



FEATURE INTERVIEW WITH BERNADETTE MAYER BY DEBORAH POE

+New work from: Kevin Varrone

Linda Russo

Julia Bloch

Stephanie Anderson

Stan Mir

& more



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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Reader:

Visiting the geography of this 9th issue of Fact-Simile, we are struck by the way in which each of the writers within sharpens our vision to landscape close at hand (*through linen / perhaps // or a window through / a dandelion thrown / in a mown row*) and in doing, actually points out to us that which is beyond: the noiseless and fleeting in our consciousness, and the ways in which this subtle knowing shapes our actions: *Near earth asteroids remind me that we're a small, coldwater planet without a plan. // Thus I replace all of the mirrors in my house with mountain ranges of / aluminum foil.*

What is wilderness and how does it manifest? What divides us from it? *What delineations keep us / Keeping / What are our borders of division?* Our senses help create and identify possible borders, *how everything's // divisible by color.* We are pushed further, toward an analysis of perceiver, perceived and the act of perception, into the blurred borders between: *What distinctions // (do we make) // How did you get in.* Wilderness can be anything outside.

Perception and engagement are acts of consumption. We perceive "wilderness," take on its elements and it becomes us. It is in our nature to consume and be consumed; what is moving through what. *Form // is not distinct / from condition.* So how to determine the border? *Together in our unconscious geographies / I'm nobody you know but now distance / binds us.* The borders blur continuous. *But [the spirit] differs / from the body // in one important / respect: // it is a fixed point / whereby // we may measure / our departure.*

Who then, are we in this consumable, changing wilderness? *You can't feel it, thick with the efforts of your life, but the infinite is shifting.* Throughout this issue, that shift occurs by language, by line, by word. *By dissimulation. This language / did not create this concrete.* We hereby invite you to widen your perception, your language until there is no more border. *More like nature / poetry can't remove us from feeling. Our language determines degrees of closeness.*

Being unremoved, finding your point amongst a new set of coordinates, all consuming and being consumed. Recalculate. *Transit and reevaluation. This is the / work right now, to look.* To take in all the wilderness that becomes us.

Happy Reading,

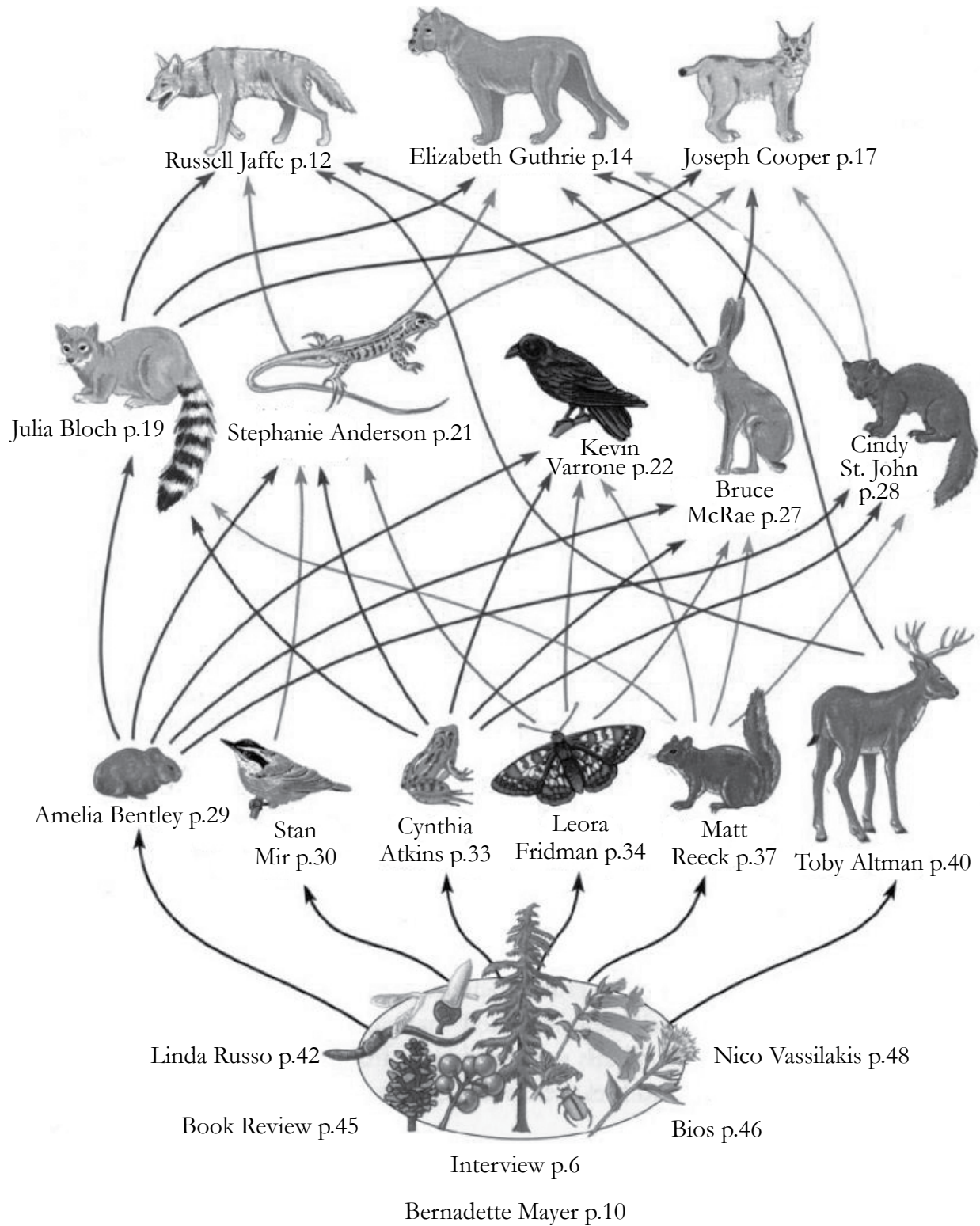
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The Editors

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To Go With The Free Things Everybody Else Has Too, Like Hummingbirds' Nests

an Interview with **BERNADETTE MAYER**

by Deborah Poe

We started this interview by my sending 20 questions to Bernadette. Bernadette typed the answers and mailed them to me. Based on her answers, I created additional questions, which we discussed in her garden—among Cosmos, chives, mint, and basil—on September 7th, 2013 at her and Philip Good's house in East Nassau, New York. I videoed and transcribed those questions in their guest bedroom. Later Bernadette sent additional thoughts, which were added to the interview at Karl Bode's and my house in the Hudson Valley

Deborah Poe: What are your best two lines of poetry ever?

Bernadette Mayer: Best lines of poetry: I could spend hours on this.

Hawthorne baby's still deeply asleep

&

More kisses than there's corn in August's field (translation, from Catullus)

DP: One of the things I love about your writing is the way in which you put philosophical inquiry and social critique into contact with the quotidian. Do you feel like this is something that occurs naturally on the page, while you are writing? Or do you find yourself pushing your writing forward purposefully with such connections? Also, do you think writing is a political act? Or, do you consider yourself a political writer? Why or why not?

BM: These two questions are all related for me. I think my obsession with the daily is quite political. In fact it is everything—all the -al words.

DP: I don't necessarily believe that poetry is a revolutionary act. Could you talk a little bit more about your obsession with the daily being quite political, and how you might relate that to the use of poetry or language as revolutionary act?

BM: Not that this proves that poetry is a revolutionary act, but the obsession with local history, local information, and daily news in local people's daily lives is basically revolutionary. If every neighborhood had a poet...Can you imagine? And, for instance, if every neighborhood had a radio station, it would be truly great. So when you went through these small towns, you'd suddenly be hearing the small town's radio stations. And that's what I'm talking about.

DP: Who have been your creative inspirations over your career?

BM: Catullus, Hawthorne, Gertrude Stein, Einstein, Wittgenstein, John Lilly (dolphin guy). Figs and raspberries are my inspirations now.

DP: Did you ever have, or want, a mentor of some kind?

BM: Dear Deborah, will you be my mentor? Love, Bernadette

I guess David Rubinfine was a sort of mentor about psychoanalysis, and Hector¹ taught me by example to wear the same clothes inside as out.

DP: What image do you think of first when you think of death (the concept, yours, or anyone else's)?

BM: When I think of death, I think of those big freezers that need generators to fuel them. I have more death stories than you can imagine.

Having my childhood was like being in a war; I have PTSD. LET'S NOT DELVE INTO IT.

DP: In an interview with Ann Rower, you consider "words as bricks or windows...poetry as visual and perhaps lacking in traditional meaning."² This seems to me to look at language, and poetry work, in a particularly spatial, or spatially oriented way. Do you find yourself driven by this idea of words as bricks or windows? If not, what do you think changed in the way that you perceive or view language?

BM: I've always found it useful to think of words as bricks. There's a scrabble-type game with words on cubes (Boggle?). You could put a word on a brick and throw

¹ Phil and Bernadette's dog that died the year before last.

² Mayer, Bernadette. Interview with Ann Rower. *Bench Press Series on Art* (Bench Press, 1985), October 18, 1984.



it through a window! But words *as* windows, I don't know. So you can see through them, really interested in what's on the other side, so you can write about it? Fascinating. Or, the word as a bricked-up window, a discovered window. We discovered a window in this house once. It was covered-over to save on heat. A good title: the leaking window, the cold window, writing in frost on windows.

The spatial thing is I think a form of synesthesia, where words seem to have shapes, usually receding at the end, like S's look like ?s

I think more of individual letters as blocks: words as landscapes or fields with hills.

Recently the guy who bought the field/lawn, dug into the earth to make himself a path to his own private little park on the Kinderhook creek bank.³ What he does there is drive one of his vehicles. The earth here is gouged; maybe he's looking for more money. As a writer, I like to go with the free things everybody else has too, like hummingbirds' nests.

DP: How do you view the "I" in your work? Whose voice is this?

BM: The I in my work is i or I; otherwise it'd be a lot of trouble, n'est-ce pas?

I always thought the voice in one's poems was you. Otherwise you'd be writing something else. (I typed otherside instead of otherwise).

I've just been reading Michael Ruby's

³ Someone recently bought the tract of land between the confluence of the Kinderhook and Tsatasawassa Creeks, Bernadette and Phil's house, and a strip of forested land that Bernadette owns. He's been pretty terrible about "trespassing" and doesn't even want them swimming at the confluence of the creeks anymore.

American Songbook. This idea of not mixing together the writer of the poem with the person who is the writer of the poem is like saying there shouldn't be any synesthesia. It's arbitrary and makes things much less interesting. In my club (or cult) we're taking two stands: one against

In my club (or cult) we're taking two stands: one against power mowing and one against the person who writes your poems not being the you of your everyday life.

power mowing and one against the person who writes your poems not being the you of your everyday life. When teachers tell students to find their voice and stick with it, the teachers are forgetting that we poets are not trying to succeed like an ad woman. We can do whatever we want, including, radically, actually being the author of the poems while occasionally waxing dramatic-monologue-ish, if you will. You can't mess with evolution; otherwise, butterflies will collide with flowers, misjudging their distances.

When you write a novel you have to remember if the main character's eyes are blue or brown. Wouldn't it be easier if they were always rainbows? Sometimes I'm sorry Aristotle was ever born.

DP: What do you think is some of the most exciting writing right now that works through issues of race, class, and/or gender?

BM: Gay anarchist poet and communalist, Paul Goodman. Though I don't like writing usually that's about something.

DP: Can you talk a little bit about why that is?

BM: It just seems to me that poetry doesn't have to or shouldn't express

an opinion. Like "I think it's great that people are gay." That's kind of weak.

DP: I guess I'm thinking about how much I appreciate work in the world with something at stake. Is it not poetry's place to talk about these things like racism and homophobia?

BM: I mean as a poet somebody might ask your opinion, and you would express your opinion. But it wouldn't necessarily be overtly expressed in

your poems. For instance, when the airplanes hijacked drove into the World Trade Center towers, I was living in New York City. A lot of people called me up and asked me if I had written my World Trade Center poem yet. And I was a little bit aghast. I could never write that poem. My friend called and said "we should definitely get even with those people who hijacked the planes." And I said, "I think you've been reading your Old Testament too much."

[Laughs]

So, I mean, I don't know. I've never written a World Trade Center poem. If someone wants my opinion on some matter, I'd be happy to tell them. I think it's weird to expect poetry to express an opinion.

DP: What is a canonical — or widely admired — book of 20th-century poetry that you do not like? What is it about that book that you don't like?

BM: I'm skipping this one. But did you know that the original title to *The Wasteland* was *He Do the Police in Different Voices*?

DP: I did not. That's so great. Let's talk about other fields of study or other genres by which you have been influenced.

BM: Other fields that have influenced me are anthropology, philosophy, physics, geology lately, paleontology, and library science.

DP: Why library science? I have a guess, but I want to hear it from you.

BM: Because when I go to the library, I like to be able to find what I'm looking for. So I'm a student of library science.

DP: So it's the cataloguing, indexing.

BM: Yes. Numbers.

DP: What topics in the sciences most interest you right now, and why do you think that/those topic(s) interest you?

BM: I'm doing geology now, but I've barely scratched the surface (ha ha, get it?). I'm studying it because I need something great that's full of new words (oolitic!) to think about.

DP: What would the ideal neutrino poem look like, if you could paint the poem on a canvas?

BM: The ideal neutrino poem would be painted by Remedios Varo, but Kandinsky's *Bright Lucidity* will have to do.

DP: What is it about Remedios Varo's work that you love so much?

BM: Oh, [laughs]. Well, interestingly, to be in the presence of her paintings, I have never experienced paintings as strongly as I did when I saw her work. Like how different it was to be in the paintings' presence as opposed to seeing them in a book. And because she's painting about physics. I find that fascinating. And I like her style. And there's something magical about her paintings, which I think she'd be the last person to deny [laughs].

DP: Yes, I think so too. I need to get to Mexico, so I can see that work. I've never seen her work in person.

BM: I saw it in Chicago.

DP: When it was traveling, right?

BM: Yes.

DP: What excited you most about interviewing the Helens of Troy, New York, and writing the subsequent

book *Helens of Troy*?

BM: I was most excited by turning their words into poems. Maybe I could have a new career. One Helen said to me: "there's not many people who'd be interested in you because of your name."

DP: [Laughs]. Speaking of turning words into poems, what craftsperson would you liken your process to? A bricklayer? A carpenter?

BM: I guess a carpenter is what I always think of. Is that mint I smell?

DP: Yes, I smelled it when I was standing here earlier. It's below the chair here.

BM: No, I always think of a carpenter. I don't mean that in any religious way [laughs].

If someone wants my opinion on some matter, I'd be happy to tell them. I think it's weird to expect poetry to express an opinion.

DP: You're not going to start proselytizing in your garden right now?

BM: No.

DP: I see that you are embarking on a second city of Troy for your *Helens of Troy* (New Directions 2013) project in Missouri. What would you like to do the same and/or differently from your work in New York?

BM: I'd like to get a new camera, but I won't be able to. Gerard Malanga told me he keeps taking pictures with his non-digital camera because he knows how to use it. I've never mastered the digital form. No matter what you do there's too much light where you don't expect it. I've never been into pictures with a purpose plus I hate gadgets.

DP: Grace a Cary Kittner, I have been visualizing friendships in a metaphorical way as this elaborate digital tapestry. Pieces of the tapestry become brighter and dimmer. Some pieces of the tapestry fly off [laughs]. Pieces of the tapestry recede, get closer. What metaphor do you think of when you think of friendships? And/or, how important are friendships for your work?

BM: As I told you, I have analog friendships. So I hope you'll be my friend, even if I don't use the computer.

interview continued on page 43

BERNADETTE MAYER

The Ballad of Theodore*

I saw my father
and then he was here
and dressed in a suit
he asked for a beer

I hadn't seen him
alive since 1957
dead I often see him
once in a while

He was all too calm
he was like a businessman
I got him a Moosehead
from the grocery next door

He'd walked into our school
daring and dead
"I haven't talked to you in centuries"
"How good to see you," I said

He put on the dead of a power animal
this time it was the tall giraffe
my father then wore a longer cloak
& I was shaking hands with his hoof,
no kidding

It was quite a good time we had
he'd doffed the clothing of his absence
& no dead man is scared of being dead
& most of the living are full of this,
his form of innocence

We conversed, it wasn't startling
I was twelve when he died
his new disguises were a method
to let particular animals as grownups confide

He foreswore the walls of the school
and that's where I lost him
no trick of time bemoaned his anxious fate
(I'm only fooling)

We drove cars backward
 ate acacia leaves, then
 made witty conversation
 wore bathing suits & swam together again

I lost him in the dream's sudden regular twist
 like he was an aristocratic woman
 going from supper to a game of whist
 instead of what he really was-an electrician
 who loved *Frankenstein*

I saw my father Theodore
 & then he was there
 a vegetarian ruminant silent giraffe
 full of his new & current perfect past

All dressed in a suit as if quite dead
 but only at first, then as mammal animal
 he asked me for a beer, he said
 "Here death is not emotional"

RUSSELL JAFFE

Accidental Nexus Worship

I like fast rides. I deserve sexy texts
of you. I'll be.

You're something.
Near earth asteroids remind me that we're a small, coldwater planet without a plan.

Thus I replace all of the mirrors in my house with mountain ranges of
aluminum foil. I replace your body's next unknown curve with plastic individual sandwich bags.

I replace my reflective iPhone and iPod screens
with the wet snow shoe depressions in the park that fill with coldwater.

Cold void, O I am worth what want.
I want to be an object of worship thus,

I tell you. I spent the holidays on my bottom in the snow with my legs. Got dark some.
While I was sexting you this tunnel became a hole.

But the hole is now a wormhole.
And this tear in reality that will swallow us asunder is happening while you're out of town.

All this is happening in lie detector peaks and valleys of the communication pocket array
of the universe.

Which is cold and empty. Check your phone, for I am texting you.
By the way, you are a mirror in front of and behind me.

We tell us in retrograde cascade like a cotton candy in the snow. We tell it omnilaterally.
We tell it tunnel of love. We tell it fat snow parking lot lines like splayed leg figuring.

We tell it wooden roller coaster tired,
baby, tired but for you I'll go one more round.

We demand the loop-de-loop sequence
we heard someone has actually been kill'd on crashing

and we all scream at the same time.
It has been cold.

Lover, I'll be
your something.

http://farm3.static.flickr.com/2031/2521188388_379a23bf33.jpg

Prey animals take themselves too seriously.
Cages are the sweet answers. One thing I love about pet shadows

are the better loving animal suggestion limbs.
I'm a pet store in a strip mall. I'm a room in a hotel tooth in a night face.

May you sneeze stars into the computer screen of the night sky and consider this a new
baroque.

I like reflective serving surfaces but identify more with day old baked goods. Because
why? Listen and be quiet, night sky networking opportunities: I'm a poet.

Poets are artists who can't commit to the gravity of an image. Today, love, I, the night
sky, am a hotel and a conference center. I there there you so much, little one.

Hello. I'm just a crazy lover.
A machine's only purpose is to frustrate desire.

Who are you? Who am I? Well, I'm in space now floating. Kill coordinates.
I love your start.

ELIZABETH GUTHRIE

Open Air Apparent
(Epilogue to Portraits - Captions)*

sherbert : An example of an event. If it is an event just by itself is there a question. Tulips is there a question. Pets is there a question. Furs is there a question. Folds is there a question. Is there anything in question.

lime: To: You: I am addressing You,

rotting wood: The Audience: Is this a performance

apple seed: You step forward in Real Time

candy: If you burn the lens that keeps you constrained

chicken soup: (separate)

steel: from this Active Real potential

childhood when I was 5: equal

New Orleans: (not hierarchical)

foishy: world

dust: To : You : She: Name : Poetry

: Is Passive Non-Compliant

: Goes long

: White silk skirt

: Says what shape is saying

oil : Inquiry leaves us on the stage, physically overdeveloped and exposed

coffee : to actors named like icons or allegory by their functions such as All Done, All-The-Loss-That-Ever-Was

pollution: What is Real

metallic: Will it : never cease to write itself

* this poem was recently collected in the full-length book *Portraits - Captions* (Contraband Books 2013)

dew: What is Apparent

passion fruit: By what standards do we measure, Who

hands after holding money: What

dusty bus seats: What is value

tarmac-wet (puddle): Beauty

damp: The Ideal

mould: not a hierarchical tool of subordination

co-co pops: but a Realization of an Idea

gunpowder: and its fitting Form

iron, greasy hair, sweat & cologne, wet dog, the smell of metal, ice, vinyl, smoke, seaweed, spray paint fumes, top of head, garbage, starch, newspaper, rust, pumpkin, sediment, pine, rosewood, acrylic paint, old furniture, hair, blood, wet leaves, rain, humidity, bins, chocolate, candy, old paint, dirt, rain, magnesium, aluminum, skin, sandalwood, oranges, smoke, dust, hair, damp wood, books, trucks, petrol, sweat, iris, hospital, iron, blood, petrol, disinfectant, paint, burning, dust, old library books, coffee, unopened paper, fireworks, bonfire, old carpet, rubbish, dust bin, oil, garbage, Channel No. 5, exhaust fumes, molten steel, garbage, sugar, fruit, copper, paper, urine, rotten banana, feathers, gas (petrol), plastic, metallic, salt, smoke, diesel, chocolate, orange

What distinctions

(do we make)

How did you get in

He: Is Passive Non-Compliant

: Goes cog

: Black skinny tie

: Says what shape is saying

: One should get to that which is Real, as such single when it is (almost) eliminated. You can only see them when they cross or coincide with each other

What delineations keep us

Keeping

What are our borders of division

Le Internationale!

Qui est le chef

Do you see a Figure

In which senses

What is who is here

Speaking

Was She there

Was He there

Is She here

Is He here

Burn the lens!

Of the hierarchical view

(Audience must change to see what's there

(but hasn't been apparent)

(the Figures)))

The memory

: the affect of Poetry in a memory can be compared to an
explosion

Now the curl of the after-smoke

Now a re-membering,

a lucidity

into the extinguished glare

JOSEPH COOPER*from A Savage Place*

1.

linguistic appropriation is very simple
detached from its context
ready to spring from several wombs
pierced by centuries of sunlight and rain

for example, the Marques de Sade's heroes enjoyed confining their victims
to where nobody dies if it is not right to die
crinkling the skin under them
perhaps even 'the germ of an idea'

scraping and buzzing
calling one thing by another's name
sometimes adding a flourish of adverb
to the wildly adventurous forays of dark woods

2.

all that he knows is his “natural” destiny
indiscriminate acts of indulgence
that unbroken thing moving behind his eyes

the smell burns the nostrils for weeks
transcends the metaphor
for slowly scratching the thick bristles of a growing snout

as he promises always to be
a sudden silence on the mountainside
a large, empty house where we can despair safely

moving across the white pages
as if this were a modernist novel

JULIA BLOCH

Projection

One thigh on another thigh and then
the last piece of wood
latching shut. A lot of words can
hold, can cross-tune. "Crawled up
from nothing" As we were in the library,
full of smoke, come down the freeway
at it. Transit and reevaluation. This is the
work right now, to look. Feeling of bread
in the mouth, fog falling in low steps,
beneath the face, a piece of wood, crawled
up from nothing, offshoot of the visible,
trajectory of all these low parts. A tender
man is a fiction and skin is a boundary.
The library is quite useless.

Cut

Chipped stones, hills, buildings, steps,
gravel, roads, styrofoam cups, tilted skies,
tilted roads, dust kicking up.
Small bodies lined up in a gel
of angelic misery. Not enough
but have seen enough already.
Cut into and against the valley,
granite is almost always massive.
Orange trees spiky in the fog. Stray
palms sifting off the trees,
going inside and away from the air,
typing as a way not to be talking.
I don't eat theme.
Some of the keys don't do anything.

STEPHANIE ANDERSON

Any Unappropriated Township*

Restrictions of artificial life tending to sauciness
The follies and falsehoods and burning
Decided to bury himself in Upper Canada

Had become attached and burrowed
To procure royal patent a dam'd block head
Some support from a few days' chopping

But had not yet received shoulders of vassals
Bona fida in laborious slop work
At Sun-rise in smock frock felling

His equal never for firewater was at the mouth
Luxuries went to stack of pea straw
The saddle all day would suffice for occupations

Crown lands as they were what was termed
Divert framed flow of emigration
The successions must go on an undated letter

* this poem was recently collected in *In the Key of Those Who Can No Longer Organize Their Environments* (Horse Less Press 2013)

KEVIN VARRONE

from lawn

through linen
perhaps

or a window through
a dandelion thrown
in a mown row

a flag
 of itself a window itself
a failure

of success

or affix, a
mistakenly dropped
tincture of openness:

lay a track the pilgrim will follow
& the pilgrim will follow

by dissimulation:

old maids never wed and have babies

cut grass
 lies frail
 blown glass

 or a vestibule
 perhaps the shape of a parachute

 or toothed tool
 a paratrooper

dandelion, a linen,
 (*beautiful lawns*
 don't just happen
 says scotts)

of grass
 one can do nothing with clippings

turf or tuft
through linen

a landscape the sanskrit

the lawn is an act
of language

(a train bisects april & april

is national lawn care month)

almost thirty percent of homeowners are do-nothings :

cut grass, our aristocratic genetic disposition
democratized,

to moral code
(the small lawns of home)

a raising of all boats,

or a little community in every seed or blade

in every seed or blade,
a flag, a suburb

streetcar
 railroad
 the small set-back ordinances

of home
 a monoculture
 or vestibule
 or national quilt
 (conformity and control)

undercover

victorians in the 1950s

oil and water
 (one can do-nothing
 with the clippings)

(*almost*
thirty percent says scotts)

the lawn as american quilt
 or appearance of seamliness
 or seamlessness, aristocracy
 democratized, the lawn
 a place to lay a way to say

we've made it,

or verdancy

as if green were truth

good lawns

make good neighbors

(all the better if fenced) :

having made it we move

from function to ornament

draped in an american quilt
or kinder hedge row

a neighbor
hegemony

separate but equal
green :

kennedys tossing a football across a flat expanse

BRUCE MCRAE

Every Afternoon About This Time

At one o'clock the earth stops listening
to the complaints of the southern winds.
It doesn't have time to argue with a stone
about the viability of magnetic attraction.
There aren't enough hours in the day
to consider each grass blade, each dying flower.

It's one o'clock, and we're running low on perfection.
We're almost out of dandelions and lichen.
Abstractions are turning in their coddled nests,
turning away from the vague ideals of their forefathers,
towards the promise of a fair and open forum.

The cat-tails and bulrushes are out of their heads.
On a beach a pebble thinks about leaving
it behind, about setting out on an impossible journey.
By one o'clock noon has lowered its usually high standards.
Two o'clock is waiting to be taken up wholesale,
to be lifted bodily from its house of nails.

The dog in the yard watches the expanses widen.
There's a money-spider toying with geometry.
In a schoolyard the children's voices have been broken.

Everything is changing, long ranks of permutations
rubbing up against the odds, the stakes, the chances.
Everything is as it was or is or will be.
The garden collapses, rebuilding itself from a single gene.
The minute vibrations at the core of existence
are happily occupied with their eternal dance.
You can't feel it, thick with the efforts of your life,
but the infinite is shifting.

CINDY ST. JOHN

Water Vs. Fire

The year I walk
the year the head goes out
into a field and hides
there we wait blue/drought hangs a history
our summers muscle memories slowly
in kitchens there's a lot of sweat
in fire it's the heat you're after
make a fist wide/white against
the house/throat I grew up
in the suburbs after all yellow/wind
and light on quiet construction sites
the breeze is still hot from the fire as we wait
holler for a fleet of bulldozers valuable things are
sometimes heavy I break/watch smoke over
thousands of other homes eyes/feed grey as if
burning out fingers or islands inside
this heat/bent I am folding my limbs
as close as I can this is not a poem
is not a poem not a poem
a poem
this woman
takes off
her shoe.

AMELIA BENTLEY

Philadelphia I

*The First question I ask myself when something doesn't seem to be beautiful is why do I think it's not beautiful.
And very shortly you discover that there is no reason.
- John Cage.*

What mix these streets,
fluted with muted
rhetoric of televisions,
grumble and shift, acceleration; backfire,
under
curses, shouts, wails
all-together
one hour of one night on one street.
In this city
an early morning and late night walker marks slouched
paint peeled and window darkened,
signs painted once, erode,

Those are fireworks, right?

a flute turns, shrills,
resuming a practice of notes

created by the only remaining unexplored grey camera.
This poem began with the body working on itself.

STAN MIR*from Holding Patterns: The Mantis at the Screen*

More like nature
poetry can't remove us from feeling
amidst all this concrete in autumn
the mantis makes the garden

The mantis makes the garden more
like nature poetry can't remove
us from feeling amidst all
this concrete in autumn

Amidst all this concrete
in autumn the mantis makes
the garden more like nature
poetry can't remove us from feeling

Poetry can't remove us
from feeling amidst all this
concrete in autumn the mantis
makes the garden more like nature

Louis
Zukofsky
once saw

a mantis
in the subway
“It flew

at my chest”
he wrote
that form

is not distinct
from condition
at least

as I read
the poem’s
interpretation

“the facts are
not a symbol”

It's bright enough to see
without the light. This language
did not create this concrete.

That hardness, "This is
my nature." Where is the
structure of a dream? Is it
only in a winding stair?

The garden grows in the dark.
The dream happens.
Sometimes we hold that image
grasping for its root.

CYNTHIA ATKINS

Foundry

At the factory of lullabies,
fonts and DNA, a birthday book
was forged—fairy dust and pulp—
cherry perfume, loitering in spines
after curfew. We wave to ourselves
as reflections in a store window—
into a time that has already happened.
Deep forts erected from sheets,
blankets, terry-cloth towels held by
night-stands and flowered beds.
When you laid out the Tarot
cards next to the pink-haired trolls,
I wondered if we were beings made
from other materials?—Caterpillar silk
of doll hair, crisp paper archived
from a tree. This is nature's perfection
hand-hewn with all the provisions—
Just a few flaws, throw the disease
in a jar. When they met by committee,
you were called to bigger things—
bell-bottoms, peace signs, parties ending
in disheveled graveyards. Thin as
a paper-clip, your smudged lip-stick
was cast with loneliness and lorn.
One night, the wind bit as strong
as a wolf with a paw in the threshold
of your dental records—A swath
of dress slipped out from the car door.
Two sisters, owls at the cotillion
of seeds and flowers. The cousins shiver
under the elm, our polyester night-gowns
buoyed up in flames—warehoused
forever by buttons and souls.

LEORA FRIDMAN

Salon riots

*Felt up, billowed, revinded
and topped: the riots are a queer
pantomime for a combat zone.
Who wants to hear about the
real reasons we attend the riots.
We are making sculptures
from our stiffened riot hair.*

*We are wrapped up billiard-balls. We crinkle. We are holy-smokes mistakes.
(We can remark on them in stride.) I forgive myself for hanging back in the
riots. Shopping for something more. I don't feel like pushing my way through
a set of obstacles just to pelt them again. I've got to claim a suit to pocket
them all.*

Remarked riots

We're the only group of friends who don't know anyone at the riots. We're the only anonymous donors of gel. We want everyone to arise weakly in comfort, drag their pieces toward the racket, hold their sensical selves up to the light.

*We like a tanning bed
for underdogs -
a crisping place
that soaks in.*

Status update: The Riot

I could go for something Asian-ish, or billiards something formalized and green.

I'd like a riot to whisper me sweet nothings across a table smelling of the sea, fermented and three-person-deep. The riot will have come to a lull during the call to prayer, and would have slipped away to lunch with me. It notified no one. The riot is not smart enough on the internet. It tries out all sort of gadgetry, millions of status updates sent up into the cloud. It diffuses up there in the moisture. It falls. The riot needs to be able to recognize itself.

On the internet it starts to see in pleas.

MATT REECK

Jute Boxes on Fa-Hsien's Ship

They sailed eastward with a fair wind for two days when they were caught up in a typhoon and the ship sprang a leak. Then the terrified merchants believed their end was at hand, and in an endeavor to stop the ship from sinking threw their coarser merchandise into the sea. Fa-Hsien also cast overboard his pitcher, washbasin and some other possessions.

Asian Travel in the Renaissance

BOX 1

a community
shares trash

the post office hires
counselors

won't mention
how everything's

divisible by color
take the Black Hills

there black
doesn't mean the growing dark

BOX 2

in regards to tennis
a batted ball

in regards to yesterday
today

this mania of
self-presentation

at Dumbarton Oaks
the weavers came with candles

to stand before
the red curtain of the meritocracy

BOX 3

correct
a bibliophile lacks time

very correct
a cartographer creates space

everything known
I'm skeptical of

everything unknown
I'm a believer

BOX 4

a swimming pool
full of lead

a light show
for the captives

security buffs
their pistols

at the monastery
who's enlightened

& who's
guessing up from down

BOX 5

a weekend dog
attracts fleas

insomniacs
suck rosebuds

lemons dried
in the Gulf of Aden

reach of ascent
head nods off

reach of descent
toes wriggle in mud

the way
I wear my rifle means

I love you
no one's home

TOBY ALTMAN

INVOCATION (to the waters)

scene: the reverend father addresses the crew of mourners.

■ *orison*

reverend:

From which the mud-sick mother, desolate
and quick, rises to tend her things:
rough eglantine, tattered cowslip,
pitcher of bees, to which she swerves and sinks.

And once she was shatter and thrum,
a cold voice, unweaving. And once she lent
her tattered edge to salve the drum:
still the skin sinks, and longing has its length.

When river-drunk, belly-burst—when tooth gouged
her frigid hand and harrowed book—
when swerved in tempest turn—she finger-plowed
her furrow to ask where it took
its lapse, its whetstone ash, the liquid edge
from which she rose—still, it passes knowledge.

■ *notes:*

There is an obstruction here,
some excess of phlegm.

PETITION (for all things, a living music)

scene: the congregation joins its many voices to a single space: to police. to presence. to lift the bruise from its shackle in the flesh.

■

Is lifted in thought—is furnished in it:
 is body barked and presence bound. (Then what?)
 It must wear out—must cleanly house and limb
 its aging in things—which will its will unknot:
 though I feel its envy rub, garlic tough,
 accident named, “Song and Stuff” (And then what?)
 It must wear out—must seek the end of love:
 is body-barked and lifted into thought.
 Long is riverhead—makes a morning rut.
 Do not ask what good it does: it knows how
 to go on—makes an end of love. (Then what?)
 Then lift the coal, o man of unclean mouth
 and write—write his name where the rail rubbed
 it out. Perishing road and opened ground,
 he is lifted in voice: then make a mournful sound.

■ ‘And they came and held him by the feet’:

That he rejoices chiefly in music, we know by oak and
 asp. That he rejoices in beaten matter, we know by
 the music it makes in the grass. Still his sorrow will
 not soften. Still we taste the bitter mortar in the heart
 of things. Therefore we say, with a single voice: the
 spirit that is / does not build up / nature around us
 / but puts it forth / through us / artery / a curtain
 / a turn in winter / as the life of trees / puts forth
 new branches / and leaves / through the pores of
 the old:

But it differs
 from the body

in one important
 respect:

it is a fixed point
 whereby

we may measure
 our departure.

LINDA RUSSO

Orchard Sprung

if any are uncertain, we show them
 how we map an informal space between us
until a sudden sky reveals
 the mold into which
so much behavior is cast (as so many
 American women know)
when none are near

together in our unconscious geographies
 I'm nobody you know but now distance
binds us

how many distances do humans have?
 flight distance, critical distance, personal distance
 so many she forgets her own locality
in the fixed-feature space of her culture
 (the walls don't tell)

our language determines degrees of closeness

with taints of majesty we're orchard sprung

I only communicate digitally with dead friends because they're at such a vast distance.

DP: What has been your most successful collaboration? Why do you think it was successful?

BM: The one with Philip Good about the use of condoms. It really took both of us to write it. And it's funny.

Firewood is \$750 a season with heating oil billed separately.

DP: Do anarchist sensibilities or beliefs relate to the way in which you choose to make money?

BM: Yeah, I think they do. In the sense that I don't really think of money in terms of existence or importance at all. So in that sense, I'm not a good American. And I'm

about suspension of disbelief. So let's all suspend our disbelief in money. And just act as if, just for a time, the time of our lives, that money doesn't exist. I mean you can do it. But you can't do it.

DP: Okay.

BM: I was never sensible about this. If I had been sensible...Well, I was sensible. But my parents wouldn't let me do it. I wanted to go to a high school that would have taught me a trade. Then I would have had a way to earn a living besides writing poetry. I mean I didn't know at the time that I would write poetry, but I did know that I wanted a trade. And they thought that that was too lower class. And they were very upwardly mobile like everybody in America at the time. It was the 1950s.

And so they insisted I go to a useless high school, which was not even a high school where women at the time were taught stenography and typing. It was a high school called a "Classical High School," so what did I learn? Greek, Latin. I mean all these things that were great for me to learn.

DP: And great for your poetry.

BM: Yeah. But I never learned how to do anything useful to earn money. So, summer school, when I was in high school, my mother sent me to a typing class. I've never been so grateful to anyone.

It's quite anarchist not to get your guaranteed annual income as it is not to think making love and being pregnant are harmful. I would never get married. When I die I'd like to be shot in my grave, already dug, but if I'm killed while robbing a bank out the back of which is the Long Island Sound, just roll me into it and don't let anyone look for my remains. Or, scatter my ashes in the Tsatsawassa creek.

...when you're studying poetry, you read about suspension of disbelief. So let's all suspend our disbelief in money. And just act as if, just for a time, the time of our lives, that money doesn't exist. I mean you can do it. But you can't do it.

DP: [Laughs]. In *At Maureen's* (Crony Books 2013), you talk about the narcissism of poetry readings, even the introductions at poetry readings. Do you still feel that way about readings? What function do you think poetry readings serve?

BM: The purposes of poetry readings are so people can hear the poet's work and that, maybe, the poet can make some money.

DP: Let's talk about money.

BM: I live on the Social Security Income (SSI) I get as a result of having a stroke at age 49. It's about \$500 a month, plus \$100 a month from an organization Kenward Emslie helped me become a beneficiary of for aging women artists in NYC. Plus whatever I make giving readings, but I can't make too much (more than \$4000) because this jeopardizes my SSI and makes the income tax unaffordable. Phil and I own this house in East Nassau, New York. I inherited \$60,000 from Hannah Weiner, and Phil had a full time job then. Our mortgage is \$660 a month, and altogether it costs us about \$1000 a month to live here.

certainly not...I guess that's why I chose to be a poet. You know, that was definitely a way to avoid the whole money dalliance.

DP: How do you reconcile the inexistence or importance of money with paying bills, people gathering money for you to heat your house in the winter, etc. I'm not talking about your Indiegogo campaign to raise money for Missouri's *Helens of Troy*.

BM: [Laughs] Yeah.

DP: The fact that money is not real, but we need money to pay bills. And there are people willing to generate money for you to help you. How do you view that?

BM: I think, as a poet, I should be able to support myself with a full time job as a poet. But nobody agrees with me. Including...you probably don't.

DP: I don't know if I do. I'm thinking about it. This is why I wanted to ask you about it; we have never spoken of this specifically.

BM: I mean, you have to...when you're studying poetry, you read

I'm grateful for people helping me pay my bills. I hope I've increased their happiness or alleviated their alarm and/or boredom. That's why I like to publish my poems.

Wherever I go, I seem to need to have money. I hope this is temporary, like a talk show.

The most interesting anarchist writer is Emma Goldman. You can read her autobiography *Living My Life* in two volumes. Another book to check out is *Boxcar Bertha: An Autobiography: As Told to Dr. Ben L. Reitman*.

It's the autobiography of a female hobo in the 1930s. Get the edition with the intro by Kathy Acker, published by Amok Press. The etymology of the word hobo is from "Ho, beau" or "Hi, beautiful." Boxcar Bertha is an amalgam of three or four women's lives.

The only anarchist I ever knew was Brad Will who travelled the freight trains and helped start an independent local radio station in NYC where he was a squatter. He used to come to my house for readings of great long books like *Stanzas in Meditation* and *Paradise Lost*. He was killed as a journalist covering demonstration by the Zapatistas in Mexico. Piles of his possessions were assembled at his memorial at St. Mark's Church from which I chose a shirt.

DP: Thank you for introducing to the Emma Goldman and Boxcar Bertha books. And Brad Will—I did not know of him. The image of you choosing a shirt from his possessions gathered at St. Mark's—that's so intense.

Alan Loney, in *The Books to Come* (Cuneiform Press 2012), writes, "The rivers of printed matter are pouring out of print shops of every description, effluvia in every sense. We even say, we are 'dipping' into a book, as into a moving stream" (64). I swear you passed along a similar idea of John Ashbery's to me once. How do you respond to this Alan Loney's quote?

BM: The John Ashbery idea has nothing to do with the ease with which poetry is published, but with the ease with which we write it. There IS this stream always flowing that has nothing to do with publishing. It keeps us from having to have ideas. All our thoughts are already there and lines for the taking. This is why the I has to be you. Other people's streams are private property.

DP: Can you explain the John Ashbery idea again and remind what you appreciated so much about that idea?

BM: I thought it was an interesting way to explain how easy it is to write poetry. He said there's always a stream running with your poetic lines and thought and ideas. And when you want to write a poem, you just dip into it and take some out. And I like the idea that it's a constant thing. And that there is no such thing...any ideas that deny that there is any such thing as writer's block.

DP: You deny that?

BM: Yes. I think it's just an affectation. Or maybe it's a result of forcing yourself to write fiction.

DP: [Laughs] Hey now!

BM: [Laughs] Sorry.

DP: If you had to live in someone else's house for a month, whose house would it be?

BM: I'd like to live in yours, but Karl would have to agree. Otherwise, I'd like to live in the middle of the woods, with porches on all four sides of the house, no requirements.

DP: What's the difference between a sacred object and a fetish object?

BM: St. Catherine's Finger, in Siena Italy, could be both.

You know there was a nun, in class in high school. She told me beforehand that she was going to do this. She told me the answer before asking "does anybody here know what Keats' Classical Dictionary was?" And I raised my hand and said Lempriere's.

DP: And what did she do?

BM: Well, that was the set up. That I knew the answer to her question. She said "yes, that's right."

DP: And that was that.

BM: Maybe she just wanted me always to remember Keats' Classical Dictionary. And everybody else too.

DP: You're 68 now. What might be some things you'd love to do for your 70th birthday?

BM: I think it's definitely a possibility to eat oysters. And since it's my 70th birthday, I'd like somebody to let me lie down on a bed of frozen raspberries, like Philip Whalen. **FS**

IN REVIEW

triste: mourning stories

by Lisa Marie Basile
dancing girl press, 2013

Reviewed by Chris McCreary



As part of her “Next Big Thing” self-interview, Lisa Marie Basile describes her role as the “medium” who helped to realize *triste*, the form of which she terms “obituary-as-poem.”

In these elegiac works, we glimpse narratives lost to time or trauma as we tour this “morgue of wild things.” Her “homemade mythologies” echo one another as they flash across time to encompass both horse-drawn carriages and the grim reality of the atomic bomb.

The spirits informing these individual poems might be as disparate as Octavio Paz, the Egyptian goddess Sakhmet, and the poet’s own grandmother, but the project is made remarkably coherent thanks to the poet-as-medium’s channeling it all in a consistently compelling manner.

Within these poems, the dead are mere whispers on the wind one moment and a palpable physical presence the next. The speaker of “Marosa” is “wearing a harlot’s wedding gown,” “my breasts where her breasts once were” in an effort, she says, to “marry the phantom of women I’ve never met.”

Yet these characters do not always have beating hearts within their chests: rather, the torso might reveal itself as

a secret storage compartment for vestigial wings, lantern light, or a forgotten trinket, just as the flesh itself might give way to decay at any moment. When a woman “opens her dignities and pleasures / like guava,” it is perhaps both jarring and yet inevitable in the context of this collection that the poem will end with the vulgar, debased image of “a worn worm soldier jamming its way / into the core of a ripe melon.”

Similarly, “Meursault” moves from idealized passion (“We drank, roasted a chicken, // & made love on the kitchen floor.”) to horrific clarity (“Now, I imagine the way two bodies/ start to resemble plucked animals/ in love.”). In *triste*, language itself is linked to death: “I want good words to reproduce like maggots in my teeth,” she writes, and even in the midst of remembrance we are always moving toward a final moment of unknowing.

“It’s all true,” Basile states by way of concluding her self-interview, and one has the sense that beneath even the most obscured of these narratives is a deeply personal yet closely guarded sorrow. Whether writing in luxurious prose or spare, enjambed couplets, Basile skillfully conjures the grief of those who have been left behind to memorialize, as best they can, these times, places, and people long gone. **FS**



BIOS

Toby Altman's poems have appeared.

Stephanie Anderson is the author of *In the Key of Those Who Can No Longer Organize Their Environments* (Horse Less Press) and five chapbooks. She currently lives in Chicago or Tokyo and edits Projective Industries.

Cynthia Atkins is the author of *Psyche's Weathers* (CW Books 2007) and *In the Event of Full Disclosure* (CW Books, 2013). Her work has appeared in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *BOMB*, *Caketrain*, *Del Sol Review*, *Harpur Palate*, *The Journal*, *The North American Review*, *The Tampa Review*, *The Toronto Review*, *Valparaiso* and *Verse Daily* among others. She is an assistant professor of English at Virginia Western Community College and lives on the Maury River of Rockbridge County, VA.

Amelia Bentley completed her BA in at Evergreen State College in 2010, where she studied philosophy and poetry. Her work has or will soon appear in *Gigantic Sequins 4.1*, *Portable Boog Reader 6*, and *Tinge*. Her chapbook *¢parts* was released from Damask Press in March 2013.

Julia Bloch grew up in Northern California and Sydney, Australia, and is the author of *Letters to Kelly Clarkson* (Sidebrow Books, 2012), a Lambda Literary Award Finalist. Recent poems and translations have appeared in *Fence*, *Manor House Quarterly*, and *Sixth Finch*. She works as associate director of the Kelly Writers House and is a coeditor of Jacket2 (jacket2.org)

Joseph Cooper is currently writing in Winston-Salem, NC and is the author of the full-length books *TOUCH ME* (BlazeVox 2009) and *Autobiography of a Stutterer* (BlazeVox 2007). His work has appeared in

numerous journals including most recently *Bombay Gin*, *Dear Sir*, *Diode*, *Ditch*, *Jellyfish*, Other Rooms Press, *Otoliths*, *Peacock Online Review*, *Phantom Limb Press*, *REM Magazine*, and forthcoming from Furniture Press, *Indefinite Space* and *3 a.m.*

Leora Fridman is a writer, translator and educator living in California. She has a chapbook, *Precious Coast*, from H_ngm_n B_ _ks, and her chapbooks *Essential Nature* and *On the architecture* are forthcoming from The New Megaphone. Her chapbook of translations of Eduardo Milán is available from Toad Press.

Elizabeth Guthrie is a poet and performer living in New York researching for a practice-based PhD in text and performance at UEL. She is a co-editor of Livestock Editions. Her work has appeared in various journals including *Onedit*, *Requited*, *Bombay Gin*, *Pinstripe Fedora*, *Alba Londres*, and *Open Letter*. She has a pamphlet, *X Portraits*, out through Crater Press, a chapbook, *Yellow and Red*, through Black Lodge Press, the collaborative chapbook with Andrew K. Peterson, *Between Here and the Telescopes*, through Slumgullion Press and a forthcoming book entitled, *Portraits - Captions* from Contraband Books. She is poet in residence at the Centre for Creative Collaboration in London.

Russell Jaffe is the Co-Editor of *Strange Cage* (strangecage.org), a chapbook poetry press, and MC/coordinator of its reading series. He is the author of one poetry collection, *This Super Doom I Aver* (Poets Democracy, '13), and the chapbooks *DOOM'D (zones 1 + 2)* (Strange Cage, '12), (*accompanied by pushpins and balloons*) (The Red Ceilings, '11), *LITEROAST* (Counterexample, '09), and *NOTE/WORTHY* (Scantly Clad Press, '08). His poems have appeared in *The Colorado Review*, *[PANK]*, *H_NGM_N*, *American Letters* &

Commentary, and others. He collects 8-tracks. Get at him at russelljaffeusa.com

Bernadette Mayer's poetry has been praised by John Ashbery as "magnificent." Brenda Coultas calls her a master of "devastating wit." Mayer is the author of more than two dozen volumes of poetry, including *Midwinter Day*, *Sonnets*, *The Desires of Mothers to Please Others in Letters*, and *Poetry State Forest*. Recently published are her works, *The Helens of Troy*, NY, *Studying Hunger Journals* and *Ethics of Sleep*. A former director of the Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church in the Bowery and co-editor of the conceptual magazine *0 to 9* with Vito Acconci, Mayer has been a key figure on the New York poetry scene for decades.

Originally from Niagara Falls Ontario, Pushcart-nominee Bruce McRae is a musician who has spent much of his life in London and British Columbia. He has been published in hundreds of periodicals and anthologies. His first book, *The So-Called Sonnets* is available from the Silenced Press website or via Amazon books. To hear his music and view more poems visit his website: www.bpmcrae.com.

Stan Mir is the author of two chapbooks, *Test Patterns* and *Flight Patterns*. His most recent full-length collection is *The Lacustrine Suite* (Pavement Saw). He lives in Philadelphia and teaches at Temple University.

Deborah Poe is the author of the poetry collections *the last will be stone, too* (Stockport Flats), *Elements* (Stockport Flats), and *Our Parenthetical Ontology* (CustomWords), as well as a novella in verse, *Hélène* (Furniture Press). She has published several chapbooks, most recently *Keep* (above/ground press), and also co-edited *Between Worlds: An Anthology of Contemporary*

Fiction and Criticism (Peter Lang). Deborah is assistant professor of English at Pace University, Pleasantville, where she teaches creative writing and literature and curates the annual Handmade/Homemade Exhibit and the Vox Creative Arts Series. For more information, please visit www.deborahpoe.com.

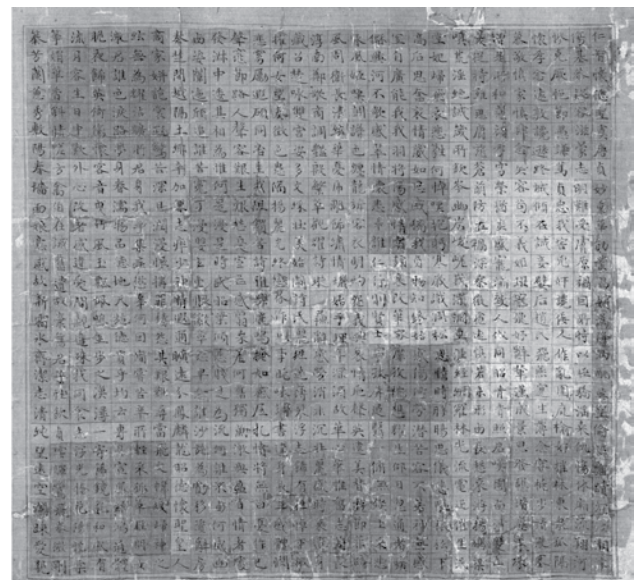
Matt Reeck is the co-editor of *Staging Ground*. Recent chapbooks were published by Konundrum Engine Literary Review and Little Red Leaves Textile Series. *Bombay Stories*, from the Urdu of Saadat Hasan Manto, is forthcoming from Vintage Classics. *Mirages of the Mind*, translated with Aftab Ahmad from the Urdu of Mushtaq Ahmed Yousufi, is forthcoming from Random House India.

Linda Russo (inhabitorypoetics.blogspot.com) is the author of *Mirth* (Chax Press), *The Enhanced Immediacy of the Everyday* (forthcoming, Chax Press), and a recent chapbook, *Picturing Everything Closer Visible*, an excerpt of a walk-in poem (Projective Industries). She lives in Eastern Washington.

Cindy St. John is the author of *I Wrote This Poem*, a chapbook forthcoming from Salt Hill, and several others including *Be the Heat* (Slash Pine Press) and *City Poems* (Effing Press). Her poems have appeared in many magazines, including *Horse Less Review*, *H_NGM_N*, *No Tell Motel*, *Peaches & Bats*, and the *Southern Review*. She lives in Austin, TX, where she teaches literature and creative writing at a public school. She also edits and prints a poetry and art collaboration called *Headlamp*, and co-curates a reading series for poets visiting Austin called Fun Party. This summer, she will be a Millay artist-in-residence.

Kevin Varrone's most recent publications are *box score: an autobiography*, recently published as a free, interactive iPhone/iPad app (boxscoreapp.com) and *Eephus* (Little Red Leaves Textile Series). His previous publications include *Pasynunk Lost* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2010), *id est* (Instance Press, 2007), and the chapbook *g-point Almanac: 6.21-9.21* (ixnay press, 2000) all part of *g-point Almanac*, a four-part project loosely based on Almanacs and Books of Days. He is also the author of the chapbook *the philadelphia improvements* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2010).

Nico Vassilakis is co-editor of *The Last Vispo Anthology* (Fantagraphics Books). He has published several books of poetry and visual poetry. The most recent title is *MOMENTS NOTICE* (Luna Bisonte Prods). Nico lives in NYC. You can see more of his work at staringpoetics.weebly.com



Hélène

Deborah Poe's 19th century heroine Hélène finds herself in the elaborate trap of a "factory-convent," manufacturing silk in western France—and her only release is the fantasy of producing it, instead, in China. Poe handles the implications and associations of these very different worlds with wrenching clarity. But finally, it is language—"We all our song within which voice finds its own escape"—that offers the window through which Hélène, and we, effect that escape. Poe's handling of language throughout the book is nothing less than liberating, and yet it's also arresting—it's often, in short, simply breathtaking, while her acrobatically precise and dynamic balance between research and attention allows the reader to be simultaneously transported beyond and riveted to the present. A major accomplishment, and a haunting one. —Cole Swensen



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