

Celebrate Three of the City's Best Small Presses Inside in Their Own Words and Live



d.a. levy lives

celebrating renegade presses

15th Annual

NYC Small Presses Night

Sun. Dec. 10, 6:00 p.m., \$5 suggested

6:00 p.m. Book Fair

Readings from Kaf Collective, Louffa Press, and Marsh Hawk Press authors, and music from Belle-Skinner.

Sidewalk Cafe
94 Avenue A

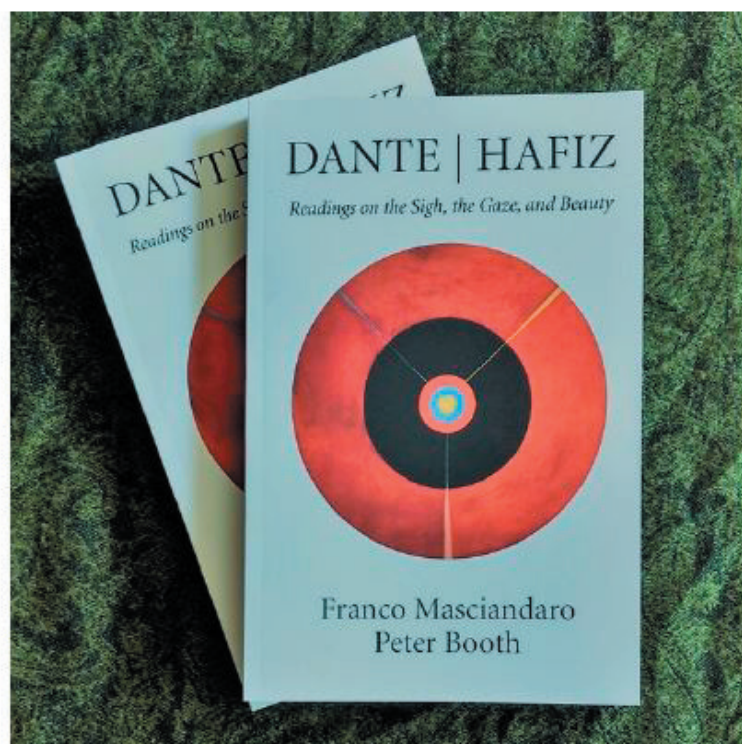
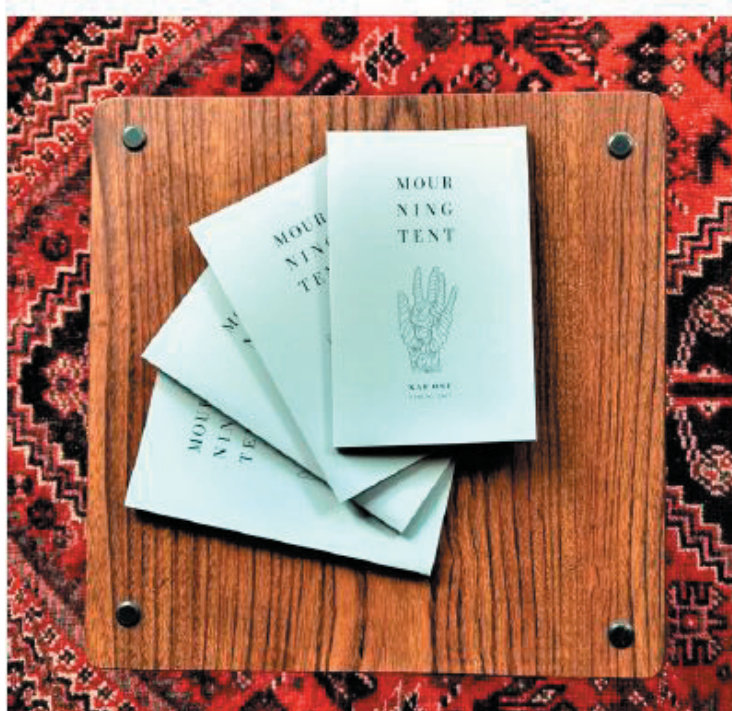
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The East Village

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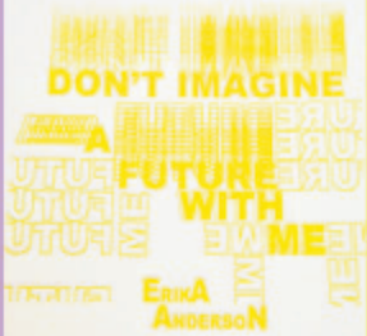
KAF COLLECTIVE

Kaf means palm in Arabic, Cuneiform, Farsi, Hebrew, Phoenician and Urdu. Kaf is the letter K in each. It signifies touch, vulnerability and intimacy. The hand lifted before it is clenched. Kaf curates work that values the space between words, letters, discourses and languages.



kafcollective.com
[instagram.com/kafcollective](https://www.instagram.com/kafcollective)





www.louffapress.net



THE MISSION behind Louffa Press is to foster a venue for limited edition, collectible, handmade chapbooks by a wide array of authors whose voices must be heard.

IN REAL LIFE ONLY
IN YOUR HOT LITTLE
HANDS

1/20 2/20 3/20 4/20 5/20 6/20 7/20 8/20 9/20 10/20
11/20 12/20 13/20 14/20 15/20 16/20 17/20 18/20 19/20
20/20 (numbered editions)

LOUFFA PRESS
LIMITED EDITION

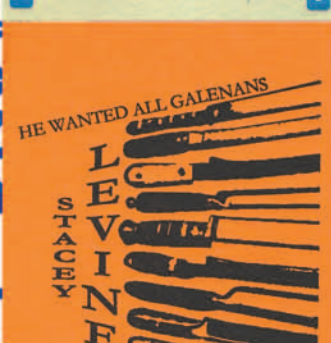
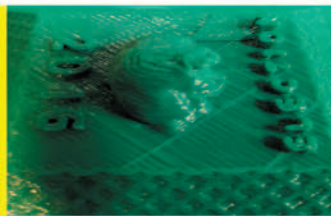
LOUFFA PRESS
LIMITED EDITION
presents
STEVE CANNON
SCREENPRINTED
BROADSIDES

Based in NYC since 2010, Louffa Press is nurtured by international and community voices, and now featuring artist's books.

Authors and artists on Louffa Press or part of the Louffa Press eXfoliation reading series past or present include: Steve Katz, Yuriy Tarnawsky, Stacey Levine, Erika Anderson, Alexander Chee, Matvei Yankelevich, Mike Topp, Vanessa Gabb, Shelly Oria, David Hoenigman, Jeff Grunthaner, Vincent Czyz, David X. Wiggin, Kawori Inbe, A.H. Jerriod Avant, Paco Marquez, The Fug, Joseph Riippi, Mezynski, Amy Huffman, Dustin Luke Nelson, Simona Blat, Amy Fusselman, Beatriz Albuquerque, Matt Dojny, Munter Jack, Claudia Serea, Nicole Sealey, Onaka Shunsuke, Christine Reilly, Changming Yuan, Petre Bokor, AJ Atwater, Robert Gibbons, Matthew Lansburgh, Jee Leong Koh, Edwin Alanis Garcia, Steve Cannon and others. Thanks to you all.

Louffa Press is a proud member of the Community of Literary Magazines and Presses [CLMP].

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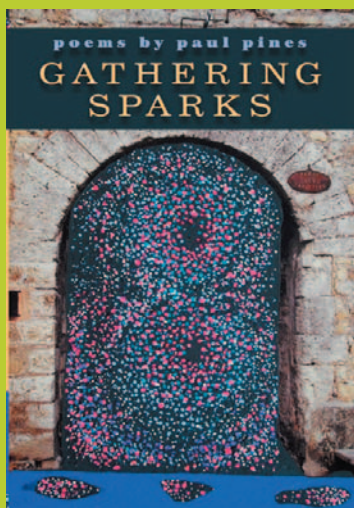


Marsh Hawk Press

THREE NEW TITLES OUT THIS FALL 2017

PAUL PINES
GATHERING SPARKS

“A BRINGING DOWN OF THE MIND INTO THE HEART, A BEARING OF WITNESS TO THE ETERNAL DANCE BETWEEN THE EVERYDAY AND THE NUMINOUS.” —ROBERT MURPHY



MUSEUM OF THE INFINITE

The museum of which you speak
has no vanishing point
everything in the open
no hide and seek
for what explains
our journey

between meaning
and menace

like the God Particle
that links mind to
matter

our universe one
of many nested in
a regressus
of black holes

ends where mortality
ceases to burden
the human heart

I want to stroll this museum
with you old friend
as if we'd been here all along
watch the corridors of our
assumptions
dissolve

around portraits
hanging in plain sight
without walls
or frames

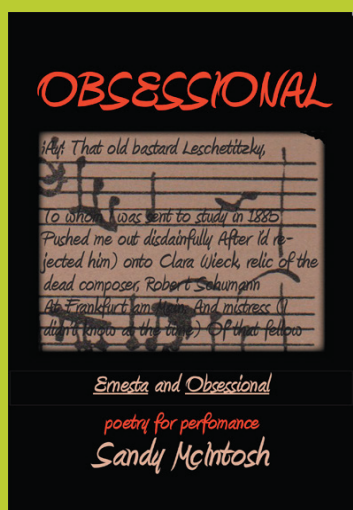
***Sixteen Years.
One Hundred Titles
In Print.***

TWO DRAMATIC NARRATIVES

“**OBSESSIONAL**,” IS REMARKABLE FOR YOKING AN ENGAGING ELIZABETHAN LITERARY DETECTIVE STORY TO A PERSONAL NARRATIVE ABOUT LIFE AS A GRAD SCHOOL POET. EVEN MORE IMPRESSIVE THAN THIS SET-UP ACTUALLY SUCCEEDING IS THE WAY MCINTOSH IS ABLE TO TIE COMPASSION TO DAGGER-THRUST HUMOR. IF THAT’S WHAT ‘OBSESSIONAL’ POETRY IS—PERSONAL NARRATIVE OF NEUROSIS THAT IS AWARE A WORLD EXISTS OUTSIDE THE POET’S GUT, AND IS NOT AFRAID TO TELL A JOKE—MAYBE IT WILL CATCH ON AMONG THOSE STILL IN THE STRANGLEHOLD OF THE CONFESSIONAL.”

—BRIAN CLEMENTS, *BOOG CITY*

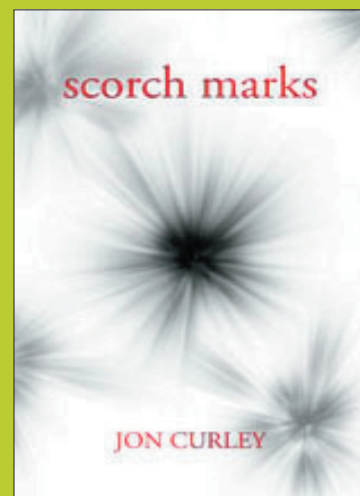
SANDY MCINTOSH
OBSESSIONAL
POETRY FOR PERFORMANCE



“**ERNESTA**,” THE DRAMA OF A 19TH CENTURY SPANISH PIANIST AND MURDERER, “BURSTS WITH BRILLIANCE AND SIZZLES WITH SASS. AN AUDACIOUS, RAVISHING, SYNTACTIC MARVEL.”—DENISE DUHAMEL

JON CURLEY
SCORCH MARKS

“A VISCERAL SHOUT-OUT, A CALL TO THOSE WHO WOULD ACQUIESCE BY KEEPING VIRTUAL OR LITERAL PEN IN POCKET, IN THE FACE OF INJUSTICE AND LIES.”—ELENA ALEXANDER



OCCUPY GENERATION

Oh, all begot or not, to nought?

Not so?

I shall sew the clothes of our new names
on my wrist and fist.

Resistance is the sweetener
of the game-changer,

your self, person, pelt...

Up in smoke goes their plot
when we get our action together.

To gather and not surrender in the force-
field of our energies—

Serge’s ‘miracle of solidarity’ surges
in our day now, now that we run riot
against our ruin.

THE PRESS HIGHLIGHTS A WIDE RANGE OF AFFINITIES BETWEEN POETRY AND THE VISUAL ARTS. EACH VOLUME IS PRODUCED WITH PARTICULAR CARE FOR VISUAL STYLE, OFTEN INCLUDING ARTWORK ALONGSIDE THE POEMS. NOTABLE RECENT TITLES HAVE WON THE PEN OAKLAND-JOSEPHINE MILES AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN LITERATURE; THE THOM GUNN AWARD FOR GAY MALE POETRY; AND THE CALATAGAN AWARD FROM THE PHILIPPINE AMERICAN WRITERS AND ARTS, INC.

MARSHHAWKPRESS.ORG





Robert Dewhurst and Feliz Lucia Molina.

SMALL PRESS

Reimagining Exchange: Crystal Marys, Scary Topiary,
and the Performance of the Chapbook

Soham Patel with Robert Dewhurst and Feliz Lucia Molina

ART

Tom Bovo

FILM

Butterfly Eyepatches and Haunted Wall Clocks:
The Films of Shuji Terayama at Anthology Film Archives

MUSIC

Personal, Narrative, Mysterious—Pinkerton/Black

POETRY

John M. Bennett, Dennis LeRoy Kangalee, John J. Trause

PRINTED MATTER

Sanctuary in Pages:
The Poets We Return to For Shelter

Philip X Levine’s Writes Movement for Survival

Reimagining Exchange: Crystal Marys, Scary Topiary, and the Performance of the Chapbook

Soham Patel with Robert Dewhurst and Feliz Lucia Molina



INTERVIEW BY SOHAM PATEL

On Oct. 5, 2017 Woodland Pattern Book Center hosted the first of five events in the Kundiman Midwest Chapbook Reading Series. The series aims to examine the role of the chapbook in small press publishing. It wonders what the chapbook can do. Woodland Pattern and Kundiman have worked together to gather five Kundiman fellows currently hailing from the Midwest with newish chapbooks with whom we could examine and wonder. Franny Choi was here last month to read *Death by Sex Machine* out from Sibling Rivalry Press. In 2018, Noel Pabillo Mariano will share *Dispatches from the Mushroom Kingdom*, forthcoming from Hyacinth Girl Press. Suman Chhabra reads her *Demons Off* from Meekling Press on March 14. And Lo Kwa Mei-en will visit on April 14 to read us *Two Tales* which has been beautifully stitched together at Bloom Books. The series supports a generous spirit that wants to build coalition with communities committed to excellence, brilliance, witness and light. It wants to offer everyone in the room a gift. The chapbook, with its priceless ephemeral quality, reimagines what exchange can look like. This is one thing the chapbook can do.

Our first event featured Feliz Lucia Molina and aimed to celebrate *Crystal Marys*, recently out from *Scary Topiary Press*, “a small press spun-off of *Satellite Telephone* magazine, that publishes a focused yet eclectic list of literary chapbooks.” There were *Munchies* and *Halloween candy*, a box of red wine, water, some cold cans of *Riverwest Stein*. Mike made a *Gabor Szabo* inspired playlist for everyone to hear as they gathered into the gallery space. A *Madonna* song was sung.

Scary Topiary released *Crystal Marys* in 2016, by the time of the event at the book center there no copies left to sell. So instead we made tiny chapbooks with short lines from Feliz’s *Crystal Marys* typed in – “snapchaps.” Everyone in the audience was given a pencil and a snapchap and was invited to draw and/or write in them while Feliz read *Crystal Marys* to us from start to finish. Something was produced from that reading, which could be given back to Feliz as a gift. What followed the reading was a tenderly robust conversation about Feliz’s poetics, about the incorporeal, place and displacement.

Of Feliz’s poems, scholar Shanae Aurora Martínez says, “they detail the abundant life within the monotony of our daily rituals.” Of *Crystal Marys*, Martínez notes Molina’s attention to the digital façade of our lives, “a façade that continually entices us with its broken promises of more, not less real” – the material it makes – and notes that with this approach to language “from out of our shared love of jagged forms, we become more human than digital with room for both.” *Crystal Marys* imagines, for example, during the time of October 2008-April 2015 in “Not a Devotional Poem,” “...that takes place somewhere/between myself and the screen/that could only mean loneliness/and the pleasure of it...” that time and space compression helps reveal what’s real. This realness shifts, is understood to be more fluid, lucid, and so instructs us, like rightly, as *Crystal Marys* does in “<3” to “[r]esist all the filtered popularities/embrace the heart-shaped topiary.”



I first saw Feliz read some of these poems in April 2015 at the Machine Project in L.A., for their Mystery Theater Poetry Archives series. I loved the poems—Feliz’s intelligence and wit about why digitally mediated life doesn’t feel good—and immediately asked her if I could publish them.

—Robert Dewhurst

Here is some spark of a conversation that’s manifesting with Feliz Lucia Molina and Robert Dewhurst of *Scary Topiary Press*.

Soham Patel: What can you tell me about *Scary Topiary*? About how *Crystal Marys* was made / conceptualized / composed / printed / distributed? What do you think the role of the chapbook is in small press publishing? Feliz, also what has it been like relocating to the Midwest?

Robert Dewhurst: It’s funny to think about *Crystal Marys* as an object or project—that’s already a wee bit historical, since its small print-run sold out this fall—because it came together really naturally. I once asked Anne Waldman about the making of John Wieners’s *Asylum Poems*, published by Angel Hair Press in 1969, and I was so charmed by her answer. It wasn’t like Wieners ever “submitted” anything to the press; he had just been an irregular houseguest at her and Lewis Warsh’s apartment on St. Mark’s Place, while visiting NYC to read at the Poetry Project. Anne and Lewis were Wieners’s fans and friends, and *Asylum Poems* was the result. She said: “He didn’t just send us this manuscript out of the blue . . . it wasn’t formally poets at a distance asking.” Angel Hair and other presses/publications of its era (e.g., *Semina*, *The Floating Bear*) are huge influences on *Scary Topiary*, and *Crystal Marys* similarly just kind of happened.

I first saw Feliz read some of these poems in April 2015 at the Machine Project in LA, for their Mystery Theater Poetry Archives series. I loved the poems—Feliz’s intelligence and wit about why digitally mediated life doesn’t feel good—and immediately asked her if I could publish them. We began emailing about it and the book appeared a year and change later. Feliz was remarkably easygoing about the details—the sequence of poems, the cover art, adjusting line-breaks to conform to the press’s arbitrary narrow format. I think I used her poem title “*Crystal Marys*” as a placeholder on one of the early PDFs, and it just stuck.

What can a chapbook do? I totally agree with you, Soham, that the chapbook can “reimagine exchange.” For one, small press publishing like this—seeing someone read, that turning into a book—is such a pleasanter alternative to the more “professionalized” models of sending out blind submissions en masse, entering contests, or writing proposals (gag). I like thinking of the chapbook as a gift, or as a form or token of friendship. Not to be too sentimental, or ponderous, but poetry itself for me is very much about friendship. I’ve always agreed with Dorothea Lasky: poetry is not a project!

It really felt like *Scary Topiary* (best name for anything) rescued these poems and put them in a little chateau with silver stone walls. The poems feel protected there and free to roam. I love everything about the way it happened.

—Feliz Lucia Molina



Feliz Lucia Molina: Robbie, I entirely agree. It always feels like you’re great at reaching into my head, organizing things I might take too long to mull over, and then presenting it back to me in a beautiful and sophisticated way, which itself is a gift. Thinking back to 2015 (which is like a hundred years ago) *Crystal Marys* was just beginning to maybe one day become a memory-object; a capsule of that time when you first heard me read. I think what’s magick-feeling about the process is exactly the way you described it: that it just kind of happened. I also love the idea of a chapbook as an irregular houseguest in someone’s life. Because chaps have this fleeting quality, a kind of Irish goodbye. And I love when memory-objects like this one just kind of appear and then fade. I guess maybe the same goes for books and movies and clothes and anything sentimental. Maybe now I’m thinking about impermanence: I’m (not) permanent though sometimes wish i could be. But also, it really felt like *Scary Topiary* (best name for anything) rescued these poems and put them in a little chateau with silver stone walls. The poems feel protected there and free to roam. I love everything about the way it happened.

Soham your question about living in the Midwest, even though we’re now in Chicago, my mind is in different time zones. They say Lake Michigan is a lake when really it’s an ocean. I can’t begin to spiritually locate myself here because there are no palm trees. I know I’m here when I see Chicago style hot dog stands, all the brick buildings, Chicago river, and excellent public transit. Just yesterday there was a distinct chill in the air I couldn’t place in relation to something I saw online. My heart is mostly in LA and the southern California desert because my parents are there and I worry about them because they’re getting older and I want us to all live happily ever after.

Robert Dewhurst is a poet and scholar; he holds a PhD in English from the University at Buffalo (SUNY), where he participated in the Buffalo Poetics Program. With Joshua Beckman and CAConrad, he coedited *Supplication: Selected Poems of John Wieners* (Wave Books, 2015). He is the publisher of *Scary Topiary Press* (<http://www.scarytopiary.endingthealphabet.org>), and was the editor of *Satellite Telephone* magazine (2007–10), and coeditor, with Sean Reynolds, of *Wild Orchids* journal (2009–11). He lives in Los Angeles.

Feliz Lucia Molina is based in Chicago and the Southern California desert. Her books are *Undercastle* (Magic Helicopter Press), *The Wes Letters* (Outpost19), and chapbook *Crystal Marys* (Scary Topiary Press). Her long poem “*Roulette*” is coming out with Make Now Books in 2018. She can be found at <http://www.felizluciamolina.com/>.

Soham Patel is the author of *and nevermind the storm* and *New Weather Drafts* (Portable Press @ Yo-Yo Labs) and the forthcoming *in airplane* and other poems (Oxeye Press) and to afar from afar (*Writ Large*). She serves as a poetry editor at *Fence*. Chuck Stebelton photo.

Sanctuary in Pages: The Poets We Return to For Shelter

BY JACLYN LOVELL

Sanctuary is a soft architecture of sounds. This is its greatest strength: slipping past brick and glass: a breath. Sanctuary is malleable, elusive, can exist in small, less recognizable spaces. This past year I’ve found myself gravitating more and more to language as sanctuary. Poets who make me feel safe, fired up, recharged; who create direction, community, a space to get really angry, really quiet, fall apart. To close my tenure at Boog City, I’ve asked a few of the poets whose work I turn to for shelter to reflect on the sanctuaries in their bookshelves.

Amber Atiya

In 2005, I spent my senior year of college at the Brooklyn YWCA, living among women, some students, some on parole, others had therapists who visited weekly. As exploited as we all were, paying so much for so little, I referred to the Y as Punany Alcatraz, where residents stole each other’s groceries from the community kitchen. Once, after making my go-to meal, corned beef hash and instant potatoes with the aftertaste of menthol lights, I returned to my room to find it broken into, a large bill and two nip bottles lifted from my top drawer, June Jordan’s Haruko/Love Poems left behind, unacceptable currency for purchasing weed or deli meat. For sure the exposed wiring in the ceilings, framing electrical outlets, reminded me of someone I longed (but was too afraid) to touch again, what with my penchant for self-sabotage, but there was Miss June, shouting in a poem what I could not bring myself to say:

YOUR BODY IS A LONG BLACK WING
YOUR BODY—

Whose body—mine? Hers? All the women we’ve loved between us, in secret and out loud? Haruko was published by High Risk Books when I was 13, more than a decade before I would read it and recognize undertones of seraphim light in my own skin. Currently, my worn, tea-stained copy is in storage, along with most of my books—space is an amazing commodity and almost impossible to find in the city without a trust fund. Tonight, the cats where I stay snag lightning bugs, swallow their fire whole, like the scene in Like Water for Chocolate where Pedro dies while he and Tita make love, and Tita, overcome with grief, devours matches. There is no light so distant and yet so close as the light of longing, to risk its rewards and also its devastation. In “Poem for Haruko,” Jordan expresses lyrical disbelief at her own desire to commit the memory of her gone lover to the page:

I never thought I’d keep a record of my pain
or happiness
like candles lighting the entire soft lace
of the air
around the full length of your hair/a shower
organized by God
in brown and auburn
undulations luminous like particles
of flame
But now I do...

All my life I’ve watched Black women who love babies and god with equal intensity resist the “burden” of romantic love and intimacy. There’s too much at stake, namely raising kids, often as single parents, to swap self-sacrifice for self-care misconstrued as unnecessary self-indulgence. Lord knows we can turn anything into a religion, including suppressing sexual desire (for the children, for the church).

It doesn’t help that Black folk have had a volatile relationship with English for centuries. Perhaps some of us have grown too suspicious to shape its words into lovely praise. But not Miss June who, in repeated fits of “lyrical delirium,” rushes toward the cliff of every line and jumps. When I hold Haruko, its velvety yellow and red jacket open and flipped to the first poem, I know I’m being taught a lesson in courage. I am learning to eat matches, to rip each one from the book and chew the red phosphorous tip. I am surrendering to their smolder. I am fashioning for myself a permanent aura of smoke.

Jeff T. Johnson

Annual



**December: C. D. Wright,
Deepstep Come Shining**
**A road trip for the end of the
year, on the edge of then and now.**
**A wallop when you need it. Don't
miss the full-text recording from July
16, 1999, online at PennSound.**
Deepstep, Baby. Deepstep.

Here’s an omnibus of books I (re)turn to, arranged in a calendar conflating seasons and years:

January: Juliana Spahr, Fuck You-Aloha! Love You

The ways these poems open up and extend the field (or parking lot) of the page, and run a stream of pronouns through these parts and into future works, has been a gift I’m always thanking Spahr for in my mind each time I write.

February: Rosmarie Waldrop, The Reproduction of Profiles

I had read prose poems before, and these were the first prose poems I ever read. Waldrop taught me to assemble and sing a thinking text: a book that draws you into its existence.

March: Erin Moure, My Beloved Wager

I wouldn’t be a teacher without this book, and I’d know a lot less about how to write an essay with my body.

April: William Carlos Williams, Spring and All

Poetics as process. I’ve been reading this semi-annually since I first encountered it in Volume I of The Collected Poems, which I read in Ron Loewensohn’s senior seminar on VWCW in 1995. The New Directions single-volume facsimile reproduction in 2011, with a terrific intro essay by C. D. Wright, was a rebirth.

May: Lisa Robertson, Occasional Work and Seven Walks From the Office for Soft Architecture

I return equally often to Robertson’s “Doubt and the History of Scaffolding,” which along with Rosmarie Waldrop’s “Alarms & Excursions” and Erin Moure’s

misconstrued as unnecessary self-indulgence. Lord knows we can turn anything into a religion, including suppressing sexual desire (for the children, for the church).

“The Anti-Anaesthetic” is my favorite and most nourishing poetics. How fortunate we are to have an entire volume of such wonders from Robertson, whose Nilling later adds several more gems.

June: Amiri Baraka, Wise, Why’s, Y’s

I’ve been carrying around Baraka’s selected poems volume Transbluesency, which concludes with a selection from Wise, Why’s, Y’s (sic) since 1995, and I found the Third World Press stand-alone edition online a few years ago while working on Trouble Songs: A Musicological Poetics. The poem “Wise 1” was a key reference I didn’t figure out how to write about until the end of that project (though Blues People, the poetics of blues he wrote as LeRoi Jones, was foundational to the opening section of Trouble Songs). Some poems you have to read for years and years before you can talk about them. Some poems will just knock you out forever.

July: Michael Palmer, Sun

One of the first books from this list that I read, after Joshua Clover referenced a line from it in an essay. He loaned me his copy with a note that said “here ya go—play safe!” and I knew I was dealing with some heavy shit. Here’s where I first became aware of book-length serenity in a contemporary context, though even in 1997, this book from ’88 was out of print and seemed like a lost treasure.

August: John Ashbery, Three Poems; Lyn Hejinian, The Cell; Nathaniel Mackey, From a Broken Bottle Traces of Perfume Still Emanate

These are books I have been reading for years without finishing, because they can’t be finished or I dole them out to myself, or anyway we don’t finish our favorite books; we just stop reading them. Then start again.

September: Claudia Rankine, Don’t Let Me Be Lonely

A book about America, and the recurrent problems with(in) America. This book will probably always be associated with 9/11 because it was an early, profound response to the world that bloomed and rotted in the wake of that event: “It strikes me that what the attack on the World Trade Center stole from us is our willingness to be complex. Or what the attack on the World Trade Center revealed to us is that we were never complex.”

October: Orlando White, Bone Light

This book taught me that letters are objects and bodies, skin and bones. It also taught me patience and care with language.

November: Tan Lin, Seven Controlled Vocabularies and Obituary 2004. The Joy of Cooking

“Text as ambient soundtrack?” The book taken apart and reimagined as hypermall. I’ve written about this book in detail elsewhere, and am due to read it again. Another great classroom text, for figuring out what a book is and can be.

December: C. D. Wright, Deepstep Come Shining

A road trip for the end of the year, on the edge of then and now. A wallop when you need it. Don’t miss the full-text recording from July 16, 1999, online at PennSound. Deepstep, Baby. Deepstep.

Eli Nadeau

existential (un)safety: Inger Christensen’s alphabet

in our despair we have made
a flowerless earth
sexless as chlorine

alphabet exists; a fallout shelter of a poem, translated by Susanna Nied, published by New Directions Books in the year 2000, originally in Danish, as alfabet, 1981 by Gyldendal.

Through this nacreous, Fibonacci account, Christensen and Nied draw meaning from contingency and wring from verse drops of certainty. The sections open like hands, calloused from scrubbing potatoes, bloodied by the sins of fusion; nuclear dreams. Hands innocent as baby birds curl into chambers; defenseless against accusation, imperialism, technology, time. Unarmed, momentarily, we reach a fragile space for thought between that which exists, and that which resists thinking.

This is an account. Place names, half-lives, lists, address a sensed and sensible ‘you’ — but it’s the ‘I’ who walks, writes, peels potatoes in the kitchen, sleeps in hotel rooms; thinks like dreams of anticipates death exists.

I imagine them, Christensen and Nied, holding the banality, the cruelty of this account. Imagine, by light of evening or morning, the scratch of a pen dipped in salty witness; knowing. Writer broken open by and opening to that which exists. Imagine the company of this lonely chain of tropes; names for things quilted, substantial, the loved and the dead and the dying — extant as names, atoms only. Ghosts of the once-animate; the collateral sacrifices of decisions, fallout.

There is something reassuring in the unhurried line, the obsession with form. Nied maintains the integrity of Christensen’s lachrymose Danish through assonance, consonance, cadence. There is comfort in the luminous movement of sense and contrast; cobalt and vanishing; sacred and heavy; deadly and vital.

Co-extant with the flora and fauna are chiseled lips of warning. Other names, elemental and logical; neologisms of a bygone day: hydrogen; dioxin; chromium; bromine remind us that once upon a time everything was, in the mouths of the upstart gods, new. But these, in their sparse and nominal brutality, tell different stories, modern, precise. How is one to exist with these sounds, each name held in steady alphabet, a holy and ancient nautilus curl of attention that is also new, and disposable? After all, we’re reminded: errors exist.

don’t panic: from the heart of the poem, this irony rises. From love exists; the middle of June, a carrying-over which is also November, evocative of neverending winter. But don’t panic — it’s just bracken’s own calendar, containing, uneasily, wakening snow, and ice crackling icily; the redundant sounds, alarming. We find a body dissolving, in salt, as it does — the story of memory’s; identity’s; childhood’s decay.

alphabet comingles things Bergson would dig: matter, affect, memory, time. As when calendars emerge, the days count back and forth. June, the sixteenth; twentieth, back to the sixteenth, June 26th. Morning, evening, mo(u)ning, mo(u)ning. The patterns of dis/order sooth and infect as they’re petaled down the page: apricot; Eniwetok; narwhal; 140,000 dead and / wounded in Hiroshima; given limits.

What safety in vowels, nouns, lists, accounts? What shelters from the crack of songbird into window, the report of a gun; a meltdown; a hurricane; climate event. What can be said when blood exists; patient, inevitable; pooling across, for example, a page.

alphabet is a gift to world, an other to silence, whiteness. An offering, aware of its muteness, composed of soot and snow.

There is no safety to be found in this poem. Its ohs, and ohs, its fricatives, and sibilant slips that send their signs to eyes and lips: there is no bunker here. But lips exist, and tongues. To speak the words; brave surgery. Through this excision, we receive as infection, a terrible knowledge.

So summoned, we come, and trembling we stay: together, apart, aroused, unhinged. We can’t shake the certainty of these lines in their unwavering radio signal; whispers, hollows, fruit trees, human skin.

There is no sanctuary; it does not exist.

i/j hastain



**I experienced production of
said pages as a wise mother
might simultaneously feel pride
in their offspring (“this came
from my body and through a
process of me pushing it out of
my body during which I tore”/ “I
am scarred by this beauty—not
me but come from me”) ...**

1. Force life through the random book:

Where—for so long it was bibliomancy with any book anywhere for what message/s could act themselves out in my hands—my hands which held open the sides (legs) of this book—I recall this process involved anyone from E. Pound to Dufay (music composer)—so—from the words “poured we libations unto each the dead” to some presence of “Ave maris stella” in fauxbourdon approach—the sense was sanctuary came from ‘the other side’—a bleed-through regardless of what I was using as a tool to access it. The library as a place of kink in relation to pursuit of sanctuary in anything I could possibly get my hands on therein. By this process, a child’s book could talk to me of my future Beloved as much as the most romantic of poets. The sense was I am responsible for finding meaning, sanctuary—and I was perfectly happy to instigate that by spreading what I was holding in my hands.

2. Bibliomancy on Gaia forms:

With the passing of time I began to get quite specific about the tool used to contact sanctuary. If more could come through uplift of the broken neck of a petal-scattered sunflower than could ever come from a book, I would work directly with that version of Gaia’s own body—still performing a kind of bibliomancy on the object/shape/ texture by softening eyes by will, allowing them to flicker as the brink seized with unforeseen life (light). This involvement had a sense of humility as holy. Loving what my hands came to surround. What was inherently there in a life-form? What hidden intelligence—and what could that intelligence communicate of a sense of safety (sense of safety) if I let it by getting out of its way? Cupping it in my hands was allowing it to be the center of the sense.

3. Pages as proof:

It began to be called of me (in dramatic ways from across the veil) I mediate (queer as verb) certain figures whose lives had had attributed them some form of historical charge. Jeanne d’Arc, Lucifer (and others)—and then, even beyond figures into edgery-populate Gaia forms. Rafflesia Arnoldii and Amorphophallus Titanum (corpse flowers) were two other dears whom I served in mediation manner—and while these calls to mediation were largely energetic, the beings who were being mediated wanted pages in their offspring (“this came from my body and through a process of me pushing it out of my body during which I tore”/ “I am scarred by this beauty—not me but come from me”)—and also a sense of awe at having had the opportunity to house a cosmic light which—due to its own will would eventually crest a bountiful shape of its very own. Opening my hands to let the signing sign (angel) free and into space.

4. Croning in creations (creatix agenda):

At this point I feel myself to be sitting on my rocker—window ajar, just so. Mediation pages above me in the crevasse inlet of the wooden boat that hangs on the wall above my head.

These beings whom I have mediated have created a desirable equilibrium within—made by saturating my thought-forms and cadence to the point of passion and peace balancing each other out. By this I have gotten in. This in—sacred site from which the sense of sanctuary is unconditional. Collaboration with beings/beingness from ‘the other side’ produced expansive enough ethics whereby I can now actually provide sanctuary—not only in pages but in body and thought-forms. Ultimately—something about being a provider of providence as sense of place—somatically similar to the effect healthy fats have on human vitality.

Philip X Levine’s Writes Movement for Survival

Phillip X Levine “feels putting meaning into one’s life is the first step to survival.”

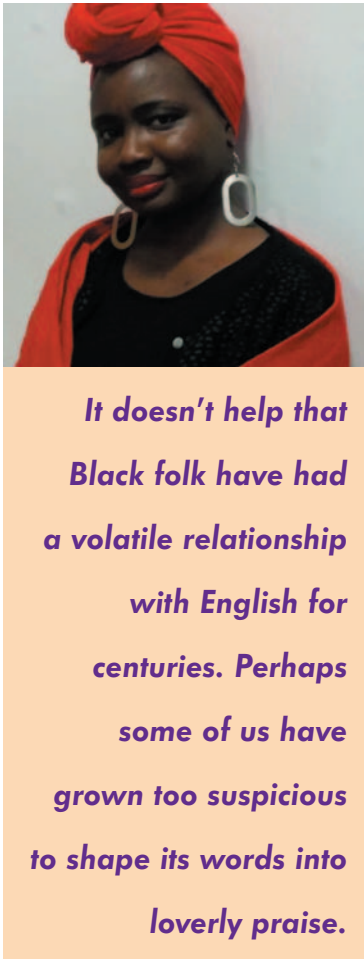
Some of these steps to survival, which Levine’s lines detail foot by foot, present movement as a motive. His poetry is full of angling and threading and arcing, whether it is two people sewing their faces together in “Thread,” or the day that “travels a long arc up and up and then back down again from middle” in “Soon.”

This movement is not only in the words. Levine’s vocal delivery can fly at a breathless pace or in sweet, slow heartbeats. His articulation is flawless, even in the stutters.

Levine occasionally practices “stream of anxiety,” as in when “all the people you’ve never met seem to know you because they keep phoning and though they never say anything you know that they don’t know you because they always mispronounce your name and when they tell you that there’s no annual fee you know that they’re lying, it’ll still take a lifetime to pay.” But it’s never anxiety as a crutch; it’s anxiety as a movement into beauty (“just run naked and almost without worry”), or, sometimes, its lack (“and you let it go at that, in fact, you let everything go, including all the things you ever dreamed of”).

Levine’s poetry maneuvers somewhere between surprising and obvious, always veering close enough to touch and feel. His variety and depth are strengths in and of themselves, but, what’s more, they call on us to keep moving. —Zack Reeves

Zack Reeves (M.F.A., The New School) is a Tulsa-based writer and editor, focusing on culture and the arts.”



**It doesn’t help that
Black folk have had
a volatile relationship
with English for
centuries. Perhaps
some of us have
grown too suspicious
to shape its words into
lovely praise.**



**This is an account. Place
names, half-lives, lists, address
a sensed and sensible ‘you’
— but it’s the ‘I’ who walks,
writes, peels potatoes in
the kitchen, sleeps in hotel
rooms; thinks like dreams of
anticipates death exists.**

Butterfly Eyepatches and Haunted Wall Clocks: The Films of Shuji Terayama at Anthology Film Archives

BY JOEL SCHLEMOWITZ

There is a strange, kindred notoriety between the obstacle-burdened genius, Orson Welles, and the iconoclastic Japanese film and theater director, Shuji Terayama. In 1938 a Halloween prank was beamed over the airwaves in the form of Welles’s adaptation of the work of another Wells, the radio play adaptation of “War of the Worlds.” Terayama’s feature film, “Emperor Tomato Ketchup” (1971), began also as a radio play fashioned in a similar hoax-like mold: a successful putsch has taken place wherein the children have seized power from the adults and rule over their elders in merciless, militant autocracy. Quizzical listeners tuning in would hear the authoritarian proclamations of the juvenile dictator. While this scenario seems to have found a gloomy regurgitation in our own political scene of today, with an autocratic-minded, petulant, infantile potentate tweeting his screed, the work also reflects, in fun-house mirror fashion, the chaotic political scene in Japan after what was known as the “right turn” taken in U.S. and Japanese relations. The term refers to the postwar period in Japan when the cold war alliances and enmities, and the actual shooting wars fought in nearby Korea and Vietnam, steadily eroded the defeated country’s pacifist and progressive fresh start.

An impressive retrospective of Terayama’s films will take place in New York this month. Two of Terayama’s expanded cinema works began the series at the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center at The Graduate Center, CUNY (365 Fifth Ave., in Midtown), followed by a comprehensive retrospective of this cinematic work at Anthology Film Archives (32 East 2nd St., in the East Village), including his feature films – some rarely seen in the U.S. – with the sharply cynical coming-of-age story “Throw Away Your Books, Rally in the Streets” (1971) and the more strange and wistful version of the bildungsroman in “Pastoral Hide and Seek” (1974). Four programs of the shorter cinematic works took place at Anthology.

The Terayama oeuvre ranges from the more straightforward narrative feature film in the form of “Throw Away Your Books, Rally in the Streets” (1971) to the Decadent-tinged hermetic short films, to the works seeming to deconstruct the film itself. There are scenes in what appear to be post-apocalyptic bordellos draped in silk and swathed in sallow-colored light. Other films are shot in stark black and white in a landscape of ruined buildings, an all too recognizable sight for those, like Terayama, coming of age during the Second World War.

Actors are smeared with makeup resembling the whiteface of the Japanese stage, but somehow imperfect and smudged, as if the performers were only half in character. The prim, high collared jackets of school uniforms are worn by some, while others lie back on Western-style velvet divans in semi or complete undress. The figure of the mother holds an old-fashioned, wooden wall-clock cradled in her arms. She wanders desolate streets in “The Cage” (1964) carrying the clock, later thrown into the air, smashing into pieces on the pavement. The mother and the clock reappear in the feature film “Pastoral Hide and Seek” (1974), the clock now hanging high on the wall, unable to keep time, the bell malfunctioning so that it is continually ringing, but treated with reverence, almost as if it were an ever-chiming household shrine.

In the short films “The Labyrinth Tale” (1975) and “The Reading Machine” (1977) characters wear the Occidental costumes of the turn of the century, the bowler hats, houndstooth suits, and black crepe tea dresses fashionable during Japan’s Meiji era, in addition to the indispensable white face makeup. The use of trompe-l’œil is employed in “The Labyrinth Tale,” and also “The Woman with Two Heads” (1977). The idée fixe of “The Labyrinth Tale” takes the form of a paneled door within a wooden frame, carried through the streets by the bowler-hatted lead character, and set in the center of the frame. It opens to reveal a passage illusionary and imagined, sometimes with a painted backdrop within giving the impression of portal into another time and space. The film, like “The Cage,” has been shot in black and white and given a tint in the printing, a high-contrast blend of blank white highlights and blue-green shadows. In a desolate rural field the door opens to reveal a nude woman in disheveled wig awkwardly dancing in place, the camera’s iris slowly closing and opening to shift the scene into a snow blanket of white overexposure. In “The Woman with Two Heads” characters include a girl playing with a stick and hoop, and a couple together in bed, up against a white wall, their shadows cast on the surface. But the shadows begin to lead their own lives, sometimes, in a moment of illusionary rupture, to reveal themselves to be painted on the door in smoky grays, the table, the wall, rather than cast by the people themselves. The painted shadows bear an unsettling resemblance to the silhouettes outlined in ash left behind by the vaporized victims of Hiroshima.

The short film “Butterfly Dress Pledge” (1974) also uses silhouette, not cast through lighting or painted on the wall, but created through printing of film onto of film at the lab, the shadows forming a layer seeming to be in front of the action on the screen. The white-faced protagonist is seen in schoolboy uniform, with butterfly eyepatch, and the shadows of a sadomasochistic reverie take place in some obscure foreground plane of action. Other films use this layering of tableaux vivant and foreground elements through video green screen studio effects: “A Tale of Smallpox” (1975), “Les Chants de Maldoror” (1977), and “Father” (1977). In this hybrid image melding method a snail crawls across the screen or text is written against the background tableaux by a hand with ink and brush. Some of these works, composed of a series of extended takes staged before the camera, echo with recurring motifs: ripped up photographs of men in military uniform, nude women in white makeup look out from the screen with mocking smiles, a sandy costal landscape provides the final tableaux, with waves coming in on the shore.

Terayama was poet, theater director and playwright, filmmaker, photographer, but an aesthetic continuity links one form of his work to another. The logo used by Terayama as the lead-in to many of his films depicts silhouette of the figure of a man standing within a Leonardo-like flying machine, the combination of aspiration and hopeless impracticality at the heart of his artistic paradigm. A curious contraption, resembling a Steampunk version of an exercise bicycle, appears in “The Reading Machine.” The as the seated figure slowly pedals wires and wheels transfer the action to eventually turn the pages of a book mounted on a reading stand.

While Terayama’s penchant for the outrageous, culminates in the strange, orgiastic moments within Emperor Tomato Ketchup (1971), his boundary-pushing penchant can be also found in work deconstructing the medium itself. In Laura (1974) – showing as part of this retrospective at the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center at The Graduate Center, CUNY –three sinister women in the obligatory theatrical whiteface, unkempt hair, and dressed in black slips, and first seen taking bites from a raw fish, look out from the screen and speak, as if they can see the audience within the movie theater:

“There’s the type who’ve just bought and 8mm or 16mm camera. Do they just copy what they see? They’re curious what other guys have made. That’s why some guys come. Other guys think ‘avant-garde’ means a naked lady. I’ll give you a peek if you like. That’s what some of them want. We get pervy Peeping Tom businessmen too. And aspiring literary critics.”

Then, in a stunt that seems like it could have been conceived by the master of gimmick cinema, William H. Castle, the mischief-minded Terayama has planted an actor in the audience who responds to the women’s sarcasm and cajoling by standing up from his seat, walking up to the screen and bursting through into the movie where he is stripped and tormented by his enticers. The upcoming

New York screening boasts an appearance by the actor, now older, but, through a seeming Faustian transformation, regaining his youthful appearance as he enters the screen, transported back to 1974 when the scene was filmed.

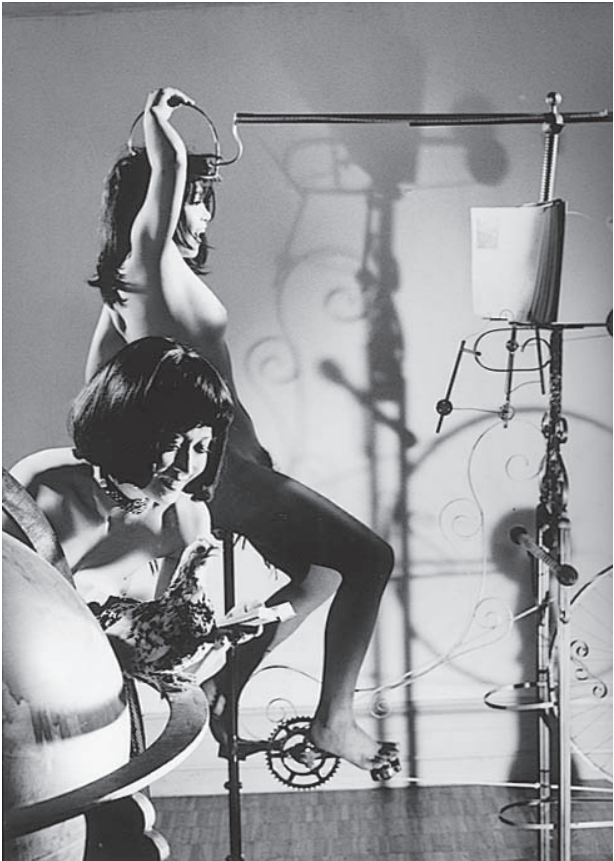
When Terayama was asked by Image Forum in Tokyo to contribute to a screening of works limited to three minutes of screen time he circumvented this constraint to triple this by shooting three rolls of film, projected as a triptych, entitled “Young Persons Guide to the Cinema” (1974) in droll allusion to benevolent condescension of Benjamin Britten’s instructive work for the concert hall, “The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra.” The three images are shot in black and white but printed by the lab in tints, one screen pink, the other green, and the third a slightly purplish ultramarine blue. The film

culminates in a sequence where rivulets of streaming piss partially obscure the screen, shot safely from behind a sheet of glass.

The feature length “Throw Away Your Books, Rally in the Streets” (1971) seems a departure from the signature Terayama style, set in the run-down city outskirts amid grimy, rusty-shuttered Showa-era buildings, patchwork backstreets of cement, weeds, and tram lines. The film chronicles the dysfunctional family life of a young man and his sister, bringing to light the savage bullying and masochistic need to be accepted by one’s sadistic schoolmates. The subsequent coming of age film, “Pastoral Hide and Seek” (1974), is far more strange and intriguing. Summed up by the Anthology Film Archives program notes with the epithet: “autobiography as surrealist phantasmagoria,” the film includes a Greek chorus of the little old ladies of the country village in black shawls, white face-paint, and all bedecked in matching square eyepatches. At a traveling circus, filmed with candy-colored filters on the camera lens, an inflatable “fat lady” has her husband and various paramours attend to the needs of her rubber suit with a bicycle pump. A prospective romance simmers between the awkward 15-year-old protagonist in schoolboy uniform and the unhappily married woman next door, with the clock-venerating mother as obstacle to the young man’s desires. Impatient for the accoutrements of adulthood he asks his mother if she could buy him a wristwatch, and she chides him for wanting to take “time” around with him when there is a perfectly good clock on the wall. The clock has not stopped its infernal chiming.

The full schedule can be found on the Anthology Film Archives website at: http://anthologyfilmarchives.org/film_screenings/series/48215

http://anthologyfilmarchives.org/film_screenings/series/48215
<http://thesegalcenter.org/event/shuji-terayamas/>



The Reading Machine (1977) Shuji Terayama.

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While Terayama’s penchant for the outrageous, culminates in the strange, orgiastic moments within Emperor Tomato Ketchup (1971), his boundary-pushing penchant can be also found in work deconstructing the medium itself.



John M. Bennett
Columbus, Ohio
never wetter never drier

deep moon deter
gent nor a
sw allowed s lab
of gran ite
hub of end
.end the offal
dock broke
the shore a
fish thinks in

John J. Trause
Wood-Ridge, N.J.
*Thoughts for the
End of September*



“ ... and the reapers reap’d,
And the sun fell, and all the land was dark.”

Alfred Lord Tennyson, Dora

When autumn rears his horrid head
And reigns over the newly dead,
I see a world not like the world
I see in lucid spring.
I see the fornicating leaves
Like agitated bumblebees
In death pangs move about a tree
Down from my darkening cell.
I now see Lambert’s tower tall
Dilapidating in its fall
With sinful stones self-casting down
To valleys echo-filled.
I see the statue in the park,
The Indian statue, black and stark,
Puff, puff upon a cigarette
On Main St., Hackensack.
I see that lady kick up high
Her leg to hubby standing by
Upon the top step leading to
The orthodontist’s door.
I still sense Mommy at my side,
Or Grandma Edna on a ride—
Yes, at the wheel in someone’s car:
I am the passenger.
Last night I saw her driving me—
Yes, last night, unbelievably,
She drove me, though she’s dead for years,
Back home with her again.
She never drove when yet alive,
But last night on our troubled drive
I saw her, though in sepia,
Drive next to me in peace.
At first I did not know her well,
Then slowly did my memory tell
That it was she here next to me:
A resurrection?
I see the shades of withered friends
Exchange their forms, then back again;
I see them dwelling in a state
Of choking apathy.
I see an old man walk the street
With two young girls with tiring feet;
They follow that same course each week
On Main St., Hackensack.
I see a kitchen, small and stark,
In agitation in the dark;
A body cannot rest in here
When family comes to call.
I see the present well enough
And of the past its dim, gray stuff,
But of the future, what about
A view of what’s to come?
I see myself in brighter light:
My cell grows darker as the night
Portrays me as a fading life
By Caravaggio



Dennis LeRoy Kangalee
Greenpoint Brooklyn
For a Second I thought I Was Mahler

Stepping back in the room, I caught myself
Frozen
Like a cat burglar who had lost his cool
And for a second I thought I was Mahler –
Perhaps it was my high forehead
And my reversed sloped hair
As if my roots were growing out of the crown of my head and up backwards
Towards the sun (or the Aliens who had neglected me)
I was disappointed to not have looked like Prince
But maybe that’s the price you pay
For living past the age you wanted to die at
I thought I knew that profile anywhere, having seen it stretched across the
banner of an old friend’s door
He was a classical musician
and loved all things sad
He would play Elgar on a piano
and insist that it sounded better without an orchestra,
We traded stories of madness and caught each other once again
years later when we both did our stint at Paine Whitney
Our vitals were low, we were anemic, we were angry, we were young
And once when I stepped into the sun, my wife cried
And when I asked her why
She said I reminded her of something she had forgotten about in her heart
And while I was hoping it might have been Prince or some rock ‘n roll
revolt
That jarred her memory –
It was the moving shadow around my head, landing into the new apartment
we
had just rented –
And I cursed myself as I heard our new neighbor jerking off his new leaf
blower
in a coarse Sunset Park afternoon up on the highest hill of Brooklyn where
some
Rich and poor are now living closer and closer –
I heard the faint notes of a symphony spilling out of a broken heart.
*

Poetry Bios

John M. Bennett (<http://www.johnmbennett.net/>) is the author of numerous books of poetry, vispo, and other writings, and the proprietor of Luna Bisonte Productions. Alysia Peyton photo.
Dennis LeRoy Kangalee (<https://dennisleroykangalee.wordpress.com/>) is a filmmaker and poet living in Brooklyn. **John J. Trause** (<http://www.johnjtrause.com/>) works as the director of Oradell Public Library. Recent books include *Picture This: For Your Eyes and Ears* (Dos Madres Press) and *Exercises in High Treason* (great weather for MEDIA).

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Tom Bovo

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Before I was born, my father was in the Army. While he was serving in the Korean War, my father put some cash in an envelope and mailed it to a US Army Post Exchange in Japan. In return, he received a camera by Army postal service. When I was young, my father gave me that camera. Aside from crayons and pencils, that camera was the first tool I remember using to create images—it was also the first time I was conscious of using a tool to create images.

Early stylistic influences

In college I studied in the studio art program at Columbia University with important established artists in New York. Most important for me was Andre Racz who taught drawing, and was friend and mentor to a small group of us. He spent time with me away from the academic setting to discuss art as seeing, bringing me to his home and studio in Demerest, NJ where we could talk and compare our unique visions. He used art and teaching to help learn about ourselves. At Atelier 17 in New York, his prints could be described as being surrealist or expressionist, and later his matured style was more calmly representational and expressive. He is the source of the directness I feel for arriving at an image.

Also at Columbia was painter David Lund, identified as being of the New York School of abstract expressionism, he taught painting and took an exceptional interest in technique and composition, encouraging my pursuit of personal themes. David revealed the wonders of the use of color, and texture, two ideas I am aware of in my own work.

Robert Blackburn taught printmaking at Columbia, which involved the discipline of process—he was especially supportive and encouraging of my experimentation in monoprints. Monoprints is close to drawing in that it can create unique images, but also has aspects of photography in that you can almost create multiple variations of a single image idea. Printmaking requires discipline in the process, but a unique and vibrant image is the result of that process. In a way I use the digital processes of modern photography, with the ability to insert the hand of the artist into the product, to create prints.

The photographer makes the image

This mixture of influences, from abstract expressionist and surrealist, the more matured objective visions of the teachers I encountered at Columbia, and the art of the 70's and 80's form the primordial creative soup from which I come. Although the tools are secondary to the vision, I keep returning to the camera as a primary tool and medium of choice, especially now that digital imaging opens a whole range of possibilities to create images.

My images are not accidents—the camera does not reveal things that do not exist, but can reveal the things we filter out when looking directly at them. As a tool, it reveals—street reflections in a window, or an urban landscape reflected in the glass of a building. Using the images that a photograph creates is idealism and romanticism, form and color and profundity all wrapped up together. There are visual patterns, textures, and colors at play, and the ironies of the representational forms. At the same time, I am immersed in and part this process, so that what comes out of what I do is no different than who I am.

I control all of the creative aspects involved in my work, from the initial exposure to the final printed piece. My work rendered as giclée prints from high resolution files using acid free papers.



untitled #1, 15" x 20".



untitled #3, 22" x 30".



untitled #5, 22" x 30".

Personal, Narrative, Mysterious—Pinkerton/Black

BY R. BROOKES MCKENZIE

IN DEPTH

Pinkerton/Black
How's The Weather Over There?
<https://pinkertonblack.bandcamp.com/album/how-the-weather-over-there>

Despite their inexplicable refusal to call themselves Pink and Black, this is a pretty fantastic record. Henry Black’s solo work to date has been marked by a striking resemblance to early Bob Dylan, and there’s still a little bit of that influence lingering, but the addition of Riley Pinkerton to his act has made it sound more like an alternate universe version of Bob Dylan in which he was not too insecure to write and sing with Joan Baez, and also in which Joan sounded more like a cross between Jeannie C. Riley and Roseanne Cash. It’s worth mentioning the recording quality, which is stellar, and the engineering/production, which is both crystal clear and gorgeously atmospheric, as it was all done by Black himself. (Full disclosure: my band will be doing our next record with Henry Black recording and engineering.)

But let’s talk about the songs. “Nothing Ever Is” is a meditation on family and how the narrator’s mother set the tone for her romantic relationships. The music is slow and yet uplifting despite the bitter lyrics: “Mama don’t you see / I’ve never wanted what I need / and maybe because I’m dramatic / where I’m bruised I’d rather bleed / to stain the hands of any man / who dares to try to play for keeps / or set the speed”. The guitar solo is positively Beatlesque. I especially like the rise and fall of the extended vocal hold on the end of each line.



This and Like The Lady sums up Pinkerton-Black in nine minutes of understated, shabby majesty, like the crushed velvet on a thrift-store sofa, you sense that it has stories to tell and you might not be able to hear them all, but that’s okay, you can feel their power from beyond the grave.

“Weeping Willow” is a classic political ballad with sweeping Spanish-style guitar underpinnings and harmonies throughout. One of the things I like about these kids (who are both in their early twenties) is their strong sense of history and folk tradition. This music sounds like it could have been made fifty years ago. I find this completely fascinating. The lyrics are pretty pointed: “now I ask the private prisons / why they pay the county guard / to follow on the chain gang / that they pay in metal bars / well there’s only so much freedom, they say / and they pissed it all away / they should find a better lawyer / or be born a different race”.

“In His Image” is a deeply personal song which Riley says (when introducing it live) is about her “daddy issues”. Basically it is about how hard it is to strongly resemble her father, who seems to have let the family (in general) and her mother (in particular) down. Her private pain is well-articulated and moving: “well I try to be good / where he turned away / but it’s hard when my mother / alone in bed lays / and she looks on at me / with that distant gaze / no I don’t want to look like him today”. The baby Dylan sound is pronounced here - the guitar figure irresistibly conjures up “To Ramona” - but it’s a strong offering nonetheless.

“Looked Like Eve” is a more mystical song about a female figure who seems to be both mother and lover, goddess and nymph. Some lines seem like personal in-jokes or references but their very mystery makes it intriguing. Strong songwriting and stirring vocal harmonies by Riley (Henry sings lead) carry it along nicely. I also like the bit of breaking the fourth wall with the little nod “and now I know what those songs were about / there’s one about the highway / that Southern boy goes down / maybe finds himself a lady / that’s country music for you / but it doesn’t seem like lying / when you’re looking back at me”. I don’t entirely understand what’s going on in this line, but I like it: “and maybe I’m your Joni darling / always a step behind your waist and smiling / trying harder to remember how / to seem like me”. There’s a sense of secular country-folk hymnal here that is really endearing. The classic little bluesy turnaround/pickup before each verse is like the musical version of a nudge-nudge-wink-wink.

“Like The Lady” is another Riley number, and it’s stunning. A five minute short story with a beginning, middle and end, and if the characters are slightly blurred, it only adds to the intrigue, like a family photograph gone foggy with age. The lyrics are wonderful: “You could volley blame, but for the score you’d have to ask her / you’ve never known a better woman, could you have been a bigger bastard / oh why bother fixing what was broken long ago” and “I just got word that she’s got cancer / I know that I should call but I’m half-afraid she’ll answer / don’t know how I’ll say it’ll be all right when I don’t know”. This is powerful, emotionally mature songwriting, beautifully sung. I will leave the brilliant little twist with the chorus - which reveals the meaning behind the title - for the listener to discover for him or her self. I have to give a shout-out to Henry’s fantastic electric guitar playing and mixing here - the spacey, echoing reverb and left-right panning makes it a ghostly counterpoint that weaves in and out of the song, adding so much texture and emotion. It reminds me of the gorgeous Palace Music (Will Oldham) song “West Palm Beach”, with the same kind of haunted, atmospheric beauty underscoring such melancholy sadness. The song wouldn’t be the same without it.

Finally we come to “The Other Side,” which is a Henry song that is at once moving and mysterious. The long lines with their a / a / b / c / c / b rhyme scheme sweep the listener forward into a world where nothing quite adds up but you’re drawn in to the mystery like the X-Files in a song and then the magnificent chorus unwinds into a series of close harmony runs that almost feels like a

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&
the Righteous Ghost

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spiderdust

LW ⚡ RG

NIGHT OWLS

“sunshine goth”

“what if Soundgarden were in the Nightmare Before Christmas?”