of such literariness. Occasionally, the classical gestures are used in a somewhat self-conscious manner, and a number of poems from the early period make it clear that Zadura is becoming increasingly aware of the artifice inscribed in the forms he has been practicing. The effortlessness with which he has mastered the art at some point begins to produce a degree of surprise at the poetic craft itself, and there is a widening gap between classical rigidity and the poem’s level of self-awareness. This seems to push Zadura’s expression, at least in some poems, toward the strange, even the surreal, as he is more often meditating on the split between life and the crafted artifice of poetry. In this he may be compared to the styles of Elizabeth Bishop. Another variety of the split is the gap between detail and abstraction. In a poem entitled “May He Not Know That” from an early volume A Sea Journey (Podroz morska), Zadura mentions “an abyss [that] opens between the pulp of detail and hypostasis” (14), which in turn brings to mind Ashbery’s “repeated jumps, from abstract into positive and back to a slightly less diluted abstract” (Mooring of Starting Out 1997), a recipe for poetic explorations that the American poet formulates in his long poem “The Skaters.”
In Zadura, however, the increased attention given to the intricate exchanges between conventions of writing and life do not signify purely literary pursuits. Rather, they serve his realistic temperament of a poet looking to comment constructively on both the private and public realms of his here and now. Clearly, in the early period Zadura admires poets like Zbigniew Herbert and Kawafis, but he is trying to use the classical gestures as pretext for shifting poetry toward the private realm. He has always been a poet of intimate communication, speaking of friendship, love, and family history. This private sphere is always sketched by a subtle brush without indulgence, and with close connection to public contexts. With his sensitivity to public languages, Zadura is interested in the private as a certain function of the public. Hence, in the early volumes the formal poems interchange with free verse experiments in which the themes of personal friendship are released from the classical packaging, and the Herberitian analogies between contemporaneity and antiquity give way to colloquial reports on the ordinary and actual. In these pieces Zadura achieves a more relaxed, natural expression that allows his emotional composure to attain more closely to his private histories. He mixes simplicity and economy of expression with close attention to the unexpected changes in the meanings of words depending on contexts. This combination of the private and the public, created by intertwining the idioms relevant to both spheres, reflects the very spontaneity and unpredictability of life—the elements that exert further pressure on the convention of his classically poised formalism.

Such tensions—between the classical and open forms, between the real and the surreal or paradoxical, between convention and life—continue into the early 1980s, when Zadura’s poetry comes to a crisis. At this point, there is a feeling that the internal pressures of his poetry, not finding a proper resolution, are beginning to choke his expression. This condition sometimes shows in the language. His emotionally balanced verse begins to feel too artificial, somewhat stuffy and cramped, especially in the volumes from the late 1970s and early 80s. Even in the collection entitled The Landing (Zejs’cie na ląd) from 1983, an important stage in Zadura’s attempts at achieving a more colloquial expression, his naturalness becomes problematic—it sounds strained, lifeless, betraying a certain lack of energy. Proving that he can employ the quotidian and ordinary, the poet is missing something else. Traditional realism, understood as faithfulness to simple events and close adherence to authentic speech patterns, is not the answer to the conflicts of his poetry. A distance is needed to both the forms and the vernacular, a distance that would open a space that can contain the realistic and the strange, an enlargement of form fit for the poet of the continuous oscillation between the public realities and the private freedom of reverie.

This distance, when achieved, is what makes the poet’s volumes after The Landing his most interesting period. These are the volumes that Zadura wrote after having come into contact with Ashbery, who visited Poland with
a group of American writers in 1980. After the visit, during which the poets met, Zadura went on to translate a substantial number of Ashbery’s poems, becoming one of the three most prominent translators of Ashbery in Poland. Zadura has shown himself as a skillful translator from other languages, notably Hungarian, or, more recently, Ukrainian, but I contend that the strangeness, the foreignness, brought to Zadura in Ashbery’s poems, was a crucial poetic enrichment in his career so far. Ashbery has functioned for Zadura in a way that Ashbery says poets like Hölderlin, or Mandelstam, or Clare have functioned for himself repeatedly – “a poetic jump-start for times when the batteries have run down” (Other Traditions 5) – with this difference, though, that here the reviving stimulus was of much longer duration.

Zadura himself is happy to admit the influence. As he said in an interview: “If it hadn’t been for Ashbery, my poetic adventure would have ended with The Landing” (26). In an essay bluntly entitled “John Ashbery and I – Poetry of Conjunctions,” Zadura says that reading Ashbery resuscitated him as a poet (110) and enabled him to write the volumes of the later 1980s: Old Friends (Starzy znajomi) (1986) and Overexposed Photographs (Przes´wietlone zdje˛cia) (1990). The influence can be extended over the next volume, called Silence (Cisza) (1994). And in a diluted form, or as a point of departure, it is also present in his more recent books. But how exactly are the volumes Zadura mentions a new breakthrough? What has changed and what remained untouched?

As it may be usual for poetry, the first layer of the change is visual. The poet reaches for one of his favorite classical patterns – the sonnet – yet only the overall line-count is retained, preserving the layout on the page of an octave followed by a sestet. The individual verses, however, are free verse lines with variable length and rhythms. Clearly, the reader is not presented with a poetic form in the traditional understanding, but with what Ashbery referred to as “a format” (Interview with Jackson 76). The continuation of the pattern over many pages of the volume Old Friends introduces the kind of sameness, or even monotony, which Ashbery has always seen as a paradoxical energizer of the poem, and which the reader finds in Ashbery’s volume from 1981 Shadow Train – precisely the collection that Zadura got from Ashbery on his visit in New York.

The next novelty is the acceptance of an extraneous linguistic materials as a fortuitous genesis of the poem. Zadura is now more open to accidentally intercepted remarks, phrases, linguistic flotsam and jetsam, or overheard conversations. Words themselves, with their capacity for elusiveness and unpredicted evolution, sonic or etymological, become such a random impulse. Alternatively, the poet may show himself, in a fashion clearly borrowed from Ashbery, in the process of writing the poem and being distracted by intruding noises from the radio or from the street. Or he may start with somebody’s mechanically repeated proverb; or begin with a preposterous question out of context. The context itself becomes more of a shifting and elusive variable, pushing the reader toward necessary imaginative work on
the poem. In a poem from *Overexposed Photographs*, for example, the poet, very uncharacteristically, buries a tragic event from the public realm – the catastrophe of the space shuttle “Challenger” – beneath the collage of intercepted phrases. That Zadura is trying out the new poetics hesitantly is shown by the next poem – a poetic footnote, in fact – in which he feels compelled to clarify the buried reference to the readers (*Photographs* 7-8).

Inside the poems the tones are balanced and reserved as usual, but the earlier kind-hearted ironies with which Zadura greeted the world now shift half a tone to become playful dialogic internal exchanges, the poet chatting with himself in a relaxed manner. An implied interlocutor appears inside the poems, either a participant of the poetic scene, or an internal “you.” In a poem from *Old Friends*, he has the following sequence: “The fast train is fast in a timeless way/ regardless of how late it is/ Are you joking?/ No I am reading from the face of my electronic watch” (59). Such playfulness appeared in Ashbery’s poetry around the end of 1970s, in the volume *As We Know*, which had poems of ironic internal conversation. Compare, for instance, Zadura’s lines with the following exchange from “My Erotic Double”:

Some occurrence. You said it.

I said it but I can hide it. But I choose not to.

Thank you. You are a very pleasant person.

Thank you. You are too. (*As We Know* 82)

Increased tolerance for the accidental, coupled with the playfully dialogic, necessarily changes the quality of the poems’ logic. Logic is retained, but it is the logic of unexpected connections. As Marjorie Perloff would say, borrowing from Roland Barthes, it is an esthetics of simply setting one thing “next to” another (270). In the aforementioned essay “John Ashbery and I – Poetry of Conjunctions,” Zadura quotes from Ashbery’s poem “Shadow Train” in which objects are set together in a way that Perloff appreciates so much in Ashbery: “To that end the banana shakes on its stem/ but the strawberry is liquid and cool” (qtd. in “Poetry of Conjunctions” 110). This is one of the strategies that, as we know, make Ashbery’s poems so elusive, but also vast.

Zadura himself is aware of what kind of esthetics, with what kind of repercussions, he is admitting into his poetry. The Polish poet comments on Ashbery’s ability to explore surprising connections of images, phrases, or objects:

Basically, Ashbery’s poems opened my eyes to an entirely new way of speaking, to a new possibility of employing the word’s energy. They showed me the importance of apparently marginal words—“but,” “while,” “and,” those
secondary parts of speech, which are suddenly foregrounded, working as joints without which the system as a whole cannot move.

(“Poetry of Conjunctions” 110)

This sounds like Gertrude Stein on parts of speech, or like Ashbery in his review of Gertrude Stein’s “Stanzas in Meditation,” and Zadura is discovering for Polish poetry the fact that meaning may be an elusive category that happens to words, and the poet, besides relying on his intentionality, might be equally well employed tracing the adventures of meaning. Additionally, it appears that the poem may be a form of movement in the world of senses, just as a New York poet is moving during his walks, factual or imaginary. These walks, as in Ashbery, amass collections whose beauty is in their accidentality and strangeness. Zadura further quotes from Ashbery’s famous early manifesto “Le livre est sur la table”: “All beauty, resonance, integrity, / Exist by deprivation or logic / Of strange position” (qtd. in “Poetry of Conjunctions” 111). Something important happens to Polish poetry at this point: its traditional logos is enriched; rationality does not disappear but is redefined and broadened.

Such broadening introduces extra space that gives the poet a distance to his language; it is the distance his previous poetry needed so much in order to revive naturalness. In the earlier volumes the principle of the natural sound of language – the principle of such poets as Milosz, Herbert, and Szymborska – was beginning to suffer from a certain excess of the literal, the prosaically realistic which was stalling the poem. What spoke earlier in Zadura’s poetry was the muse of private memory, but the notion of privacy it offered at some point began to seem narrow, as the Polish poet’s social contexts started to evolve rapidly. Zadura knew earlier how to expose and use the lyrical quality of the ordinary surroundings and public languages, and he knew how to link the private with the public. Now, however, with the more extraneous material included into the poem, his play between the internal and external or the public and the private responds better to the challenge of evolving realities, and simply becomes more engaged. It seems that the more dynamic movement of associations is precisely what Zadura needs to enhance and develop his natural inclination to a subtle allusion with which he can ridicule the absurdities of Polish reality.

In the new poetics the poet is able not only to comment on the net of private and public interrelations, but he can also see himself with more distance, revealed in a more fascinating light by the surroundings. Bonnie Costello has demonstrated how for Ashbery the landscape becomes “a trope of knowledge” (60) – frequently self-knowledge – and this strategy is beginning to pay off for Zadura in Overexposed Photographs. Zadura has always been the poet of memory, seeking ways to preserve it, enhance its activity and include it in the construction of the present moment. Now, he can achieve these aims more efficiently:
if we hadn’t stopped off at that
bar with the video sporting some overgreen karate movie
I wouldn’t have memorized the waitress who flirted
with your golden-haired two-year-old son
and the light from the door projecting her like a slide

It’s important to memorize well If you memorize well
you don’t have to reminisce

(Photographs 19; trans. Piotr Sommer)

Clearly then, Zadura’s typical speaker, habitually poised to observe the external world, is now finding more channels through which to merge the internal with the external, thus questioning the division, intermeshing the system of private records with fast changing external contexts. This aesthetic has always been Ashbery’s trademark, and Zadura is now making happy use of it. For him, this is a way to find new life for earlier realistic tendencies. But this leads us to the question of how Zadura is using the influence for his own distinctive purposes, remaining a poet in his own right, independent and much different from the source of influence, a rare capacity that makes him one of the most fascinating contemporary Polish poets.

Much as Zadura has been attracted to Ashbery’s styles, he has also remained a radically different poet. This difference is the real subject of the two volumes that Zadura mentions as those the writing of which would not have been possible without Ashbery’s influence. The difference becomes gradually clearer to Zadura himself, as he explores – and disputes – Ashbery’s stylistics between the first poem of the cycle Old Friends, provocatively entitled “John Ashbery and I,” and the eponymous poem of Overexposed Photographs, placed toward the end of the volume.

The subject of “John Ashbery and I”, besides documenting the meeting of the poets, is the possibility of communication across different linguistic systems. In the poem Zadura says: “I know more, than I can name/At least in this case; sometimes it could be the other way round” (Old Friends 25). In the essay “John Ashbery and I – Poetry of Conjunctions,” which functions as a companion piece to the poem, Zadura explains that the lines involve his belief in translating Ashbery’s poetry despite a limited knowledge of English. Zadura’s views a good poem as a coded conversation, and each good poet, Zadura claims, devises his own language in which to lead the conversation with others. Despite the strangeness, or foreignness, of these languages – the question of whether these are within the same national language or cross national divides losing its relevance – the communication is possible. This stance is especially important for Zadura in today’s world, in which language is abused and its meanings worn out too quickly by too intensive use in the media. For the Polish poet it is intersubjective communication that re-infuses meaning into language, and the best way to achieve that goal in poetry is by
enhancing the subtle playfulness of the poetically coded message.

Refreshing the abused idiom is, of course, one of John Ashbery’s primary themes, developed in many of his central poems. One of them is “Paradoxes and Oxymorons” – the pivotal piece of *The Shadow Train* and the most important among the poems Zadura worked on as a translator. The elaborate play of gaps and blanks, over which “Paradoxes and Oxymorons” develops, winds down to a “you” (3) – an achieved interlocutor. For Zadura the poem is an analysis of how understanding happens as if despite, or through, the elusiveness of language. On the whole, the Polish poet reads Ashbery’s playfulness as a tool that returns value to language, the value that Zadura wants in language all the way down to the level of the single word. But here Zadura swerves away from Ashbery: “The more words we find around us, the more we lack words. The more we use them, the faster they wear out” (“Poetry of Conjunctions” 110). This sounds much different from what Ashbery says about language. Here is an example from an interview the American poet gave to Piotr Sommer in 1980:

In America the language is constantly changing, it gets mistreated, misused; it’s a tool for us—why should we polish it and put in a glass case? We Americans go perhaps too far in our careless attitude towards the language, we are inventing new words every week there’re undoubtedly more words than there are concepts to go with them. The language is there to be violated, or to be used however we want to use it; it’s not a sacred thing. (310)

The American poet is less wary about the condition of language and he assumes a much more imitative stance toward its contemporary proliferation. For Ashbery, for whom communication is an equally important goal, understanding is much more a result of the work of language – even when language produces its own unmaking – than the value of single words. Sometimes understanding will happen, on other times it will not, and Ashbery is willing to take the risks, inscribing accidentality and sheer noise or linguistic idling into his poems.

Zadura, in contrast, trusts accident much less and he is looking for the possibility of understanding that transcends the difference in codes, stemming not from coincidence, but from the subject’s intention. *Agency*, then, is the principle that occasionally groups subjects, drawing them into intersubjective communicative situations across the differences in codes, no matter how large. For Zadura, unlike for many contemporary poets, the key category is not *language* on its own, but the language user, the poet, talking secretly, across the hosts of abused words, to the reader, or another poet. The subtlety of allusion and play, which he enhances with the stylistic borrowed from Ashbery, is the subtlety of a subject thinking in language, not just the subtlety inherent in the playfulness of language detached from its human user. Playfulness and the shimmer of associations always return in Zadura to
a recognizable subject, who, as in Ashbery, is a recipient of linguistic stimuli, but in Zadura the reception is performed with more reservation, caution and a stronger selective gesture. When Zadura constructs a poem with the use of Ashberean fortuitous catalogues of spotted objects – the Whitmanian tradition now challenging the Polish poet – he will characteristically limit the catalogue to suit personal preferences. In the title poem of *Overexposed Photographs*, a Whitmanian/Ashberean catalogue crammed into the sonnet’s octave finds the following commentary in the closing sestet:

it wouldn’t be pointless to ask When and how you’ll pay for it Or who Since nothing’s free There must be something to it if moments mimic eternity A poem is patient That’s true But not a donkey However hard you drive it it won’t bear everything

(46; trans. Piotr Sommer)

Existence for the Polish poet is a debt, a large one, even if life’s moments are preserved in a format as modest as that of the sonnet. Clearly, the overarching forms of American poetry, nourished by the hypothetical spaciousness of an Emersonian transcendental subject would be too costly. The bigger “I,” the real “me-myself,” the Emersonian “conceptual image” of a grand self detached from the world, the self that Harold Bloom identifies at the core of Whitman, Stevens, and finally Ashbery (19), is inaccessible to Zadura. Apparently, for him, a self of such transcendental grandeur incurs liabilities that are too big to repay. But the comparison I am trying to sketch need not be couched in romantic terms. Besides being ascribed the role of a central heir to the American Romantic heritage, John Ashbery has been seen as an exemplary poet of the deconstruction age, and read as a poetic counterpart to Derrida’s continuous displacement of discourses. This is certainly the way Andrzej Sosnowski, another important Polish poet influenced by Ashbery, has chosen to read the American. Sosnowski, who reveals a completely different model of absorbing the American influence than Zadura, ends his discussion of *Flow Chart* by referring to Derrida’s discourse on the Revelation of St. John. Sosnowski exults in Derrida’s thesis that language is a self-revelatory entity, not addressed either by or to man, who is no longer a terminal of the floating connections (109). In Zadura, although man may not be a final destiny of linguistic exchanges, the human subject is at least a transitory stage, inconspicuous, but necessary for the linguistic particles to acquire a new spin. In Zadura language needs man as much as man needs language. In fact, it is difficult to speak of the two as separate entities. Not being a master of language, man uses it occasionally to see himself in the world, and to
comment on it meaningfully. This commentary on the world is what features increasingly in Zadura’s latest volumes, in which the lessons of Ashbery’s poetics are often retained to deliver devastating critique of contemporary Polish reality. As a self-limited subject, Zadura admits to such down-to-earth feelings as irritation and concern for the developments in the public sphere. Always seeking communication, it is this feeling that he now wants to communicate, and perhaps this is what links him with the Polish poetic tradition of bearing active witness.

Both Ashbery and Zadura look at the globalized reality with a critical eye. In their later work the sadness resulting from observing the modern vulgarity mingles with the darker vision of aging. But the final difference is substantial. Ashbery’s writing, consistently dissolving the subject in the language, eventually creates a quasi-subject: a point of view that remains external to the world of human affairs alternatively created or obliterated by the linguistic proliferations. Here, the poet is an observer, a dumbfounded witness, sometimes dazzled with the cruel beauty of the spectacle, sometimes terrified, as in a bad dream. But he cannot be much more, or, more properly, much less. Consistent with his life-long creative choices, Ashbery must remain a distant star, a receptive device tuned impersonally to vast stretches of contemporary frequencies; he must go on receiving both information and its background noise, keeping himself away from outright reaction. To react, after all, is necessarily to select the stimuli, to limit one’s stance. What Ashbery continues to offer instead is the perception of our world as a place in which the magical and the terrifying are hard to separate. In contrast to this, Zadura, an Eastern-European poet, is a witness who, although equally helpless, feels more involved, because crucially dependent, on the witnessed processes. He is a poet who cannot afford the distance of wonderment as the sole poetic stance.

NOTES

1. See, for example, a recent article by Charles Altieri, provocatively titled “Polish Envy: American Poetry’s Polonising.”
2. I am referring to a recent book by Michael Magee, Emancipating Pragmatism, in which he shows very convincingly how O’Hara’s responsiveness to the details of his surroundings and his movable styles derive directly from the work of William James and John Dewey.
3. Zadura admits to an early interest in Apollinaire, Max Jacob, and Blaise Cendrars.

4. One of his poems of the period echoes Elizabeth Bishop’s elegant meditation on dislocated referentiality in her early poem “The Map.” It is interesting to note this, I think, since “The Map” belongs to these poems in Bishop’s oeuvre which clearly fascinated and influenced the young Ashbery. For a good discussion of this connection, discussing “The Map,” see an article by Mark Ford.

5. If not indicated otherwise, translations of Zadura’s poems are mine.

WORKS CITED


Two Reviews

Jen Tynes

The ghost in my mouth holds me close to his fondness:
Sam White’s The Goddess Of The Hunt Is Not Herself

This collection draws particular attention to what we—writers and otherwise—are talking about when we talk about I. The first poem in the book, “The Sun Brings Hope,” introduces an “I” separated but not detached from the lively world around it.

These discolorations by visitors
whom I cannot speak words to
exceed my sense by half.

Which are you, they seem to read,
an experiment that worked,
or light lurking in silence?

Swans have left me and cry out…

Color as designation or value, light in the sense of “enlightenment” or omnipotent presence, are concepts that snowball and complicate throughout the book. Section One’s “I” seems to me most relatable to “The Goddess Of The Hunt,” a speaker both upraised and vulnerable to desire.

How are you, bastard? How much time
in the stem of that cigarette?
Is it enough? Do you crawl through
your newspaper shreds? I know your father.
I know the man who arced the myth.
I know that evening: wild ache of nightgrowth.

These poems are both character- and plot-driven in the sense that the I is driven to locate its identity, its story, though in a way that is “constructive” and collaborative with both other voices/presences and the reader. In “Prairie” there is a moment of improvisation that can be attributed to either writer or speaker: “They ran and ran as if against us. As if,/ I am open to suggestions.” Read simultaneously as a break or query of identity (“As if I am open to suggestions”), this intensioned and well-timed wobble suggests one of the
larger tensions of this “story.” Where does I begin and end?

Here is the rope of your life’s sunsets,
each pastelled thread a part
returning you to your first walk on the beach.

Here is dune grass, your mother’s fingers
through your hair the sea a fit of rabbits,
someone’s hand like your hand

keeping the shape of the face
moments after the face is gone.

Both the place and the syntax of “Snake Hunting at Night” set it apart from this collection, but its intention (“he thinks and// does not say,/ I remember you// differently”) and precise merging (“an errant life// closed in,/ now coiled// and digestive,/ now currented// lashing at the bag”) relate.

The second section of the collection focuses on an I-and-Thee relationship where the positions of lover and creation become indistinguishable. (“I have come into your chamber./ I have begun the process that will make me a man.”) These poems have a “nature” in them that is colored by a collapse of historical chronology, by the wants and needs of I.

A sprig unboxes a mountain. And birds, needful birds. To be
warmly colored and inheriting atmosphere. Orange foil. Yellow
string. To straggle from the accident of one’s nest
and take heart.

There are mountains and mountainous presences, panoramas. The speaker is small, malleable and at mercy. These are back-lit love poems that do not hold still, love that rushes to its own mutation. (“I will become something other/ than you expected./...There’s more/ when we finish here. There’s more,/ take my tiny word.”) They connect identity to action. (“When I was hanging,/ I had my hanging thoughts.” “The me who was me showering.” “I am not me alone.”)

Section three begins with “Specificity”:

How on this earth, this
good place, did I see
light in its crankshaft
descend to understatement.
The sense of repose in these poems unifies the I if only on the basis of chronology. The light that served as symbol or sign in the first poem has become an old key. The love that has inspired the speaker’s migration is now everywhere, accessible and too wide to capture.

I’ll stop but I’ll stop not knowing
and if you sweep your paddle through trees
I could assume anything, which alone
is reason to love you.

Likewise, location of the I seems not to be specified but turned inconsequential, smaller yet uncapturable. In “Black Window”:

I’m dumb to say what divides my agreement through the night
or how in the morning my mix of sensations agree
on one likeness smoldering…

There is less enjambment and word play in this final section; the lines feel long and mediated. When, in “Announcement,” the speaker is “alone on a bus,” it is an alone that has not yet occurred in this “narrative,” an alone that demands consideration and eventually takes on an echo in the final poem, “Loved One” –

You were not gone
but asleep through the slide show;

and you were gone
the projector pointing skyward

the ceiling quivering
with our faces.

an echo that falls outside of the book itself, by virtue of its insistence otherwise:

Many houses

in the valley at night
and yours was where

I stopped.
BOOK INFO

_The Goddess Of The Hunt Is Not Herself_, Sam White
Slope Editions, 2005
Paperback, 54 pages
$12.95
ISBN: 0-9718219-7-6
Even the title suggests a place we know a little something about—down home, downtown—with an *unheimlich* twist. The cover is a triptych of glowing butterflies against a background of black-green foliage. The lighting is unnatural, the butterflies lined up like samples. The first poem in this collection, “We the Blind Need Pushing,” starts by riffing on aphorism (“We who lead/ do not need audible traffic signals”) and ends with a promising introduction to an exploration of what our five or six senses do for us, of where and what we call home:

We’re like mice trying to get in,  
fawning over the icy breadbox.  
We do not have to imagine.  
We do have some idea.

The first thing you get about these poems is their humor. (“Your mother put a/ fan in the oven,/ he said, to cool/ it down.”) Funniness based in conversational rhythms and pun, in a certain kind of knowing that is often centered in place. From “Those Days of Pomp and Vigor”:

I’ll see that wildcat  
and raise you tigers.  
Our band was better  
than your band, we  
won 4-a State, and played  
the Cowboys’ game on Turkey Day.

And from “The Local”:

we live beyond. The warmth  
of someone else’s ass left  
on the subway seat  
is sometimes a comfort.
Compton’s biography confirms the poems’ own movement: a southern past that is still present, a New York presence that is haunted by what passes through it. In “I Declare a Rose,” “Mama’s answer to everything was/dope and salve, such remnants of the thicket”. In “Knowing & Saying Are Two Different Things,” “After the crack up, the tremblings/ continued throughout the day/ and during the forenoon, as if to offer up/ explosion as proof against mistaken poetry.” These poems are both invested in and critical of what “home” is, how we connect to place whether or not we are “from there.” In “Guided Tour of the South”:  

The landscape sees but its inhabitants do not.  
Nor do plain visitors. All are washed over  
by the paradox of open space.  

And from “The Local”:  

Origins are stations  
between nothing and  
something. A name for this  

could be home.  

And yet for all the discomfort, uncanniness, and haunts, this collection is alive, hilarious, and deeply bright. Compton writes, “Marianne would discuss the fauna,/ but I’m not gonna,” which reads as dead serious as it is word-playful. The speaker of these poems is strong-willed, curious, equally concerned with content and form. “Clues Down” and “Last Paragraph” are both prose poems which deal with the relationship between symbol and symbolized, language and communicator, world and story:  

The words weren’t more than a handful she flung at him, a fistful of darts stinging through his map of St. John Parish. The result was too many destinations to make on a quarter tank. She could have been more precise.  

Poems like “Sweet Tater Pie,” “White House” and even “The Migrants” read like meditative definitions on. So many different kinds of language come at us in plain type that, when italics are heavily utilized in poems like “The Woman from the Public” and “Ecstasy for Guy Lombardo,” the uncanny is kicked up a notch—those familiar voices must be from Mars. Metamorphosis, in these poems, is not preternatural, but, like any good poem, intuitive beyond what we thought we understood. In “Thank Y’all for Appreciating My Animals,” it is both familiar and thrilling to find out that a “corrected version” of the poem’s character is “the goat-footed nanny of us.”
While “I Am Not Related to Any of You Yet” is not my favorite poem in this collection, both its sense and end resound: “Brown little bird rest/ here just a minute.” These poems capture the fraction of time when the speaker is both resting spot and brown little bird, and, what is no less stunning, they capture what exists before and after.

BOOK INFO

*Down Spooky*, Shanna Compton
Winnow Press, 2005
Paperback, 51 pages
$ 14.00
ISBN: 0-9764726-4-3
Literary Narcissism and the Manufacture of Scandal

Gabriel Gudding

1. A Literary Narcissist’s behavior will not only tolerate but encourage attacks on himself so long as it can translate his own self-fascination into more news of himself.

2. Just as the Narcissist will use argument, catastrophe, disputation to attract attention, certain people will be willing to dispute the Narcissist in order to participate in the economy of attention. Others will dispute the Narcissist because they are so profoundly appalled by his/her behavior. Either way, the economy of attention is fueled.

3. The Narcissist needs Catastrophe. The more internal crises of shame the Narcissist endures and fails to heed, the more s/he will need to create external Catastrophes. A chief and signal way a Narcissist might attract attention is to start fights: Narcissists will gravitate toward satire and caricature as a means of creating argument. The Narcissist will attempt to construe strife with health: These arguments need to happen, etc.

4. The Narcissist is fascinating – but not for the reasons the Narcissist thinks. S/he is fascinating because the energy s/he will expend in micromanaging the self image is so profoundly exceptional. People just sort of stand there slack-jawed wondering if this person has a life. The Narcissist however will mistranslate the fascination of others as admiration.

5. Poetry communities will tolerate narcissism so long as it is translated into a Social Energy which others can use to strengthen and promote their projects.

6. Narcissism and alcoholism. Alcoholism is a systematic way to push down socially regulating emotions like shame, guilt, and embarrassment at ones own self-aggrandizing behavior. The suppression of these emotions is never successful, even in the most energetic of self-aggrandizers, and they will periodically burst upward into brief displays of remorse and convictions to change. These brief spouts of regulatory behavior are sometimes shared publicly and sometimes privately among confidants. These
displays however can often easily be re-used by the Narcissist as a way of showing his/her authenticity and emotional fealty to the community.

7 The Narcissist is aware of the economy of disgust surrounding his/her behavior. S/he becomes more and more sensitive to this and consequently begins to demand private declarations of loyalty from those people whom s/he knows consider themselves friends – even if they have said nothing publicly against the Narcissist.

8 The Narcissist, aware of this disgust, will create a personal mythos in which s/he will be justified and exonerated by the rewards of literary history. The stronger the disgust of others, the greater the energy used to maintain the mythos of exoneration by history.

9 Narcissists are only interested in community so long as it pays dividends to their energy: they will support it if it feeds them.

10 The narcissist may outright demand in private that you pay him publicly with praise. Then he or she will publicly repay you with a communal mention.

11 In their attempt to cause others to adopt their self-fascination, Narcissists will become increasingly paranoiac, constantly searching the environment and community for news of themselves, for fealty or disloyalty.

12 The Literary Narcissist begins purposefully to conflate criticism of his social behavior into an indication of his/her literary worth. That is to say, the Narcissist will try to show that the reason others despise or are disgusted by him is in fact because he or she is a Rebel, a true Literary Revolutionist – and that the statements of disgust others publicly make at his behavior is merely an indication of (a) their necessary denial of the work because they are threatened by it, or (b) their jealousy of the work.

13 There comes a point – and the point may come early – where the community thinks to itself teapot and the Narcissist still hears tempest. The truly insular narcissist (aka “the boor”) will be met more and more with shunning, ignoring and silence. This will wrest the narcissist from his insularity – such that he will begin another project designed to create Genuine Interest instead of mere scandalous attention. This project, like a new comet’s head, will be followed by a long tail of manufactured scandal so as to call attention to its presence in the literary sky.
Meteoric Flowers by Elizabeth Willis

≡ Raymond L. Bianchi

“A Poem is a Meteor”
– WALLACE STEVENS

The above epigraph appropriately frames poet Elizabeth Willis’s newest book *Meteoric Flowers*, which is crafted like a Bavarian stained glass window with the blues and reds radiating as luminously as possible. Fusing two great avant-garde traditions—one on the one hand the concentrated and restrained lyric of Wallace Stevens; on the other the sprawling range of crazy Ezra Pound—*Meteoric Flowers* offers us a poetry that is crisp and visionary.

Divided in four cantos, the book culls from some unusual sources, particularly Erasmus Darwin’s botanical-poetic writings. Darwin’s work—as well as the Pre-Raphaelites whose work has been ignored for so long—is reclaimed from English-class hell to illuminate these poems:

> I am almost asleep in it. You, over there, constabular trees. Your hand on my wastedness. Your hand on my stem.

> (“In Flowers Concealed”)

Willis’s usage of botanical and pastoral images and terms is stark, surprising, and refreshing. She also favors some words that are not in wide parlance anymore, like “porridge” and “mirth,” which tips off an appreciation for the past, and creates a sense of being between time. If being interested in the 10,000 year old history of poetry, if being charmed by the classics might put a poet at risk of losing her nerve, Willis shatters the thought. Like H.D. or Anne Carson, Willis engages with and rejuvenates literary history within the context of the continually evolving present.

Many books of prose poems move away from the lyric and its focused constraint, and move more towards a multi-genre sense of writing or aim to create micro-stories. Willis avoids this terrain, and like Rosmarie Waldrop before her, favors the prose poem less for acrobatics and more for profundity. In the first canto in the poem “The Steam Engine” she wonders:

> Have we overstayed our party in the heavenly city or are we spilling through its gates trying not to be trampled?

Amazing. I had to put the book down and reflect on the *lectio divina* of this poem and wonder why more poetry is not as awe filled as this book. The spirit of this work, the breadth, the respect for the exploratory spirit, history and innovation are flecked through the poems like brilliant crystals amid the mud, showing bold examples of what is possible, what might dare to be.
In the poem “Near and More Near” she writes:

We’re so close to the ocean I can taste it, like the volcanic in Picasso. A hand fit precisely over a mouth. I know about the thighbone, but what’s this connected to? A skirt trailing off into scorpion silver at the edge of L.A. Compare this with the habits of the wife of Bath, her passing breezes, the stolen pear, tallied for change, tailed to the last, her Spanish clock. This star plane is mechanical it’s having on us. What long teeth you have.

What Willis does in *Meteoric Flowers* is akin to what Italian Renaissance architects did with ruined Roman buildings. She takes the fine pieces, the cornices, columns and doorjambs and uses them as starting points for new ways of thinking and creating. Like a palace enveloped by a fine and well-tended garden, Willis fuses Stevens’ sense of taut craftedness with Pound’s desire for “newness” and innovation. The new architecture here is spectacular, something truly worth sitting with and breathing in.

**BOOK INFO**

*Meteoric Flowers*, Elizabeth Willis
Wesleyan University Press, 2006
Paperback, 100 pages

$22.95
While writing this review, it was my good fortune to be re-reading Fanny Howe’s wondrously confusing essay “Bewilderment,” parts of which resonated with the sparse lines of Laura Sims’ *Practice, Restraint*. One sentence in particular surfaced repeatedly and comes at the very end of Howe’s essay: “After all, the point of art—like war—is to show people that life is worth living by showing that it isn’t.” I admit the first time I read “Bewilderment” I was outraged that art should be compared to war. Art seemed to me the very antithesis of war, positing beauty in the face of annihilation. But I have come to understand this line differently. Howe is not positing a violent similarity between art and war; rather, art, like war, is ‘broken’—and this brokenness gestures to the unbroken ideal—the ideal for which artists must strive and struggle. I have in mind a willow tree bent double in a howling gale that, with its tortured form, allows us to know the direction of the wind. In her best moments, Laura Sims’ poems are conscious of this tension between the broken and the ideal. At times, her poems gesture beautifully and hopelessly toward perfection.

Disjunctive and sparse, the lines sometimes only two or three words long, Sims’ poems dare to be swallowed whole by the white space of the page. The opening poem of the collection, “Winter in You” is exemplary. It begins:

Have I seen such a tower

Her fleshly, spectacular hand

Would the dogs not find

A tower of ash when the hearth wound down

What it costs

to put winter in you!
The sparseness of this poem (indeed, most of Sims’ poems) focuses the attention of the reader on the words themselves. Each syntactical unit is a beam that presses out against the white space of the page, buttressing the structure of the poem. Each line is arduous: isolated, buffeted, created in crisis. “Winter in You” wastes no time defining the parameters of its utterance. It begins with the half-question “Have I seen such a tower” and the poem, seemingly at a loss for an answer, pauses, forcing the reader to languish in the void before a response is found. At stake in this opening line is the relationship of the poem to the outside world—the relationship of art to its object. Does the poem simply stand as witness to that which is external to itself—the tower—or does the poem function to redefine the external into art? Does poetry talk about objects or does poetry create objects? “Winter in You” comes down firmly on the side of the ‘poem as maker.’ The fraught first line of this poem pushes it to redefine its own relationship with the extrinsic. Instead of replying ‘yes’ or ‘no’, the poem makes a metaphoric leap—recreating the tower as “Her fleshy, spectacular hand.” Not ‘yes’ or ‘no;’ rather, metamorphosis. Objects cannot be ‘re-seen,’ in poems, they can only be transformed.

Something seems ‘at stake’ in these poems. One wonders, at the end of every line, if only for an instant, if the poem will vanish into the void. In their desperate attempts to exist, the poems in this collection take refuge in metaphor. Images are juxtaposed and take on new life; they are linked and made whole. Out of struggle comes the poem—an artifact forged in a moment of desperation.

“Winter in You” ends ambiguously, simultaneously asking and stating, “Her hand / Is the winter / lost, innocent people?” It questions the validity of poetic transformation, the poem’s ability to make any progress in the face of a ‘reality’ in which meanings are set and given. “Winter in You” is aware of this struggle and though it may occasionally doubt its own power, its validity, it does not break; it soldiers on, trying desperately to convince itself and the reader, and speaking to the seriousness of the poetic endeavor. Its frail form withstands the intensity of gale force winds.

That said, the line between productive reflexivity and solipsism is a thin one. There can be little doubt that these poems are aware of their own existence. “Lyrical Plot, with Ephemera” addresses this tension even more directly: “for all of eternity, / here is my beauty” self-consciously gestures toward abstraction. Indeed, the poem seems aware of the drift into sentimentality and marshals a linguistic force of nature to shake it up. We read,

The earthquake raises them up

and rejects them. Raises them up
and rejects them.

Bold repetition,

It is the line “Bold repetition” that’s so enfeebling. I cannot help but read it as referring back to the repeated line “The earthquake raises them up and rejects them,” a gesture that undercuts the efficacy of the image—effectively reminding the reader that whatever transformation enacted by the poem, it is, in the end, nothing more than a linguistic construction. While “Lyrical Plot, with Ephemera” productively straddles this line between self-reflexivity and solipsism, some poems do not manage to reach beyond their own linguistic restraints. The poems in “Bank Book,” the largest section in Practice, Restraint, are particularly stillborn.

For example, “Bank Ten,” a ten-line poem which ends,

Our eyes

Have seen sandier shores and whiter

When cancer

Ran in the family

The ending of this poem is an anticlimactic falling off. By the end the poem manages to address something difficult, (cancer); however, as it exists now, this ending has so little valence that I am left wondering what importance I can attach to the (seemingly) tragic introduction of a grave illness. This particular detail, so suggestive of narrative structure, leaves the reader unchanged, untransformed, and unsure how the detail should inform the poem. It cannot help that the poems are so sparse. Indeed, when narrative has for so long been denied the reader, every phrase that implies a back-story becomes a node of meaning to be queried and examined.

Rae Armantrout notes on the back cover, “‘Bank Book’ engages the language of economy and consumption, [tagging] the lyric’s chronic preoccupations with the tracking devices of financial institutions.” This is no doubt true; however, at times the poems in this section of the book are too conscious of their own limitations as art. The poems merely ‘notice’ and remark on the details instead of forming new linguistic connections that challenge consumerism and financial institutions. While Sims’ disjunctive poetic gestures madly at transformative parataxis, after a while it gestures only at itself. For example, “Bank Fourteen” which reads,
Branding a world
In which daisies
Appear as if
You who were
The yard lady
Turn
In the parking garage

Your logo
Bearing you
Gravely

It is a perfectly fine poem, but one that does little against a world in which corporate logos have usurped the bearer/borne relationship. Though the double meaning of logo (logos) points to an awareness that the poetic utterance can subvert the meaning of words, it’s too small a gesture—one aware of its own complicity with the commercial but without any righteous indignation—no anger that language has been co-opted by the global economy. The inability of art to make ‘real’ progress is returned to in “Bank Fifteen” which reads,

In every backyard

A peacock

Or some green nonsense

Refuting

what rifles report from her far-flung states.

The crux of this poem is the lie that it tells us. The language of violence from “far-flung states” cannot be drowned out, cannot be ‘refuted’ no matter what “green nonsense” our society marshals to the task. My question then
becomes: Why write poetry? Too many of the poems in this collection seem to be content to simply write about the dehumanizing effects of institutions rather than writing from the frustration engendered by these institutions. I have no doubt that Sims has the linguistic force at her command; indeed, many of the poems create beauty from the tatters of our world; however, in the final analysis, many of her poems seem to beg an ethical stand that finally they are unwilling to take.

BOOK INFO

*Practice, Restraint*, Laura Sims
Fence Books, 2005
Paperback, 120 pages
$13.00
ISBN: 0-9749909-9-9
The opening lines of Simone Muench’s *Lampblack & Ash* are its velvet rope and curtain. “*I’m like you, my dear,/ a leafleteer of belle-lettres./ A fan of lentissimo,// doloroso.*” The implied confidence between speaker and reader in these lines—that you too are a logophile, not simply a fan of the humanities but of *literæ humaniores*—will either resonate with a reader or bode warning: ‘Abandon all abridged dictionaries, ye who enter here.’ Unquestionably, Muench has a more than friendly relationship with words (read the pretty white dress of her poem “Pretty White Dress” as a sheet of paper for proof). With titles like “The *OED* Defines Red Hot” or “The Disease of Pronouns,” language is more than Muench’s medium, it is often her muse.

Yet while the Muse and Muench could easily be the ‘you and I’ relationship that permeates this collection, it is certainly not the only reading. The presence of Language as such, from the explicit mention of vowels, asterisks, “the elegance of the letter *f*,” literary terms, and other linguistic hardware (“you/ perched like a comma in the middle/ of a sentence, circumscribed but alive”) to the mention of poets, literary theorists, and the outright apostrophe of Language (“Poem marry me.”), leaves no doubt that Muench intends a layered reading of her work. As such, I would not deny, as the collection’s anonymous book-flap blurb purports, that these poems “explore the layered dangers of sexual love, and/or lust,” even though that particular exploration covers a lot of well-charted ground and misrepresents, for the sake of sex appeal, far more interesting aspects of Muench’s work. Nor would I discount the influence of the Surrealist poet Robert Desnos (1900–1945), whose poetry Muench employs to partition *Lampblack & Ash* and after whom one of her poems is titled. Desnos may very well be Muench’s other, her ‘you,’ the muse that inspired this collection. However, seeing how widely the poems of *Lampblack & Ash* vary in style and subject, and as all twenty-eight of these poems have been previously published in this or that literary journal, the Desnos epigraphs read with an air of afterthought. Are the epigraphs beautiful? Yes. Thematically relevant to Muench’s poems? Somewhat. Essential framework? Questionable.

As for the poems themselves, *Lampblack & Ash* reads as a collection of curiosities, for as with any *Wunderkammer* worth its cabinet, Muench’s showcase draws on the intricacy of nature (*naturalia*), human oddity (*artificialia*), and the mysterious relationship therein (*scienticifā*). In the vitrines of her pages, one discovers “an architect of petals,” “a man who…barks at his car,” “a witch
disguised as a stem of snapdragons,” “cicadas that decay into lace,” and such an abundance of flora that I’m convinced the poet moonlights as an amateur botanist. While the diction in these poems can be outright esoteric (i.e. loup-garous, schizocarp, axolotl, satinspar, vermeil), it is appropriate to Muench’s curio-program and worlds away from the indecipherable hyperlexic wordscapes you might expect from someone employing such vocabulary. Her genera choices are similarly arcane: bestiary, fairy tale, herbarium, dictionary entry, malediction…Like the curiosity cabinets of the seventeenth century, Muench’s collection is as much a testament to her fascination as it is her humanist education. Thankfully though, her curios are rarely opulent, drawing instead on the magic desuetude of garage sales, prosody, regionalism, second-hand dresses by the rackful, and a diaries-of-strangers aesthetic.
Three Micro-Reviews

Rodney Koenke

_The Thorn_, by David Larsen, exists in a prickly, unsettling space between the modern diss and the ancient curse, urban graffiti and antique inscription, that David Larsen’s staked out as uniquely his own. Printed poems exist alongside Sharpie scrawl, photographs, drawings of numbers, and renegade photocopies that take this book well beyond the run-of-the-mill poetry collection to suggest a deeper meditation on the nature of signs. Larsen leavens the history with huge dollops of humor—poems like “Fifty Pizzas,” “Bride of Pancakes,” “Death by Vanilla,” and “Charlton Heston Presents the Bible” are closer in attitude to Dr. Dre than Derrida—but the phantom limb of orality that haunts all our books pricks just as insistently for that. “Haunting” for once is maybe a good word to describe this collection, not for the sentimental pyrotechnics the term usually implies (expelling of breath at exquisite last line), but for Larsen’s ability to take writing back to its originary functions of magic, spell, imprecation, and invoker of unseen powers while keeping the idiom firmly America circa ‘06. For news that stays news on the fate of the word, you could do worse than turn to _The Thorn._

BOOK INFO
_The Thorn_, David Larsen
Faux Press, 2005
Paperback, 84 pages
$15.00
Do you ever get those light scratches in your DVD that confuse the laser for a second, creating these weird halts and pixilations in the action? The poems in Drew Gardner’s Petroleum Hat do that with the standard lyric ‘I’, u.s. war culture, and the English language itself to create an experiment in sound that catches the unique squelch of America circa now. Gardner’s found a way to make poems that look fresh & new as an aerial view on Google Earth while tapping into the more familiar energies of pop culture. With titles like “The Indian Government is in the Band Gwar,” “A Copy of The Koran Written in Rootbeer,” “The US Is Turkey and Humanity,” “John Denver Wawa Shadow Puppet Government,” and (personal favorite) “Art Licker,” it’s hard to go wrong, and the innards are just as imaginative (“I’ll be the one flying the flaming fetus kites”). Petroleum Hat samples the insanity of the 24-hour media feed and puts it to work—for a change—for art. Protest too, via satire and absurdity, but also art. Gardner’s poems, in their wry outrageous way, are beautiful, full of an overloaded kind of 21st-century beauty I haven’t quite heard anywhere else. I came for the laughs but stayed for the life information.

BOOK INFO

*Petroleum Hat*, Drew Gardner
Roof Books, 2005
Paperback, 96 pages
$ 12.95
ISBN: 1-9318241-7-7
Bay Poetics is the singular achievement of Oakland poet and editor Stephanie Young, who climbed an immense circus ladder with all eyes upon her, gazed steelily from the platform, and jumped into space assured a trapeze would be there to find her when she reached out. Two years in the making, and published just in time for the earthquake centenary, Young’s anthology shakes up different lines and schools to offer a unique stratigraphy of San Francisco and environs at the edge of the 21st century. It’s a collection no one else could have assembled, but one I think people will be looking back to for years to come. Here in San Francisco it already feels indispensable for anyone seriously involved with poetry. I hope Young’s coralling of 110 writers from across the experimental spectrum breaks into the sunlight of wider attention to prove what you’ve always suspected: that the Bay Area’s no more (or less) than a collective state of mind.

BOOK INFO

Bay Poetics, Stephanie Young, ed.
Faux Press, 2005
Paperback, 432 pages
$29.00
ISBN: 0-9765211-3-X
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JOSELY VIANNA BAPTISTA is the author of several poetry books and one children’s book, which received the VI Prêmio Internacional del Libro Ilustrado Infantil y Juvenil del Gobierno de México. She is one of Brazil’s most widely read poets.

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RAYMOND L. BIANCHI is the publisher of Cracked Slab Books and poet-editor of Chicagopostmodernpoetry.com. For most of the 1990’s he lived in Bolivia and Brazil. Ray has published two collections of poetry, *Circular Descent* from Blaze Vox Press and *American Master* from Moria Books. His work has also appeared in many journals.

With ten books of poetry and many translations, RÉGIS BONVICINO is one of Brazil’s most accomplished poets. A great editor and public intellectual, he has been called one of Brazil’s greatest poetic innovators.

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Journalist and writer FABRICO CARPINJEAR was born in Caxias do Sul and lived for much of his life in São Leopoldo. He is the author of *As Solas do Sol* (Escrituras Editora, 2001) which won the National Cecilia Meireles Prize in 2001, and *Biografia de uma árvore* (Escrituras Editora, 2005) [http://www.carpinejar.blogger.com.br/].

ODILE CISNEROS is a critic, writer and translator born in Mexico. Her translations and essays have been published in *Sibila* (São Paulo, Brazil), *Poesía y poética* (Mexico City, Mexico), *Sibila* (Seville, Spain), *Ecopoetics* (Buffalo, NY), *Chain* (Philadelphia), *Circumference* (New York), *Tse-té* (Buenos Aires), *Literatura mexicana* (Mexico City), *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas* (New York). She has translated the poetry of Régis Bonvicino, Haroldo de Campos, Rodrigo Rey Rosa, and the Nobel laureate Jaroslav Seifert, among others. She co-edited the volume *Novas: Selected Writings of Haroldo de Campos* (Northwestern University Press, 2005). She also teaches Latin American Literature and Culture and translation at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

ROB COOK is a social dropout trapped in New York City. He is not much of a self-promoter but has work in current issues of *The Bitter Oleander*, *Ur Vox*, *Massachusetts Review*, and *Indefinite Space*. His book *Songs For The Extinction Of Winter* is available from Rain Mountain Press.

LAIŞ CORRÊA DE ARAÚJO died in December of 2006. She was one of Brazil’s leading poets in the Modernismo movement, as well as an influential critic, poet, and activist, along with her husband, Affonso Ávila.
BRUCE COVEY is Lecturer of Creative Writing at Emory University and author of *The Greek Gods as Telephone Wires* and the forthcoming *Ten Pins, Ten Frames* and *Elapsing Speedway Organism*. His recent poems also appear or are forthcoming in *Verse, LIT, Bombay Gin, Boog City, Cannibal, 58o Split*, and other journals. He edits the web-based poetry magazine *Coconut* and curates the What’s New in Poetry reading series in Atlanta, Georgia.

CLAUDIO DANIEL is from the Bexiga neighborhood of São Paulo. His first book *Sutra* was published in 1992. He was the poetry editor of the magazine *Diario Popular*. He has published three more collections, *Tume* (Ciencia do Acidente Press, 1999), *Sombra do Leopardo* (Azougue Editorial, 2001), and *Figuras Metalicas Perspectiva* (2005).

CHRIS DANIELS was born in New York City in 1956. He dropped out of high school to become a dishwasher; never bothered with college, and now lives, works, and translates in the San Francisco Bay Area, where, for reasons still unclear to him, he passed the GED and received a high school diploma in 1996. His translations of Lusophone poetry have appeared all over the place.

SHIRA DENTZ’s poems, stories, and reviews have appeared in various journals and anthologies including *Denver Quarterly, Colorado Review, Field, American Letters & Commentary, LIT, Electronic Poetry Review, Painted Bride Quarterly, Chelsea, Seneca Review, Salt Hill Journal, Barrow Street, How2, The Journal, Diner, Web del Sol, Big Bridge, Tarapachein Sky*, and *can we have our ball back?*. She has received fellowships from Vermont Studio Center, the Ragdale Foundation, Squaw Valley Writers’ Community, and the MacDowell Arts Colony.

ALBERT FLYNN DESILVER’s recent poems have or are soon to appear in *Jubilat, New American Writing, 5 Fingers Review, ISM, 26, Van Gogh’s Ear, Coconut, Bombay Gin*, and elsewhere. A new book, *Letters to Early Street*, is due out Spring 2007 from La Alameda Press. He is editor/publisher of The Owl Press in Woodacre, California.

JULIE DOXSEE, born in London, Ontario, holds an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and is now a PhD student at the University of Denver. Other recent work appears or is forthcoming in *Retort Magazine, 42opus, Spork, La Petite Zine, H_NGM_N, Slope, Eratio Postmodern Poetry, Word For/Word, can we have our ball back, Elimae, Coconut Poetry, Conduit, Typo, Fourteen Hills, Shampoo, Action Yes*, and other journals.

STEFFI DREWES lives in Oakland, California and received her MFA from California College of the Arts. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Shampoo, Traffic*, and *Mirage #4/Periodical*, among others.
Werner Dürssen was born in 1932, studied music and literature and taught at the universities of Poitiers and Zürich. He has published in all genres. Some recent poetry titles are *Gegenflut* (2003), *Wasserspiele* (2002), and *Aufgehobene Zeit* (2002). He has also translated Mallarmé, Michaux, and Rimbaud into German.


Laura Erber is from Rio de Janeiro. She is a poet and artist and has published the book of poems *Insones* (7 Letras, 2002) and *Os Corpos e os Dias Merz Solitude* (2006). She was an artist in residence at the Center of Contemporary Art in Le Fresnoy France and also at the Akademie Schoss Solitude in Germany. Her works have appeared in museums and galleries in Brazil, Spain, Russia and France.


Michael Farrell has recent poems in *Jacket* and *Verse*. He is a postgraduate student at Deakin University in Melbourne. He is the author of *ode ode* (Salt Publishing, 2003). His reading-project blog is http://readingrevival.blogspot.com.

Angelica Freitas was born in Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul. Her work has appeared in the recent anthology *4 Younger Poets from Brazil*. She blogs at http://www.loop.blogspot.com.

Marcello Frixione teaches cognitive science at the University of Salerno.

he wrote in his car. His work appears in such anthologies as *Great American Prose Poems: From Poe to the Present* (Scribner, 2003) and as translator in such anthologies as *Poems for the Millennium* and *The Whole Island: Six Decades of Cuban Poetry* (University of California Press).

Gordon Hadfield’s work has appeared in *Fence, Colorado Review, Chain, Denver Quarterly, Ribot,* and other journals. His translations of the Moroccan poet Abdellatif Laâbi have appeared in *Circumference, Fascicle,* and *Blaze Vox.* He lives in Northern Colorado.

Rob Halpern is the author of *Rumored Place* (Krupskaya, 2004) and *Disaster Suite* (Vigilance Society, 2006). Currently, he’s co-editing the poems of the late Frances Jaffer together with Kathleen Fraser, working on a collaborative project with Taylor Brady for Atticus / Finch, and translating the early essays of Georges Perec, the first of which is forthcoming in *Chicago Review.* He lives in San Francisco, California.

Erika Howsare lives in Virginia and holds an MFA from Brown University. A collaboration with Jen Tynes, *The Ohio System,* has just been published as a chapbook by Octopus Books. Other work has appeared in *Fence, Chain, The New Orleans Review, Encyclopedia,* the *Denver Quarterly* and *CutBank,* among others. Her most recent project is a fictional account of traveling with the 19th-century writer Isabella Bird.

Jibade-Khalil Huffman’s fiction and poetry have appeared in *Bat City Review, NOON,* and the *Boston Review.* He is at work on a novel.

Evelyn Ibarra was born and raised in Minnesota. She is currently a PEN USA Rosenthal Fellow for Emerging Voices. She lives in Los Angeles, California where she works as an architect.

Gabrielle Jesiolowski currently lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where she makes poems and paintings of birds, fences, and vessels in her small studio. Her recent poems have showed up in places such as *So To Speak, Sonora Review, Touchstone* and *On The Cut Sail.* She will soon move west to begin her second MFA in sculpture after receiving her first MFA in poetry. She will like the oceans but not the highways.

Rodney Koeneke is the author of *Musee Mechanique* (BlazeVOX, 2006) and *Rouge State* (Pavement Saw, 2003). His work has been read or performed at Small Press Traffic, The Poetry Center at sfsu, the Pacific Film Archive, The Poetry Project and the 2006 Flarf Festival in New York City. He lives in Portland, Oregon with Lesley Poirier and their young son, Auden.
Drew Kunz is editor of Gong Press and Track & Field and is co-editor of the journal traverse. Recent writing has appeared in 26, Bird Dog, Denver Quarterly, POM2. He is also an artist and provided monoprints for Stacy Szymaszek’s book Emptied of All Ships (Litmus Press, 2005). He currently lives on Bainbridge Island in the Puget Sound.

Cyana Leahy is from the Brazilian city of Niteroi. Her work has appeared in England and the usa. She is the translator of Rose Marie Muraro, Olga Savary, and many other poets.


Maria Esther Maciel is a professor of letters at the Federal University of Minas Gerais. She is the author of two collections of poetry, Tris, from (Orobo Edicoes) and dos haveres de corpo, (Belo Horizonte: Editora Terra, 1985).

Matias Mariani is a poet and filmmaker from São Paulo who is now studying film production at New York University. He is co-editor of the poetry magazine Sebastião.

Glauco Mattoso is the pseudonym for poet Pedro Jose Ferreira da Silva. Born in São Paulo, he is a poet and translator.

Sérgio Medeiros is a poet who fuses much of this dynamism into a new poetics with Guarani, Portuguese, Spanish influences. Medeiros is a professor at the Federal University of Santa Catarina in Florianópolis.

Christina Mengert holds an MFA from Brown University and is pursuing her PhD in Creative Writing at Denver University. Her poems can be seen in Salt, Phoebe, Versal, Typo, The Canary, and other journals. Her first manuscript has twice been a National Poetry Series Finalist.

Edric Mesmer studied at the State University of New York at Geneseo and The University of Manchester. A resident of Brooklyn for the years between, he currently lives in Buffalo, New York and rides the bus that picks him up along Forest Lawn Cemetery.

Sandra Miller’s first book, Oriflamme, was published by Ahsahta Press in 2005. Her new work—entitled Chora—also currently appears in Crowd, Forklift, and Order + Decorum. Sandra will be teaching at Hollins University for the year 2006-2007, living near the ponies with her husband, the poet Ben Doyle, and their pup.
James Mulholland is a translator and professor working and living in England.

denise nico leto is a San Francisco Bay Area poet and editor. Her poetry, reviews and essays have most recently appeared in 26: A Journal of Poetry and Poetics, Xantippe, Seneca Review, MELUS, and Passing Twice. Formerly an editor of the journal Sinister Wisdom and at Three Guineas Press, she was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2004.

Akira Nishimura is from Osaka, Japan. He is a well-known musician and translator.

idra novey’s poetry and translations have appeared in various journals, including Washington Square, Circumference, Poetry International, The Literary Review, and Rattapallax, where she is an editor. A recent recipient of a grant from the PEN Translation Fund, she is at work on a translated collection of poems by Brazilian writer Paulo Henrique Britto. Novely currently teaches writing at Columbia University.

Martha Oatis teaches poetry writing in New York City’s public schools. Excerpts from her long poem, “Two Percept,” were published as a chapbook by Portable Press at Yo-Yo Labs in the fall of 2006.

dora ribeiro was born in Mato Grosso in 1960. Her debut collection Ladrilhos de Palavras was published in 1990. She has lived in Lisbon since 1983.

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Claudia Roque Pinto worked as a professional photographer, graduated from San Francisco State University in American Studies and, after graduating in translation from the Universidade Pontificia Universidade Catolica, worked as editor of the magazine Verve. She has published two books of poetry, Os Dias Gagos and Saxifragas.

Elizabeth Robinson is the author of seven books of poetry, most recently Apostrophe from Apogee Press. She lives in Boulder and teaches at the University of Colorado. She is also a co-editor of 26 Magazine, EtherDome Chapbooks, and Instance Press.
Trey Sager is the author of *O New York* published by Ugly Duckling Presse, and is working on a book called *The Weeds* with artist Munro Galloway.

Brandon Shimoda was born in Tarzana, California. Poems and prose can be seen in *Xantippe, Cannibal, Wildlife, GutCult, TIPO*, and elsewhere, as well as in *The Pines Volume Three: The Knights of Columbus*, the latest in an ongoing collaboration with Phil Cordelli. He currently lives in Missoula, Montana, where he curates the New Lakes reading and performance series, and helps to edit for the Missoula Writing Collaborative and *CutBank Literary Magazine*.

Pontius Silas is a native of Lubbock, Texas, and an MFA candidate at Texas Tech University.

Marcos Siscar is a poet and translator at the University of São Paulo in São Jose do Rio Preto. He has published four collections of poetry and a book of criticism on the work of Jacques Derrida.

Michael Slosek lives in Chicago. His first book of poetry, *Each In Neither*, was released in May 2006 by House Press. He was the editor for the poetry magazine *Drill* from 2002-2006, and is now the co-editor of *string of small machines* with Eric Unger and Luke Daly. His poetry has appeared in *Drill, Small Town* and *Plantarchy*.

Sasha Steenensen is the author of *A Magic Book* (Fence Books). She is currently working on a new manuscript, *The Method*, which takes its title from a collection of proofs by the Greek mathematician Archimedes. She teaches Creative Writing at Colorado State University.

Anne Tardos is a poet and visual artist. She has published five books of poetry and the multimedia performance work and radio play *Among Men*. She is the editor of *Thing of Beauty: New and Selected Works*, by Jackson Mac Low, forthcoming from the University of California Press in the fall of 2007. Her and Mac Low’s new CD can be listened to online at xtina.org/tarmac.htm and her web site is www.annetardos.com.

Virna Teixeira is a poet and translator. She was born in Fortaleza, Brazil and has lived in São Paulo for many years where she works as a neurologist. She has published two books with 7 Letras press, *Visita* (2000) and *Distancia* (2005).

The poems “A-F” are from Matt Turner’s manuscript *Poems of Value/For the Authentic*. He has just finished another manuscript called *Wolves’ Poems*. He has published in *Wherever We Put Our Hats, Antennae, Onedit*, and other journals. He lives in Beijing, where he teaches literature at the University of Chinese Medicine.
JEN TYNES edits Horse Less Press and is the author of *The End Of Rude Handles* (Red Morning Press, 2006), *See Also Electric Light* (Dancing Girl Press, 2007) and, with Erika Howsare, *The Ohio System* (Octopus Books, 2007). Her writing has recently appeared or is forthcoming in *Lit, Denver Quarterly, Typo* and *The Bedside Guide to No Tell Motel: Second Floor.*


LINA RAMONA VITKAUSKAS co-edits the online literary/visual arts magazine *milk* (www.milkmag.org). Poetry chapbooks include *Failed Star Spawns Planet/Star* (Dancing Girl Press, 2006) and *Shooting Dead Films with Poets* (Fractal Edge Press, 2004). In 1999 she won Honorable Mention for Story magazine’s Carson McCullers Award. Her spoken-word cd, *Opaque Lunacy*, is due out this fall.

ROSMARIE WALDROP’s trilogy (*The Reproduction of Profiles, Lawn of Excluded Middle,* and *Reluctant Gravities*) is being reprinted by New Directions under the title *Curves to the Apple* (2006). A book of essays, *Dissonance (if you are interested),* is out from University of Alabama Press.

G.C. WALDREP’s books of poems are *Goldbeater’s Skin* (Colorado Prize, 2007), *Disclamor* (boa Editions, 2007), and two chapbooks, *The Batteries* and *One Way No Exit* (New Michigan Press and Narwhal, respectively, 2006). Most of the poems in this suite are from a new book-length manuscript, *Archicembalo.*


DEVON WOOTEN is currently on a Fulbright fellowship to Aarhus, Denmark, where he translates the poems of Sophus Claussen. He is a contributing editor to *CutBank Literary Magazine.*
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