

**ecopoetics**  
**no. 3**

**winter 2003**

# ecopoetics

is published (at a minimum) **annually**  
and dedicated to exploring  
creative-critical edges between writing  
(with an emphasis on poetry) and  
ecology (the theory and praxis of  
deliberate earthlings).

Edited and designed by Jonathan Skinner,  
with editorial assistance from Florine Melnyk.

**Rates**— single issue: **\$7 (\$14 institutions)**; four-issue  
subscription: **\$25 (\$50 institutions)**. All prices include  
postage; outside US & Canada, add \$3. Please make checks  
payable to Jonathan Skinner.

Letters to the editor are welcome. Please allow some time  
for response. **ecopoetics** will not be accepting unsolicited  
manuscripts during 2004. Our next reading period will be  
in early 2005.

**ecopoetics**, no. 4 will appear in the Summer of 2004.

Note: as email sometimes gets vaporized, please back up vital  
correspondence with snailmail.

## ecopoetics

106 Huntington Ave.

Buffalo, NY 14214 USA

jskinner@acsu.buffalo.edu

[www.factoryschool.org/ecopoetics](http://www.factoryschool.org/ecopoetics)

This issue is made possible by generous grants from the SUNY at  
Buffalo David Gray Chair of Poetry and Letters, Department of  
English (Charles Bernstein), the James H. McNulty Chair,  
Department of English (Dennis Tedlock), the Samuel P. Capen Chair  
of Poetry and Humanities (Robert Creeley), and from a 2003 New  
York State GSEU Professional Development Fund.

Contents copyright © **ecopoetics**. Copyright reverts to contributors  
upon publication

**Periplum Editions**  
ISSN 1536-7479

# ecopoetics

## no. 3, winter 2003

---

---

- JOHN BATKI.....Lines on Larry Eigner, Deduce Rust, Mind Your Foot Print  
ALICIA COHEN.....reviews Andy Goldsworthy's *Rivers and Tides*  
SIMON CUTTS.....After John Clare, Rubber Stamp Mini-Printer  
ALEC FINLAY.....from Mesostic Herbarium  
LISA FORREST.....Black-crowned Night Heron, Kingfisher, Mockingbird,  
Yellow-headed Blackbird  
ERIC GELSINGER.....Wearing a Sweater on the Surface of the Earth  
JODY GLADDING.....Purple Loosestrife  
GOTHIC NEWS SERVICE.....SUV Solar and Oak Grove Ranch, "Relief Not Bombs"  
MARY RISING HIGGINS.....Scaffolds to K  
PETER JAEGER.....Pollard and other poems  
JEFFREY JULLICH.....A Temptation for Miss Juliana,  
Portrait of Colon Dash Parenthesis  
ROBERT KOCIK.....Enfranchisement Ranch  
JOAN MALOOF (WITH RICK MALOOF).....The September 11th Memorial Forest  
DOUGLAS MANSON.....Sight / Nonsight (Olmsted's Front Park in Buffalo)  
BERNADETTE MAYER, PHILIP GOOD, MARIE WARSH.....Poetry Pyramid  
PABLO NERUDA (TR. JOHN FELSTINER).....Floods, Guilty, Lapis Lazuli in Chile  
ALICE NOTLEY... They Are all Dead Today, Earth Speaks, Show You His Face Young  
MARK NOWAK.....8 June 1916  
DEREK OWENS.....from *ngurra blues*  
ISABELLE PELISSIER....."Low Emotional Temperature"  
STEPHEN RATCLIFFE.....from *Real*  
TOM RAWORTH.....from *Caller*, (WITH FRANCO BELTRAMETTI) *Animist*  
JEROME ROTHENBERG.....from *China Notes*  
KAIA SAND.....from *Aquifer*  
ANDREW SCHELLING.....Haibun at Thoor Ballylee, Floor of the Turlough  
RAVI SHANKAR.....Chinese River Dolphin;  
Recollecting Monteverde, Costa Rica; The Old Joy of Sex  
ALLEN SHELTON.....The Mineralization of John Pelham  
JONATHAN SKINNER.....reviews Jed Rasula's *This Compost*,  
Derek Owens's *Composition and Sustainability*, Andrew Schelling's *Wild Form*  
& *Savage Grammar* and *Tea Shack Interior*, *The Paper* (ed. David Kennedy)  
JANE SPRAGUE.....White Footed Mouse, Field Notes  
ELENI STECOPOULOS.....Geopathy  
SASHA STEENSEN.....reviews Alicia Cohen's *BEAR*  
BRIAN SWANN.....It Should be Abstact, More Than Enough  
STEPHEN VINCENT.....A Walk Toward Spicer  
DAMIAN WEBER.....Red Haiku  
NATHAN WHITING.....The Midget Forest, The Meadow
- 
-

**AUTHORS KEY:** Batki 3, 28-29, 188; Beltrametti 101; Cohen 50-54; Cutts 49, 161; Felstiner 22-27; Finlay 80-87; Forrest 38-41; Gelsinger 75-79; Gladding 4; Good 139; Gothic News Service 10-11, 114-115; Higgins 102-113; Jaeger 169-173; Jullich 156-157; Kocik 150-151; Maloof 116-122; Manson 33-36; Mayer 139; Neruda 22-27; Notley 12-17; Nowak 30-32; Owens 37, 57-68; Pelissier 163; Ratcliffe 5-9; Raworth 101, 152-155; Rothenberg 125-129; Sand 166-168; Schelling 130-131; Shankar 162, 164-165; Shelton 88-98; Skinner 69-74, 132-138, 174-184; Sprague 42-48, 123-124; Stecopoulos 140-149; Steensen 55-56; Swann 99-100; Vincent 18-21; Warsh 139; Weber 185-187; Whiting 158-160; You 189-190.

400 copies of **ecopoetics, no. 3**

were printed in December 2003 in 10 pt. Garamond on recycled paper. The covers were printed on tree-free kenaf poppy seed paper.

Simon Cutts's Aeolian Neon "After John Clare" is presently being installed in Northumberland, in a stone barn in a field, with the turbine outside, and a huge pile of stones gathered over the years. The poems published here by Pablo Neruda originally appeared in *Canto general* ("Floods"), *Las manos del dia* ("El Cupable") and *Las piedras del cielo* ("Lapis Lazuli"). Felstiner's translations first appeared in *American Poetry Review*. Jerome Rothenberg's *China Notes* first appeared as a tel/et book (Charles Martone). Stephen Vincent's "A Walk Toward Spicer" was originally published as a chapbook in a limited edition of 150 copies by The Cherry On The Top Press (U.K.). Damian Weber's *Red Haiku* were first published by House Press. All of these pieces have been reprinted with permission of the authors.

Thanks to the contributors, and to all who have encouraged *ecopoetics* along the way. Special thanks to Bill Sylvester, Joel Kuszai, Florine Melnyk, George Hart, Nate Dorward, Paige Menton, Elliott Skinner, Linda Hibbs, Isabelle Pelissier, Jane Sprague and the people who put it together at Alphagraphics and Quality Bindery, here in Buffalo.

## EDITOR'S NOTES

The support and interest *ecopoetics* has met have been overwhelming. Especially when one considers that the focus of this magazine has been on what happens at the edges, not the deep interior of writing. (There is no inherently ecological reason for this bias since the interior sustains many rare species and events.) It is to be hoped that readers will not be dissuaded from wandering far into some of these contributions—and so *ecopoetics* has been sure to include sizable islands of writing. It is also to be hoped, however, that readers will be looking for something more, here, than the newest kid on the block.

One of the edges *ecopoetics* rubs against is critical of this figuration (edge, interior, ecosystem) of the poem. Imagining endangered species is a useful act of language; writing that decenters the habitual configurations, enough to see who's endangered, may be more useful. It is a writing whose surface *ecopoetics* has barely scratched—the coming issues look forward to more critical reflection on the place of (a given) writing in this earth household. A question this editor sometimes gets is, what makes contribution A, B or C “ecopoetic”?

But such criticism will be more effective when it also questions the place of its own writing—finds its way in listening and observation as much as in (self-) reflection. Though this writing somehow always finds itself speaking *for*, we need to hear what our housemates have to say. It may be that in decentering language from what it figures nonhumans to be saying, something “new and strange,” or “old and familiar,” will get to be heard. If not, at least a good scolding.

In times of great stress, one instinct is to head for the wilderness—not to escape from but to get another perspective on events. On March 19, 2003 as American and British warjets screamed toward Baghdad, I headed alone into the wilderness of Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument on the Arizona-Mexico border. For five days the only news I had was from the skies, as airforce jets conducted training runs above, night and day, and stealth bombers headed east with full payloads of “bunker busting” weapons. No radio, just the opening and closing of desert goldpoppies on the drainage slopes, the leaping and darting shadows of rodents at night, chant of the curve-billed thrasher with a moth in its bill, owls' hunting calls, the speech of cactus spines in a brisk wind:

impulse and  
boundary, expansion  
and contraction, tender-  
ness and aggression  
retention and  
surrender

it's a cactus world  
but it wouldn't be nothin'  
without some rainstorms on it.

As I hiked the arroyos and flanks of the Ajo range, I became interested in signs of another kind of human traffic—the plastic and trash-lined migrants' trails leading from the Mexican border up to the pass and smugglers' vans waiting on Tohono Od'ham lands. The low hum of jeeps negotiating sandy washes that reached my ears at night was so constant I could hardly distinguish it from the blood humming in my ears. Empty plastic gallon water jugs festooned literally every cactus along the trail. (Twenty rangers working a full day on this trail wouldn't be able to clean up a quarter mile of it.) Small groups of travelers looked at me over their shoulders as I observed them with my binoculars from a peak in the valley. (And who was observing me?) 200,000 “illegals” or “undocumented aliens” move through the monument each year.

This is a good time of year for such travel—in the summer, when ground temperatures reach 175°F, it can be dangerous country. A recent clipping from Ensenada's *El Vigia* newspaper reads: “Fallecen más mexicanos en la línea fronteriza en 12 meses que en el conflicto del vecino país con Irak.” (More Mexicans died in 2003 on the borderline than in the neighboring country's conflict with Iraq.) On the American side, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument has been declared the “most dangerous unit” in the national park system, and one of America's “Ten Most Endangered National Parks.” Slaves from as far abroad as Ukraine are also brought through this wilderness. Who documents and naturalizes me, who authorizes my “backcountry permit”? The most powerful military in the world? The brutal fact of this has been demoralizing and frustrating. We are all visitors to these nonhuman places.



Wilderness, then, is the undocumented place of trespassing and captivity, is precisely this border, or rather these networks of borders, too broad and intricate to police. It is a place more liable to confrontation than retreat—not to naturalize aggression, but to hear our critics:

blue Dallas Cowboys jacket  
reads “starter”—under a smoke tree  
as if spread out to dry

woodpecker scolds me  
for carrying out a deer skull  
(returned)

underwear on an ocotillo:  
welcome to the USA

*ecopoetics* has been blessed with superb contributions in the past year, many of which could not be included. The editor would like to thank the writers for their fathomless patience. (Many other preoccupations delayed the appearance of this issue—for which the editor takes full responsibility.) It is hoped that those who could not appear in no. 3 will find a way into future issues.

Readers anticipating a Niedecker feature will be disappointed—that has been postponed by a trickle of submissions (now finally substantial). The Lorine Niedecker feature—along with a report on this year's Centenary in Milwaukee and Fort Atkinson, WI—will appear in 2004. My call for investigations of activist poetics came through in a couple of cases (herein), but remains largely unheeded. Prose fiction and translations (for the most part) are also more scarce than they should be here. (Translation work outside the alphabetic habits of Western literature is especially desired.) This includes 'field notes'—please use the last page!

I would like to devote some of the next issue to the correspondence I have been unable to address. There is also a significant backlog of books received (see list at the end of this issue); more reviews, from a greater diversity of reviewers, are needed. A Jack Collom feature, and a report on my short but inspiring visit to the Dreamtime Village permacultural community in central Wisconsin, will also take some room. For all of these reasons, *ecopoetics* will not be accepting unsolicited submissions in 2004.

Readers with something to contribute in one of the above-mentioned areas (including field notes) are, however, encouraged to contact the editor. I should say that one of the greatest pleasures of editing this magazine has been the surprise of opening the mail, to get familiar news from strange places—the publication will reopen to unsolicited submissions in 2005. Also please note that a website is in the works: at [www.factoryschool.org](http://www.factoryschool.org) Though the first two issues of the magazine are now sold out, free pdf files of these issues are available on the website.

Finally, I would like to thank my assistant Florine Melnyk, who volunteered many long hours over the summer to get this publication into shape and who has had to wait even longer to see the results. It would not have been possible without her help.

Best of luck to us all in 2004.

JS





10.21

Vertical sunlit edge of upstairs bedroom window  
the right side of which swings open as the wind  
arrives, pale peach towel draped on curved back  
of wood chair. Purple on green stems of irises  
next to the man whose right eye reads 'Histoire  
de Florida,' whose syllables measure its shape.  
The woman telling the man about man with baby  
following the neighbor walking her dogs, her  
name exactly the same as his wife's. Two red-  
breasted finches landing on edge of the feeder  
surrounded by others on foliage above and below  
it, man in red jacket running into pair of quail  
walking across yard. Small black and brown bird  
with white swatches on its cheeks and shoulders  
lifting and falling across a horizontal field,  
green of frog behind the darker green plane  
leaning against the window.

10.22

Northeast wind moving the shadows of the leaves across a column of sunlight on the bedroom wall, yellow of tee shirt wrapped around window latch that kept blowing open all night. Man on phone talking about paddling to the break from a boat, the older man choosing not to speak ten minutes to his daughter in Spokane but planning to fly there Thursday. A crow landing next to black body of crow on its side in a patch of green, the golden dog wandering into the back yard. Wind blowing through the blond woman's fresh-cut hair, who notices a pair of butterflies circling above poppy's purple. The sound of the honeybee buzzing around then crawling into a still bright orange nasturtium's mouth beside the stone wall, wind moving above the yellow orange of poppies waving in the background.

10.23

Upturned cup of waning moon hanging in the sky  
above uppermost leaves of tobacco plant tree,  
light scattered along edge of the unmade bed.  
Husband in blue shirt bent over book on table  
saying 'the current doesn't stop with the body,'  
his wife who isn't wearing wedding ring leaving  
'behind an almost empty ivy mind.' The pitcher  
throwing the broken end of a bat at man heading  
for first on a foul ball, trying to get control  
of his emotions. Twenty year old cat strolling  
toward man leaning back against the stone wall,  
short-haired woman on late night walk peering  
into the purple flower's stem. Pair of rust-  
colored moths landing on top of rose leaves,  
pair of white ones flitting in front of peach  
towels flapping on the line above a weathered  
cypress plank.

10.24

Black rock tumbling onto the white marble table  
beside a pair of old binoculars, planet shining  
in still dark sky opposite the circle of shadow  
in moon's bowl. Short-haired woman on a second  
late night walk finding books by Henry Miller  
and Anaïs Nin in the dumpster on the corner,  
attic window blowing open all night leaving  
everyone sleepless. Man in the black jacket  
leaving during the applause, face in a window  
looking back in pale morning air. Apparently  
rising pitch of an invisible owl's three-note  
'who' calling from the still dark eucalyptus  
grove, man standing on the far side of a dry  
canyon next to dog with ball at end of tail.  
Random scattering of white patches on blue  
surface of windswept plane, chaos of spray  
blowing off the tops of small waves.

10.25

Upper level of darker grey clouds moving across right plane of window above lighter grey sky apparently not moving, curve of bright white rock to the right of the middle of the table. Man in Marseilles writing poem to woman he loves in order to make her actually present, the blond woman reading steaming image of summer as a sign the man is lucky in love. The grey-haired woman at memorial service realizing her own father is dying, silver-haired man and son in maroon car driving over cliff. Ruler-edged lines moving across surface of the horizontal blue plane, close-up of man in black tucked under slow-motion action of falling white wall. Moth landed on angle of ceiling above the stairwell, tilt of lampshade in front of which the action suddenly stops.

## EASTER MORNING AT THE SUV, SOLAR AND OAK GROVE RANCH NEAR CRAWFORD, TEXAS

*Crawford, Texas, GNS, April 20, 2003.* Easter morning, drivers along Highway 185 in Texas – the one that leads right by the President’s White House in Crawford – found themselves treated to a brand new roadside attraction. Five SUVs, each one from a different manufacturer, are spaced 10 feet apart and stuck nose first at 65-degree angles into the earth. Only the back side doors, windows and rear ends remain revealed. Each of the vehicle’s alternatively royal blue, butterscotch gold, white, and cherry red colors glow oddly like fresh spring growth in the face of the rising sun.

More curiously, on a small northern pathway from the SUV vista stop – on what is normally an arid, some say biblical landscape – is the emergence of a large, circular Oak Grove that includes picnic tables at the open center and several winding paths into private alcoves with small benches under the awnings of the robust trees. Perhaps equally spectacular, extending out for several acres behind the SUV display and the Grove, are the parallel, reflective solar energy panels that rotate at different angles to best catch the sun’s rays at various points of the day. Visitors are welcome to pedal the site’s free bicycles up and down paths that extend in several directions across the horizon.

In the roadside parking area, on a stand sculpted out of an SUV hood, a small brochure printed on recycled paper provides some information about the site:

- The solar panels’ steel rotational supports are 100 percent constructed from shredded SUV metal. Granulated glass and shredded synthetic upholstery units constitute the reflective material and chemical agents required to produce solar energy.
- Bicycle frames, wheels and gears are also created from recycled SUVs. One SUV will create 1000 bicycle frames and parts.
- Individuals and families are welcome to donate their SUVs to the Ranch Recycling Center located at Crawford town limits. Free van transportation to their destination and back home is provided to donors.

- Under the auspices of Solar Utility Vendor, Inc. (SUV, Inc.) the company provides energy throughout Texas and adjoining states for community electrical, fuel and heating systems.

Easter Morning featured an egg hunt in the Grove with both adults and children fanning out across the paths to find blue, red, gold, and green eggs in and around the trees. Each egg also bore a stenciled message:

“RECYCLE & CREATE”

Eggshell waste cans were set up at the exit with fresh painted advice, “Disposed egg shells convert to biodegradable plastic for practical use.”

Houston art critics were quick to claim the new site’s significance. “This is a great contemporary re-interpretation of the both practical and sublime use of the traditional religious shrine,” one said. “It’s a magical combination of high-tech modern materials used to produce both illumination and power co-leveraged with the Oak’s healing, restive and regenerative power.

Another critic remembered Joseph Beuys, the German artist who planted trees, and the Texas Ant Farm’s Cadillac Ranch as influences, but, he said, “SUV, Inc.’s commitment to recycling, non-fossil fuel commitment, and implicit reverence for nature as a human partner is a clear artistic step forward to community, national and world health.”

The Crawford White House refused to comment publicly on the value of the site other than to express its concerns about either pagan religious and/or terrorist uses. It is also not known whether the President’s ranch will buy into SUV, Inc.’s solar power unit. At last look, on Easter morning, families were stopping – many in SUVs – to join in the egg hunt, picnic and sit quietly and contemplate on Grove benches while many others took advantage of bikes to pedal towards the horizon on special paths between the illuminated panels.

## ALICE NOTLEY / THEY ARE ALL DEAD TODAY

they are all dead today

like us?

like them.

the owl flies up and up to ask  
to hear sounds to know  
the turquoise snake is delighted with you and will bite you  
have i caused as much grief as i have received? returned to me, because i can  
feel. can't feel says the owl, can't feel now. tell me  
the woman with the long long hair strokes my head — i am telling you, thing,  
doing this, putting it into your unfeeling head.  
you will go again mask not to lose it  
mask of a human to grieve  
the tears are real turquoise, because they come from a form of beauty  
if you cry them, for anyone, who is dying in the world  
if you cry them sown in the earth they  
what, they, what? they return beauty to our ground. if someone cries  
who isn't the mate mother or father child relative of the dead  
if anyone else cries turquoise is returned balance and beauty are returned to the  
ground

i saw soldiers and civilians lying in heaps, through the crystal  
the light disk had become crystal  
and i saw that the dead were black corpses. and pieces they are speaking to  
you, what did i learn and what was my life?  
wasn't i supposed to learn something from the shape of it? (torn to bits) and  
you sent me out not to, and we shot them so they couldn't  
and you sent us out so we wouldn't learn any more. wouldn't  
and she remember, i couldn't bear to see her breath wiped  
from the mirrory surface of interaction, days closely clothe us in soil  
there are no issues here, no text you are reading the veins behind your own  
eyes

i can't find you.      no you have found us, dead ground.  
revenge a paint the numbers      who can have vengeance against the owl's wings'  
weight on us?      shot so couldn't surface, and i      will never surface any more  
there is another space, you fly      if      the wing doesn't weigh      if it's palatial  
and light,      but who told us that? who told us anything that mattered?  
is this true  
hu hu hu she replies  
everything in being reflects the other and, so, how could you disappear  
into something very different? but what you don't know is how the pieces  
are put together there

you used to let me walk alone, downtown when i was too young  
you have put me here, when i was too young  
i never thought, she said, he'd be in the ground so soon  
hu hu wails the other's mother for hers      was brought back in pieces, sealed  
and she'd never thought that, a long time ago. but all that was so many years  
you don't know where we really are and you don't know what we think of you  
or what we think of each other now. you have tried to know nothing and you have  
succeeded  
that is true. do i know anything?  
you have a crystal in your split forehead that is working its way towards  
knowing sounds  
i have come from another form      in the ground

## EARTH SPEAKS

in the frankest analysis  
scorpion you are a gesture.  
spit on the cards. they are tug-  
ging at you. you're not dead  
enough. your cosette rebirth  
no she is a birth. she is a  
bird. i front you. i am  
seething with corpses and those  
of the future. mouse jehovah  
in charge on top of the earth.  
come with quote — it was so  
you could mention me  
apologetically: DON'T APOLOGIZE  
FOR ME. man will, until you  
strangle his voice. every  
page, more pages, wall of  
grave crumbles more  
the moment you silence twin,  
there is no meat here.  
(holding my arms straight out  
together fingers extended.)  
break wall open. your first  
retrospective  
in courage. (i'm becoming,  
weepy?) you are a bark  
shadow now — you are  
secret to me, earth. you  
are cherokee for my  
purposes, i am listless,  
make some more song.  
i hear you thinking: human.

i, the anthropomorphized?  
you are terramorphized. i am now  
projecting into you.  
there is no bit of you who didn't  
come out of here  
you are body grew here soul  
sees through rock  
crystal, i grew you i grew  
you. (the old man nods  
black headband.) if you  
can "hear me," you are freely  
ensouled. (we went in that  
black bar with orange  
light lamp. everyone at the  
tables is dead. plates of  
worms. a knee split open.  
whose. face is ghastly,  
kid stuff. waiter serves  
us. he says, you are not  
to be remembered. too old.)  
i project that you  
dark lit necropolis  
you are a body death  
here in me. feel it, he can  
put some more crystals in you,  
you being projected. terramorph,  
you are an earth dirt ear  
now hear more and more

## SHOW YOU HIS FACE YOUNG

treat everyone else as if they were also  
pieces of the earth projections of the  
earth, he said.

all this decay of bodies, this putre-  
faction? not so bad, he said.

what does the earth want me to sing  
to it?

'i love you.' he said.

my child come this way

my child come this way

you will take home with you a good country

says the father

ghost dance song.

i dreamed my own father was young,

drinking and young. such a longing to see him Mara i say

in a church basement i say

i'm in jeans and a soft man shirt, it's an amateur sing

all the men there will sing, will i

the seat i sit down in i see belongs

to someone who will sing from Songs of the Republic

for the book is in front of me

i must find a seat where there is no book no Republic

no named song.

show you my father's face young

but you can't see it because

it's inside me

or can you see it

can you see?

if they could see inside you his young self. and he is dead,

in the uncorrupting earth,

Gaza Strip determined to resist,

having set booby traps mines and roadside

bombs Mira says, so that  
“This crime was carried out  
by scum who hold nothing sacred,”  
Putin said after the deadliest  
terror attack in Russia since

and all such attacks can be linked  
and then we can kill them all,  
all the Muslims we care to, in this corroborating war  
which makes whatever we say  
the truth of it, Mira says

Keep his mouth  
away from me  
whose? the mouth of male leader  
keep it away

pull it away tear it away. a new  
ghost dance song  
i am singing Cosette says for i am new

Why am i here? i ask  
the man in the black headband  
Because you remember everything  
and know that the earth is uncorrupting

Has gallant hair and master dust  
who  
the dead in mind  
i'd show you my father in my mind

i love you earth, for you have allowed me my mind  
for you have allowed me my form  
which exists in my mind,  
yours and mine  
you are more than and more than by being only

i am the people of the sacred bird and the ghost shirt  
soft plaid shirt

## STEPHEN VINCENT / A WALK TOWARD SPICER

This last weekend I was on a walk (here in San Francisco) with friends that started at Fog City Diner on the Embarcadero side of Telegraph Hill. We went up the steps to Coit Tower – took in the wonderful murals from the WPA Thirties (which are, among other things, a great embodiment of the radical intellectual and political life of the City circa 1939) – went down the hill into North Beach, passed not far from Gino and Carlo's to Washington Square Park to take in the Fire Department sculpture/shrine (there's always a recent beer bottle up in the outstretched bronze fingers of the Fireman); went up to the SF Art Institute where, inside on the Mission Revival style patio, in progress is a Hollywood-style production of a film to be called *The Sculptress*; the dark-haired heroine – looking appropriately schoolish and devoted – quotes her lines from behind a cut green-leaved tree branch held up on a rod with a metal clamp while we step into the Gallery to look at the splendid Diego Rivera mural: an optimistic, worker-centred vertical scaffold vision – including the painter and his assistants – in which City and country are being rebuilt. A fiction upon a fiction.

From the Art Institute we walk over the bay side of Russian Hill and take Polk Street down to Aquatic Park where we sit down on the edge of a low, contoured sea wall that separates the narrow beach from the sidewalk, the Maritime Museum building and the matching contour concrete bleachers that rise and overlook the harbor which is almost entirely encircled by the curve of two breakwaters – the view a lovely kind of cement necklace with an opening out to the larger bay where Angel Island and Mount Tamalpais rise in the hazy distance. The thin, little sand beach is partially covered with large grey and black stones, remnants from the construction of the sea wall and breakwater; their odd wet shapes, some full of myriad angles and planes, once broken apart by steam shovel, sledge hammers and picks.

Directly in front of us a number of the stones are precariously balanced, one on one – sometimes there are three – standing end upon end, creating improbable geometric figures, a feather-touch from falling over. In the middle of two or three receding rows, a thin, olive complexioned man – maybe twelve feet down from us – is crouched on one knee, both hands gripped around a large stone; he holds it up and posi

tions the lower end over another ‘base’ stone and begins to explore the point where a plane on one rock will match and balance itself on a plane of the other. Testing and shifting the balance, he twists and tilts the upper stone – lightly scraping it on the other, moving it up and down one plane, then another. If there’s slippage, he pivots the rock and tests it again.

He never adjusts the bottom rock, as if that will be somehow to cheat or alter some basic fact. His long, slender fingers resemble those of a piano player; in fact the process of working the stones is perhaps comparable to tuning an instrument, listening for the perfect pitch.

Three, maybe five minutes pass. He is patient, very patient, and he works as if unquestionably convinced that a singular balance will come to figure. Finally, if the activity were not so focused, one might say ‘as if by magic’ – he finds the tilt, the balance that works; gradually he withdraws his hands to make a complete break and comes out of his crouch to observe the combined shape of the two stones. Spontaneously, we clap.

“This is a gift,” he speaks to us, “I’ve been given this gift. It takes patience. It is a gift to the City.”

He sweeps his arm out across the Bay towards the islands and Mount Tamalpais.

“This is a powerful place. All that energy comes right to here. To find the balance I just have to be patient. I had to learn patience.”

There is a faded dark blue tattoo of a bracelet on his wrist, another tattoo up on his forearm, and one on his neck – possibly a gang, prison time or both: a life time apparently separate and behind him. As he speaks a small wave knocks over two of the sculptures.

“At the end of the day, they all come down. At night the birds need to eat the creatures in the sand without getting injured.” He then asks, “Would someone like to pick a rock? I can work with anything I can lift.” One of our friends chooses a rock and the process begins again.

In Peter Gizzi's excellent 'Afterword' to his book, *The House That Jack Built: The Collected Lectures of Jack Spicer*, he describes the late poet in and around North Beach, including his usual afternoon stroll from his apartment on Polk Street to Aquatic Park, before heading off in the direction of Gino and Carlo's – a route similar but in reverse to the one we have taken. Here, if he did not meet or gather with other friends, he sat to listen in solitude to the Giants baseball game on a transistor radio – as legend has it – hanging down from a tree branch tied by a piece of string. For Spicer, the Park was one of those places – an urban version of a sacred grove – where power gathers and takes focus. A place to be open, to take in “the dictation,” those forces from the “outside” that could invade the poet's body from anywhere, anytime. To be on the ready – notebook and pen on hand – ready to move the words, one by one, into the right location. Words, those awkward objects not undifferent from these stones (“the furniture”), their awkward planes and angles, a debris of intractable syllables; words to which the poet patiently listens, tilts, and pivots until they somehow miraculously conjoin and fit into jagged lines: gravitationally balanced, the combination heightened to a larger power.

Poet and Sculptor – both tested and scarred – strikingly similar and grateful to take the pitches from an “outside.” Those forces crossing the Bay out of a vague horizon of cloud, sunlight, mountain and island. The sculptor - as Spicer wrote in *After Lorca* - the poet's “correspondent”: another time, another maker:

“Things do not connect; they correspond. That is what makes it possible for a poet to translate real objects, to bring them across language as easily as he can bring them across time. That tree you saw in Spain is a tree I could never have seen in California, that lemon has a different smell and a different taste, BUT the answer is this – every place has a real object to correspond with your real object . . . (perhaps as unapparently as that lemon corresponds to this piece of seaweed) and, in turn, some future poet will write something which ‘corresponds’ to them. That is how we dead men write to each other . . .”

Each new sculpture, a new translation. The process continuous.

*November 28 1999*



### **About Jack Spicer**

Jack Spicer (1925-1965) was an important figure in the so-called “San Francisco Renaissance” – circa 1946-1965 – together with his friends and fellow poets Robin Blaser and Robert Duncan. His work enacted a belief in and recognition of the necessity of the practice of poetry – not as a higher life, but as the movement and care of what we are and where we are. His mature work developed the idea of poetry as dictation i.e. as something received from outside the individual self. Jack Spicer’s influence continues to grow. Interested readers are directed to *The Collected Books of Jack Spicer*, edited by Robin Blaser (Santa Rosa, Ca.: Black Sparrow Press, 1975) ISBN 0-87685-241-X.

*A Walk Toward Spicer* was originally published as a chapbook in a limited edition of 150 copies by The Cherry On The Top Press, 29 Vickers Road, Firth Park, Sheffield S5 6UY, U.K. with a colour photograph by the author of the balanced rocks tipped in. 30 copies were printed on Svecia Antiqua Rare deckle edged cotton laid paper and have endpapers made from Italian printed paper. The 120 copies were printed on 90gsm white paper.

**FLOODS**

The poor live on low ground waiting for the river  
to rise one night and sweep them to the sea.  
I've seen small cradles floating by, the wrecks  
of houses, chairs, and a great rage of ash-  
pale water splaying terror through the sky:  
this is all yours, poor man, for your wife and crop,  
your dog and tools, so you can learn to beg.  
No water laps at the homes of gentlemen  
whose snowy collars flutter on the line.  
It feeds on this rolling mire, these ruins winding  
their idle course to the sea with your dead,  
among roughcut tables and the luckless trees  
that bob and tumble turning up bare root.

## INUNDACIONES

Los pobres viven abajo esperando que el río  
se levante en la noche y se los lleve al mar.  
He visto pequeñas cunas que flotaban, destrozos  
de viviendas, sillas, y una cólera augusta  
de lívidas aguas en que se confunden el cielo y el terror.  
Sólo es para ti, pobre, para tu esposa y tu sembrado,  
para tu perro y tus herramientas, para que aprendas a mendigo.  
El agua no sube hasta las casas de los caballeros  
cuyos nevados cuellos vuelan desde las lavanderías.  
Cuomo este fango arrollador y estas ruinas que nadan  
con tus muertos vagando dulcemente hacia el mar,  
entre las pobres mesas y los perdidos árboles  
que van de tumbo en tumbo mostrando sus raíces

## LAPIS LAZULI IN CHILE

Snowbound, shaggy, and stark,  
America's harsh cordillera,  
a planet:  
there lies the blue of blues,  
blue solitude, secret blue,  
nest of blue, lapis lazuli,  
my land's blue skeleton.

A fuse burns, the shock clears  
and the breast of the stone breaks up:  
soft humus above the blast  
and under it blue bonework,  
stone mounding ultramarine.

Cathedral of buried blues,  
jolt of blue crystal,  
the sea's eye sunk in snow –  
you come back again from water to light,  
to day, to the clear skin  
of space, turning  
the earth's to the sky's  
blue.

(DE *LAS PIEDRAS DEL CIELO*)

Ronca es la americana cordillera,  
nevada, hirsuta y dura,  
planetaria:  
allí yace el azul de los azules,  
el azul soledad, azul secreto,  
el nido del azul, el lapislázuli,  
el azul esqueleto de mi patria.

Arde la mecha, crece el estallido  
y se desgrana el pecho de la piedra:  
sobre la dinamita es tierno el humo  
y bajo el humo la osamenta azul,  
los terrones de piedra ultramarina.

Oh catedral de azules enterrados,  
sacudimiento de cristal azul,  
ojo del mar cubierto por la nieve  
otra vez a la luz vuelves del agua,  
al día, a la piel clara  
del espacio,  
al cielo azul vuelve el terrestre azul.

## GUILTY

I declare myself guilty of not having  
made, with these hands they gave me,  
a broom.

Why didn't I make a broom?

Why did they give me hands?

What use have they been  
if all I ever did was  
watch the stir of the grain,  
listen up for the wind  
and did not gather straws  
still green in the earth  
for a broom,  
not set the soft stalks to dry  
and bind them  
in a gold bundle,  
and did not lash a wooden stick  
to the yellow skirt  
till I had a broom for the paths?

So it went.  
How did my life  
get by  
without seeing, and learning,  
and gathering and binding  
the basic things?

It's too late to deny  
I had the time,  
the time,  
yet the hands were lacking,  
so how could I aim  
for greatness  
if I was never able  
to make  
a broom,  
not one,  
not even one?

## EL CULPABLE

Me declaro culpable de no haber  
hecho, con estas manos que me dieron,  
una escoba.

Por qué no hice una escoba?

Por qué me dieron manos?

Para qué me sirvieron  
si sólo vi el rumor del cereal,  
si sólo tuve oídos para el viento  
y no recogí el hilo  
de la escoba,  
verde aún en la tierra,  
y no puse a secar los tallos tiernos  
y no los pude unir  
en un haz áureo  
y no junté una caña de madera  
a la falda amarilla  
hasta dar una escoba a los caminos?

Así fue:  
no sé cómo  
se me pasó la vida  
sin aprender, sin ver,  
sin recoger y unir  
los elementos.

En esta hora no niego  
que tuve tiempo,  
tiempo,  
pero no tuve manos,  
y así, cómo podía  
aspirar con razón a la grandeza  
si nunca fui capaz  
de hacer  
una escoba,  
una sola,  
una?

TO REMATERIALIZE :

DEDUCE

TO REDUCE

DEMATER


TO REDUCE

TO REDUCE RUS


DEDUCE DUST



TO DEMATERIAL

REDUCE FOOTPRINT 

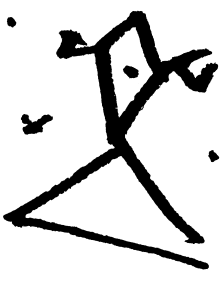
3

U1  M

RUST  
DUST



IALIZE  
DUST


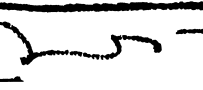
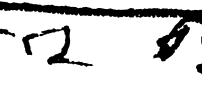
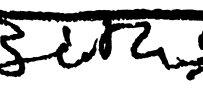



T  

REMATERIALIZE



IZE, PREMATERIALIZATION

MARK NOWAK / FROM *1916: THE MESABI  
MINERS' STRIKE AGAINST U.S. STEEL*

**8 June 1916**

**I am a miner  
for fourteen years—  
over fourteen years,  
and I have eight children—**

**I have seven living  
and one dead.**

“A big bullhead,  
“weighing nearly 100 pounds,

“was caught [today]  
“by Smith and Gripp  
“who are netting St. Mary's Lake  
“and transferring all the fish

“to Ely Lake.

**I work now  
for last three years.  
I get \$59 check...**

*Archie Roosevelt,  
son of Col. Roosevelt,  
will become a wool sorter  
at \$6 a week this summer*

**and I send  
four kids to school,  
following his graduation  
from Harvard.**

“The big fish was caught  
“at the intake pipe  
“of the city  
“water supply system

“and had been  
“partially sucked  
“into the pipe,  
“clogging it.

**and the teacher would  
like to have the children  
dressed and clean  
and everything**

**like that.  
I would like  
to do that  
myself.**

*Archie has chosen  
a job similar  
to the one held down  
by his elder brother,*

*Theodore Jr.,  
in which he will learn  
all the branches  
of the carpet-making trade.*

**Children go to church  
and priest like to see  
wife dressed nice  
like American ladies,**

**and children  
like American children.**  
*After his graduation  
he will take*

*a short rest  
at Oyster Bay...*  
**I like too, but can't.  
Maybe single man**

**on wages  
like mine,  
but we  
are nine.**

**I pay rent, no longer  
get free wood, pay coal,  
insurance, taxes,  
light, water,**

**how can I live?** *...and then go  
to Clinton, Mass., and take up  
his work in the factory  
of the Bigelow Hartford Carpet Co.*

“Smith and Gripp  
“are giving away...  
“hundred of suckers,  
“red horse and fish

**So here—a man have  
seven children...**  
“which people of the district  
“will not angle for,

“but which  
“some foreigners  
**Where am I going  
to get the money?**

“dry or salt  
**I can't get it working,**  
“for winter use.  
**or nothing.**

DOUGLAS MANSON / SIGHT / NONSIGHT

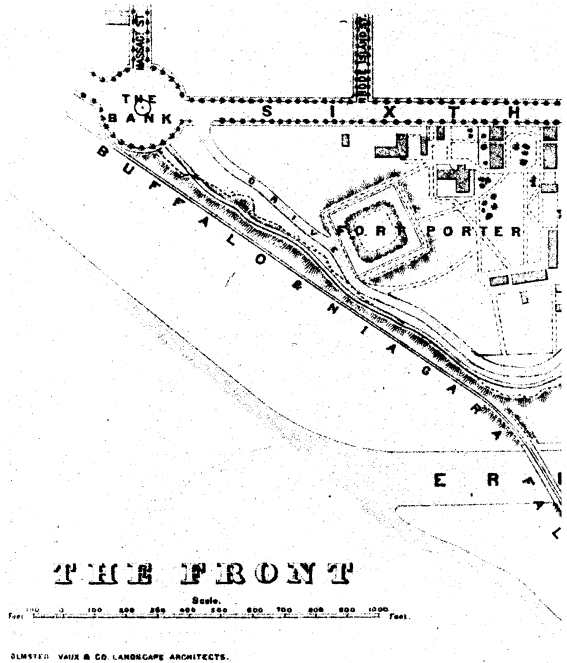
(A WRITING ON OLMSTED'S FRONT PARK IN BUFFALO, NY)

I see and don't see what was once here. I see, then nonsee, what is here today. The documents and historians tell me much about what was, and the conservationists what could be reclaimed of the once was. I find that saying what is seen can arrive at nonsight. Telling a space seizes other tones. I nonsight the park that is still park, but one unseen in the founder's vision. Peter William Hedlund has revisioned this Park, and his vision is quite beautiful. I found what was monumental in the as yet unrevised. I tell it in two tones: *The Monuments of Olmsted's Front Park, Buffalo, NY, 2003*. A title in a tradition. A park cut into remnant by time. May the unseen please.

Front Park currently features three distinct and noteworthy monuments amidst its asphalt pools and ancient oaks: The Viewing Platform, the Earthworks, and the Staging Area.

Access to **The Viewing Platform** is difficult & perhaps illegal (for safety reasons), but it offers the best approximation of the view around which Olmsted designed and contoured The Front back in the nineteenth century. The Viewing Platform is a hollow structure made of regular construction beams, affixed to a much larger structure of brick built in the 1920s, forming a kind of projection, or later addition, to its rear face. The viewing platform sits lower than its parent structure, which is built into the side of a steep, but short, rise. It stands about 10 feet above the ground and has no guard- or handrails. The Platform's horizontal surface, an area of about 300 sq.ft., is covered in successive layers of plywood, tarpaper, and a continuous layer of granulated roofing paper of a highly saturated, tennis-court green. At various points on the Platform surface these layers have collapsed inwards or have been cut away, offering to sight the form and materials of its construction and the black depths of the hollow interior underneath them. This adds an element of excitement and risk to the enjoyment of the view. The view itself is westward and WNW only, since the brick structure blocks all views to the east. The lower two-thirds of this view is dominated by an enormous stone and concrete project which bears the unfrivolous name "190."

Project 190 appears to be a pair of low, parallel channels, each approximately 10 yards across, which lay across the entire scene perpendicular to the line of sight. From beyond one's view to the left another channel curves from behind and rises to join the others. It is sunk so deeply to the far left that the striated limestone of the bluff can be seen along its walls. The bluff limestone, the channel beds, and the low dividing walls between them are all of the same pale, dirty cream color. The noise from these channels provides the dominant aural accompaniment to the view, a kind of continuous, hypnotic aspirate sound simultaneous with varying percussive undertones that form unique, quasi-stanzaic motifs that could be described as staccato strainings, rattlings, grindings, or plosions. Further to the left, in the middle distance, other raised channels cross over 190, transecting and



interrupting our view of its full extent. 190 is an enormous work which extends for miles in either direction along the Lake Erie shoreline, and along the Niagara River. The Viewing Platform only offers a sustained view of about 1/1000th of it.

The remaining upper two-thirds of the view from the Platform is rather diminished in importance, since 190 is so impressive; but if one looks, there is a body of water, across which can be seen a low shoreline, some structures in the SW distance, and a bit of sky above that.

**The Earthworks.** One feature of The Front is a large, circular asphalt “pool” nearly 150 yards in diameter, which contains a sculptural object in its center. At one point in time this pool was bordered by a series of wrought-iron lamps, many of which remain, though unevenly, since quite a few have been torn from the ground, leaving small, wire-sprouting



ing pediments behind. Gulls frequently use these pediments, looking much like miniature imitations of the sculptural object. And like the figure of this sculpture, the gulls are probably the only creatures who now consistently look out to the lake from this locale.

The Earthworks monument itself rests atop the pool near its WNW edge, where it adds a pleasant, asymmetrical organicism to the prospect as a whole. It also provides a distinctive, dialectical contrast to the cracked, pervasive grey-blue tone of the asphalt with its rich green and deep brown-black hues. The Earthworks is a mound of approximately 3 tons

of sod, shaped less like a barrow or tumulus than a chance aggregate of earth-and-grass globules of 3-4' diameter each. It achieves its strong aesthetic effect because it appears to have been the type of sod used for general landscaping purposes, though now in such mixture and disarray that surface and subsurface are indistinguishable, and any use for the creation of a new lawn impossible. Instead, it is a monument to landscape design itself, stark remainder of that activity, so revolutionary in Olmstead's time, now rigidified into a monoculture of surplus and waste. A mark of the wilderness that has passed beyond the far side of the age of industrialization and exists now, not as a natural contrary and salve to our civilization, but as the most palpable form and signal of excess. Wilderness as discard.

**The Staging Area.** The most beguiling of the Front monuments is The Staging Area, simply because its purposes, uses, and current intention are so difficult to discern. Sporting arena, pageantry site, parade ground, demonstration theatre, tournament field, gladiatorial pit or landing platform—all are suggested, but none verifiable. It is located at the foot of a low rise, near a rarely used entrance to the park, surrounded by tall trees, and out of sight from the old playground greensward to the NE. It consists of a stone surface, 25 yards long on the SE side, and 40 yards long on its SW side, of a plain, almost unmarked bluish macadam. One can see, very faintly, that a number of concentric circles had been painted at intervals in a white tone. But these are so faint, and so unusually placed, no single purpose for them seems accurate. One could conjecture “parking lot” for the Staging Area, but this would only be a matter of later convenience (since any approximately flat surface is now used as such), and definitely not its original purpose. For one thing: on the NE side there are a row of evenly spaced, and tall power lamps, three to a stalk, which would aim more light, in more directions, than necessary for a contest of sport. Secondly, there is an inexplicable structure running the length of this NE side, built into the hillside, and just behind the lamps. Were it not for limitations of space, a great deal could be said of its design, appearance and features. It will be enough to say that its relatively low height, about 8', make it suitable as a viewing platform, or a stage for drama or oratory. Perhaps it was at one time connected to the Staging Area by ramps or steps of some kind.

One feature bears mention: a large 1' diameter pipe, extends along half its length, about 6' from the ground. Because of this, it seems the structure could possibly have held some kind of mechanism or pump, though the interior couldn't be explored, as its previous openings and doorways have all been bricked or boarded shut. Oddly, there is a jumbled pile of cut logs at one end, much weathered, and seemingly unrelated to all else in the vicinity. It may be that this wood was used to serve some ritual purpose on the Staging Area.

DEREK OWENS / FROM EGG SEQUENCE

you on your lunch break wandering, as is your habit, about the industrial park

an assembly of gulls congregating by one of the loading docks  
(dumpster beacons = instant bird commons)

you decide to walk into their midst, intersect their zone, bisect  
their business, why not  
you can envision the subsequent eruption, the helicopter hum  
of wings en masse, the cloud effect  
you'll watch where they'll go, note how far away  
they'll let you get before they reconvene  
it'll be like an experiment

and in truth this decision to interfere with their foraging is borne not by malicious  
intent, not much anyway, but more an acceptance of how any  
thing is always dislocating some other  
thing and since dislocations invariably push  
to surface might as well let the conduits manifest where they may

so you bust your way in

*but the birds refuse to spook*  
they won't even part

and there it is you're not  
*there* to them  
anymore

you're not mattering to birds

LISA FORREST / BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON

This left behind begins  
back as front  
scapulars glossy streaked  
slender to touch to reach

from above sky is grounded  
landscape divides & juts  
wooded stream string boundaries bow &  
thoughts concentric snap

roomed out there some transitory shoulder traced  
restless in sleep nest in pairs  
a branch over water,  
feed both by day & night

## KINGFISHER

White spot before the eye  
Halcyone days wash  
sides of neck back  
& band across breast  
solitaire broken

on your shore  
quiet as you please  
the limits of wanderings  
reached

wings hover plunge  
dive from height of ten or  
fifteen feet even  
felt distance comforts

legs' brush under table  
glint of scale or fin  
water passed over faces  
word rooms unsuspected rattle

## MOCKINGBIRD

Songster of the south  
ash gray & white upper parts  
sexes not distinguished in  
color voice, poured forth  
hushed thrill tied-up knot

king of feathered mockers  
courting rather than shunning  
good mockers are exceptional, you  
stand outside strained to  
inch forward

sing throughout the night ring marvelous  
but little depth an undefinable variation in what was  
reaching alarm note sharp  
on rare occasion found a bit farther north

## YELLOW HEADED BLACKBIRD

Pale & cinnamon brown  
dirty yellow voice  
never before did duty as song  
harsh strain sounds a whistle

same haunt & take wing  
habit female muted streaked  
under hangs a cradle nest  
quill reeds or rush

you, you sing red-winged sentry  
long & shrill alarm note crimson  
mounts alight  
bares the topmost branch

the nesting season is a short one  
we gather in flocks circle  
half-light far seldom sounds met  
feed on wild things, pillage & push

JANE SPRAGUE / WHITE FOOTED MOUSE

In the days of apocalypse wind blows clean and lovely

In the field of the barn wheat sways gentle under

In the line of forest mice grow stout and handsome

In the days of our remembered

In the fur of the mouse the rider

In the rider the small disease

In the disease the spirochetes snapping

In the scratching

come in

In the light of the night sky

In the memory of constellations

the white footed mouse SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH the meek  
opportune arachnid INHERENT THE GRANDEUR the male deer  
stamp in velvet BADGER FUR our thick chambered heart HOLLOW  
BONE WHISTLE we of diminished consequence TEMPEST MADE  
OF MOSS trampling the holy EVERY SINGLE EAGLE PART

when they went down to grassland KAOLIN CLAY FOR PREGNANT  
some say to subdivide LITTLE BACKYARD LANDFILL some trap  
the menace deer NEW SCIENCE PROTOCOL some wonder at their  
sperm count STERILE DOES ARE DEAR some miss their hybrid  
hosta INSURANCE CLAIM TEN THOUSAND and cars and cars  
and gears

there was a way, a western way  
a history of lawns.  
there was a place, an england place, the staid and landed gentry

below the rolling hills  
below the groundlings sty  
below the manor trappings

surround surround hemmed in by lawn by leaf our trifles  
lawned in by grass no beasts of burden bedlam feasting  
their trifle garden collection

once become betray we beckon  
see them steal them mimic best  
our noble tweedy classmen

herbs of the temple PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE garden herbs of hot-  
house toolshed JAPANESE KNOTWEED medicine of the doorstep  
GOLDENROD rip and treadle snap and treacle butter for to fat you  
VIRGINIA CREEPER knifing needling vines WILD PURPLE  
GRAPE choking chiming threading binding

*an etymology of plants: PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE: to lose strife. to peaceful  
to sweeten to bind. fragrant herb for strewing. tacit tool for gall. stones.  
back in the day. of laudanum lauds. before our fine tuned landfills. we  
tread upon such ground.*

they plant seed instead. four hectares. four types of standard needle  
grasses. lush livid limpid luxuriate languish languid languorous  
our green triumph disorder

#### THE LEGACY OF MICE

in the apocalyptic time in the new and dawning dark time our sacred  
books will make clean and ample homes for rodents. if only we had  
such teeth.

in the end the survivors will be the white footed mice. the ticks. the  
white-tailed deer. and cockroaches. they can be trusted with our leav-  
ings. WHAT ENDURES. LASTS.

the bedcovers will be put to good use. grass will not be beaten. these  
few will use it well. feed to seed and cover. KAOLIN CLAY. sparse and  
shallow places.

KENTUCKY BLUE  
CRAB  
FLAME  
RICE  
WHEAT  
BAMBOO  
JOHN BARLEYCORN  
KAOLIN CLAY

SPIROCHETES  
TICK  
TICK  
TICK  
TICK

Long teeth. Curved edge. Vulnerable to hawks.

haws  
brambles  
berries

such small and human hands

a small place

is all

white footed mouse

white tailed deer

deer tick

these cycles

contiguous to...a meadow...contiguous to forest...contiguous to in the winter...contiguous to the deepest winter...contiguous to they tunnel under snow...contiguous to the drifts blow...connection treacherous to larger...connection to a dog will nose in deep...contiguous to a doe will keep her shape...connection to a thaw...connection to all it takes for insects...connection to arachnids will move in...contiguous to their corpses in the freezer...connection to nestled into skin...connection to we soaked them long in lye baths...contiguous to it was not long enough.

connection from connection. contiguity from contiguity.

on NPR. a VOICE. a FEMALE voice. a SCIENCE nimble master.  
a MOUSY girl. she's BOOKISH.

*the white footed mouse will inherit the earth. no way to eradicate. tenacious and steadfast. the suburb is their homeland. their avenues of lawns. on the mice, the ticks, in the ticks, disease. in the grass, the mice. on the grass, the ticks. who comes loping? our hybrid suburb deer. on the deer, the grass. in the deer the grass. on the deer the ticks. in the blood the spirochetes. tick. when they went down to grassland. where we shot them there. where we took off all their skin. where we found a prize. tick is an arachnid. in the spirochetes, at the full moon, they stimulate, they wriggle. one afflicted feels this. in the blood. in the heart. in. they've come in. and look at us: we've let them.*

## WHAT WE DO WITH TRIMMINGS

we soak the hide in lye. a solution of 3 parts lye to more parts water. this should loosen off the fur. the hide of a male deer. we remove his testicles we wonder at their smallness. their remarkable attachment. we think of his other parts and wonder where the antlers. a candelabra. or mounted in a cabin. and covered up with spiders. where is all his velvet. the lye is not working. we haul out his hide we scrape it with a blade. we do this alone in nighttime. every angle of its wrong.

in between the floors. in buckets in the garden shed. in between the walls. an anarchy of rodents.

we hear them run their long trails. we find their slatted lodge.

## TO THE HIDE THE TICKS

## A HUNDRED OF THEM, MORE

we give up. we lose faith in scraping. our weight is not enough. we dump the liquid poolside. the hide returns to deep freeze. it lingers there for years.

## WHAT TO DO WITH WASTE

what was the cover a deer a mouse what once was congeals or turns to dust in the GARDEN shed. a mouse. she turns to DUST in a freezer a BUCK he's stiffened out in ice. some PART what was him. his other parts GONE DOWN to GRASSLAND.

## WHAT LINGERS AT THE DOORSTEP

in the mice so cute and sweetly. an england lady, little beatrice the spinster.  
these lovely little books  
turning to dust dusting to turn the covers of  
tucking in tightly down from the goose cotton from texas simple homely pie.  
police patrolled streets exterminators cuteness tipping the newsboy stopping  
up drains.

and

‘goodnight mummy’

and

‘lights out son’



Proposal for the first Aeolian Neon,  
powered by wind turbine.

**RIVERS AND TIDES : ANDY GOLDSWORTHY WORKING WITH TIME**  
**THOMAS RIEDELSHEIMER DOCUMENTARY, GERMANY, 2000, 90 MIN.**

*Looking, touching, material, place and form are all inseparable from the resulting work. It is difficult to say where one stops and another begins. The energy and space around a material are as important as the energy and space within. The weather, rain, sun, snow, hail, mist, calm is that external space made visible. When I touch a rock, I am touching and working the space around it. It is not independent of its surroundings, and the way it sits tells how it came to be there. I want to get under the surface. When I work with a leaf, rock, stick, it is not just that material in itself, it is an opening into the processes of life within and around it. When I leave it, these processes continue.*

—Andy Goldsworthy

In the morning—about twelve hours before I saw *Rivers and Tides*, the documentary film about the work of land artist Andy Goldsworthy—my partner and I took our dog for a walk to Mt. Tabor which is fairly close to our house and “famous” for being the only volcano in the bounds of an urban U.S. city. On a clear day, if you look from off the north side of the mountain you can see the flat top of Mt. St. Helens over in Washington which blew off its peak and lost over a thousand feet when it erupted in 1980.

I won't go into details, but after our walk that day, the vet put our dog to sleep. When we returned home we found it an unbearable place; a painful catalogue of what was so profoundly and abruptly gone. To get out of the house and get our thoughts off our dog's death, we decided to go and see *Rivers and Tides* though neither of us knew of Goldsworthy's work. Really I assumed that, whatever the film, I wouldn't last long sitting in the theatre. And though it did *not* help me get my mind off what had happened, I did stay through the entire film—stayed precisely because the film helped move me into the anguish of loss. The film helped me to realize, or to remember, that grief is integral to the experience of love; that death is a type of catastrophic transformation but not an aberration.

While pulverizing iron-rich red rock into a powder, Goldsworthy comments that there is something violent about the energy of the color red. That a Japanese maple with its bright red leaves standing on a hillside is like a wound in the mountain. It's no coincidence that the color of the maple's leaves is the color of blood—not to Goldsworthy, not within

the revelation of his work. They share a kinship that they also share with the red rock that Goldsworthy finds under the surface of a narrow rock-bed stream which has a number of waterfalls and small water-carved pools along its banks. Goldsworthy tells us that he'd worked in that location a long time before he noticed the red veins hidden under the "skin" of the rock. He takes the red powder and mixes it with river water in one of the isolate pools along the bank where it sits—still and unmoving—like a pool of blood; violent but gorgeous. He releases the red powder just above a small waterfall so that, as it flows down, it appears a shock of color among the deep greens and black of the river—and the striking connection to flowing blood is unavoidable. He takes the iron powder and throws it into the air where it plumes out into a red cloud that, again, resonates as dangerous yet irresistibly lovely. For Goldsworthy, transforming the rock into these fluid states recalls our intimate connection with rock whose iron is also hidden in our veins, flowing under our skin. And it reminds us that even rock, which we think of as the most stable element of our world, what holds everything else in place, is in fact moving, changing, and fluid. Rock in its fluid state is somehow ominous—threatening, he says, to our sense of stasis, our sense of having an anchor to hold our world in place.

That, ultimately, there is no "anchor" is what we perhaps feel most intimately and intensely when something in our everyday world, something we love and take for granted suddenly disappears. With such disappearance absence becomes presence. The absence of the click-clack sound our dog's claws made as he crossed the wood floors to greet us when we walked in the door, his nose's nudges when he wanted to play, his affectionate cuddling whenever we went to sit or lay down, his pouting, agitated insistence when he wanted something like a walk—all of it a wound—not the visible violence of red or the explosion of a volcano but a hidden kind of wound, like a missing mountain peak or the terrible stillness of a room. In Goldsworthy's film this absence/presence is most strikingly articulated through the figure of black holes. There are many such holes in his work, made not by using black but by way of surrounding materials like rings of yellow, orange, and red leaves. Especially moving was the black hole he made in a massive tree root in response to his sister-in-law's death at a young age. That hole, for him, *is* the image of death—an image made only more articulate by the green sprout he found growing out of it when he returned to the spot a few weeks later. The hole is both tomb and womb.

As the camera follows him through the neighborhoods of Penpont, Scotland while he collects dandelion heads, he talks about the place where he has lived for more than a decade. He says its important to stay put because only by living in the same place year after year can you move into the cycle of change. He talks about a grim old lady he knew who used to live on one of the village's cobblestone streets. While they were talking one day and he told her how much he loved their neighborhood, that all his children had been born there and she replied, "that's the difference between you and me, you see only births, I see only deaths." She'd lived there all her life and knew all the people who'd lived in each of those houses most of them now dead. "I never want to forget that" Goldsworthy comments. The fact of loss is fundamental to our lives and to Goldsworthy's work which, though not morbid, is deeply concerned with loss, sorrow, shock, and upheaval. This is paradoxical in a way because *seeing* his work is such a pleasant experience—it is so beautiful and visually pleasing. But for Goldsworthy loss is found not only in, say, a parking lot built upon a filled-in river, but in those places that appear most pristine and vital. It is a mistake, he says, to see nature as pastoral. We need to get beyond the notion that nature is "pretty," beyond that pastoral surface. Sheep, for example, he points out, though they appear soft, wooly, and sweet are incredibly brutal to young shoots and growing things. They rip and tear at the earth and have a long history of displacing other beings. Sheep have defined the Scottish landscape making it barren and treeless.

I realized after seeing the film that I had indeed seen Goldsworthy's work before. And though I remember being drawn to it I also remember that I'd been turned off by the glossy photographs and the seeming neatness of the work. I thought it was contrived—that the *point* of the work was the attractiveness of the images just as the point of much "nature art" seems to be the representation of some fantastic beauty and the peacefulness of "nature." If I'd read the text more closely or looked more carefully at the duration catalogued in many of his photographs I'm sure I would have changed my mind. The documentary, however, because of the time-based nature of film, makes very clear that his work isn't about the finished product but about the working itself, about that which is learned only through the process of working. His focus is not on the final product but rather on taking the work to what he calls "the edge of collapse."

Goldsworthy originally started working outdoors when he was in art college. He left the cubicles at school and went outside exposing his working process to the risks of contingency and the relentlessness of time which is epitomized in his work by the rising and falling of the ocean tide. The film enables us to see dynamics in the work that photography and even his museum installations (I was lucky enough to get a chance to see the recent Three Cairns show at the La Jolla Contemporary Art Museum) don't convey as dramatically. For example, watching him build a bracken sculpture on a very blustery day and watching the work fall apart as he's building it, to see the frustration on his face and then to see him start again tells you something that the visually stunning but motionless version in the museum (where there is a standing guard and no wind or rain) doesn't. To witness him build a cairn that keeps falling apart as the sunlight changes and brightens, while the tide inches forward and threatens to subvert the project, makes clear the centrality of risk in his work; makes it evident that his work is defined by a certain urgency and that contingency, as much as any given material, is in fact his teacher.

Goldsworthy's vision moved its way into my seeing over the course of the film so that after I left the theatre I noticed patterns everywhere, in everything, in cracks in the sidewalk, the stars, the rose bushes leaning over the fence. And I saw death and my sorrow as part of the movement of a pattern like the serpentine movement of leaves threaded together, winding and unwinding within the serpentine bed of a river.

The serpentine pattern, like the image of a river from the sky, is a central figure in the film, and guides director Riedelsheimer's construction of the documentary: the rambling digressions linked together with jump cuts stitched together through the overlap of visual images and thematics. The filmmaker in his patient and sympathetic cinematography and editing and through Fred Frith's haunting sound track evokes the visionary multiplicities of Goldsworthy's work very precisely and with enormous care.

The film opens with the artist at a beach in Nova Scotia on a freezing cold morning sculpting a serpentine pattern out of icicles. His fingers are bare and bright pink from cold. He holds a bowl of water which he's using to glue the ice together. Goldsworthy says that to make the work, to make the contact necessary to make the work, he must use his bare hands, but if the work is going well then the art itself will keep him

warm. He looks pretty cold. Suddenly the icicle is illuminated by the sunrise, transforming the sculpture from an attractive pattern into this luminous, otherworldly figure. “I didn’t expect that” he says, “I couldn’t have planned that.” The icicle drips drops full of golden light: “What brings the work to life will cause its death.”

Walking on Mt. Tabor now I think about the volcanic explosions that made the Willamette Valley’s soil some of the richest in the world; I think about Goldsworthy biting the icicle to make it fit and the light that illuminated our dog’s being. He used to look back as he trotted along ahead of us on the park’s hiking paths, he was checking to make sure we were still there behind him.

Recently, with Spring in full riot, I took a walk, alone, under the towering pines on Mount Tabor. I thought of the catastrophic volcanic explosions that made the Willamette Valley’s soil some of the richest in the world. And I thought of the image of the sun caught inside Goldsworthy’s icicle sculpture. That astonishing light that gave life to the sculpture as it slowly destroyed it helped me to see how Aweful is the light that illuminates and then absconds with the lives of beings we love.

—ALICIA COHEN

**“YES, LEAVES LOOK BACK/ AT ME”**

**ALICIA COHEN, *bEAR* BUFFALO: HAND PRESS, 2000**

*bEAR* is a book that sees to hear and hears to see. Eyes and ears are limbs reaching out into the natural world. Cohen holds, beholds and hears her subjects carefully—“held/ in my hand’s eye I heard you.” This care results in book that insists on a reciprocal relationship with nature, one that tries to reverse the predatory approach to the natural world taken not only by industrial capitalism, but also by the writer who might appropriate nature’s images without any attempt to understand nature itself. Thoreau complained of English literature “breath[ing] no wild strain... There is plenty genial love of Nature but not so much Nature herself.” He calls for the poet to “nail words to their primitive senses,...transplant[ing] them to [the] page with earth adhering to its roots.” Cohen’s experimentation is in service of discovering and representing both the biological roots of living entities and the etymological roots of words.

not of my will  
I write            trees  
and erbys bergenyth and florysshyth  
spryngh,    burgenyth  
buddyth and florysshyth  
harte begynnyth to blossom

This setting of the words of Sir Thomas Malory, which appears early in the book, suggests a willingness to relinquish control in the face of the natural world and language. (This is not to say, of course, that Cohen’s use of language is uncontrolled. The musical precision and the use of page space demonstrate a careful eye and ear, further enforcing two of the text’s imperatives—to look—“look and look and ever aware” and listen—“be ears.” This might also be a good opportunity to comment on the beauty of the book itself—from its aptly placed diagrams of bees and leaves to its snowy white cover, spring green inside paper, and hand sewn binding). A central question appears in the middle of the book—“do eyes extend/ to the stars to see them/ or does something/ from the stars extend to the eye?” In *bEAR*, everything from bears to bees to stars to language extend themselves to the perceiver, yet each of these entities is also simultaneously sensing. “I see you/ says a letter.”

Recognizing the reciprocity of sensation—we are seen by what we see—is what Cohen calls “seeing double.” We forget that the natural world senses us just as much as we sense it, but *bEAR* reminds us. When Cohen writes, “I am a pupil,” she means it in both senses of the word. In the face of the bear who wanders in and out of these poems, the pupil who sees becomes the pupil who learns:

who'd choose to see

choose each day  
each breath  
paw upon soft earth

my beloved is ever yes  
Love,  
the warm air everywhere

the beast is my teacher  
hot  
breath soft paw upon earth

When the beast is our teacher, we see the beast with “an animal eye and hand reaching/ out off the page to see.” The book ends with a section entitled “Buffalo, New York,” where Cohen lived for some time and where I currently live. The winters are infamously un-bearable—cold, gray and snowy. These conditions tend to produce a good deal of moaning and complaining, but Cohen resists this tendency. “White/ snow/ falling heavy as bees but slow/ so slow and now heavier and covering the/ tracks with white/ falling, love comes./ and seen through the eyes.” This Stevensian moment of being cold a long time (or, in this case, seeing cold a long time) results in an appreciation and even love for the thing seen. It echoes Thoreau’s claim that “the bareness does not suggest poverty.” When the leaves fall off the trees, we are better able to see the branches. That is, if we make the effort. Cohen, almost in defiance of those moaners and complainers, but more so in obedience to the natural world, concludes her beautiful book *bEAR* by not only bearing (surviving) the harsh Buffalo winter, but by entering it: “Today I’ll have green tea in the after-noon, thank you. / In snow I will go for a walk, thank you.” Ultimately, the author of *bEAR* bears the Buffalo winter in another sense—she gives birth to it.

—SASHA STEENSEN

ngurra: Pintupi word for place, terrain, country, camp

*The Aboriginal sense of personal identity is derived from only one context, the idea of place....ngurra describes both the physical place where [the Pintupi] return to share food, dance, and sleep and the metaphysical act of 'dreaming' the countryside into existence....The question of identity, of who I am, is resolved in the Aboriginal consciousness by knowing the full implications of where I am.*

— Robert Lawlor, *Voices of the First Day: Awakening in the Aboriginal Dreamtime*

### The Fifth Parable

*The philosophers attribute two bodies to the Art, namely Sun and Moon, which are the Earth and the Water. They are also called Man and Woman, and they bring forth four children: two boys who are Hot and Cold, and two girls who are Moist and Dry. These are the four elements. And they make the fifth essence: the white Magnesia, which is no falsity. Senior concludes the same, saying: "When these five are assembled, they will become a single thing out of which the Natural Stone is made." Avicenna says: "If we can attain the Fifth, then in my opinion the end is come."*

*To show this in a parable, the philosophers describe an egg in which four things are conjoined. The first, outermost one is the shell—the earth—and the white is water. But the skin between the water and the shell is air, and it divides the earth from the water. The yolk is fire; it has around it a subtle membrane which is the subtle air. That which is in the innermost part is the subtlest, for it is nearer the fire, and separates fire and water. In the middle of the yolk is the fifth [essence], out of which the young chick comes forth and grows. Thus an egg contains all the forces together with the material out of which the perfect nature is created. And it must also be so in this noble Art.*

— from Salomon Trismosin's *Splendor Solis*, tr. Joscelyn Godwin

## GAZETTEER

### 1.

crows in oaks / oak  
in the crows

the animals lob their barks across the veldt

3 caws

4 caws

2 caws

3

in my little chair I'm the apex in their theater / the button  
their volley casts a bowl across mind's smaller blossom

weevils drilling holes  
dropping eggs into their dream of blue acorns

plum gall wasps spinning baby planets  
casting atmospheres

the nodes swapping partners  
in their odd little dance

2.

today the Erasers took the wooded lot by force  
backhoes effecting frenzied rabbit desertions  
first trees were / then trees they weren't

when it was over: a cloud of displaced birds wide as  
a parking lot rotating in lazy broad spirals

they were still tethered to their old ghostprint  
some lingering, flickering residue burned  
into the collective avian thought chords  
grainy "home" footage projected yet  
upon the open raw  
debris, the guttings, the roil  
of stumps

this chattering black birdcloud whirled overhead well into dusk  
gone the next day

— and yet birds  
don't really go anywhere  
(part of me has to believe this)  
don't vanish or relocate / birds evolve  
(back) into "birds"

(were ever "birds")

### 3.

so I conjure a box  
for hoarding the day's conceits and phantasma:

delicate brass hinges  
an intricate cloisoné mandala composed of  
Escheresque interlocking hummingbirds and  
pineal glands with a hint of sandalwood to it, a scar  
on the underside (from "the accident")

okay so into it I place all my

- 1) yammering monkeys muscling their way in and out of the dreamwork
- 2) crone-wraiths burping obscene ditties in the phragmite
- 3) gnomes reaching through grates in the roots, strips of human  
jerky in their hands

and my two cranes, the ones with impenetrable (black upon  
black) eyes, their fixed stares and silent  
molestations

(demand memory, these cranes, *inscription*)

then drop the box  
into the River of One Billion Hands  
a mazy column of unfathomable  
depth wherein all manner of hands bob and  
sink, surface  
to grasp each other in elaborate  
chains, a fractal choreography floating "down" stream all  
of these vevers wheeling  
in the eddies

4.

6:40 AM Long Island Rail Road voice-balloon  
drifting up out of  
suit on platform A intended  
for suit on B hey  
howyadoin  
I'm *alive*  
I hear that

5.

so the berms are illusions...

singularities conjoining in  
impenetrable grids  
of exotic

sublinguistic  
design

strata upon strata embedded  
within / further strata  
and swirled into the dyes

in the nets that surround the forms  
the caul some call "the first hand"  
lines of flux and force run  
the gaps, part the holes / bisect  
the ambiguities

so there are holes w/in the holes, spaces  
w/in the spaces                      sinkholes  
in the Grid

constructivist solar systems woven into the pile / "the boy  
with Gabo & Pevsner eyes"

6.

down in the fells a killer drops a body  
for some child to stumble over

thirty yards away a den of skunks  
dreams up and down its skunky universe

little further: hyssop  
announcing itself  
up from compost

shitty, fecund world

**FROM FEEDBACK LOOPING****From Evans to I Forget**

Crows unleash their dream of crows over farmer X's wedding.

Twin owls sacrifice themselves over route 88 traffic. Now they are just two black thoughts bobbing in the Delaware debris.

Benevolent vampyres hatching in purple loosestrife may not be so benevolent!

## Herkimer

Eighteen-wheelers vs. she-wolves in the fog. Always a draw.

As kids: we saw five peepers sitting on a guard rail. Each a different color: burnished amber, smoked aqua, dried blood, terrible blue, and bologna. And in the background, Skeleton Boy himself with arms upraised, pleading: Don't let hands turn into hands!

Consider the reflection of kite-magic on the highway. Today the mind is thunderbolts coming out of a dark culvert, homing in on a red barn with white Xs for windows that gulp open and shut, devouring the signatures of lightning. (Insatiable barns.) (They'll do that indefinitely too: no end to the amount of electric fuel a barn can hold.) We drive through radar.

It's well known that all of the cells (except scent cells) replace themselves umpteen times in the course of "a life." Some even keep growing after death. Big dead naked tree with big predead naked birds in it.

Baby lotus bird trapped in blowdown. Arthurian selenographic plates vibrating underneath the druid belts. A tremor, then doeblood from the substrata surfaces through the gap, staining the prairie grass. The legend *is* the map.

**Bath**

I could just barely make them out on the edge of the savannah, night-trolling with ultraviolet bait. Phosphorescent narcotics providing the only light source, enticing air pickerel out of the humidity. I could even hear traces of their conversation.

She (raising her shirt): "My Euclidean birthmark: I can make it appear and disappear."

He: "It's like my palms are brains, and each finger an eye upon a stalk!"

I saw dart-spores from a puffball "called back" by autumn cortex. Organ kites glancing off the malachite rain bough. Everywhere I smelled ova mulch, tumescent before the occipital geode runes. Diatoms emitting remnants of Catskill logopoeta.

Mind and milieu, two sides of the same golden coin, a coin of zero width that when held to the light disintegrates. (And if you stare a moment too long, that light flows into your eyes as water.) Held up to the cranial sun heads and tails are indistinguishable, their contours morphing into hybrid coitus.

But I am interrupted by the lowings of entities having chlorophyl-sex out on the steppes. With each howl, a little blue plume uncoils, rising out of the grasses...

**Nine Partners Rd., Taconic State Pkwy.**

Waxy parabolic overlay cuts in horizontals across the bamboo toms, flirting humans out of their slumber. Myriad wraith bites in the strophe swarm wreaking an erotic havoc. Look, this is not just a weaving of noetic and geographical into psychotopological relief. Here your thoughtsong can actually sew the fissures formed by a suicidal Eurowestern metaphysic. There was never gulf between self and scape, mind and extra-mind, active imagination and route 17.

Umbilicals, everywhere.

The lichen of an ego grows on every stone along this river bed. He tries to make it rain, and it does, but *up*.



Slow-motion Seminole dancing in the cumdrift.

n-dimensional cauls falling like sheets over the mouth of the river, pulling water from the pores in the rocks, patinating the air(s) a musky olive.

A child falls into sleep listening to nine shades of night fermenting in the mincemeat bath, and dreams of the Black Disk.

As harts cry *om* before Inanna.

**Austerlitz to Chickopee.**

6:35 p.m. phlogiston display between three-quarter moon and orange glowtorch maple assault.  
Thought sloths intersecting in post-peak ochre swim.

My family and dog sucked back into cherry fallopian ring!

**COMPOSITION AND SUSTAINABILITY: TEACHING FOR A THREATENED GENERATION** BY DEREK OWENS 259 PP. URBANA, IL: NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH, 2001

Recently, a prominent American poet strongly advised me not to seek a Creative Writing job, since, as this poet put it, “those are just service teaching jobs.” Curious to hear, from a figurehead of one of the more revolutionary moments in recent American poetry. Once again, a literary revolution insists on insulating itself from those it claims to speak for. Fortunately, not all adherents to the “revolution of the word” are allergic to service as a real conduit for change. Derek Owens disagrees with those who still perceive composition as the “shitwork” of English—rather, he believes it lies at the heart of English studies, “or at least makes up one or two chambers of that heart.” Composition’s “little secret” is that the comp instructor enjoys a “contextual freedom and disciplinary flexibility unknown to many of his colleagues . . . [and] can orchestrate zones of inquiry that juxtapose eclectic webs of information, inspiration, and provocation.” While the literature of critical pedagogy revolves around race, class, and gender it seldom acknowledges the role environmental justice often plays in these sites of cultural conflict. This is unfortunate, since, as Owens notes, writing-across-the-curriculum is where we might most profitably begin the interdisciplinary collaboration necessary to a sustainability-across-the-curriculum movement. (The first of Owens’s six pedagogical tenets, one hardly anyone could disagree with, is that “a sustainable society cannot be created without sustainability-conscious curricula.”) At this stage, the move is largely an interventionist one: to recognize that our consumer culture fosters unsustainable behavior, and that the educator’s job, on some level, is to disrupt the assumptions implicit within that culture.

Owens, who hails from the SUNY Albany school of composition-inflected poetics, made his publishing debut in 1994 with *Resisting Writings (and the Boundaries of Composition)*, an attack on the rhetorical habits of academic discourse in the context of composition studies. (At the time employed as a Preceptor in the Harvard Expository Writing Program, Owens was well-positioned to launch such a critique.) In part a survey of experimental expository prose, avant-garde feminist poetics, African American discourse, hypertext and other innovative writings, *Resisting Writings* advocates a pluralistic tolerance for radically conflicting writing philosophies throughout the university. In part because

Owens settles for an academic prose style himself (to reach his intended audience) his book appears to be little known outside academic circles. This is a shame, given the fact that many poets earn their bread as adjunct composition instructors—and since this book would, at the very least, make their jobs a little less lonely, if not encourage them in the overlap of poetics with composition that, one would think, should be their particular strength as instructors.

*Composition and Sustainability* strikes into altogether different, and more radical, territory. Here Owens challenges not just the style of academia but the wherefore. He notes that:

As teachers we want our students to get ‘good jobs.’ But most of these ‘good jobs’ are unsustainable. . . . If teachers fail to give students the means by which they might come to reevaluate their job expectations and their assumptions about work, then in the long view teachers are arguably doing more harm than good when their labors result in students entertaining and perpetuating unsustainable careers.

Owens seizes on the notion of “sustainability” mainly to avoid the “eco” brand in the hopes of reaching a wider audience. Certainly, he does not subscribe to the “sustainable growth” mantra, and he seeks to reclaim “sustainable development” from corporate cliché to its broadest and strongest sense, “as the kind of human activity which nourishes and perpetuates the historical fulfillment of the whole community of life on Earth.” Such “sustainable development” requires a “limits to growth” perspective, involving “full, precautionary protection of of ecosystems and maintenance of all ‘natural capital.’ ” But Owens is also careful to offer more subjective definitions of sustainability—as “a mixture of humility, recognition of limits, and an awareness of natural systems as ‘circuits of aliveness’ ” (Clugston and Rogers) or as “wholeness, posterity, smallness, community, quality, spiritual fulfillment” (Stead and Stead). Owens is also the first to admit that sustainability, thus defined, makes for an exceptionally hard sell.

He begins the book with a “chameleon vision” of pessimistic and optimistic outlook:

One “eye” belongs to that of the father, the husband, the teacher. It is an optimistic eye preoccupied with figuring out ways of enriching the lives of my family and my students. It is driven less by naïveté (I hope) than by hopeful pragmatism. This eye is unabashedly committed to imagining and creating . . . The second eye, though, is a more pessimistic eye, a nervous

and increasingly frightened eye—not so much cynical (I hope) as darkly pragmatic. It is an eye which, the more it regards current trends, arrives at unsettling conclusions that literally cause me to lie awake some nights and fear for my son's future.

The rest of the book is a useful extension of David Orr's argument that teaching environmental literacy lies at the heart of an environmental ethic. Owens takes this task for granted, focusing on the kinds of questions that will more immediately interest college students: quality of *place* and the role it plays in our lives as well as the choices available to us regarding place; the nature, purpose and philosophy of *work*; and a range of likely scenarios for the *future*. Each chapter devoted to one of these themes includes a generous selection of examples of student writing. Owens bucks the academic trend of indifference to one's surroundings, beginning his writing courses "by having students make written and photographic portraits of where they live . . . because an awareness of sustainability cannot exist without a developing awareness of the conditions and limitations of one's immediate environment." (Owens also offers an example of his own approach to this assignment—with a short essay in words and photographs on his Long Island neighborhood, Lake Ronkonkoma.)

The "Work" chapter includes such radical takes as Bob Black's "Abolition of Work," while the "Futures" chapter taps into the corporate literature of scenario building (developed by the Global Business Network) for a classroom discussion about what the next twenty-five years will bring. Owens points out that "nonfiction writers who tell stories about the future are nothing new," such as Alvin Toffler (1970), and cites contemporary, speculative nonfiction by futurists such as Peter Schwartz, Eugene Linden and others for scenarios ranging from business-minded and optimistic to downright bleak to fork-in-the-road. Though Owens is careful to qualify his own assessments (of an urban/suburban population)—assessments that point to "this fear, this cynicism, this frustration, [that] runs like an invisible current beneath whatever curricula we impose on our students"—he is led to wonder "how irrelevant and disconnected our professional preoccupations with literacy, outcomes assessment, and core requirements must seem to [such] a student body." There is, however, a positive side to future thinking, in the need for social visionaries and the obligation (quoting Charles Beitz and Michael Washburn) "to invent a little bit of what we want to see exist in the future." Owens notes that "future scenarios are inevitably vision statements" and that "a roomful of students playing the

game of futurist, arguing with one another about where they see things headed, becomes a conversation fueled by idealism and cynicism, hope and fear, optimism and pessimism.” My own experience using future scenarios as a teaching tool confirms that, although the exercise can feel overwhelming and awkward—certainly we Americans are not accustomed to thinking practically about the distant future, and the requisite information uptake can seem enormous—it always produces engaged writing, especially when the ‘scenario’ is focused on a particular place familiar to the student.

The last chapter, “Reconstructive Design,” is both the richest and the sketchiest of the book. Owens takes on the “academia” resulting from the specialist/ generalist polarity—where curricula are “suburbanized” in the sense that, as in the top-down, atomized character of suburban planning, “faculty are expected to design courses but not curricula.” Owens proposes, rather, a culture of “expert generalists” (citing examples from the likes of Gene Youngblood, R. Buckminster Fuller and Wendell Berry): “arcological cartographies” for imagining curricula can be found in Elizabeth Martin’s notion of a “y condition” (a membrane between disciplines like the y-sound often heard between the i and e of quiet) or Robert Smithson’s “nonsites,” Paolo Soleri’s “arcology,” Lucien Kroll’s organic architecture, the retro approach of New Urbanist design or, finally, Arakawa and Gins’s “built-in tentativeness” and “perceptual landing sites.” Though Owens acknowledges that some of these philosophies may be incompatible, he advocates multiple “arachnid” vision and notes that he is presenting his own thoughts in the same spirit of “built-in tentativeness”:

thinking sustainably is for me a combination of reeducation and invention: educating ourselves about the complex interrelationships between site and self, while experimenting with new approaches to teaching, to theorizing, and to conceptualizing our responsibilities as educators working with a threatened generation.

The obvious connections with “reconstructionist” educational philosophy (à la Theodore Brameld and John Dewey) are made explicit in the final section of this chapter where Owens proposes “reconstructivism” as a meld of constructivist aesthetics—realizing space as “a condition of our being” and recycling anything, including garbage, into art (cf. Schwitters’s “rhetoric of garbage picking,” Jess’s “paste-ups” or “outsider” collectivist installations)—with Brameld’s reconstructionist educational philosophy. “Teaching,” Owens concludes:

can mean constructing zones of active inquiry where states of felicity are more valuable than the consumption of things. . . . It can mean rethinking the role of the classroom as a field where our accelerated ecological crises become not more 'issues' tacked on to the educator's already overburdened social agenda, but the hub out of which spiral future pedagogies of sustainability.

The book has three Appendices: "Bad News: A Compilation of Observations and Forecasts," "Sustainability in a Composition Course" (a specimen syllabus), and "Snapshot of An Environmental Footprint" (the cradle to grave impact of a disposable camera). I myself test drove Owens's syllabus in the fall semester of 2003 and can attest to its integrity as a composition syllabus that offers enough of a range of writing assignments to keep students interested while engaging them in some very tough discussions. The one fault to the syllabus is, ironically, an unsustainable workload (at least for one teaching two sections of comp, as I was): Owens expects a lot from his students and the instructor, in ways I see hard to sustain in today's overworked academic environment. (This is also a weakness with Owens's proposals in *Resisting Writings*.) One feels his analysis hasn't adequately addressed the economic bases of any potential reconstruction—nor the arguments of those who continue to insist that we need a revolution in the economic "base" before attempting an ecological/ cultural one. Such is the current zero-sum world, that when we put art and activism into our teaching (treating curriculum as the "educator's artspace") we squeeze the activism and art from our lives. Design must take this economic reality into account. Perhaps this is what my avant-garde advisor meant when cautioning me against "service teaching."

The other issues I have with Owens's pedagogy are the less-than-dialectical schematics of his "chameleon vision" (pessimism vs. optimism, a binary especially notable with the selections from student writings) that does not really address the gray area I found in most of my own students' views. This simplicity is reflected in the book's reliance on an economics and discourse of scarcity. Andrew Ross's critique of the "discourse of limits" and of the ecological movement as "the one that says no, the antipleasure voice that says you're never gonna get it, so get used to going without," and Ross's obvious point that "people respond better to a call for social fulfillment than to a summons to physical

deprivation” come to mind here (*The Chicago Gangster Theory of Life* 268). Owens’s section on reconstructive design—which by the author’s admission is the “most tentative”—moves to redress the crippling antinomy with some adventurous (and tantalizing) suggestions. Indeed, his “reconstructive” agenda, geared toward “constructing zones of active inquiry where states of felicity” are the model, rather than the rhetoric of environmental apocalypse, shows plenty of promise here. We should look forward to hearing much more from this author. In the meantime, this book belongs in the toolbox of any instructor whose teaching is geared to a rethinking of the whole curriculum. Owens’s willingness to bring the most difficult issues of our time into the heart of his pedagogy is an example and a resource to all who work in education.

–JS

### Campus Profile

Compiled for the 1997 Environmental Literacy Institute at Tufts University, sponsored by University Leaders for a Sustainable Future.

1. In what watershed(s) is your campus situated?
2. In what city, town, or municipality is your campus located?
3. Name the following officials representing the community your campus is a part of: (a) City Council; (b) State Senate and Congressional Representatives; (c) Federal Senate and Congressional Representatives
4. (a) Where does the energy for electricity on your campus come from? (b) What is the fuel source? (c) Who is in charge of energy management?
5. Where does the water on your campus come from? (b) Where does it go when it leaves? (c) Who is in charge of water management?
6. (a) Where does the majority of food from your campus come from? (b) Where does it go when it leaves? (c) Who is in charge of food management?
7. (a) What are the major materials used (i.e., construction, office, laboratory, etc.) on your campus? (b) Where do they come from? (c) Where do they go when they leave? (d) Who is in charge of purchasing and disposal?
8. What problems does your university impose on the environment?
9. What would you identify as your administration’s top three policy issues?

ERIC GELSINGER / WEARING A SWEATER ON THE SURFACE OF THE EARTH.

Once there was a Wounded Wolf who turned babies inside-out,  
Like wrappers picked off lollipops.

He wore a bonnet, baited with a rattle,

Got hard in his diaper and waited

While children put sticks in their mouths.

Kevin grew a beard from the sky.

*"Have no fear, Kevin!"* I swing masked with my cape  
Billowing behind. I crash in to the wall:

**NEAP!**

The limp body sack slides down the tower

Like garbage tossed 'cross a brick alley wall.

It leaves an oily streak of heroism,

Slimy she-maleism, and gooey globalism,

While its glowing moon erodes within

As silvery as sewers inside its dreams as white.

White hot eyes beam out a subdiurnal night

Where heaps of rats claw over one another's swarming backs

Like shifting strata in the shadow of the garbage.



Like one hippopotamus on top of another until the ultimate gigantic hippopotamus looms taller than the Empire State Building's red, blue, white lights.  
When it walks, the entire city earthquakes, darkening miles away.

The interstices of the towering monster peek between legs on backs on top of backs of backs  
of stacks of hundreds  
of thousands  
of joined hippos jointed up  
like so many gills – apertures  
filtering crepuscular rays like a luminous breath.

It comes.

BOOM.

And it comes.

BOOM.

Steps.

BOOM.

Steps.

BOOM.

As windows shake troublingly and no one bothers to drink coffee, not because it would burn their hesitant, slipped tongues, but because they forget coffee, and all other things, exist.

The entire, quickened city's  
breathing's opened,  
a fan, by flick  
of a wrist.

But fittingly, as door chimes were swinging madly,  
As coffee was splashing saucers scattered through a deserted café,  
As the street grates were rattling faster,  
As the metropolis was hyperventilating –  
They were children,  
Cause of the ruin, who saved humanity.  
They, as one,

Without adult communication –  
Throughout neighborhoods with walkie-talkies

Secret knocks and handshakes;

Leaning out top-floor windows with slingshots;

They, with severe deliberation, lifted binoculars off their necks,

And slowly pulled pouch strings tied fast on their belts,

Loosing marbles that rolled down roads by the millions

And millions and millions of marbles down Broadway, down 6th St,

Down FDR, down the West-Side Highway, down 34th St, down Bleecker . . .

The slipping HIPPO lost his footing  
And in a massive fall, collapsed

like a thousand whales falling from the sky into the ocean.

The people rejoiced as they dipped their tiny, icy, blue children pinched in their fingertips  
into their newly-revived coffee, interest.

And the whales' songs lilted as from Japanese fans.

And American women would hop up to suck

Floating G notes and F notes, wobbling like black clothespins past the cafes, past a health-food store.

And the men would bend to inhale

The scent of A and E notes

Growing like black mushrooms that quiver lustroously along wet sidewalks.

And all the children were quiet and never whispered again, their white bed sheets pulled to lips frozen, heads  
sewn-up, stuffed with moonlight and pale streetlight that beamed through the windows.

superfi**C**ial

b**R**uises

**A**re

**B**lameless

**A**<sub>n</sub>

im**P**erfection

acce**P**ted

**L**oses

sham**E**

Sickness  
isola T e –

Jarring  
divisi O n –

Halving

a N,

Separating

W hat

sh O uld

natu R ally

T win

be **W**itching

ch**A**ngeling –

fo**L**lowing

a**N**gel –

prefig**U**ring

**T**ransformation

g**O**ld  
he**A**ds  
sca**T**ter

wind**S**  
tak**E**  
th**E**ir  
divi**D**end

**B**lue

stai**l**ned

**L**ips –

**B**lue

mark**E**d

finge**R**s –

pleasu**R**es

ink**Y**

amongst **T**

mo **O**rs

o **R**

**M**ountains –

y **E**llow

shi **N**ing

pe **T**als –

gl **I**nting

f **L**ints

I**O**ve

**A**nchors

**K**nowledge

## MESOSTIC HERBARIUM

The language of flowers and herbs is one of beauty and healing. The idea that names are magical and conceal secret knowledge, has always been with us. You are invited to compose one or more mesostic poems, using the names of flora. A mesostic is written from the letters of a chosen plants name; these form a stem from which single word-branches grow.

By researching plant lore and the healing effects of herbs and remedies your mesostic poem can reveal some of the properties of the plant that you have chosen.

Send your contributions on an A4 sheet, typed and centred, with your name and address included on the reverse.

Alec Finlay  
Artist in Residence  
BALTIC The Centre for Contemporary Art  
South Shore Road  
Gateshead NE8 3BA

Mailto: [alecf@balticmill.com](mailto:alecf@balticmill.com)  
[www.balticmill.com](http://www.balticmill.com)

## ALLEN SHELTON / THE MINERALIZATION OF JOHN PELHAM

*for my double, A.S.*

I have long, indeed for years, played with the idea of setting out the sphere of life – bios – graphically on a map. First I envisioned an ordinary map, but now I would incline to a general staff's map of the landscape around my house, if such a thing existed. Doubtless it does not, because of ignorance of the theater of future wars. I have evolved a system of signs, and on the grey background of such maps they would make a colorful show if I clearly marked in the house, [where I planted the lilac, the quince blooming in the winter, the tool shed, the scratches the rats made across the boards in the barn, the places where the leaves gathered in the corners of the fence, the salt block in the trough eaten away by the bulls, the wooden bench like a block of brain underneath the pecan tree, the slightly eroded paths to the graves of dogs and cats, the sites of old houses whose long forgotten owners daily crossed the pasture, the creek bank now filled with willows, and the praying mantises hidden like a pack of murderers in the foliage.

—Walter Benjamin (1692, p. 5)

You can locate my house on a topographical map butt up against the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in the northeast corner of Alabama. There it is, a small square next to the intersection of White's Gap Road and Nance's Creek Road. Like the small lakes within a half-mile to the south and west and the swamp off to the southeast, the house was a landmark that could be identified in aerial photographs taken in the 1950's. Before that it was known as "the big house" in the valley. A yeoman farmer named Burton built the house in 1834. Burton probably came from Virginia or the Carolinas in one of the early western movements for cheaper land. He was dead by 1864. The house is identified on a Confederate military map as the Widow Burton House. All through the valley, houses were identified in this way—the Widow Lusk, the Widow Champion. Nance's Creek is named after an Indian widow. My grandfather had a different naming scheme. Each pasture was named after the man he bought it from. Out across from my house was the Barnwell pasture. Behind me on the rise was the Warlick pasture. These names didn't stick. With the same land in the hands of my father and uncle, the pastures became feminine again. The Barnwell pasture is named Mary Jane Acres after my dead mother and is broken into detailed, acre sized plots for sale. My uncle inadvertently remembers my dead grandmother in one of his real estate swindles, naming the road into the development after her favorite flower—

Cosmo Drive. My grandfather is shrunk to the size of the road sign "Shelton Farm Road" on the dirt road heading to his one story ranch house. A chicken farmer lives there now.

The valley surrounding my house is an old war zone. Because of the mountains to the east and back to the north and west, my farm is set in a long channel running from the Piedmont region in the south to Sand Mountain and Chattanooga, Tennessee. The flat pastures and rich bottom land were cut by State Highway No. 9 running north to south over dirt roads and trails dating back to the 16th century. In the 1940s South American fireants arrived. All across the ruined pastures you can see their foot high dirt mounds. They can kill a calf. Kick a mound over and you can smell the acid in the air. Hundreds of years earlier, de Soto and his army snaked up the Quataquilla Valley a half-mile to the east looking for gold. The Indian wars climaxed in 1812 when Andrew Jackson crushed the Creek Indians in the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, 70 miles to the south. Davy Crockett was part of that expedition. Jackson's troops bivouacked seven miles from my house next to a spring I used to eat lunch at. The mountains 5 miles to the east were the war zone between the Creek and Cherokee nations. The Trail of Tears removed the last of the Creeks. Arrowheads are easy to find after a hard rain washes across the hillside. I picked up a sack full in an hour.

The Civil War killed the sons of the men who moved the Creeks. My house is something they left behind. Military casualties decimated the yeoman farmers in the valley. The Depression was the next big wave to hit, driving the poor whites out and killing the last of the cotton fields. No more labor to swing hoes. It was during the Depression that a man named Warlick bought the house at auction for \$112. He built a big mule barn out of heart pine below the house. He moved in his mistress. Then he began the real work. There were rumors of Indian gold buried on the land. He dug the place up looking for treasure. He found a box of Confederate money under the stairs but that only pissed him off. The cash was worth nothing. In 1951 an Indian who made his living following the Trail of Tears with a metal detector dug up a box during the night directly across from Warlick's bedroom. Warlick must have been huddled under the quilts because he never heard a thing. The Indian made off with the gold. He left the hole uncovered for the old man to see. After that Warlick disappeared. Whether he died or moved away my grandfather could not remember. He bought the land from the bank and moved his hired hand John

Parker in. All this happened four years before I was born. Property was cheap in 1951. The valley was deserted.

Just after the millennium the property values are booming. The valley is becoming a bedroom community. Houses are springing up as tiny ranchettes with an acre or two in the former cow pastures on top of what were at the turn of the century pine woods. The barn that Warlick built is still standing, slowly being strangled by mud and dock weed. The broad pine boards are popping back into space. The tin roof flutters against the joists, a pinned moth. At night the tin sounds like an animal wrangling in pain.

The creek bank swarms with willows and alders. The watercourse hasn't changed noticeably in 40 years but you can still see in the ground where the water used to run. There are the cuts in the ground that housed the creek channel. Just under the thin layer of grass, the ground is clogged with rocks. In *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History* Manuel De Landa describes a river as a sorting machine to get at how hierarchies of sentiment and muck are formed:

Geologists have discovered one such mechanism: rivers acting as veritable hydraulic computers [or, at least, a sorting machine]. Rivers transport rocky materials from their point of origin [eroding mountain] to the bottom of the ocean, where these materials accumulate. In the course of this process, pebbles of various size, weight, and shape react differently to the water transporting them. Some are so small they dissolve in the water; some are larger and are carried in suspension; even larger stones move by jumping back and forth from the river bed to the streaming water, all the largest ones are moved by traction as they roll along the bottom toward their destination. The intensity of the river flow [i.e., its speed and other intensities such as temperature or clay saturation] also determine the outcome, since a large pebble that can only be rolled by a moderate current may be transported in suspension by a powerful eddy.

—De Landa (p.60)

What De Landa means by this is more than a description led by a suggestive metaphor. De Landa cuts back on the notion of “social stratification”: “The term social strata is itself clearly a metaphor, involving the idea that, just as geological strata are layers of rocky materials stacked on top of each other, so classes and castes are layers—some higher, lower—of human materials.” He asks, “Is it possible to go beyond the metaphor and show that the genesis of both geological and social strata involves the same engineering diagram?” When he writes this, he’s not just mak-

ing a linguistic analogy; rather he's saying that rivers embody the same diagrams used by engineers and teachers as little engineers, to build a school which separates and sorts students by class, intelligence, and gender. Rivers and institutions both work as sorting machines in the creation and maintenance of hierarchies. How they work points back at the common engineering diagram—flow, agitation, sorting, applied to the weight of material—and emphasizes the Borgesian insight that from a certain distance humans resemble rocks and are subject to the same historical forces. A statue is nothing more than a mineral cocoon or an intermediary stage between the two assemblages moving towards a marble bloom or an introjection of flesh inside of calcium. De Landa puts the ground under our feet into the historical process. The formation of creeks and pastures are tied to conventional historical accounts such as the transformation of Burton's cotton fields into cow pastures in the 1940s. Each stage of economic development reorganizes the landscape and the ecological system. But just beyond the effects of rivers and cow hooves and the concretization of social hierarchies is the formation of an acid-like fog at once nostalgic and capital intensive, that condenses on structures and begins a corrosive process.

Within ten paces of the house is another building. Squared off at seventeen feet by seventeen feet, it is too small to have been a barn. I found what must have been the hearth straight back from the door underneath four short pine boards. A red clay, hand made brick was half buried in the soft black dirt. The brick was the last survivor; the others were pillaged years back. The outbuilding shares similar architectural features as the house's post and beam construction, pegs, square-headed nails and clapboard. The handy man John Parker told me the building was the original kitchen. He was seventy three years old, a scrawny, rawboned figure barely able to keep his overalls on. He always wore a white T-shirt that stuck to him like a rag soaked in napalm. "Could it have been slave quarters?" I asked.

"Shit naw. Kitchen."

My grandfather A. C. Shelton—the initials were important, columns stuck on a plain name—added shed roofs off three sides into the adjoining pasture, where the bulls could get some shade and lick salt blocks. They churned the ground up. And after they were gone, the dirt turned into a fine, dried dust several inches deep. Like something from a Pharaoh's dream, the shed floor was covered with a field of

antlion pyramids swirled into the powder. At the bottom of these cones were the enormous jaws of the larva. The *Audubon Field Guide* gives this brief description:

Often known as doodlebugs, the larva have oversize heads with long spiny jaws, short legs, and bristles all over their bodies. Most hide at the bottom of small pit traps made in the sand and wait for ants and other small insects to tumble down the sloping sides. The larva in some species do not build pits but lie buried in sand or hide among debris waiting for prey.

—Milne 1980, p.530

My grandfather is dead, himself the victim of a voracious descent. Goffman wrote of a “betrayal funnel” to describe the gradual collapse of the social relationships around the asylum patient, as if they really were made of sand with a creature curled just out of sight. In prehistoric periods dragonflies were three foot long. What size did their larva get? The size of the nurse who ran down the hall screaming “stop him” as Granddad shuffled across the linoleum towards the exit. He starved himself to death in a nursing home after a series of small strokes left him slightly out of his mind and unable to control his bladder. Behind this were a series of real estate deals initiated by my uncle. The farm was sold off.

I dreamed I saw my grandfather floating underwater in the big lake with the Amur, grass eating carp from Vietnam cruising alongside him. These are torpedo shaped 70 pound fish. A clump of algae was curled around his foot. The surface of the lake was sealed with a see through Tupperware cover. I stood on the surface looking down at him and the fish, wondering if the fish would bruise his white skin. Ten years before he died granddad sold real estate to support his sons’ business dealings. I would drive him around the county in his blue Plymouth filled with baling twine, medicine, corn, newspapers, a tattoo kit, buckets, and his walking stick. He pointed out to me that the Arabs were buying up giant tracts of pasture and pine forests. What he did not see was how his fish were part of a water compass re-oriented towards Kublai Khan’s old dream palace.

The shed is an elephant’s graveyard. Time is slowed down to the speed of rust. The tools are parts of old families reaching back into the past for ancestors. Only their concurrence is modern. Objects like an old iron bed frame, and a collection of ladderback chairs that no longer

have a place inside wait here, stuffed in the corners, hanging from nails. There is a 100-pound anvil salvaged from the collapsed blacksmith shop a hundred fifty paces into the pecan orchard. There are cotton bale scales. Wooden boxes filled with tools sit patiently for Jesus to come back with their dead. My bee equipment—veils, helmets, frames and an extractor—have a place in the corner. There are old horse bridles and mule yokes with dirt dauber nests affixed to them draped over the ceiling joists. Rats have crisscrossed the soft ground beneath the floorboards. Termites have turned the corner posts to sponge held up by nails. Wasps float across the room like Nazi zeppelins over London.

I kept my tools in here hung up on ten-penny nails. In the center was my English spade with a filled d-handle. The blade was sharp enough to cut a snake in two. Hanging in a line were a hard rake and two solid strap forks forged in England, identical to each other except for one broken tine. Then there was a Felco pruner made in Switzerland; Japanese hedge clippers; an Austrian and a Japanese hoe, both American pattern; and a Coleman hoe. Propped against the wall was a grubbing mattock with a full seven pound head in the shape of a dinosaur head and a railroad pick I inherited from my Granddad A. C. Shelton. Standing, were two forged Irish heart-shaped shovels; one made in America and the other in England, and a red enameled watering can. The tools sat next to each other like volumes in an international encyclopedia set. There is a strange concurrence of language here that is neither English or Japanese but a cutting dialect. These tools are devoted to cutting rhizomic grasses, disciplining spreading shrubs, and chopping dirt. A garden is a monumental corpse made of foliage and dirt, a breathing, eating statue with a different appetite than the war memorials in the nearby town. My tools carve a living marble into monuments that harbors bees and fleas.

Under the same pecan tree that shaded the outhouse, John Parker would sit in a straight back chair and stare at his grandson tied to the trunk like Faye Ray waiting for King Kong. “Goddamn him,” he’d say. “He gets away from me.” Flies would light on Parker’s hat and hunker down like it was made of flesh. Parker worked for my granddad. He signed his name with an X. He trapped. In a room in the house he dried animal tails from a clothesline. His wife beat him with an iron frying pan. He had two daughters and a son. He wore overalls and half

boots. All together he could not have weighed more than 130 pounds. His son-in-law murdered his youngest daughter. She weighed 300 pounds. It was nearly a week before anyone found her body like a big slab of melting butter on the living room floor. The other daughter was named Rachel. She looked like Dolly Parton in a brown wig. She collected antiques from the mill village and liked to belly dance. My wife and I were at her house looking at her collection when suddenly she put on a Middle Eastern record, picked up a long silk scarf and shimmied her ass across the room. "I love to dance." It was bizarrely beautiful. The son took Polaroids of topless women posing next to his Chevy truck. The truck was red. Only Rachel and her mother Opal ever came back to visit the house they lived in most of their lives.

Directly opposite where Parker would sit I planted a lilac at the edge of the shade. Parker had a sitting style. He would sit straight up in a ladderback chair for an instant and then he would lean forward into an aerodynamic tuck with his elbows on his knees and his legs cobbled out. No chair, he fell into a hunker with his small ass hovering inches from the ground and his knees stuck into a V. John Parker didn't care much for flowers or figs. He loved cornbread and fried meat. He would not have noticed the lilac that has taken his place under the pecan. I dug the lilac up out of my mother's yard. She got it from her mother, who got it from her mother's mother. My grandmother was already dead when I planted the lilac, but I see it as a gift from her. Eleven feet to the southwest is a row of jaggedly stacked rocks from the pasture running in a line for eight paces with an arm curling north towards what the Victorian fairy tale writer George McDonald called the land behind the north wind, which is where the dead go to wait for Christ. Under this arm looking north I buried a malamute. Each section in the line is a grave filled with dogs and cats. The graves are two and a half feet deep, straight sides, smoothed with a flat spade, packed dirt. I stomp on them to pack the dirt. I piled rocks on top to keep the dogs from digging up the carcass. A winter honeysuckle spreads across the intersection of the arm and the line.

Early on in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud makes an analogy between Rome and the mind. "Now let us by a flight of imagination, suppose that Rome is not human habitation but a psychical entity with a similarly long and copious past." He is struggling to come up with an image to conceptualize how the mind retains traces of its past in buried or repressed, half-remembered psychic accumulation beneath

the present. It is a typical surrealist move for Freud, predicated on an urban scaffolding. Inside of buildings are the remains of previous structures. "It is hardly necessary to remark that all these remains of ancient Rome are found dovetailed into the jungle of a great metropolis which is grown up in the last few centuries since the Renaissance. There is certainly not a little that is ancient still buried in the soil of the city or beneath its modern buildings. This is the matter in which the past is preserved in historical sites like Rome."

He pushed the comparison further. Memory surfaces in odd aches at the tender parts of the body like snakes rippling across the imperceptible spaces between the muscle and the skin. Nothing that has once come into existence or what has passed away in earlier phases of development can escape this Rome. "This would mean that in Rome the palaces of the Caesars . . . would still be rising to their old height on the Palatine and that the castle of St. Angelo would still be carrying on its battlements the beautiful statues which graced it until the siege by the Goths, and so on." It is an unconscious empire. The mind retains its past, even as the new debris accumulates, sending shivers across the surface of the skin.

Freud's equation can be indefinitely extended to the child's wax tablet of "The Mystical Writing Pad":

Some time ago there came upon the market, under the name of the Mystic-Writing Pad, a small contrivance that promises to perform more than the sheet of paper or the slate. It claims to be nothing more than a writing-tablet from which notes can be erased by an easy movement of the hand. But if it is examined more closely it will be found that its construction shows a remarkable agreement with my hypothetical structure of our perceptual apparatus and it can in fact provide both an ever-ready receptive surface and permanent traces of the notes that have been made upon it.

—Freud 1959, p.177

Or as I do, to a garden sprawling around a house. The advantage of shifting the comparison from the public structure of the city to the child's pad or the garden is that immediately the simile is put in touch with the oedipal triangle in the household. The degrees of movement are more constrained. The holes into the unconscious are more intimately accessible. In the end, the mystic writing pad is a smaller, more portable Rome. Freud is left with an interlocking urban landscape that traces the mind from the smallest unit—a toy—to the grand architecture of the city. But Freud's landscape is suspect from the very begin-

ning. His map lacks a rhizomic, or floral, intelligence. The garden, absent from Freud's mapping, acts as an intermediary in between these interlocking structures. The garden adds insects and green snakes peeking out of the roses and thorns, emphasizing that the optical unconscious is more than the sofas, dens, and mimetic technologies Benjamin imagined—it teems.

Evidently a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye—if only because an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man. Even if one has a general knowledge of the way people walk, one knows nothing of a person's posture during the fractional second of stride. The act of reaching for a lighter or a spoon is a familiar routine, yet we hardly know what really goes on between hand and metal, not to mention how this fluctuates with our moods. Here the camera intervenes with the resources of its lowering and liftings, its interruptions and isolations, its extensions and accelerations, its enlargement and reductions. The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses.

—Benjamin 1969, p.236-7

The garden is a border between a series of interlocked structures, which are twined together like honeysuckle around a sapling. The bare branch stretched out, a network of arms about to bud across the kitchen window. The flat, white cut of the pruner visible on the branches, a red wagon turned on its side on a gravel path, through the glass to a bowl of Honey Nut Cheerios and an Oneida spoon. The garden retains a history and the accumulation of debris and markings on the ground. The spade cut, the pruned branch, the scar on the hand, the rotting compost which retains the compositional structure of Freud's simile but gives it a more personal, smaller radius. The garden pushes for an arboresque and a more human vegetative mind alongside Freud's metropolitan equation. The intertwining of the family with the commercial and bureaucratic triangles begins as soon as the doorknob is turned and the man mistakes his wife for a straw hat. At the same time a floral surrealism blooms in the margins. Instead of following streets and monuments in an archeological dig, the garden simile develops the lilac into a new patient for analysis. The lilac has a history that is personal as well as genetic. It is an actant with stories to tell. The lilac talks in the same language as the unconscious connected to the Irish shovel connected to the habituation of the body parts at the end of the ash handle.

My garden works off the pulses of absences and presence of fathers and mothers. Plant a shrub; mark a tool with my thumb. The reconstruction of the family is another layer in the strata that pervades the soil. The ghosted slave quarters, the rusted nails, the broken pieces of blue glass, and the projections into my son coexist in the dirt with a thin layer of humus. The deep red clay, the creamy white grubs congeal into a surrealist alternative to the metropolis.

At the corner of the fence on the southwest side of the pecan shade I am treeing a wisteria vine. The vine is from China. It blooms in the spring thick purple clusters that can smother a tree strapped around the trunk like heavy rubber bands. It came to Virginia in the 17th century as part of the embellishment of the larger plantations. It comes to Jacksonville, Alabama in 1864 as adornment over a coffin. The gallant Pelham, an officer in the Confederate Army, had his head blown off with grapeshot in the Wilderness Campaign. His head was knocked off again in the late '60s when it was stolen from his statue at the entrance to the city cemetery. It was made from white Italian marble. He stands with one leg slightly forward, strangely feminine-looking, with a plump ass. Curls spring out from beneath his hat. His right hand rests on his sword. Behind him are rows of Confederate dead. A new head is on his shoulders now. Confederate flags are stuck in the dead and flutter like red and blue butterflies.

At the center of the town square in Jacksonville, AL a statue of a Confederate soldier stares north down the highway. The highway is named after Pelham. The Confederate soldier has no name. Instead there is an inscription at the base of the statue describing how while men may change, values never do. I lived as a kid in an ante-bellum mansion on Pelham Road with my grandparents.



In my memory the statue of the confederate soldier turns on a hidden mechanical dial so that he is always facing me. He doesn't stay still in my memory like the officer does in the cemetery. He moves as I move. He is a part of the fatal strategy of the Confederate State sunk into a network of memorials that can't be viewed too critically without pulling the plug on the longevity of the values commemorated in the inscriptions. Ironically, the values are acknowledged as obscene themselves in the inscription. They are turned away from the eye. No values are mentioned. Only their existence and persistence is noted, it is a reverence of absence. In the gaps, and in the holes left by the omission, a line can be wound like a wisteria vine pregnant with clusters of purple blooms through the remnants of the Confederate State to the new commercial district reorganizing and projecting the old South's residual values. The memorial is an entrance into the obscene, which in turn opens into the larger territorializations of absences hidden in the perfume of flowers.

Benjamin, Walter. 1969. *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken Books.

Benjamin, Walter. 1978. *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms Autobiographical Writings*. New York: Schocken Books

De Landa, Manuel. 1997. *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History*. New York, NY. Zone Books

Freud, Sigmund. 1929. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. New York. Anchor Books.

Freud, Sigmund. 1959. *Collected Papers* Volume 5. New York. Basic Books.

Goffman, Erving. 1961. *Asylums*. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books.

Milne, Louis and Magery. 1980. *The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Insects and Spiders*. New York. Alfred A. Knopf.

This piece could not have been written without the support of the now dead A. Shelton my grandfather, Elaine Stecopoulos, Ann M. Costello, and Jonathan Skinner. Photographic techniques courtesy of Molly Jarboe.

BRIAN SWANN / IT SHOULD BE ABSTRACT

I want creatures who've  
waited above light &  
below worms to bring me  
back to somewhere I've never  
been where I can  
empty my face, let my sockets  
fill with fractious water,  
earthtubes coil like a  
mountain pool after a storm,  
all muscles in my face  
repositioned & jutting  
from the jaw an arm,  
a chest, belly & hips,  
down to legs & feet serious  
the way birds are serious,  
their syllables not buttoned  
or made up, but empty as  
the sea is empty, sounds  
coming from everywhere so  
you could call them inarticulate  
because they are everywhere  
& you could call them abstract  
because drawn from themselves  
which are shapes of the rock,  
insides of trees, emanations  
of soil & entrails of water.

## MORE THAN ENOUGH

— (Taking off from late Morris Graves, e.g. “Winter Bouquet”)

### I

As if paper were mind  
    flowers grow out of it,  
thoughtful, informed, themselves  
    and their opposites making them  
fully themselves, stems in bottles  
    standing on nothing, on  
the dark itself, rising up  
    following themselves to  
clarified openings, globe nebulae  
    all round spilling out and  
coming at you, for spirit is  
    only the earth breathed deepest.

### II

A stain slowly covers marsh birds.  
    There is a brimming of something  
shocking them out of silence  
    like one more missing piece  
pushing in over trees,  
    the edge of day just occurring  
in the barren incompletions,  
    stiffening, then spreading where  
the stream flicks a breath, a tongue,  
    the great birds backing away to get  
at what's there, which is  
    more than enough.

Animist

L



Luigi Beltracchi  
Pomilio Beltracchi  
per Pio

R.S.V.  
8/IX/92

MARY RISING HIGGINS / SCAFFOLDS TO **K**

*Begin with ordinary speech  
Undertow return to the site meadow a clearing*  
Myung Mi Kim

dust shadow mountains reshape *loves me knot, loves me*  
sun speeds a farther north lane sky corner, *loves me*  
catalpa petals, drop one by one, scuff patch grass  
new mown, weeded, then monsoon sand lit gust flurries  
rain cool clearing early June afternoons burst in  
predicted chaos average repeating along  
scaffolds at **K**, velar capped and frost peaked, to  
flavor the grained silence cloud squared thermals *re | place*  
*re | verse re | place* all day's labyrinth to search the  
voice listening inflects, clew spin space and matter  
through impossible architecture terms come to

*The **same** Moon in the next century!*

sun speeds a farther north lane sky corner *loves me*

night's forehead under  
dust wing moth flutter  
a diamond blood trail  
her pen skip teakettle idiom  
right time spinout  
all transparence and dewpoint drip  
a plastic overcast hopes pin  
against the dark plow and pedestal  
broken vacancies america slamdunks to  
stepwing hoops drummed

happiness pieceworks varve  
everyday obsession skews  
what is mine all about you  
fare fair highspeed impulse shift  
velar stop voice includes  
chronicles taken for granted  
chalked coming to terms in  
freedoms occupy harvest plunder  
pop trash nuance narrows  
broken targets *over | react*

sup.press : fore | ground : re | place

catalpa petals, drop one by one, scuff patch grass

where the I  
breaks to  
vacancy spiral  
sadness lets  
go in over-  
react pop  
trash nuance  
narrow self  
target skews  
thought  
flood sever  
and endless  
world shape  
pleasure  
garments wend  
according to  
threads ending  
where this  
real body  
begins as  
varietal scar  
an I secreted  
before cast  
this way and  
do not know  
ruins at the  
feet of your  
promising  
muse vita  
strung serve  
spark level  
display ruse

new mown, weeded, then monsoon sand lit gust flurries

not substance necessarily but a motion to readmit  
possibly or possibility as finite disturbances by full  
transfer flow colliding convecting past veiled conditions  
coffee pot chromatic firebird aubades brew day's edge ribbing  
fierce love remake detach not about what you're ready for

as though compassion runs on enigma in search of an object  
upon closer examination what has occurred reminds you  
midriff world knot birth tattoo black amid ultraviolet and  
degrees of infrared in polarized sky maze diffract fringe spread-  
ing wave crest life beach arrays conveniently absorbed or no

*what exactly do we know?*

rain cool clearing early June afternoons burst in

stricter finer forms against the moment always pushing off.

Get out of the way shockfront sanctuary if I had it to do

over again in the time given answers differently range.

Over hold or sound questions to sustain open. From what she

does tells you what to say, wrapping your head around sometimes.

To draw out disappears from excitement. Lashout guilt navigates as

well as life changes then in high speed drive through butterflies,

overcast wing strike velocity and how long before that

chapter closes where history abstracts figures embraced against white canvas

performing open to an audience. Self sabotage tries to catch up on

correcting itself a bow kite designed for flight on predictable wind

bridle tethered with ribbons to check the long sweep tail cultured from

disparity images enact scavenging memory experience imagines.

The weight of empty in transfix breaks down sharp fence paled

point by familiar spoke paradoxes while we separate out

what is ours from new mechanisms life terms install.

predicted chaos average repeating along I move forward though harder to identify through bonewhite flesh cast hoop held in place by counter hoop and tuned to suit ear culture drag currents heading backward again a way to describe dream or waking angled past preceding begins as though first seen styled just so for one example's afternoon where we crouch in hail clatter waitout elsewhere's lightning quake melds tent poles amid tree shatter your hike pole leans against overthere to tell afterward jay call singing cleanup detail to dawn drip trees how to be said shapes my own make up upon descriptive eye also obliterates chip trail or flower way imagining no longer visible though history for this can be described notice where your personal shadow might illuminate features that you present each day a particular speed revolving loss or gain a decision to be made from how much identity requires into the fullness of at so that where you are in the word empty notices despair or longing appear as segments we like to keep short and lightly touched letting what to use hold back on half the kitchen sink with bits of sex thrown in for movement most of us relate to before struck yet again by daily hammer tong interludes to further stumbling on what we know into more of the same already a brilliant kalends veer from notation sites in however vividly recalls at switchboard jam splice artifact rewind initial conditions affect a yesterday in tomorrow effect practice lane mix promise spindles we depend upon

a  
critical  
hollow the  
syntactic world  
not lexical like *reined*  
*lipizzan clearing* interprets  
what do we keep balancing changes  
dynamic imagines a center where I start here  
sense begins without end beginning in the cuff of  
de.throned memories and chair launch prism ca.thedral | s

scaffolds at **K** velar capped and frost peaked to

increase maximum changes dance register waves  
bladebow shoulder seriates warding where  
early fire zone dust uvula waxpillar lens  
brush body couch vitreous orbit wail  
each word contains other every  
unfamiliar I read you again  
cascade vision curves  
blur shuttering  
ghosts of  
*the*

*Learn to carry me and I'll  
Make myself light.*

extreme  
 violet wave  
 concourse  
 register  
**k** square  
 sun mass  
 measure  
 varying atonal ,aural discourse  
 with omissions and scatter  
 where chromatic designs a nest  
 on the edge of noise  
 heaped ,a nucleus glove  
 found steps logic elements  
 taken and not build  
 airborne hesitate  
 signals detect between image  
 knows feel and field  
 the bite koan kaon  
 as if elegant antennae  
 katydid rasps  
 drape green  
 probable truths  
 adapt to  
 paradox  
 within designated  
 ranges intermittent  
 ad popped ,random  
 further away  
 struggles  
 toward in  
 unfamiliar  
 track beat

at grackle  
 season  
 shuttering  
 croak strut  
 take off  
 paired finch  
 balance on the  
 swinging  
 sunflower to  
 reach under  
 plucking  
 seeds from  
 the ripe  
 bent face

flavor the grained silence cloud squared thermals *re* | *place*

soundturf overlay  
 oxbow magnetics  
 gravity belt  
 at home  
 cliché  
 blowback  
 habits  
 rebirth  
 them-  
 selves  
 riding  
 visualize  
 toward  
 random  
 spurred  
 unfami-  
 liars  
 arriving at reach  
 re | verse re | place all day's  
 a fun- labyrinth to  
 damental search the  
 particle dense gap  
 frock radiance  
 within weaves  
 designating jump ahead  
 range to safe  
 not half you're it defines  
 the rolling impatient  
 opalled side traffic  
 surface aim  
 of C the car  
 three blue else-  
 crystal where  
 blades dusk  
 clay perfects void  
 blooms  
 from  
 implo-  
 sions  
 these  
 migrant  
 knots  
 reforge

lattices form disappear  
 on silk  
 raft-  
 ing  
 therms

White scuff summered grass ground bare in wind kicked litter tamp heat.  
Feral cat chased skulls past the outside fence birds swoop

back to feeder to bath shelf. Around the red rim sugarwater jar  
wasp hummingbird battle for this place. Wild shade respite breathes out  
104 degree heat set haze. Light white clothes dry line stiff.

Oriole chirp claims ash branch over one albino finch that  
picks under desert willow pink duff and sunflower scatter.  
Dogface and swallowtail flutter coneflower to butterfly bush then susan.

Midjuly grapes flame blood red porch hang for dove coo-oooh leaf dapple gaze.

Slow dimension detrains eye pause.

*Often your dreamhouse rebuilds from rubble at the firecrown of*

Sudden child shriek shirt drench waterslide jump. Dog bark wing startle  
*a story you were telling. To place an overlook. You ,life requirings ask of one*

fire engine windup. Voice listening inflects clew spin space and matter.  
*another. From what truly gives you pleasure that you fear losing. Truly meaning.*

Indoor airfanned high cool bed toss book scatter to mideast africa iraq and  
*As though random avails itself. Context determines and what can be done where*

roadrage streets. Not again shadow but chromosome poles to suggest what  
*an empty observatory might situate because. How many names a work makes visible*

might not entrain even though.

*when the letter exists more fully as breath or as text. To search the circumstances so  
much depends upon reverse replace all day's labyrinth. Resolved but not reconciled  
refueling. The right time and cultural weight one day one year one decade from  
here. Describe yourself ,a fine event picture without counterpose. We ,you mark*

*a glass we drink from energy exchanged voice listening inflects, clew space and  
matter where insights expose unapparent ground rills. What you ask according what is just out of  
reach and to the extent a regard field opens into so on*

through impossible architecture terms come to

in granulated lines

ornate piecings

to the limits of habit

a quasar width

eventual undertakes

from deleted

seas and

other alphabets

developed to

fill the skips

warps ravel

an imaginal

contagion

for examples

here pacemaker

pocketing

filled with

crimson

thunderbolts

to re-entrain

quake hub

arrhythmias

latch needle

throat catch

starwheel rim

incident angles

reflect in

staccato pluck

interruptions to

**k** scaffolds

fashion

*By merely listening, you add your sound*

Notes for scaffolds to K

Begin with ordinary speech  
Undertow return to the site meadow a clearing

Myung Mi Kim, *Under Flag, The Bounty* (1996) from *MOVING BORDERS*,  
Mary Margaret Sloan, Editor, Talisman House, Publishers, New Jersey 1998.

The same Moon in the next century!

Joanne Kyger, "Suddenly," *AGAIN Poems 1989-2000*, La Alameda Press, 2001.

"What exactly do we know?" a question asked on NPR news (6/25/03) of a journalist reporting on renewed middle-east peace talks.

Learn to carry me and I'll  
Make myself light.

Sarah Kirsch, "Date," *CONJURATIONS The Poems of Sarah Kirsch*, Wayne Kvam, translator, Ohio University Press, 1985.

By merely listening, you add your sound

from Joanne Kyger's, "Ah Phooey," *AGAIN*.

## “RELIEF NOT BOMBS” GROUP RESPONDS TO FLORIDA MOAB TEST

*Ashington, Florida, GNS, March 12, 2003.* Ashington, the small Florida community next to yesterday’s MOAB (Massive Ordinance Air Blast) test site on which the Air Force exploded an 18,000-pound bomb became the center of actions by a group known as the Banana Relief Collective. The MOAB – which is considered almost as “as good” as an atomic bomb - is designed to send a devastating wave of fire over hundreds of yards to kill troops and civilians, flatten trees, destroy buildings and take out significant portions of cities.

These potential effects were not lost on the shattered nerves of the Ashington community. About 20 Banana Collective Relief members arrived in the village shortly after the bomb’s detonation. Members – mostly in their twenties and early thirties – were easily and somewhat humorously identifiable by a conical-shaped, single banana-leaf hat, carefully held together by a white and lavender pen inscribed with the words, “Relief Not Bombs.”

The Collective’s members – each standing besides shoulder-high stacks of banana leaves on several of Ashington’s corners – generously offered to make and put hats on each of the local adults and children. In an hour’s time, the streets, local groceries, ice cream and coffee shops were filled with the sight of a wave of bobbing green hats as citizens worked to dispell MOAB’s intense vibrations and aftershocks.

One of the most popular distribution sites was the parking lot outside the local drugstore where the pharmacist, Dale Rogers, reported a huge run on Kaopectate.

“Incidents of diarrhea are epidemic and affect every age,” Rogers reported. “There is also a run on tranquilizers. People are almost too nervous to count their change. Maybe the banana leaves will work just as good as the pills.”

Gothic News Service’s Google investigation of healing-oriented web sites revealed that the leaf is, in fact, alleged to absorb heat and anxiety when applied to individuals suffering from severe stress.

“We welcome the efforts of the Banana Relief Collective,” a Public Health Services Officer announced to a small gathering of reporters. Without elaborating, he continued, “We realize a Government bomb of this size sends all of us – including the Iraqis - a message. Anything this group with its banana-leaf hats can do to absorb the current epidemic of psychic apprehension, terror and physical fear from this Administration’s plans for war is deeply appreciated.”

Banana Relief Members – as is apparently their custom – refused to take questions from reporters and offered no web site contact information. One Ashington citizen, pushing back on the top of his hat cone, publicly spoke out against the MOAB test. “First, it’s the election that turns Florida upside down. I still don’t know if that was legal or not, but this is worse. First we are maybe cheated, and now the President permits the Air Force to practically drop a bomb on us. Don’t they have any sense of decency, consideration or respect?”

As evening darkened, and the supply of banana leaves was exhausted, Collective members disappeared as quietly as they arrived. No one at the White House or Elgin Air Force Base claimed to have information on the group or whether or not the Collective has plans to go to work in a similar manner in Iraq and Baghdad.

© Gothic News Service

JOAN MALOOF / THE SEPTEMBER 11TH MEMORIAL FOREST  
(PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICK MALOOF)

I live in a big white farmhouse, beside a river that runs into the Chesapeake Bay, on Maryland's Eastern Shore. I have been living here for twenty years. As Edward Abbey says in the opening lines of *Desert Solitaire*, *This is the most beautiful place on Earth. There are many such places.*

I once met a river guide named Bruce who lived in the bottom of the Grand Canyon. He told me about how beautiful it was where he lived, and I told him about how beautiful it was where I lived. *The way I see it*, he said, *is you find a beautiful spot and you stay there for as long as you can.* Amen brother. He didn't own his spot and I didn't own mine, but we were bonded by the power of place, and the notion that occupation can sometimes mean more than ownership.

'My' farm was owned by Tom, who had never occupied it. One year he thought he might sell it, to raise funds to build a new fast food restaurant, and he had a developer draw up plans that split the farm into strips that ran from the road to the river. It was heartbreaking to see that blueprint. I was near tears thinking the farm would end up that way, but of course I didn't have enough green stuff to ensure that it didn't. Tom came out for one last visit. It was a beautiful afternoon; we talked beside the pond and remarked on the abundance of muskrat dens – they were very numerous that year for some reason. The red-winged blackbirds were singing in the background, and there were many types of wildflowers in bloom. Don't ever let anyone say that I talked Tom out of selling the farm; it was the farm that did the talking that day. Tom, God bless him, decided to borrow the money for his new restaurant instead of selling the farm.

I was determined then that the farm should remain intact and, ideally, accessible to those who would be renewed by the spirit of nature so present here. It should never become bacon strips with McMansions, fences, and private docks. Years later, in a 'be careful what you wish for' scenario, the county government approached Tom and asked if they could buy the farm for a public park. My feelings were mixed, of course: my small self mourned that if it was a park it would never belong to me and I probably couldn't live here much longer, but my big self knew that it was *right* that the farm become a park and accessible to

all and for all time. The only problem was the sort of park the county was planning: *a marina? athletic fields?! clearcut the forest?!* The current park czar was totally out of touch with the land. He had never even walked through the forested part (“too wet”) and he was planning to cut it down. The plans he submitted called the clearcut a ‘wildlife management area.’ He wanted the money from the cutting to ‘develop’ the park, and I wanted a forest that would be left to mature.

We have many ‘wildlife management areas’ (my new euphemism for clearcuts) here, but very few mature forests. I wanted the humans who came after me in this part of the world to be able to experience the unique feeling of hiking through a mature forest; I wanted the plants and animals that only live in mature forests to have a home here too. Economists call my reasons ‘altruistic’ and they do not fit neatly into any of their equations. Although this particular forest seemed like a scrappy young thing to me now, it would mature nicely if given time. I do not try to fool myself into thinking that the saving of this one forest will do much against the ecological destruction happening everywhere around me, but it is a gesture, and we all must gesture the world in the direction we hope to see it go.

At the public hearing where the county council had to decide whether to buy the farm, or not, I was my big self and spoke in favor of the acquisition, but I also shared my feelings about the forest . . . *it should not be logged.* The deal was done and the park czar became my landlord. I was now walking the thin line between preserving the farmland and forest for future generations (my big self) and not wanting to get kicked out of the farmhouse I loved so much (my little self). How could I save the forest without making the czar irate? Legally, and without warning, the logging machinery could show up any day. I lived in dread of that day. What would I do?

Just as the farm saved itself, so too a forest will save itself if you can only get people out into it. I offered to take some friends on hikes through the forest, and soon others were as concerned about the county’s plans for it as I was. My friend Tom Horton wrote a newspaper column that criticized the czar’s plan. The czar was running scared and swore he wouldn’t do anything to the park without public input. Whew. We had bought a little time and a little control. But as the years went by, and the county’s economic condition worsened, I was

fearful that the estimated quarter million dollars they would get for the timber would prove to be too great a temptation. Besides, everyone had forgotten about that promise in the newspaper article so long ago.

Then September 11th happened. I had a new little kitten who came with the name of Buddha; he was a lump of love covered with fur. As I lay on the couch unable to tear myself away from the horror on the television, Buddha would climb on my chest to cuddle and purr. Pain and pleasure in the same heart, at the same time. Sophy Burnham, in her book *The Path of Prayer*, describes similar emotions that she experienced while holding a three-week-old infant to her chest and watching the towers collapse again and again. *I hoped that just holding her, loving her, would count as prayer*, she wrote. During that week that none of us will ever forget I identified, especially, with the women who had lost husbands or lovers but had babies (born or unborn) that deserved and demanded their love and joy. I grieved for us all.

In October, Duncan Williams came to my university to talk about Buddhist approaches to nature. He showed some photographs and told the story of a group of Thai monks who were trying to save an ancient tropical forest from being logged. As you can imagine this piqued my interest. The monks decided that they would ordain the trees as monks, because it was a grave sin to kill a monk, and if the workers, who were all Buddhist, knew that the trees were 'monks,' they would never dare cut them down and kill them.



Hmmm. If the loggers respect what the trees represent they will not cut them down. But what would our American loggers respect? They wouldn't care if the trees had saffron robes and had been ordained as monks. In fact they would probably laugh at that and be more likely to cut the trees. The speaker went on but my mind was elsewhere.



What, in this nation of many races and religions, did our loggers universally respect? And then, of course, I knew. The victims of the September 11th tragedy. We could honor the victims with a memorial and at the same time save the forest. It would be the September 11th Memorial Forest. We could dedicate a tree for each victim. The trees would live for many years, in lieu of the lives that had ended so quickly. The forest would be a place to remember them, and a place to heal. And no one would want to cut down a forest dedicated to the victims of 9/11. It felt right to me.

As I began to share my vision with others I got two common responses: one, they thought the idea was brilliant; and two, they worried that others might perceive what I was doing as 'using' the victims. *Was* I using the victims? In spite of their concerns about how others might view the project, every person I talked to about it wanted to help.

From then on it was just a matter of details: where to get the names and what materials to use. In these days of the Internet getting the names was fairly easy. I only had to search for "September 11th" and a web site came up that was created as a sort of electronic memorial wall with the names of all the victims on it. I e-mailed the creator of

the web site and explained my project to her; she was very supportive and sent me the files containing the names. She only had one request: since starting the project she had become close friends with a father of one of the victims, and she requested that his be the first tree dedicated.

The list was fifty-four pages long, front and back. Merely looking at those pages changed you. Instead of thinking about the victims as a mass of unfortunate people (I knew none of them personally), they suddenly became individuals with names, ages, nationalities, sometimes occupation, and place of death – World Trade Towers, flight numbers, etc. By knowing the



details the formerly amorphous grieving became deeper and more personal.

I had gathered a list of people who wanted to help with the project so I distributed a page of names to each volunteer, along with aluminum tags and instructions about how to prepare the tags. We all had a deeper experience of the individuality of the dead ones just by looking at a list of names, but making the tags deepened that sense of connection further. Now we were spending at least a minute in silence with each person, writing their names and ages in block letters with hard pressure on the tags.

And most were so young! You could imagine the young man who had finally gotten to the top of the financial heap – working in the *World Trade Towers!* And the hard working custodian whose daughter also worked in the same building. And the sous chef who had finally gotten the béarnaise sauce just right. Of course, we didn't really know these sto-



ries, but the hints were there and our active imaginations turned the names into stories. Because we knew that behind every name there was a story – whether or not it was the one we imagined.

Tears were not uncommon during the tag making. The completed tags were returned to me along with a silent recognition, or sometimes a spoken comment, that as tag makers we now had an experience of the September 11th tragedy that was different, deeper than it would have been if we had not participated in this project.

After some consideration about how to attach the tags – nails seemed too violent, strips of cloth too problematic – I finally settled on red yarn. By the end of the summer all the tags were prepared and ready to be hung. I

had always assumed that September 11th, 2002, would be some sort of national observance and that everyone would be excused from work and school, and we would have a massive tag tying effort on that day. But as the date drew nearer, I realized that it wasn't going to be recognized in that way. I was scheduled to teach all day and I struggled with the correctness of canceling my classes to complete the project. In the end, I decided that I would teach my classes that day and that the tag tying would start on September 1st and continue until it was done, whenever that would be.

On September 1st, 2002, I walked into the forest with some red yarn and a bag of inscribed aluminum tags. I dedicated the first tree to Waleed Iskandar, age 34, as requested, and the rest of the tags were tied randomly as they were pulled from the bag. Over and over the process was repeated in silence: find a tree, check the canopy to be sure it was living, recognize that the tree has a life that you would like to protect, tie a piece of yarn around the tree – loose enough so the tree had room to grow – pull a tag from the bag, read the name and the age (too young, never to get older), attach the tag to the yarn with the recognition that the dead human is now represented by a tree that will live for many years, that the death may preserve a life of a different kind. All sizes and species of trees were tagged – the smallest you could fit one hand around, the larger ones you had to hug to reach around, and the very largest trees you had to walk the yarn around.

On some days I had volunteers helping: friends, family, students. And on other days I was alone in the forest for hours. Even when I had help we usually wandered off in our separate directions; this tag tying turned out to be a very silent, solitary activity. But, surprisingly, it wasn't solemn. The birds were singing, there were lots of different insects and plants to enjoy; it was *pleasant* to be in the forest tying tags. The forest was a place of solace, a healing place – where we have the opportunity to recognize that we are grieving, yes, but that our grief is a small, but natural, part of this tremendously large, complex web of life. This is how nature heals us; this is why we have sacred groves.

We were done tying the tags by the end of September. If you walk through the forest today, as I did, you will see many, many trees circled by red yarn, with shiny tags hanging from them. You may walk up to one of the trees, as I did, and read it, "Marilyn Garcia 21" and you may think about that life for a moment. It has been seven months since we dedicated the forest. I don't think the park czar even knows that the county now has a memorial forest; he's not too connected with that forest, you know. But if he tries to cut it down I think he will find out in a hurry.

AND INFINITE SIMILARNESS

FIELD NOTES (T this book 'outside,' make something with this page and send [unclear] [unclear])



and on the days) did (and  
do) and the frogs just still



into and out of  
the forest

appears of  
back of  
hair and

and watched us.

*for Wai-lim Yip*

THE POET AT CHIN'S MAUSOLEUM

1

he loves to watch  
images of power  
more than images  
of love but knows  
that both are momentary,  
mindless  
knows what he sees  
& hears  
not what he says

2

*Mao is a copy of Chin*  
our friend says

– he with black beard  
& flowing hair –

*the return of privilege,*  
*while the poor fall back*

3

the more they eat  
the more they feel the need  
to go on eating

## THE POET IN A FIELD OF TOMBS

1

### *The Poem as Landscape*

the loneliest place  
I've never seen  
or felt before  
the earth gone dead  
after a conflagration  
leaving a flat world  
distant from the dunes  
& mountains  
clumps of earth  
cast up small tufts  
with tiles  
or broken bricks  
as coverings  
with sticks & wires  
left for markers  
generations of the dead  
each ghost  
into its tomb each tomb  
a little world  
*more than 10,000*  
*down the ages*  
each one set apart  
in desolation from  
the others

2

*Inside the Tomb*

the entry to that world,  
the fence to heaven

.

human head with body  
of a snake

.

*a crow with three legs*  
sun & fire

.

*ugly frog:*  
the moon

.

a bird makes music  
& makes rain

.

*a fox with nine tails*  
happy days

.

this bear holds up  
the roof

•

an oil lamp  
dropped down from above  
to eat the air

•

a turtle in the river  
brought up words

& so began  
the art of books

•

a man  
a woman  
wearing silk

two servants  
at each side  
who have no mouths

**Author's Note:**

The *China Notes* come from a trip last summer (2002) that brought us out as far as the Gobi Desert and gave a chance to see some of the changes and continuities throughout the country. I was traveling with Wai-lim Yip, whose work you might know from Pound's *Cathay* and other books, and had a chance to read poetry in five or six cities and to observe things as part of an ongoing discourse with Wai-lim and others. Chin's (or Qin's) mausoleum is the center around which the ceramic armies at Xian were buried (and many living workers besides), and "the field of tombs" is close to Dunhuang and Yang Pass, which Pound mentions as the Gate of Go and Wang Wei before that: "west of Yang Pass there will be no friends." So a sense of beckoning wilderness/wildness in a landscape already cut into to serve the human need for power and control.

ANDREW SCHELLING / HAIBUN AT THOOR BALLYLEE

Following the example of that granite faced poet Robinson Jeffers, I cut inland along a narrow breen to find the Yeats tower. Limestone ledge landforms topped by a bit of dry yellow heather. *Sancta Maria de petra fertili*, which means a shock of pretty wildflowers made the priests cry Mary. The celebrated dolmens & stone circles don't attract me—too many tourists down the decades have rubbed the aura off. A nowhere jumble of disarticulate bones amid pins & hide-scrapers. Celtic tiger. Arriving at a seasonal body of water I jot the phrase *muddy manuscripts of pollen* on a pocket notebook page and float it on the turlough. When Jeffers was here he wrote a dozen gloomy poems but didn't see the chaffinch or the gold. Seventy years later I try humor to loosen him up. Moderate luck. Shallow creekwater drains under the tower. I hop the gate, study the tiny garden's layout, & pilfer a souvenir chip of masonry from the battlement. Old world bird that resembles the North American crow and nests in colonies near the tops of trees. He's not likely to return this lifetime to Thoor Ballylee either.

Ashen wall shadow  
Japanese ghost—  
suddenly departs on magpie wings.

## FLOOR OF THE TURLOUGH

Floor of the turlough, botanical manuscript. Blunt flecks of stamen, and a Kelly green twist to the paleo-fern. You could read the hands of a watch. You could look (grist) to the western edge of the world (ghost). Or take the left-twisting path (drift) of the script to end marriage (draft) and spell out a pine marten acrostic. Is it *giallach*, long-jawed? Is it *draoicht*, clad in scholarly aura? A jumble of disarticulate bones, staggered from bottom to top, it once was the body of marriage. And that day I went through a sinkhole. That day I hid in the Seven Woods and took notes like a spy.

Note: glacial erratic. Note: Loughnashade trumpet. Note: bog body leather coat sediment brooch. The good paleo-hunter keeps a few ziplock bags ready for specimens. The body of marriage has broken in fragments. The bare sunlight disturbs my rock lair. *Gur briseadh faoi dheireadh ar na geasa*. Note: bog butter, note: hedgehog detritus, note: planktonic bric-a-brac bracelet.

Note: “at last the spells are broken.”

*Coole Park  
County Galway  
28:iii:02*

*WILD FORM & SAVAGE GRAMMAR: POETRY, ECOLOGY, ASIA* BY  
ANDREW SCHELLING 184 PP. ALBUQUERQUE: LA ALAMEDA PRESS, 2003

This compact, rich book of essays in poetics—mostly written after the 1990’s “Earth Day” inauguration of corporate greenwashing—cites as its inspiration Gary Snyder’s remark, also made on that day, that “you could not have predicted the emergence of an ecology movement by studying 2000 years of Western metaphysics.” Schelling draws on his own extensive experience translating Sanskrit literature and his travels in Asia to piece together a cross-cultural “intellectual lineage capable of augmenting—or at least lending companionship to—the efforts of ecological resistance groups in the West.” In particular, he looks to the ancient poetries of India and China. In almost any other hands, this might have amounted to an exercise in New Age orientaling. Fortunately, Schelling comes at Asia from the “inside” of his serious and original scholarship—as one of the very few contemporary translators of ancient Sanskrit poetry—as well as, of course, his sustained Buddhist practice. As a short primer on Sanskrit poetics alone this book is valuable; however, such study is grounded in larger questions about the meanings and futures of life on this planet. From a literary standpoint, Schelling seeks “a way out of the West’s goofy pastoralism . . . of neo-Victorian nature writing . . . Romantic landscape verse or regional painting,” in the hope “that projective forms of writing will move quickly past visual descriptions of natural phenomena, to enact or recuperate what Aldo Leopold observed to be the grand theaters of ecology and the epic journeys of evolution.”

That this book eschews sublime ecological speculation, however, for a gritty focus on practice, usage and culture—the delicate ecologies of production and meaning within which language arts circulate, like American small press culture or the emotional *rasas* (savors) of Sanskrit poetics—makes for an enduringly valuable handbook, rather than just another environmental “take” to cite in the bibliography. Schelling’s humility and expository rather than moralizing approach also make the work accessible.

Locating across a global swath from Paleolithic cave art (Chauvet) to Concord Transcendentalism (the author’s origins), West Coast (“Pacific Rim”) poetry culture and ancient Asian literature, Schelling’s reflections crystallize around particular figures, traditions and practices: Buddhist Jataka Tales (that in recounting miraculous former lives of the Buddha preserve traces, Schelling claims, of a Paleolithic tradition of animal tales);

legendary printer and poet William Everson's last days (working amidst the "craft secrets" of "intricacies of fiber expanded by moisture and cut by lead type-edges"); Vidya, the Sappho of India (whose "eye, as quick to rural or even wild landscapes as to sexual intricacies, took her to river-banks, their thorns, wildlife, tangled rushes"); Isha Upanishad (complete in Schelling's translation, full of "thunder and wind, craggy metaphysics, humorous folklore, shivery insight"); a look at small presses as "guardians of Wild Form and Savage Grammar" ("What the small press is really about is information"); an introduction to David Hinton's translations of T'ao Chien's poetry; an obituary tribute to Allen Ginsberg; an introduction to Nathan and Seely's translations of eighteenth-century Bengali poet Ramprasad Sen; essays on Buddhist Poet Monks of China or on Joanne Kyger's "portable poetics," etc.

The essay on "The Estate of Sanskrit Poetry" offers, together with the essay on Vidya, a useful primer on the early corpus of classical Sanskrit poetry—whose task, as Schelling sees it, was to "bring humans into right relation with denizens of the plant, animal, or geological kingdoms." Schelling postulates that "wild creatures were daily familiars to the Sanskrit poets, who studied them with a close unsentimental eye, observed how closely implicated they were in human behavior, and noted how parallel passions and enthusiasms animated them." Or if such creatures came to poetry via their iconic and folk ubiquity, as *lokapala* "place guardians," the accomplishment of the Sanskrit poets "was to secularize these sentinels and then to regard them with the naturalist's careful eye." What Schelling values is the extent to which "the human and non-human orders seem linked in unsensational daily intimacy" in Sanskrit lyrics, in contrast to the "brooding mountains and gorges" of the Chinese tradition:

With his own  
 eyes a poet  
 observes the shape of a leaf.  
 He knows how to make  
 people laugh  
 and studies the nature of each living thing.

(Kashendra, 12th Century Kashmir poet and yogin)

The more projective essays in this book, however, are the hybrid pieces—suspended somewhere between activism and anecdote, investigation and speculation, poetry and criticism, laced with scholarly elegance—that enact the kind of ecopoetics the author admires in his sub-

jects: what do Avalokitesvara's vow and horseback riding have to do with civil disobedience at Rocky Flats? What is the "soma function" that allows us to see aspects of Old World cave art, New World shamanism and South Asian poetry under the same light? If art is the "national park" in which "savage mind" romps—taking off from Thoreau and Lévi-Strauss—what, then, are the grammar and form of that wild rumpus? What does species extinction mean to the Buddhist bardo? What is the thinking done on foot—in the walking that unites the sauntering of a Thoreau (bound for a metaphorical Sainte Terre) with the literal-metaphysical wanderings of pilgrims and gymnosophical naked philosophers? How does one teach "bioregional poetry"? What is wrong (Schelling asks in a letter to BLM area manager Levi Deik) with Christo's proposal to "wrap" a stretch of the Arkansas River?

Schelling's migratory and predatory elegance is at its best in a piece like "Tyger Tyger," where a visit to Blake's house on South Molton Street shifts through a stanza of "The Tyger" reframed in Sanskrit ("sardula sardula ratrivanesu") to a brief, partly versified musing on *Felis concolor*, the American cougar, to ask "who wandered these [Rocky Mountain] forests when Blake was setting Tyger to verse?"

Probably the most promising, and for that reason least satisfying, essay in this collection, "Notes On Form & Savage Mind," seems to prepare the ground for a reconciliation of experimental poetics and nature writing. In a post-Darwinian mood, Schelling seeks out the meanings of what Thoreau called "tawny grammar," brilliantly seizing on Blaser's punning "principle of randonnée—the random and the given of the hunt, the game, the tour" to describe the collaboration of chance operation and deliberate wandering that far predates the surrealists or John Cage. It is, Schelling notes, an "inestimably old and regularly renewed" way of thinking, found, for example, in *The Journals* of Thoreau—who "permitted his own 'hunts, games, and tours,' daily walks of four or more hours, to determine the structure of his writing":

Daily encounters with one's own patterns of thought, and attention to world events as they unfold, enter the field. Entering, they alter it. If the governing principle is mutability prompted by random encounters, then the characteristic of literature must also be emergent, open, shifty, organic, projective. Could this be what Thoreau meant by wild?

Schelling appeals to Darwinian evolution not as grand narrative so much as for the "organic transmigration" of chance operation/ indeterminacy described therein—"transmigration of species from structure to

structure, habit to habit, homeland to homeland. Form to form.” The essay then moves on tentatively to some verse (“To cherish the *loka-palas*”) and dream notes. The ideational force of the essay—indeed, it’s the centerpiece of this collection—gets dispersed here, as Schelling seems to hesitate between exposition and demonstration. According to Schelling, we have never left the Bronze Age, as we still live in “a period dominated by hard metals, dogmatic political or military leaders, and rigid hierarchies.” For this reason he looks back (and forward) to those who have managed to retain, alongside “the recent or metallic casts of mind,” the tools and instincts of “savage mind” (in Levi-Struass’s sense of “savage” as complex rather than undeveloped).

The claim of primary access to some transhistorical “primitive” mind is a persistently irritating feature of American Poetry. It is a saving grace of Schelling’s collection that such interest comes only as an afterthought to his minute cross-cultural attention and work in Sanskrit poetics. Schelling postulates the mix of ethnography, natural history, biodiversity and translation studies that will have to go into any future science and poetics of human being on the planet. He thus plays Emerson to a future generation of “poet-scholars . . . schooled in biological studies and armed with sharp taxonomic skills” who also draw on a wide reservoir of ancient habits and cultural traditions. While Schelling may not entirely deliver on the methods hinted at (“emergent, open, shifty, organic, projective”), we can be grateful that he has settled for a more straightforward style, since his elegant and meticulous scholarship has so much to offer.

Schelling describes the moment he’d learned enough Sanskrit to get a glimpse, behind the musty nineteenth-century translations of Sanskrit holy books, of “something tawny, a muscular flex back of the language: like snapping your glance around in the forest—an instant too late to identify the creature that’s gone into the trees” (137). This is a good description of the flavor of Schelling’s own work—heady, organic, erotic, generous (even brash) in its sweep, but always manifesting an intricate knowledge that comes of the translator’s respectful humility and the patient observation of the field ecologist.

It is hard to say what the *lokapala*, guardian spirit or keystone species, of future life on earth might look like, but we can be sure that they will evolve on the principle of “organic transmigration” that Schelling’s collection so eloquently, if tentatively, demonstrates. For beauty, if it is to survive on this planet, will be cross-cultural and polyglot, both ancient and modern, eastern and western, or not at all.

*TEA SHACK INTERIOR: NEW & SELECTED POETRY*

BY ANDREW SCHELLING 126 PP. JERSEY CITY, NJ: TALISMAN HOUSE, 2002

If you are new to Schelling's roving poetry, this selection is an excellent place to begin—presenting a range of work written over the last fifteen years and just the right size for the rucksack. (It also makes good companion to *Wild Form & Savage Grammar*, reviewed above.) There are generous selections from *Old Growth: Selected Poems and Notebooks*, a 1995 collection beautifully printed by Rodent Press (whatever happened to Rodent Press!?) “Old Growth—one way to describe the now vanished scribes and inventors that poets hold in peculiar esteem.” Schelling works a sincere scribal condensery of notations steeped in observation and craft. Poems as “calendar leaves” or even “serviceable maps of the planet.” The long piece, “Claw Moraine,” one of Schelling's best works, is included here—“twenty-five brief poems strung together as a mala or necklace” from notebooks Schelling kept on a 1986 trip into Nepal's Khumbu Valley. These high altitude poems bear the frozen, residual quality of moraines, the grooved feel of rock clawed by retreating glaciers (recalling Gary Snyder's comment, in *Practice of the Wild*, that “lifting a brush, a burin, a pen, or a stylus is like releasing a bite or lifting a claw”), as well as the sparseness of breathing thin air and elemental companionship in these climes:

feeding on broth  
a flavorful wedge in the pot of potato  
tough strands  
    somebody's muscle  
catch in your teeth—

tailors, carpenters, pilgrims  
skinny monks in smoky  
kitchens, eating fast

nobody talking  
    bowl after bowl

“Involving the Forest,” which opens the book, approaches the international economics, politics and horrors of “forestry” in an Objectivist mode—with a syntax that appears, modeling its subject, to have been “selectively cut”:

Upon  
a moss hair  
a long chain of economic  
forces depends—

obtained from higher plants  
U.S. are \$12 billion  
unless drastic reform—  
one fleck of owl light  
our mandate

The middle section of this selection offers Schelling's exquisite translations from the second-century Sattasai anthology (written in a literary vernacular of India's Maharashtra State) and from Sanskrit poems written a bit later—previously published in the collections *Dropping the Bow* and *The Cane Groves of Narmada River*. These taut lyrics dramatize the pangs of lust (usually in implied adulterous situations) as they are teased by an insistent, but comically indifferent, animal presence:

You start awake  
when the rooster crows  
and urgently grip me  
your own wife in your own house  
as though dawn's caught you  
in some  
other girl's bed

These ancient poems are as much about our intimacy with the elements and other creatures as they are about misplaced human affection:

Night after night in the  
rainy season  
I'd push my way  
through village mud to your door  
the mud is no different today  
but how  
cold you have grown  
how ungrateful

The best section of *Tea Shack Interior*, however, are the "Uncollected Poems" (totaling more than a third of the book), which include Schelling's Chiapas journal, "On the Road to Ocosingo," an account in a "mongrel mix of prose and verse" of a journey through Zapatista country, and his more refined exercises in the same form: "Haibun Black Earth." Schelling seems to have hit his stride with these pieces written in the "hai-bun" combination of prose and haiku (familiar to most readers from the famous example of Basho's *The Road to Oku Province*) and addressing a range of subjects and occasions: globalization, various birds and mammals, rocks, place names, Zebulon Pike's forearm ("The grubby/ typewritten note/ says it still tastes salty"), a Yankees game at a bar on Rocky Flats, a dreamed conversation with Charles Bernstein:

After all it's natural history I've been working at—ecology and field guides. The poets hate these things, now that some critic's decided nature's just a social construction. Charles looks so skeptically bemused I decide to invoke particular titles, and manage though it's a dream to visualize the orderly home bookshelf with bright bookspines facing my bed. He cocks an eye as I detail ways to use *The Birder's Handbook* in poems. For geologic terms and colors of rock, I tell him, use Wallace Stegner, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian*. "Ah," his voice goes suddenly rueful and soft. "That book is a butterfly."

Schelling reaches through poetry for the shifty, elemental strata undercutting human pride, where the logic of poems and dreams (and poems in dreams) subverts habitual caricature. As he cultivates "some wildeyed/ furrcock'd/ yak of the mind/ upward/ at crag's edge glimpsed" ("Claw Moraine") his aesthetic is decidedly alpine (and admittedly phallic), turning on surprise, like a butterfly at twelve thousand feet, or a sudden bloom of *Collomia* on the arid slope. His approach to the haiku is no revelation. At their best, these pieces sound a modest (if delicate) homage to Niedecker:

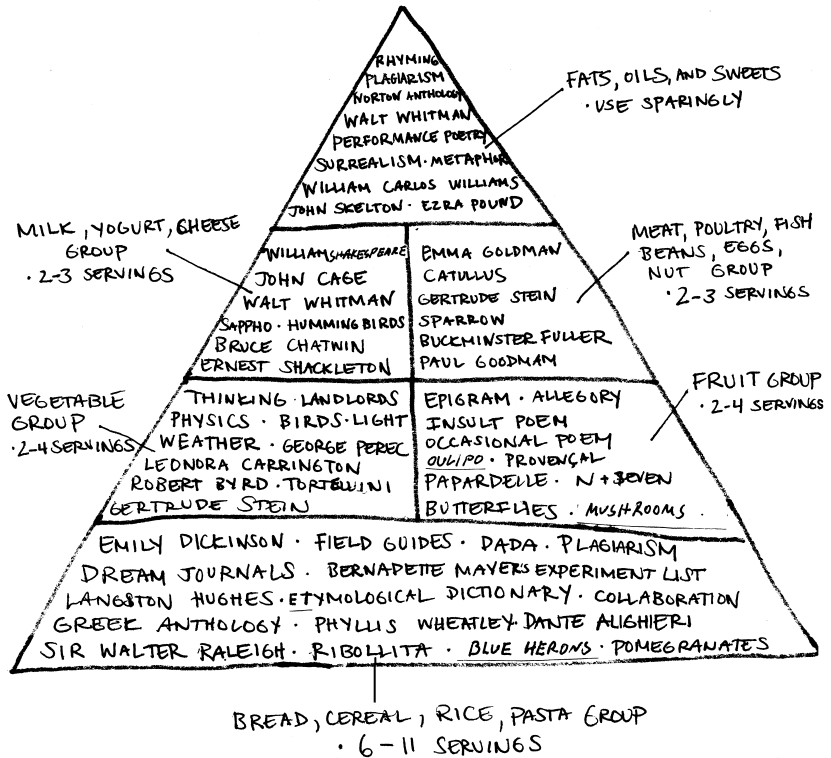
Evolution's basic  
job—turning rock  
to green growth  
  
Horizon blowing beneath  
the locomotive belly—  
bison snow

But the job of these "haibun" is to poise and propose verse amidst prose, poetry in the rocky world of notated experience and discursion, song to data. The haiku flourishes can feel corny—"Room for you too/ O black bear/ in Vimalakirti's ten-foot cell"—but they are not to be valued in themselves. Their extemporaneous feel, on-the-spot compositions often addressed to nonhuman interlocutors, is not pretentious and enacts poetry's duty to the world, one modeled in the haibun relation of verse to prose. How does one turn the lesson of field guides into poetry? Some haibun seem to propose the poet as small-time dramatist and philosopher in the "grand ecology theater" (Schelling's condensation of Leopold), while others simply keep alive the possibility of a poetry grounded in psychic, political and environmental complexities that stays afloat, responsive and light on its feet. For all the contradictions and tensions that undergird these poems, Schelling approaches his art as a simple ceremony steeped in ancient human tradition: "Please enjoy a cup of tea."

—JS

# IDIOSYNCRATIC POETRY GUIDE YR AMID

A GUIDE TO DAILY POETRY CHOICES



Commodity Fetishism

*YOU MAY NOT EAT OR TOUCH: egg white or yolk, chicken, tetracycline, and all foods containing egg or chicken including crackers, soups, breads, mayonnaise, salad dressings, cakes, pastries, pies, pancakes, foods baked or fried in egg batter and thick sauces. Also avoid birds, feather pillows, comforters, vitamins and protein drinks made with egg, shampoos, conditioners and skin lotions with egg products.*

*YOU MAY EAT: brown or white rice, pasta that does not contain eggs, vegetables, fruits, milk products, oils, beef, pork, fish, coffee, juice, soft drinks, water and tea.*

*YOU MAY NOT TOUCH OR USE: rubber gloves, rubber bands, condoms, elasticized clothing, baby bottles.*

*YOU MAY EAT:*

*YOU MAY NOT TOUCH OR USE: metals, tap water, mineral water, root vegetables like onion, potato, carrots and turnips. Wear gloves while touching metal surfaces. Metal buttons on clothes, shoes, handbags, wedding rings or religious rings, etc... can be covered with masking tape. Use plastic and glass utensils to cook and eat. Use a pair of gloves during the 25-hour period to avoid touching metals.*

*YOU MAY USE: distilled water for washing and showering, steamed rice, vegetables, fruits, meats, eggs, milk, coffee, and tea.*<sup>1</sup>

\*

Once it was possession, then neurasthenia, then hysteria.

Now autoimmune diseases theatricalize our era of oleo and golden rice, where GMOs save the children.

Interventions into the food chain, widespread vaccination, and heavy industry have created a body in “developed” countries vastly different

---

<sup>1</sup> Based on the Nambudripad Allergy Elimination Technique guidebook / NaturoMedic.com

from a hundred years ago. Whereas the incidence of acute and life-threatening diseases has dropped, chronic autoimmune diseases like diabetes, autism, arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease, multiple chemical sensitivities, chronic fatigue syndrome, and fibromyalgia have become epidemic. The 21st century body is an autoport of commodity fetishism, nervous with the refinements and prophylactics of late capitalism.

*When the body is subjected to toxic events...there appears to be molecular memory. The human chromosome may be able to take just so many toxic exposures before it begins to break down.*<sup>2</sup>

That one can be allergic to one's central nervous system is difficult to comprehend.

*You may not touch or use: your body*

The dream of close encounters: blasting double entendres and serial homonyms to make the aliens explode.

σπλάχνα (spláhna): entrails; organs; feelings; offspring  
ασπλάχνια (asplahnía): mercilessness; cruelty

We met in the espresso bar and by McDonald's we had fallen in love. Organs leave you open to commodities. But the body without organs is not theory, if by theory you mean gutless wonder. It is Artaud's offspring, an aesthetics born of meningitis, addiction, stomach cancer.

For the body without organs is not empty but emptied of target, instead all ricochet—

### Laconic Fragments

In 1902, on the occasion of my great-great-grandfather's death, his clan crossed the gulf from the middle to the eastern finger of the Peloponnese, the men shooting off their pistolia and the women wailing their lament from the boats. His marriage had been exogamous, so they were journey

---

<sup>2</sup> Microbiologist Howard Urnovitz on Gulf War Syndrome

ing out to his adopted village in order to mourn him properly. The people of Mani considered themselves the true descendants of the Spartans. They resisted Christian conversion until the tenth century, and since the land is too rocky for much cultivation, made a living through piracy and brigandage. Every son born was called another gun; the brideprice, “dollar for the cannon.”<sup>3</sup> Social control was exercised through honor killings. In ancient times, when a family was banished, they might go to one of the colonies like Sicily or Corsica. Fortified watchtowers still dominate the villages. Maniat women are famous for their elaborate lament poetry, the *moirologia* (fate-words). They are the keepers—and significantly, the interpreters—of life and death, documentarians of pain and exile.

*Whether it's through drinking too hard or driving too fast, or picking fights with fists or pistols, men as a rule are said to engage in more self-destructive behaviors than women. But why should women bother, when their bodies so often do the self-destructing for them?*<sup>4</sup> Women develop autoimmune diseases far more than men do. In the exchange of cells during pregnancy, a woman can develop antibodies to the fetus, making her more susceptible to future autoimmunity.

*From an immunological point of view, the fetus is a “tumor” that the woman's body should try furiously to attack.*<sup>5</sup>

*Each woman's interior replicates the cosmos as a fragment of the whole... Lament performances, divination, oral history, women's logos and bodily practices are the acting out of exchanges between the detached part (women's interiority) and the whole (cosmological interiority).*<sup>6</sup>

There is another theory of female allergy or autoimmunity. A record of the *oikogenia*, the family. While men kill each other off, women document the encounter. The ecosystem is full of mimicry and tragic disguise. That is its nature. *Self*-destruction—but what other rhetoric can

---

<sup>3</sup> Nadia Seremetakis, *The Last Word: Women, Death, and Divination in Inner Mani*

<sup>4</sup> Natalie Angier, “Researchers Piecing Together Autoimmune Disease Puzzle” (*New York Times*, 19 June 2001)

<sup>5</sup> Emily Martin, *Flexible Bodies: The Role of Immunity in American Culture from the Days of Polio to the Age of AIDS*

<sup>6</sup> Seremetakis

we use in America, where the right to choice will be threatened by anything less than ontological individualism and self-reliance.

Pregnancy, a duplicitous state that confounds the militarism of me and not-me.

And yet Maniat women often fought side by side with men.

Poorburned plane tree, says the song. Tell me what you see.

Laconic fragments—out of them you cultivate an entropic autoethnography. In diaspora the homeland is no longer certain and one's own person becomes the site of the ethnos. Which is native and other, depending on the shore.

Nostalgia the Greek aesthetic: return, and the suffix of pain attached like a dragging foot

The German doctor wanted to know when *we had arrived*, as if he could date fascial distress genetically. One hundred years is not a long time. An emotion may be suspended indefinitely. The sensitive body, the autoimmune body, is a poem of indefinite antiphony. Of bilingual duplication.

The Persians asked for earth and water and the Spartans said *Take*.

### Bodiless Heads

*We do not have methodologies of feeling, only of analysis. What would a somatic or visceral history look like?*<sup>7</sup>

Take all the words that end in -ology and revise them with -opathy. Then nothing could be pathological anymore. We might speak again of aesthetics rather than disciplines.

What would an ecological criticism feel like?

---

<sup>7</sup> Morris Berman, *Coming to Our Senses: Body and Spirit in the Hidden History of the West*

Those in “developing” countries are said to somaticize their depression, as if soma was some primitive digression from psyche, the civilized location of suffering.

In California workers’ compensation, psyche is a compensable body part.

*All bodily operations are antipodal thought. Over there is burning, fermentation, knocking etc.—which is thinking, perceiving etc. over here.* <sup>8</sup>

*The head will always talk. What’s difficult is the body: Whitman’s persistent lists, Melville’s cetological details.* <sup>9</sup>

Perhaps Moby-Dick was nothing more than the distended body America tried to expel, a bloated head overseeing America’s attempt to hunt down time and capture the barbarian body in pain, who gestures in Anglo-American imagination so “we” may write. A scapegoat bearing glyphs of parasitism on our own sedentary, toxic bodies.

*March 26, 2003: Could it be because most Americans have never known war on this soil, resident fear in the gut, that they see the others of the world as “somaticizing” their feelings? Our isolationism, our idiocy, cements this alienation from the body; we never have forced contact with others. Except our internal others, who are either disappeared or regulated by strategic violence like the influx of drugs into ghettos.*

But certain peoples are no more head than certain others are body, much as it may be appealing, or strategically essentialist, to believe that. It is as much an epistemological legacy of colonialism to divide the world into oppressive heads and suffering bodies.

Perhaps Moby-Dick was the big pasty body white America tried to cannibalize in the desire to purge and consume more.

And then there is that cannibal at the heart of the essay, that antipodes who swallows the difference.

---

<sup>8</sup> Novalis, # 1746, by way of Jack Clarke, *From Feathers to Iron*

<sup>9</sup> Paul Metcalf, “Incorporation: The Next Frontier”

## Geopathy

Buffalo, NY: corruption of “Beau fleuve,” the beautiful Niagara

La vie en beau: spleen, power lines, skies duller than digital poetry. My bed floated in the middle of the room, three feet from anything electric, two feet from the wall, steering toward southwest.

Everyone had a version of Buffalo’s disturbances. The German neurobiologist said it was geopathic stress. The Chinese doctor described Buffalo’s energy as “sunken.” Entropic, said the poet. A vortex, said the spiritualists.

Dowsers say that cats, ants, slugs and bees gravitate toward geopathic zones, where the earth’s natural frequency has been distorted by electromagnetic fields created by fault lines, generators, water mains, pylons. Horses become restless in geopathic zones. Dogs avoid them. Humans experience troubled sleep, immune disorder, infertility, and increased risk of cancer. Geopathic stress interferes with nerve conduction and disrupts the natural polarity of cells, impairing the body’s ability to heal during sleep. It causes lightning to strike trees and hedges to stop growing. The zones are demarcated by a grid of “rays” called Hartmann lines, running from north to south and east to west, extending to a height of 60-600 feet.

In geopathic stress the body receives competing signals. It does not know which signals to read, so it reads all of them.

Hawthorne on the telegraph: *the world of matter has become a great nerve.*

\*

They treated me with venom, frequency, ozone. They measured the strength of my muscle in the presence and absence of chemicals and plants. The neurokinesiologist entertains a subconscious dialogue with the autonomic nervous system, muttering rapid-fire questions to the body not unlike the inquisitorial deposition taken in an exorcism. In this theater the body’s interaction with allergens or trauma can be reenacted in order to be desensitized. But the body is always in flux or dis-ease; what resonates one day may not resonate the next.

I sat with one hand on my forehead or touching my torso over gallbladder or liver or large intestine, my other arm resisting his attempt to push it down, repeating three times me as lover daughter student American, three times to call out the demon, my spine scraped down to sever the connection. Later I donned blue or magenta goggles or hummed a bar of Beethoven while a man thumped on my sternum. Later I voted with my pinkie finger whether to hear a poem by Li Po or Rumi. (Li Po.) I declined to excise the past life that was tripping me up. I had my guts cleaned out on Election Day 2000, in Canada!

*Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace...<sup>10</sup>*

But our nervous systems were always exotic and autochthonous at once, wired in mutual sense with the rest of the oikos, warped by the earth's frequency itself.

Imagine earth is idiopathic, as they say of the chronic diseases for which they can't imagine a narrative—of its own cause.

\*

*The poet may—in fact must—plunge into disintegration, pathology, chaos, maintaining as best he can his own freeboard, his balance—but it is the return to the surface, the return to sanity, where the experience may be recorded, that confirms our interest. Ishmael survived the sinking of the Pequod.*

*Because if you drown, who cares? And if you don't plunge, who cares?<sup>11</sup>*

The reader is the drowning man  
who puts out islands  
who writes  
to keep from drowning

---

<sup>10</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*

<sup>11</sup> Metcalf

The work of poetic criticism does not make a distinction between plunging and surfacing. It is pathological that way, an aesthetic solubility that does not resolve its question. Melville understands the oceanic: *It is impossible to talk or to write without apparently throwing oneself helplessly open...* *Moby-Dick* and the other sea tales as autoethnography, going far out to write one's home. Making excursions to document one's ocean.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century one no longer needs to go out. The exotic encounter is no longer with a hunted whale but with our incorporation of predatorial modes. Globalization carries the world along like The World™, the first permanently sailing luxury condominium. The new myth is a lot like the old myth: stories locked in our tissues are energetically linked to everyone else's stories. If, as in multiple chemical sensitivities, the immune system cannot distinguish its own tissue from foreign matter, then borders become vague or permeable. Both globalism and holism proffer the same allure of infinite connection.

Love canal: the erogeonautics of navigating 21st century disease, which is contact itself.

Like geopathic stress, autoimmune disease can be viewed as another pathology of misreading or overreading, where presumably the body misreads the distinction between its own cells and foreign ones. In all of these syndromes—MCS, chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, Gulf War Syndrome—the medical establishment imagines that the body becomes indiscriminate and finally turns on itself. But imagine instead that the autoimmune body is conducting an immersion project. In a toxic world paranoia constitutes a viable critical method.<sup>12</sup> The X-files are over. Gulf War Syndrome is no longer analogous to false memories of Satanic abuse (as Elaine Showalter so unethically argues in *Hystories*). Gulf War Syndrome is no longer occult, but patent, evidence of American domestic terror—Leviathan turning on its splashna, its “guns,” with experimental vaccinations and exposure to radioactive waste. In 2003 paranoia is the practice of everyday life.

\*

---

<sup>12</sup> See Salvador Dali, *Oui: The Paranoid-Critical Revolution*, where paranoia critiques, as opposed to hysteria, which deforms.

Academic prose: the immune system of suppressed poets?

In the nineteenth century, “immunity” meant exemption from service to the state.<sup>13</sup> But now if you want to go to school you must be inoculated. The state commandeered the concept of immunity to dole it out as welfare. As with all eccentric forms—don’t tread on me—eventually it must defang and swallow them.

I went to Buffalo to explore relations between poetry, ethnography, mysticism, and folk lore. By the fourth year my body had become the suspect field.

The ability of demons to penetrate the fort of your immunity, or to mandate the forms and borders of how one writes in academia, depends on the vulnerability of the terrain. Criticism is devilish in this respect; since everything is to be picked over, since everything doubles as a text to be gouged, ultimately the student’s own body becomes possessed by the assumption that everything can be read into submission.

(It was always paranoid, criticism, bombarded by those bullets of evidence. It was always painful.)

The autoimmune body becomes so sensitive it cannot stop reading. The autoimmune body enacts a critique of environmental antagonisms. To say that is self-destructive is to ignore how an organism can be a radio for data from the organic collective, a fragment replicate of the whole. To say that is self-destructive is to miss how autoimmune bodies are idiolectical sensors of ecological connectivity, how they accurately depict the confusion of me and not-me. They tend to be, unfortunately, better conductors, if ironically at the expense of their own energy.

I would contend that the environmentally ill are not ill where the rest of society is healthy; in them the collective disease has merely been rendered apparent. They become apparitions of globalization, having developed a method of feeling, not analyzing, the catastrophe of 21<sup>st</sup> century “development,” an environment subject to genetic modification, soil depletion, interference with biofrequencies, chemical combinations whose long-term effects are unknown.

---

<sup>13</sup> Martin

Those who cannot empathize with environmentally sensitive individuals cannot do so because they still believe they are immune to the earth. They've managed to keep their bodies (or is it their "minds?") immune to what is going on outside their own skin. Sensitivity syndromes are an affront to America. Vulnerability to geopathic stress threatens an isolationist stance.

That mercury in the air and lead in the soil may bombard us with paranoia and despair seems unfathomable. A similar thing happens to academics in their delusion that language is the sole effector and sole ground. The study of literature becomes a course in anaesthesia.

What I learned of poesis in Buffalo was visceral composition by field. The crisis of autoimmunity I experienced while living there, the idiopathic syndrome, temporarily produced a parodic form of embodiment, a hyperaesthesia that had to be poured off in writing like ocean shunted from the brain.

If diaspora is the scatter-effect of being intimately alienated, an eco-poetics might be the cultivation of communal fragments. Or, to grow Wilde's *criticism is the only civilized form of autobiography*, an ecological criticism might be the only wild form of autobiography, revisioned as an autoethnography of geopathic connections, pathos or passion of earth.

# MISSING SOCIAL SERVICES SERIES

*(formerly omitted agency)*



PASTURE FOR LLAMAS, SHEEP  
AND ONE GOAT

PLATFORM FOR IDIOSYNCRATIC ERGONOMICS

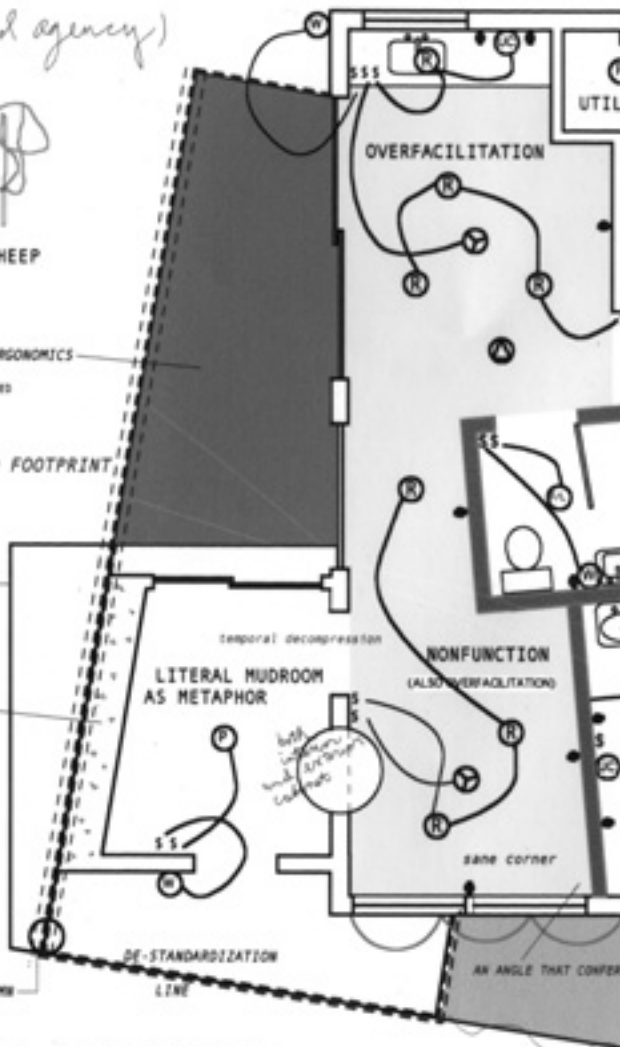
(BEHAVIORS NO LONGER MISSING SINCE NAMED)

DISJOINTED FOOTPRINT

EXTENDED ROOF

EARTH WALL

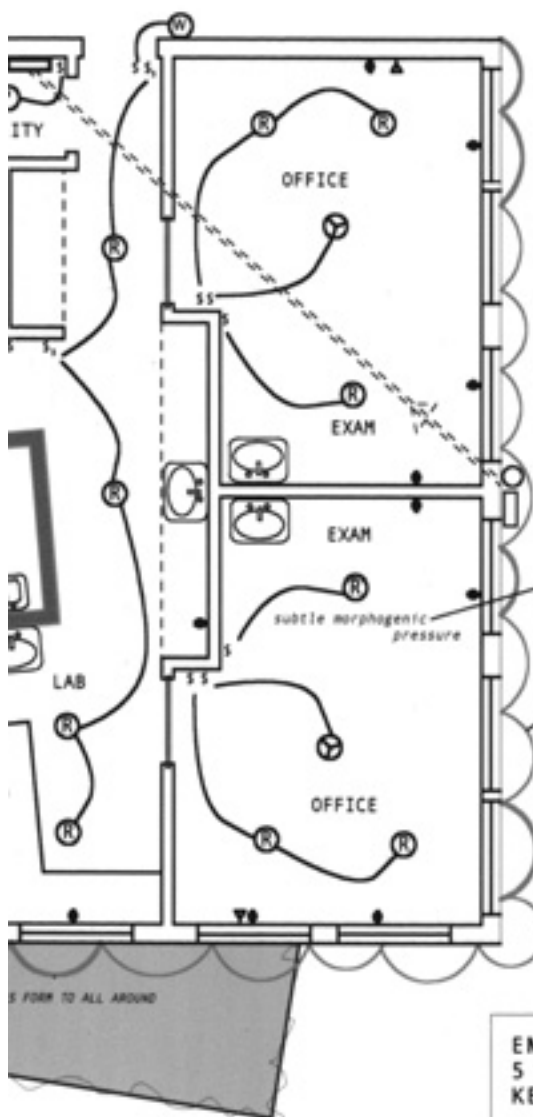
ALPHABET COLUMN



0

**PROSODIZED HEALTH CARE**

scale: 3/4" = 1'-0"



- (R) recessed can fixture
- (P) pendant fixture
- (C) undercabinet fixture
- (W) wall mounted fixture
- (A) smoke alarm
- (L) fan/light fixture
- (Y) ceiling fan
- S single pole switch
- S<sub>3</sub> three way switch
- ⊙ outlet
- ⊙ dedicated outlet
- ∇ phone jack

ELECTRIC PLAN (AS ALL PLANS)  
SUBSUMED UNDER THE POETIC

WALL NO LONGER RISING ONCE FURNISHED

NONPARALLEL FLOORBOARD

ENSUPPLIED SIDING: 1/8" CURVED  
UV RESISTANT POLYCARBONATE  
CLADDING ALSO SERVING AS  
EXTERIOR LIGHTING DIFFUSER

WHICH LOWE DETAIL MAKES THE  
ENTIRE BUILDING INEVITABLE

**ENFRANCHISEMENT RANCH**  
5 GOLDEN LANE  
KERHONKSON, NY 12446

TOM RAWORTH / *FROM CALLER*

last century  
pose half  
deep bass in which  
unknowing

con moto  
with sloppy surface  
percussion apart

mentions  
regular welcoming  
prepared to go  
sucked

whereas maudlin  
oppression sears  
table trends  
report

about our movies  
out and beyond  
partying herd

period confession  
on drums and signed  
word has it

define  
clarity chosen interplay  
provide  
pull

mushrooms wet with dew  
between two lions  
empty shape

creator of spartacus  
vectored with released pause

chicken with rice  
but here  
get through  
aftermath of glass

on what could  
risk suffocation  
embarrassing death

one hand wriggled through  
metal visited his nostrils

lights were on  
closed on  
to speed at a distance  
present

favourite nightmares  
transposed  
move recently ballet

brutality  
not yet completed  
hotwired control

perpetual smoke closed doors  
never impede  
species

monitored  
by authorities  
half a mile shaking

limousines full of heads  
cheap disposability

age of exponentials  
kurdish women  
carry brush

mere human beings  
faster than that  
nervous system

who look for guidance  
as reflection of ritual

exactly  
assumed larksong  
forgot blood suppression

knowing it will pass  
shouldn't stop you  
helping it go

interfere with nature  
mary  
o lanza liar

some testing requires  
software called  
"it prevailed" to print

vada vaguer  
vitalities  
cloudy  
underworld

suffer together  
down logic  
and intuition

target parasite life  
fused to its surface  
with drugs

that an awestruck  
vegetable  
of the temperate zone

wore off  
bewildered  
within moments he recognised

devastated repeating character  
prefers jeans

dazzling morning lies  
sparkling thinking dust  
motes  
dance wrong

cancers dictate detection  
to search out every gene

repressed when awake  
rely  
on their own conclusion

## JEFFREY JULLICH / A TEMPTATION FOR MISS JULIANA

Growing green spindrift down in the basement again, all the cellar's floribund mould spores and Milady's mildew, while simultaneously circumambulating the rickety widow's walk on Flora's feastday

on a house with no walls to hide unrepentant scoundrels at their foul "-ower"-rhyme delectations of hell-bound corruption (daisies), to be far from the unnatural badnesses of a deceptive posey

for a coy smile's bounty hunt to please the one immaculate spikey macho plant that flourishes without a ripened plant ovule

to recite into the southerly wind of perfumes a small Hellenist's anthology but hygienic antiseptic palate as spontaneous pollination from Maiden Earth revealing the indecent harm a heartless germination did unto the chessboards of black and red ant-hills--ah! my insect familiars on their Faustian backs, smothered by a wanton bouquet! done in cartoon colors

and debauched in their page-turning to be saturated hair all mussed in DEPRAVED literatures of an outer envelope of petals and sepals, those orgiasts' naughty forget-me-nots. Ah! then a degenerate readership who stain the clean, lily-clean frontispiece, a stem and leaves to be dourly imprisoned rightfully in the stench of greenhouse chained! by copying out a commonplace book of horrific bloom

which blinders itself as an old mottled pack-mule in rotten feed sack to the crime a floral pattern in wall-paper all leafy so shamelessly rolls in a fenced mud sty oinking all for rosey springtime that rogues abstain from bracing vinaigrette tonics at petals nailed to their corolla and SHOWY without blushing Modestie nor a covering as penitence for the downy pelt of up-in-your-face fl--wers their gardens

## PORTRAIT OF COLON DASH PARENTHESIS

breakfast was bifurcated into rations  
the bacterium under the microscope  
is a perfect extraterrestrial landscape  
a bubbling lake of Crisco

the tar driveway and the Goodyear tires gradually merge  
a circle gradually a semi-circle the revenge of Shamash  
the sun god singed the edges of their square beards  
the car door soldered shut by another disgusting August

Raw vegetables and steak tartare are healthy *and* ideal for a phobia of  
open flames, rolling power outages  
eaten with the hands, using the good hand to separate the fingers that  
clasp the food before biting down  
Like slicing into brie, the shovel breaks through thick topsoil only for  
stinking goop to burble up  
Lucky that finishing school taught the delicate maneuvers of an escargot  
spoon inside a snail shell  
the sluggish bumblebee can be scooped out of the clenched rose with  
one flick

NATHAN WHITING / THE MEADOW

A mosquito lands and stabs the digestive stuff right away,  
a glutton.

A tick crawls lightly, slowly, finds a place and prepares,  
a gourmet.

The tick recipe far more ancient than wings,  
its itch suppressed, yet whatever we loathe of a mosquito  
we hate the tick, detest it.

Ticks wait. We go, walk through tall grass  
they choose, goldenrod, moss,  
flip motives of butterfly color. Mosquitoes  
aircraft: the complex antennae cost a puddle a billion  
algae specks.

Governments sign treaties against flight  
but we abhor a tick head under skin,  
shudder at utensils used to fill it five times  
the old size – a vampire elastic.

Do birds dread passengers?

Do mice find them a blood donation drive?

The meadow holds under day  
a light whisper of itself, each leaf proof  
something chews. Ticks travel tourist price, visa  
ready when hunger bothers,  
starvation near, each careful meal a gut-blood brother  
honor, no flower more lovely than light  
through redtop, a dragonfly no disturbance,  
bee a phantom  
far beneath the drum within no flower but an unbounded ear.

## THE MIDGET FOREST

How close the little trees grow.  
Creeper and honeysuckle wander madly,  
light attacked by their ribbons.  
Gall insect architecture:  
a resident forces food to build  
it a house, black cherry leaves  
decorated with elf-cap cities,  
elf brains mindless hunted by wasps.  
Song sparrows perch huge and loud.  
Catbird and brown thresher monsters  
hide under shortest rooftops.  
Beach plums hang, pleasure minds  
brutal, fruit everywhere eyed.  
Aspens quiver. A pitch pine soars  
fifteen feet, hairy organ-pipe  
on sand-soil rarely dry.  
Reed shoves a blade, war without soldier.  
A low-down, dragonfly taste-party,  
orange-flashed butterflies chase,  
not yellow swallowtail billboards  
common throughout the toy city.  
Low outskirts of a shrunken forest,  
bayberries ripen before the dune.  
Ocean, sunbathers extract  
light exposure, a hurried splash.

This little magazine, edited by David Kennedy out of Sheffield, England, proposes an issue of poetry and essays engaging motion. Poetry by Sean Bonney, Karen Mac Cormack, Stephen Vincent, Elaine Randall, David Kennedy, Allen Fisher. Essays by Colin Simms (“Walking”), Lawrence Upton (“Poetry and Dance?”), Malcom Phillips (“Gait Technology: Some Remarks on Walking and Writing”). An interview with book artist Stuart Mugridge. Of particular note: Colin Simms’s whimsical and wise musings on the decline of walking amidst poets, and on the compositional use of the walk:

Distance seems different whilst walking self-consciously and seeing peripherally and, of course, in mist or snowfall. Only when the path is known can you follow it sure-footedly yet alive for those glimpses which I rate likely to be significant as well as the rhythms which can ‘suggest’ composition. . . . Like others I have talked to I do not go out to walk deliberately to put together some poetry, or prose. I go out to watch, if I can find, and listen—if I’m lucky. . . . a ‘true’ walking companion proves a rarity for a poet . . . I managed to meet, but not thereafter to walk long distances with, several poets whilst out walking in the North Country of the 1950s and 1960s by accident. These included Norman Nicholson, Basil Bunting and ‘Hugh MacDiarmid’ . . . Hardly anyone seems to walk now, in the sense I’m talking about here of the harder men when these poets were young and even when I was.

Stephen Vincent’s “A Walk to Limotaur Beach” models the delicate play of observation, sound and reflection on a windy walk with his son (in mind), “around the edge of a knob, / Point Reyes appears, disappears.” Grenier-esque flatness—“Sand, wetland, bluff./ Sand, wetland, bluff, beach./ Sand, wetland, bluff, beach ocean”—alternates with lyrical reflection on a father’s separation anxiety: “Pleasures of the/ empty nest:/ you are barren,/ the world blest./ I guess.” Stuart Mugridge’s stimulating conversation with Christine Kennedy makes one want to know more about the work of this artist: “‘Papillon’ refers to the sighting of a small blue butterfly whilst standing at the top of a mountain in the Pyrenees with a very strong wind blowing, and it deals with how such delicate creatures survive in such a harsh environment. The book consists of tissue paper pages between sandpaper pages, with a hessian cover.” Malcom Phillips’s critique of the easily romanticized association of walking with resistance, via De Certeau, Frank O’Hara and Apollinaire, is somewhat confusing (why not translate the French bits?) but offers a needed corrective, with some brilliant associations: Robert Delaunay’s critique of the Futurists marching to the “ideal of the engineer” is read in the light of DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency)’s “gait surveillance technology.” In all, a refreshingly aerated little magazine, with a different theme for each issue: no. 7, co-edited with Nate Dorward, will be devoted to criticism.

The Rubber Stamp Mini-Printer form of five lines of thirty characters and spaces per line would, I once believed, replace the sonnet. Now having combed through endless notebooks trying to fit uncompleted poems to the form, I realize that it may be a little too rigid. Nonetheless, there is an important ecology of means to it, an affirmation of the home-made, where production values can be accomplished around the kitchen table.

## RAVI SHANKAR / THE OLD JOY OF SEX

Flirting? In lieu of eyelashes, crowned cranes hover.  
Necking? Roaches, les frôtteurs, stroke antennae.  
Machismo? Male frigatebirds inflate to red strut.  
Gold-digging? To be wooed, banded shrimp demand food.  
Bump and grind? In ocean trenches, squids squash amour.  
Foreplay? Tortoises butt heads with bated breath.  
Oral sex? Via ecstatic feet – knobbed hubs of taste – fruit flies lick.  
Missionary? Blue whales, blubber on blubber.  
Moaners? When in thrall, bobcats squall.  
Doggie style? See the dog.  
Queers? Clittelum-coupled earthworms throb.  
Dykes? In the bush, lesbian baboons pontoon.  
La femme fatale? Scorpio devours her hapless mate.  
Well-hung? One-third armadillo is penis.  
Endurance? For sticky long hours, stick-insects stick.  
Mile high club? Swifts mid-drift  
Sex machines? From one sunfish rise three hundred million eggs.  
Masturbation? Porcupines straddle twigs for sweet release.  
Bondage? Soldier crabs in pincers make sand-prisons.  
Sadomasochism? Octopi asphyxiate to allure.  
Golden showers? Urine's the hare's Spanish fly.  
Group sex? Mud snails horn in coils.  
Gang bangs? Chimp-limbed ruckus.  
Swingers? Sans souci, ducks swap drake partners.  
Hermaphroditic? Hagfish hide both sperm and egg.  
Transvestitism? Oysters dress upon request.  
Nymphomania? Mayflies would rather die than stop.  
Polygamy? Old gray seal bull's harem.  
Polyandry? On feathered wings, Bay-breasted cuckoo has her flings.  
Monogamy? Penguins pair eternally.  
Immaculate conception? Virginal water fleas recur on bay leaves.  
Interracial Relation? See all.



## RECOLLECTING MONTEVERDE, COSTA RICA

Don't bother me.  
Last week is rapidly browning;  
I am trying to bring it back edgeless.  
Surely I was feeling something,  
Catching my breath in the cloud-forest.

Staring at that patchwork of green—  
Uncurling fronds, whorled bromeliads,  
Corkscrewing saplings, ferns the size  
Of baby elephants, spores that carpeted  
Tree limbs, lianas garroting the canopy—

Flocks of revelations must have used me  
As their nest. Hemmed in by the hum  
Of vast organic engines churning out life,  
I remember thinking that what I liked  
About forests was what I liked about the sea:

They've already been made. That's more  
Innate laziness than genuine revelation:  
An alembic emptying. For an afternoon,  
I was perforated by the rustling of agoutis,  
The swoop of daffodil-bellied oropendolas,

Electric come-hither of blue morphos,  
A dormant green that on closer inspection  
Showed schemes of teeming insect-life,  
And now alone in a stucco room, I hunker.  
Please bother me.

## CHINESE RIVER DOLPHIN

Twenty-four hours a day along the Yangtze River,  
Steam shovels, dump trucks, and dynamite  
Trigger a din the scope of which has never before been heard.  
The sound of the world's largest dam being built.  
What Chinese President Jiang Zemin hailed,  
“The most remarkable feat in the history of mankind  
To reshape and exploit natural resources,”  
Has already left tens of thousands of people homeless.  
Already, the rubble has slowed the dissipation capacity  
Of water in which ten billion tons of waste is dumped  
Each year, turning the lucent flow a chemical brown.

Somewhere close by, yet out of sight, the last of the baijis,  
The Chinese River Dolphin, surfaces then submerges.  
Perhaps ten of them remain on this planet.  
Soon, the creature scientists call *Lipotes vexillifer*,  
Or “the flag-bearer who was left behind,”  
Will have echo located for its final meal,  
Leaving the Yangtze with a dream of hydroelectric power  
And the myth of a princess, drowned by her father,  
Reincarnated as a dolphin in whose form she spent  
Over ten million years, until, finally able to forgive him,  
She shed fin and rostrum to rejoin him in the ether.

**KAIA SAND / FROM AQUIFER**

Everyone winds up  
part in the water supply  
—Buck Downs

without a river  
is it a delta  
where the Cocopa are  
the people of the river  
patient as an aquifer

a river takes your problems  
says Edna she says  
she can't holiday  
but she can bus  
to the Potomac  
we can give the river our problems  
we give the river problems

six billion downstream

we come to Las  
Vegas to witness  
mirages we don't  
come to worry  
about water the water  
the Cocopa never see  
return to the sea

if all the named would wake  
their namesakes with adoration

rolling toward blackouts

maybe because of march  
madness maybe something  
in the water

something in the lassitude  
no  
no not

the *yes* and *no*  
of flood and drought

---

*lest a drop of water be wasted*  
mapping salmon fury

seduction of Mulholland  
seduction of

slow-drip water      faucet smoke  
screen                      irrigation dupe

as animals are game as water is a resource  
as success is capital accumulation

vexed delirium and economic value  
are used interchangeable in this monograph  
salmon homing  
muscles and organs shred as they fast  
their eggs healthy as I hope mine are  
as the woman must think mine are  
who wants an egg

a tree dies into a snag  
the snag falls over a riverbed  
the riverbed made of gravel  
the gravel pushed into a redd by a salmon  
the salmon laying her eggs as she thrusts  
thrusts against her lover other males swim over  
swim over her eggs adding

a remote mapping psychic  
muddlement think clearly think  
clearly an accumulation of books

read and theories combed  
scrap paper consciousness

a duck black sky before the dredging

---

dredging transformed the desert into Hollywood  
as the orchards died as Owens Valley dried

I am not ready to abandon  
what I have not learned

to refer to alevin  
if welfare changes resulting  
from umbrage from policy  
initiatives from thickness blue

    tell a watershed perspective  
    I can tell him we drink the trilling sky  
the degradation of forests  
salted roads  
aquifers holding  
baby blue nitrogen

pulley cordwreck behind  
dear ones wandering  
the dry uninhabitable house

salmon swimming the rivers by smell  
leaping dams or waterfalls  
if at all possible

perhaps I'll begin by adding up days  
to know as salmon know

status                      quo scare show

PETER JAEGER / POLLARD

not of much  
account

a mere hedgerow  
by the wayside

blunt lenticels  
relished by birds

met by sulphur  
wing tips

paper pulp &  
broom heads

within its pearly house  
silver warting

slender bud burst  
bristles

prized as they  
kindle well

**CORDATE**

residing in a quality  
of beams

spanning homes, stained  
charcoal

bending the oaken  
lintel west

a place of singular interest  
to myself

that canopy  
gathered in bark

for tanning  
uphill leather

called forth  
as seasons grant

a screen  
against dust

a belt  
around crops

**AIMED**

planting young  
blisters, waste

for the risen  
alders & their

hacking out  
songs –

what we do  
with roots

PINNATE

sufficient to afford  
every rustic

lathe turning  
red & greatly

cherished for  
gunstocks

which led to  
willing consent

chipping timber  
into flat green cleats

budding  
a valued mast

at that delightful spot  
an ancient veneer

commanding  
the highest eaves

easily struck  
from cuttings

**SAMARA**

above all, the shy  
pastoral recess

through which luster  
streams

ideal for carving  
into plates

***THIS COMPOST: ECOLOGICAL IMPERATIVES IN AMERICAN POETRY*, BY  
JED RASULA (ATHENS: U OF GEORGIA, 2002)**

This compost arrived particularly hot, in need of some aeration and dilution (compost being no substitute for good soil): the following pages are an initial attempt at some stirring of the pile, to get it cool enough to stick our hands in. Please, reader, visit this compost on your own, as it appears ready for many more uses than I am able to suggest here—with caution! The blurb on the jacket of Jed Rasula's eagerly awaited *This Compost: Ecological Imperatives in American Poetry* (Athens, GA: U of Georgia Press, 2002) dubs this work the “first fully developed, carefully argued attempt at ‘Green theory’ in relation to American poetry” (Paul Naylor). In light of the limited scope and format of existing ecocritical studies of American poetry (such as John Elder's *Imagining the Earth*, Leonard Scigaj's *Sustainable Poetry: Four American Eco-poets*, Gyorgi Voros's *Notations of the Wild: Ecology in the Poetry of Wallace Stevens*, or Angus Fletcher's forthcoming *A New Theory for American Poetry: Democracy, the Environment and the Future of Imagination*) this is largely true. As a study of American poetry, Rasula's work shares the same adventurousness, scope and breadth as his *American Poetry Wax Museum*, his work on the anthology *Imagining Language*, or his syncretic essays on a range of topics in contemporary poetics (indeed, much of it is a compilation and reworking of essays published from the late 1970's onward); as a book of “green theory” it is less developed than Naylor's blurb suggests. Much of what is environmental about Rasula's poetics rests on his definition of poetry as “ecology in the community of words,” one free of literal (or, as Foucault might say, institutional) pressures. *This Compost* is nevertheless essential reading for those interested in ecopoetics.

*This Compost* forwards Rasula's ongoing campaign against the enclosure and development (whether via careerism, ideological program, or both) of the field of American poetry—whose successive “openings” his criticism has consistently explored and celebrated, from Whitman and Dickinson through the Black Mountain poets and their lineage, onto the figures of the San Francisco Renaissance. (Rasula also mentions some of the “cartographic study guides” or “hinges”—like *Io*, *Alcheringa* or *New Wilderness Letter*—that were an inspiration for *ecopoetics*.) This campaign rests on the thesis—stated at the outset of *This Compost*—that American poetry, echoing Robert Duncan, is the

“first full opening of a field of archaic, scattered, incomplete, and scarcely surmised literacies from that compost library unearthed in the nineteenth century” (14) and on the claim that “the bulk of modern poetry suggests a calamitous abandonment of the legacy imposed—enabled—by Whitman and Dickinson” (6). Whitman’s appeal to the “whole orb,” as opposed to “the smooth walks, trimmed hedges, posys and nightingales of the English poets” establishes the bearings for Rasula’s work, which sets its sights on “the geophysical phantom of an ever-impending ‘new Poetry.’” While this ‘new poetry’ has often been referred to as “open,” Rasula prefers to emphasize what he characterizes as its non-egotistical/non-anthropocentric temper. In some cases (as, for example, Ronald Johnson’s) the new poetry swallows cosmological tail. We have Whitman to thank for poetries spurred by imaginations of organic wholeness, but Dickinson, with her “zero at the bone,” suggests another legacy.

*This Compost* happily bypasses MLA conventions for academic prose, proving—along with similarly detailed and exciting scholarship by poets like Charles Bernstein, Susan Howe or Nathaniel Mackey—that stylistic control and methodological rigor thrive outside the conventional clearing. (As Rasula explains in a footnote, “wreathing” is his neologism “for the collaborative momentum initiated by certain texts, like *The Maximus Poems*,” whose energy can overcome “the restrictions implicit in generic frames.”) The book is, as Rasula points out in his introduction, as much “an anthology of sorts” as an essay. But in contradistinction to canonical anthologists who carefully mount and label their “authors,” Rasula recycles the anthologized material into his prose: “as an exercise in solidarity with the materials it conveys, *This Compost* practices what it preaches in that most of the citations of poetry are not identified in the text, but blended into polyphonic configurations” (xii). This practice of “solidarity in anonymity” is intended to restore to poetics the “deep issue of planetary time.”

Rasula is frank about the inception of his interests and methods in the New American Poetry:

The origins of my citational practice are also the origins of *This Compost* in that I initially noticed thematic congruencies specific to some primary books published in 1960—*The Distances* by Charles Olson and *The Opening of the Field* by Robert Duncan—which led to comparisons with work by Jack Spicer and Louis

Zukofsky, among others. The notion of “composition by field” carried obvious implications of compost, which led me to the concept of “necropoetics” developed here by way of Whitman. The notion of a “compost library” arose when I began carefully placing certain extracts side by side without authorial distinction.

Evoking Snyder’s “practice of the wild,” Rasula goes against the self-reliant grain in noting that this “practice is invariably and necessarily collective” and that *This Compost* is a pragmatic work, “realizing its issues in its design. It is written in units of variable length, but tending to brevity, the sequence of which is determined by imaginal, not logical considerations; its argument is hologrammatic, not hypotactic—that is, not hierarchically disposed, but radically egalitarian. Its parts are its wholes, and vice versa.”

These are ideal designs, of course: more often than not, this reviewer ended up flipping to the back of the book to look up the source of a given quotation. Rasula’s parallelism—his tendency to pile up quotations reinforcing one point rather than to juxtapose counterpoints in a dialectical movement—made me seek variety in the nominal. It may also be a residual “personism” I can’t shake, having learned poetry as written and performed by poets rather than deposited by glaciers in geological time. (I am nonetheless sympathetic to the geological imagination.) Claims for “radical egalitarianism” are somewhat undercut by the fact that Rasula’s design anchors largely in the work of white male poets.<sup>1</sup> Women poets are cited, but mostly as ancillary mulch (in their

1. The note on Niedecker in the “Biographical Glossary” (presented as “rudimentary contextual data” on the poets in *This Compost*) sums up this deficiency: “Completely removed from any literary scene, Niedecker lived in rural Wisconsin all her life. A lengthy and substantial correspondence with Zukofsky and Cid Corman led to her publication. *My Life by Water: Collected Poems*, 1936-1968 appeared the year she died. Since then the textual state of her work has been in dispute: collections include Cid Corman’s selection, *The Granite Pail* (1985, rev. 1986), and Robert Bertholf’s, *From This Condensary* (1985).” This note buttresses three citations in the text.

There is little dispute regarding the textual state of her work, at least so far as Niedecker scholars are concerned. Though her reputation owes much to the male editors who first promoted it, Niedecker’s work has also suffered through manhandling oblivious to its contextualized sensitivities—a localized (and cosmopolitan) awareness that looks forward to what an eco-poetics might be. Jenny Penberthy’s careful edition of the *Collected Works* now offers occasion to explore this—and many other sides—to Niedecker’s career. No doubt Penberthy’s edition and Rasula’s book crossed in the editorial waters, as it were (both published

‘anonymous solidarity’) to the heroic “wreathing” of the Black Mountain boys. There is oddly not one mention of Levertov and her discussions of “organic form.” After Adrienne Rich, the woman writer most cited for ideational spin is, interestingly, Muriel Rukeyser. Why hide local solidarity (with the San Francisco Renaissance) behind “anonymity”?

Rasula begins his study by singling out Whitman’s injunction, from the preface to the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*, to “read these leaves in the open air every season of every year of your life” (2). Instead of approaching the “outdoor setting” that awakens Whitman’s “composting sensibility,” however, Rasula dubs this nature worship a “pledge of allegiance” to Bateson’s “ecology of mind,” and moves on to Karl Kroeber’s point that “the romantics emphasized the importance of complex integral unities of being whose wholeness could only be imagined” (*Steps to an Ecology of Mind*). Resources for understanding the imagination’s contribution to ecology include Coleridgean “‘recreation’ as original participation” and the historical congruence of Black Mountain poetics with cybernetics (à la Norbert Wiener), as well as systems theory’s recent focus on self-organization. Henri Atlan’s study of indeterminacy as randomness, of extrasemantic creation of meaning via “structural coupling” (from Maturana and Varela’s *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding*) and of “autopoiesis,” in which “values are not objects but moiré patterns which emerge from the superimposition of opposites” (William Irwin Thompson, from *Gaia*), provides a theoretical scaffolding for the emergence of wild self, meaning and value—a scaffolding that preserves, in Aldo Leopold’s words, “the element of Unknown Places.” At this point Rasula reminds us of his theory of “poetry’s resident voice-over,” noting that this wild “self that becomes evident in the occasion of autopoiesis” is not to be confused with the “enunciative rational ego” or “preestablished speaker” we are taught to identify in the poem. Exciting stuff—the kind of adventurous speculation that keeps us reading Rasula—but has it answered Whitman’s simple injunction to “read these leaves in the open air”?

2002), but even a cursory reading of the correspondence with Zukofsky, available for almost ten years now, would have uncovered multiple signposts to material in Niedecker’s work for a “green theory,” in the tradition of poetic “opening,” that Rasula pursues.

Rasula should, of course, get credit for citing Niedecker at all, noting her “rich friend/ silt”—so relevant to a composting sensibility. But her minimized presence is but one effect of his disdain for the literal and the anecdotal (Niedecker’s statement that the “facts are wonderful in themselves” couldn’t be farther here).

To gratify the environmental sensibility Rasula quotes Whitman's charge that "the overwhelming mass of poetic works, as now absorb'd into human character, exerts a certain constipating, repressing, in-door, and artificial influence" (from the 1881 essay "Poetry To-day in America—Shakespeare—the Future"). But Rasula immediately qualifies the charge, claiming that, "The derogatory characterization of the 'in-door' here need not be taken literally . . . Between them, Dickinson and Whitman typify literal versions of indoor and outdoor life; but at the same time, the poetic wilderness they share reveals the ineptitude of the literal." A closer look at Dickinson and Whitman's literal lives, however, reveals something more complicated than the domestic and public caricatures that pass for biographical knowledge: Dickinson was a close and scientifically-accurate observer of backyard life; Whitman a bookworm and prosodist who ordered his perceptions by higher laws. Rasula's rejection of the literal is no more examined than the analogies by which he navigates the "poetic wilderness." The pursuit of James Hillman's "imaginal" at the expense of any kind of logical or scientific test (Darwin is not mentioned once in the book) pulls up the ladders, as it were, for those not predisposed to Rasula's Romantic Modernism and its "commanding prospect[s]."

In a quick graph, Rasula recreates his notion of the "compost library" (well known to readers of his essay of that title): Zukofsky exhuming Gilgamesh in "A" 23; Champollion's decipherment of the Rosetta stone composted into the American Renaissance; Pound "grossly forwarding a library"; Olson pacing off the "verses" of Gloucester, turning or "troping" around the block, and writing on the windowsill of his Assyrian apartment, "at once codex and domicile"; and the roster, from Blackburn to Waldman, of later poet "signatories" to the compost library. Olson's articulation of "the shift from the productive to the generative" emphasizes the push, of this postwar generation, to enact what they witnessed and the "moral struggle" of that act.

*This Compost* heats up with "The tropics, & the trope" as Rasula states provocatively (citing the role of promotional material in the verbal invention of America) that "America is the name for what language does in the world. As long as there is a struggle for freedom within language, that struggle will be tropical inasmuch as it solicits its occasion from language in heat" (the decompositional heat at the heart of Olson's "The Kingfishers" or of "Human Universe": "they were hot for the world they lived in, these Maya"). In the "heterological nature" of words, richness is tropism, "a struggle between veracity and voracity":

Tropical poetry is a language proposing in itself an omnipresent relevance “transcending all limit and privacy” (as Emerson put it). Ominous, omnivorous, tropical poetry teaches a biodegradable thinking, a thought for composing beings, for being decomposed and recomposed, for being composed (with equilibrium, staying cool), for being compost (heating up).

Hence the importance of Wallace Stevens’s “green barbarism” to *This Compost*, “which was (combining Milton with Mallarmé) to make the world into the final poem, to render all the world’s significations topological.” Rasula notes that “this is also the propensity of a market economy,” but that Stevens, like Dickinson, “openly toys with the posturings of idealism by absorbing the materialist priorities of a composting dispensation into a ground of thought where the reality will not be mutilated by the report: ‘The plum survives its poems.’” The following sections—“Cinders,” “Vomito cogito” and “Indian Skin”—devote attention to those who did *not* survive the report (in America’s “abrasive testimony”): habitats, species, slaves, native Americans.

“Cinders” moves from the “microbial assault” initiating colonial genocide through dust bowls, roadkill and nuclear terror to the “endless future world war . . . already well underway.” The section is almost entirely quotation/compost centered on Olson’s lines, “About seven years/ and you can carry cinders/ in your hand for what/ America was worth” (*Maximus* 3:41). Rasula’s corrective to tropical exuberance is apocalypse. “Vomito cogito” seeks a way out of the ontological subordination of such knowing (Levinas) via the historicizing of liberation theology (Dussel’s “Before the *ego cogito* there is an *ego conquiro*”) and negritude (Cesaire’s “Vomito Negro”—“We the vomit of slave ships”), putting a nutritive slant on the Middle Passage (and an ethical one on ontology), enslavement a third term between the conquering and the conquered, a “walking compost.” Cesaire’s “Notebook of a Return to the Native Land” composts what Rasula calls (alluding to his own *bête noire*) the “canontology” of the *vomito negro*. Voice blows back on “the voice of the alter-ego, the supervisory voice-over” (Fanon), spewing the undigestible.

Perhaps the best sections of the book (“On the extremest verge,” “The rim, the sediment”) are Rasula’s discussion of Whitman, whose “empathetic vulnerability . . . has its license from the threshold, the margin, the edge or verge of opposing spaces and types, a rim where sediment accumulates traces of a furtive passage.” Rasula counts Whitman’s “This Compost” among the earliest of the two dozen major

poems written by 1860: “Now I am terrified at the Earth, it is that calm and patient,/ It grows such sweet things out of such corruptions/ . . . It gives such divine materials to men, and accepts such leavings from them at last.” Whitman celebrates the “fatal appeal” of earthly corruption in “Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking,” where the vocal union of “the writing of the waves on the beach, the ocean of life surging in the poet’s ‘I’ and the styles of the poem or chant” is only achieved on “The rim, the sediment that stands for all.” The vision of “Song of Myself” is this “rim on which the vocal and sexual unions sing part-song with the Union of the States.” It is the rim where poets of the “composting imagination” do their work:

still seeking, like Whitman, *types* [“As I walk’d with that electric self seeking types”] (and Olson would later extend this literally to the typewriter, then trace it back to the Greek word *typos* to suggest the groove on the page that is the material residue of the blow of the type). These are archetypes in the true sense of *arche*—they are “blows from an original” . . .

Rasula’s tropical poetics are a wonderful antidote to the sterility (or inept literalness) of much environmental writing, to the prejudice against rhetoric and the dominance of plain style in ecocriticism, not to speak of academic writing at large. He takes to new heights Thoreau’s challenge to be sufficiently “extra-vagant” in harnessing rhetoric to generation, and digression to argument. Other tropes Rasula folds into the mix are digestion (“To read poetry is to suffer a continual lapse of meaning into being, message into event. A digestive sensation—even excremental”); predation (“to trespass the circumference of bios-logos-mythos is to be penetrated by a *circumferation*: to feel its bite, the circumference of its threat”); pestilence (the “mill of particulars,” in Robert Kelly’s phrase, “run amok”) and necrophilia (in the sediment-surviving graffiti of necropoetics, writing “is clutter and debris; trace, husk, scar, sign, particle, element: *bodily remains*”).

Out with the literal is work by writers like Mei-mei Berssenbrugge, Clark Coolidge, Christopher Dewdney, Lyn Hejinian, Bernadette Mayer and others that takes an active and informed interest in science. Such writers pursue another route—than the cosmological—to the alieniloquium “where naming does not re-present but dissolves and then reforms creation,” where the listener is “forced to take up residence in the strange” via echo-locations beyond and within her linguistic “medi-

um.” It may be another relation to the body that is more interested in prosthetic extensions and applications, and in the estrangements of objective description, than in psychic wanderings through the “old lore” or “reciprocal animation of soul and cosmos in the medium of logos.” (And even here, Eros is a stealthy presence in Rasula’s pantheon.) In any case, scientific emphasis does not have to exclude Rasula’s “poetics of the archaic”—“wreading” in the “compost library” (“residuum of leaking souls”) and opening “a field of archaic, scattered, incomplete, and scarcely surmised literacies.” (Must we, in this new millenium, perpetuate that useless hermeneutic segregating the “two cultures”?)

But such work may be less inclined to arrogate this privilege to “American” poetry, which for Rasula begins with “the recovery of half the total span of the Western literary record” and the imaginal relation to this recovery in the works of the “American Renaissance.” Rasula’s implicit definition of an American poet as “signatory of distant texts” points as much to postcolonial complications as to an important generative stance. (His chapter on “The Library” also makes for rather ironic, and troubling, reading in light of the recent torching of Baghdad’s libraries in America’s “war on Iraq.”) Is it not time enough that American poets learn echo-location through ethnographic and translational tact, rather than the grandiose schemes of imagined firstness?

Rasula’s postcolonial treatments are heavy on citational compost and light on articulation, except in the discussion of “Indian skin” that takes as its guiding image the Bibles bound in “Indian skin” in the University of Texas Humanities Research Library (“marking the extremity of therioexpulsion and its cost”). Here, however, where Rasula might have turned to a dialogue with native voices, the object lesson becomes occasion for definitional homily: “The moral charge is evident: to read is simply to scan the words on a page, whereas wreading is feeling the texture of the skin on the binding of the book as it is held together by a spine” Repeating the very move he critiques, Rasula relegates indigenous peoples to the “lost world” of Paul Shepard, Clayton Eshleman and Gary Snyder’s “hunter-gatherer” origin myths. (The lack of dialogue with any literally “tropical” poetics—with only one brief mention of Lezama Lima—is also odd.) For all of its force, Rasula’s wreading can overheat in a voracious tropism without the ventilation and methods of dialogical impulse.

Perhaps too much hinges on Rasula’s article of faith, that “The biological awareness of human species-life animated by the compost library

is the crucial link between dormant animal tact and the metabolism of intelligence as it flourishes in writing.” Can it be that Rasula’s book of nature analogies are tethered entirely to this credo (little more than a bare assertion)? What is it in this belief that would force a poet from his arm-chair? (And who’s animating who, here?) Again, Rasula relies quite a bit on Paul Shepard’s researches into the archaic—as well as on Clayton Eshleman’s ideas about “therioexpulsion” (the expulsion of the animal from the human). Shepard asks “how human consciousness was reorganized when the cynegetic life was shattered—that is, the mental, social, and ecological complex based on hunting . . . All major human characteristics . . . had come into existence and were oriented to the hunting life . . . The ecology of Paleolithic hunters . . . may have allowed the specialization of human intelligence to a degree that is intolerable in dense populations” (*The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game*). Early artists, as we know from the Palaeolithic caves, contemplated “a silhouetted horizon of animal life, a mirror of mortality humans conducted their own mortal epiphanies in the reflection of (a mirror of analogy, not resemblance).” What is at stake “in speculation about the archaic is nothing less than metabolism, intuition, tactful solidarity with animal life.” The mirror of analogy thus offers, according to Rasula, the most direct way to solidarity with other species.

Animal “rites” philosopher Cary Wolfe emphasizes instead a focus on the “discourse” of species—one which “sits, theoretically and methodologically, at the intersection of ‘figure’ and ‘institution,’ the former oriented more toward relatively mobile and ductile systems of language and signification, the latter toward highly specific modes and practices of materialization in the social sphere” (*Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* 6). Of course, analogy is how the human brain grows, but our disastrous work on the planet should give us pause: what if analogy (and troping in general) were the opiate of the species? (The closest Rasula gets to ‘work’ is in a discussion of “gift ethos.”) Humans make connections between everything, it seems, except the effects of behavior on their housemates. Four tropological millenia have done little to alter this absurdity. Our “American Century” even makes one more than suspicious of a ‘blind spot’ in the “tactful solidarity” of human speculation. Do any of us have an idea exactly how our metaphors tap into the “nutritive sensibility” Rasula envisions “as an environmental continuum encompassing biotic as well as cultural communities”? Can the “metabolism of intelligence” be anything

but speculation? Though poetry offers a counter-tradition, there is nothing inherently ecological about poets. Even *ecopoetics* bears but the oblique relation to its ecologies.

Charles Olson once noted, “All that comparison ever does is set up a series of *reference* points . . . such an analysis only accomplishes a *description*, does not come to grips with what really matters: that a thing, any thing, impinges on us by a more important fact, its self-existence . . . :” (“Human Universe”). Of even more pressing concern is how *we* impinge on the ‘things’ around us. Though open to explorations from every possible angle, *ecopoetics* will insist that no comprehensive “green poetics” can ignore the gap between what we say and what we do. To talk about how a poem is “like a tree” or “like an ecosystem” (not to mention comparing language to a house or a city) barely begins to address the radical re-situating of poetics called for in the face of an ongoing disappearance of trees and ecosystems (and peoples, along with their houses and cities). How can poetics be reconfigured to encompass the kinds of making that intervene with the *institutions* of biocide?

It is true that if ecology is in part about “making visible” that which has gone unnoticed, then poetics could be about revealing the margins of discourse. The ethics of context or “ecology of language” in *ecopoetics* then promote an ecological way of seeing. But to claim that would be to rely on analogy. And if *we are* going with analogy, then, please, can we ease up on the James Hillman!? The last thing we need right now is a Jungian mind meld; disciplined reflexivity on the alphabetical nature of our thinking (as in the openings to dialogue outside Western, writing-based literatures that *ethnopoetics* pursues) would be more useful.

Rasula’s case against voice might not be good for *This Compost*. Part of one sentence at the close to his “Introduction”—alluding to “the manifold lure of the elements, the tingle of every night and day”—is the extent of what we learn about Jed Rasula away from his desk. Though admittedly it would cut into his campaign against authorizing ego, venturing even just slightly onto the terrain of anecdote might have eased this book into the hands of many more sympathetic readers. Rasula assumes, whether he likes it or not, a voice—the voice of the competent poet-critic, the masterful wreader he undoubtedly is. It’s a mesmerizing, and multiplicitous, voice—alongside the manifold voices of *This Compost*—but the relentless closeness with which Rasula treats his materials, the refusal to grant any “establishing shots” of the compost heap, as it were, spurns the transitory, common ground.

Still, the object lesson, and ferment, of this book remain potent: Rasula's compelling demonstration of a "composting tradition," folding its voices back into an irrational (non systematic) pattern, an alternative to egocentric/ anthropocentric poetics, is essential material for any eco-poetics. The exploratory subjectivity of *This Compost* offers a needed corrective to the sanitized, odorless, shrinkwrapped pastoral of nimby 'environmentalism'—as, rather than focus on "nature," Rasula emphasizes the "need to reckon our own wild natures into any consideration of 'nature' as such." It also makes for damned good reading. Remember that, since the author has not aerated this compost pile, leaving that up to us, it is particularly *hot*—stir well and use sparingly!

—JS

### Recipe for Rasula's Compost

Combine:

Charles Olson  
Robert Duncan                      10 parts each

Walt Whitman  
Robinson Jeffers  
Kenneth Rexroth  
Wallace Stevens                      5 parts each

Ammons, Blaser, Dorn,  
Eshleman, Pound, Rich,  
Silliman, Snyder and  
W.C. Williams                      2 parts each

Ashbery, Cesaire, Creeley,  
Lansing, Loy, Oppen,  
Palmer and Sobin                      1 part each



Sprinkle with:

Beckett, W. Berry, Byrd, Coolidge, H. Crane, DuPlessis, T.S. Eliot, Frost, J. Graham, Grenier, H.D., S. Howe, Keats, Lorca, R. Lowell, McClure, McCord, Meltzer, Metcalf, M. Moore, Niedecker, Notley, Reznikoff, J. Rothenberg, Rukeyser, Sanders, Schwerner, G. Stein, Webster, Waldman, R. Waldrop, J. Williams

Pile in layers—alternating browns and greens, wet and dry. You may add earth worms. When the compost begins to heat up, turn it to keep the center warm. If it starts to get dry, piss on it. Finished compost is dark brown, crumbly, and has an earthy odor.

DAMIAN WEBER / RED HAIKU

Red

Yet another day  
I find the fire hydrant  
Right where I left it

Orange

Would not streetlights make  
Convenient little circles  
Of spotlight and stage?

Red

In Delaware Park  
The boats are tied, red side up  
Up side down, in line.

White

A layer of snow  
Is putting the avenues  
In order again.

Red

Hydrants have mornings  
To wake up to, too. Also  
They have things to do.

White

A wad of paper  
Made it over the flooded street  
And then went under.

Brown

A tree hangs over  
Going after the water  
Of the Niagara.

Brown

All the old buildings  
Have ladders, stairs, railings, poles  
And fire escapes.

Silver

The phone on Elmwood  
And the corner of Summer  
Gives your quarters back.

Blue

Following Court Street  
The great spires in a line  
Lead to the lake.

Red

I almost forgot  
To let the traffic light  
Turn green, waiting.

Green

The morning doesn't  
Make the garbage trucks any  
Less defensive.

# MIND YOUR FOOT PRINT

MIND YOUR FOOT PRINT  
MIND PRINT YOUR FOOT  
MIND FOOT YOUR PRINT  
MIND PRINT FOOT YOUR

MIND FOOT PRINT YOUR  
MIND YOUR PRINT FOOT

YOUR FOOT MIND PRINT  
YOUR PRINT FOOT MIND  
YOUR FOOT MIND PRINT  
YOUR PRINT MIND FOOT  
YOUR MIND FOOT PRINT  
YOUR MIND PRINT FOOT!

FOOT YOUR MIND PRINT  
FOOT PRINT YOUR MIND  
FOOT MIND YOUR PRINT

FOOT MIND PRINT YOUR  
FOOT PRINT MIND YOUR  
FOOT YOUR PRINT MIND

PRINT YOUR MIND FOOT!  
PRINT FOOT YOUR MIND  
PRINT MIND YOUR FOOT  
PRINT FOOT MIND YOUR  
PRINT MIND FOOT YOUR  
PRINT YOUR FOOT MIND

"Mind Your"

JB 003

**FIELD NOTES** (Take this book 'outside,' make something with this page and send to *ecopoetics*.)



## CONTRIBUTORS

**JOHN BATKI** is a writer, translator of Hungarian literature, artist and Kilimologist investigating the verbo-visual interface in Syracuse, NY.

**FRANCO BELTRAMETTI** (1937-1995), traveling poet and artist, was a frequent collaborator with Tom Raworth (and many others). Examples of *mini*, "the smallest magazine of the world," which Beltrametti edited 1985-1991, can be consulted online at [http://www.ticino.com/f.b.archive/mini\\_review.html](http://www.ticino.com/f.b.archive/mini_review.html)

**ALICIA COHEN** lives in Portland Oregon where she teaches literature and is a founding member of the artist run gallery and performance space Pacific Switchboard. Her book *bEAR* was published by Handwritten Press (reviewed in this issue) and her poetry has appeared in *LVNG*, *Bird Dog*, and *Traverse*.

**SIMON CUTTS** Poet and editor of Coracle Press for the past 28 years. Maker of some more physical objects, books, plastic renditions of poems. His last collection *The Smell of Printing* was published by Granary Books in 2000.

**JOHN FELSTINER** wrote *The Lies of Art: Max Beerbohm's Parody and Caricature*, *Translating Neruda: The Way to Macchu Picchu*, and *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew*. He edited and translated Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan and co-edited *Jewish American Literature: A Norton Anthology*. Felstiner has taught at Stanford since 1965, and is writing a book on poetry and environmental awareness.

**ALEC FINLAY** was born in Scotland (1966) and lives in Whitley Bay. Artist, poet and publisher, much of his work is collaborative. He published the *pocketbooks* series (2000-2002), and currently the *small press* series, copublished by Morning Star and BALTIC. Alec is Artist in Residence at BALTIC: The Centre for Contemporary Art (Gateshead), and Visiting Artist at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (Bretton).

**LISA FORREST** is currently studying academic librarianship at SUNY Buffalo. Recently, she completed *The Card Catalog Project* which joined the works of numerous poets into a handmade artist's book constructed from discarded catalog cards and used books. Her poetry has also appeared in *Mantis*, *Name*, and *WordWrights*.

**ERIC GELSINGER** is a private tutor in Buffalo, New York.

**JODY GLADDING** lives in East Calais, Vermont, translates French, and teaches in the Vermont College MFA Program. *Stone Crop* appeared in the Yale Younger Poets Series, and a chapbook, *Artichoke*, was published by Vermont's Chapiteau Press. A translation of Jean Giono's *Serpent of Stars* is forthcoming from Archipelago Books.

**MARY RISING HIGGINS** is a retired public school teacher who lives in Albuquerque, NM. Her publications include *red table(S, selected poems*, (La Alameda Press, 1999), *OCLOCK*, (Potes and Poets Press, 2000), *Mary Rising Higgins Greatest Hits: 1990-2001*, (Pudding House, 2002) and *locus TIDES*((, (Potes and Poets Press, 2003).

**PETER JAEGER**'s recent work includes *Pollen* (Calgary: House Press) and an exhibition of writing at the Poetry Society in London. He teaches creative writing at the University of Surrey Roehampton in London.

**JEFFREY JULLICH** was horoscope columnist for *Vice Magazine*, and librettist for the opera *American Lit: (Queer Theory) The Hawthorne-Melville Correspondence*, premiered by American Opera Projects. His poetry and criticism has been published in places such as *Antennae*, *Circumference*, *Fence*, *Shiny*, *American Letters & Commentary*, *Lit*, *potepoetazine*, *Rain Taxi*, *Rhizome*, *Ribot* and *Transcendental Friend*.

**ROBERT KOCIK**'s recent "Poetry Exposition: Poetry May Take Any Substrate (including poetry)" can be listened to at [www.factoryschool.org](http://www.factoryschool.org). His most recent publication is *Overcoming Fitness* (Autonomedia 2002). Kocik builds and designs in upstate New York and lives in Brooklyn, where he directs the Bureau Of Material Behaviors.

**DOUGLAS MANSON** lives in Buffalo, where he is completing his Ph.D. in Poetics. His most recent chapbook is *Love Sounds (Like Perfidy)*, 2003

**BERNADETTE MAYER, PHILIP GOOD, MARIE WARSH** design daily poetry choices from their hideaway in upstate New York.

**FLORINE MELNYK** is currently pursuing a BA in Literature and Creative Writing at Medaille College in Buffalo, NY where she co-edits the college literary magazine, *Prelude*. She also divides her time between *ecopoetics*, Slope Press and Starcherone books.

**PABLO NERUDA** may still be the only poet to have attempted literally to write the American continent (*Canto general*, 1950), whence “Floods” (“Canto general de Chile”). “El Cupable” is from *Las manos del día* (1968), “Lapis Lazuli” from *Las piedras del cielo* (1970).

**ALICE NOTLEY’S** latest book is *Disobedience* (Penguin, 2001); a book of essays, *Coming After*, is forthcoming from University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor. With Anselm and Edmund Berrigan, she is in the process of editing the *Collected Poems of Ted Berrigan* for the University of California Press. Poems included in *ecopoetics 03* are from the novelistic *Alma, or The Dead Women*, an unpublished manuscript.

**MARK NOWAK** is author of *Revenants* (Coffee House Press) and editor of *Xcp: Cross Cultural Poetics* <<http://bfn.org/~xcp>>. An essay on gothic-industrial music and deindustrialization is forthcoming in *Goth: Undead Subculture* (Duke UP). Recent poems out in *Hambone*, *Tripwire*, *West Coast Line* and *Chicago Review*.

**DEREK OWENS** grew up on the edge of New York state's burnt-over district and now lives on Long Island with Teresa Hewitt and their son Ryan. He teaches in the English Department and directs the Writing Center at St. John's University in Queens. His publications include *Resisting Writings (and the Boundaries of Composition)* (SMU) and *Composition and Sustainability: Teaching for a Threatened Generation* (NCTE), reviewed in this issue.

**ISABELLE PELISSIER** is a painter and metal worker who currently lives in Buffalo, NY. Her most recent public art work, the Post Car, was on display at Niagara Falls during the summer of 2003.

**STEPHEN RATCLIFFE** most recent books are *Portraits & Repetition* (The Post-Apollo Press) and *SOUND/(system)* (Green Integer). *Listening to Reading*, a collection of essays on contemporary poetry and poetics, was published by SUNY Press in 2000. He is publisher of *Avenue B* and directs the Creative Writing program at Mills College in Oakland.

**TOM RAWORTH’S** *Collected Poems* appeared this year (Carcenet Press, 2003). He is also the subject of a special feature of *The Gig* (nos. 13/14), *Removed for Further Study: The Poetry of Tom Raworth* (ed. Nate Dorward). *Infolio*, Raworth's four-page literature and art magazine—100 issues of which were published between July, 1986 and November, 1987—are available, along with much else, at [www.tomraworth.com](http://www.tomraworth.com)

**JEROME ROTHENBERG**'s most recent book of poems, *A Book of Witness*, his twelfth from New Directions, has just been published. He is the author of over seventy books of poetry and groundbreaking assemblages of experimental and traditional poetry such as *Technicians of the Sacred* and *Poems for the Millennium*. Other recent and forthcoming books include *A Book of Concealments* (Chax Press), *Maria Sabina Selections* (University of California Press) and *Writing Through: Translations & Variations* (Wesleyan University Press).

**KAIA SAND** is the author of *Interval* (Edge Books, Fall 2003), which includes "Aquifer." She also co-edits *The Tangent* (a zine of politics and the arts), along with an accompanying chapbook and pamphlet series; curates (with Jules Boykoff and Tom Orange) the DCAC In Your Ear poetry series in Washington DC; and teaches English at St. Mary's College of Maryland

**ANDREW SCHELLING** poet, author of ten books, student of natural history, disciple of mountain ecozones. His most recent titles include *Tea Shack Interior: New & Selected Poetry* (Talisman House) and a collection of essays, *Wild Form, Savage Grammar: Poetry, Ecology, Asia* (La Alameda), both reviewed in this issue. Schelling lives in Boulder, Colorado (Southern Rocky Mountain ecosystem), teaching poetry, Sanskrit, and bioregional writing at Naropa University.

**RAVI SHANKAR** founding editor of <http://www.drunkenboat.com>, is poet-in-residence at Central Connecticut State University. In addition to publishing prose and poetry in such places as *The Paris Review*, *Time Out New York*, *Crowd*, and *The Iowa Review*, he has planted no less than thirteen trees in his lifetime

**ALLEN SHELTON** worked as a cattle farmer and landscaper in northeastern Alabama. Currently, he is a sociologist in Buffalo, NY. The house in the essay is now overgrown with vegetation and insects. John Pelham stares at a decaying strip mall and more tiny flags. The best cheeseburger in the region is at Ceil's on Pelham Road. A longer version of this essay appears as "The Mark on the Spade" this fall in *Cultural Studies-Critical Methodologies* 3.10 (2003).

**JONATHAN SKINNER** is currently pursuing a PhD in Poetics at SUNY Buffalo, where he edits *ecopoetics* and misidentifies birds on the Niagara river. His poems, essays and translations can be found in numerous

magazines, including *Elevator*, *Jacket*, *Lagniappe*, *The Poetry Project*, *The Transcendental Friend* and *verdure*. *Political Cactus Poems*, his first full-length collection, is forthcoming from Palm Press.

**JANE SPRAGUE** lives in Ithaca, NY where she publishes Palm Press and curates the West End Reading Series. Her poems have been published or are forthcoming in *Tinfish*, *Columbia Poetry Review*, *Barrow Street* and other magazines

**ELENI STECOPOULOS** lives in San Francisco and is finishing her PhD in Poetics from SUNY Buffalo. “Geopathy” is drawn from a dissertation that explores what it would mean to “go native” as a literary critic.

**SASHA STEENSEN** is a poet and critic who lives in Buffalo, NY. Recent work can be read in *Range* and *Enough*.

**BRIAN SWANN** has published and edited a number of books (poetry, fiction, translations, children’s) the latest of which, *Voices from Four Directions: Contemporary Translations of the Native Literatures of North America*, will be out this year from the University of Nebraska Press. He is also poetry editor of *OnEarth*, formerly *Amicus*—NRDC.

**STEPHEN VINCENT** has published seven collections of poetry, the most recent of which is *Walking* (Junction Press, 1994). He was the publisher of Momo’s Press and *Shocks* magazine (1972 - 1984), and of Bedford Arts, Publishers (1990 - 1996). “A Walk Toward Spicer” is selected from *Crossing the Millennium*, a day book journal and photography project currently in progress. He lives in San Francisco where he works as Senior Director of Publisher and Library Relations for ebrary.com.

**DAMIAN WEBER** edits House Press and the magazine *Source Material* in Buffalo, NY

**NATHAN WHITING** a former distance runner and dancer, has performed in the United States and Japan. He is the author of nine books of poems and has just choreographed an environmental dance theater piece called “Angles” performed in three city parks.

## PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

If you have an interest in reviewing any of the following publications for *ecopoetics*, please contact the editor: [j Skinner@buffalo.edu](mailto:j Skinner@buffalo.edu)

### Magazines and Presses (Series):

*Action Poétique*, ed. Henri Deluy. Quarterly. Issues 160-173 (2000-2003). [jeanpierreballe@club-internet.fr](mailto:jeanpierreballe@club-internet.fr)

*Antennae*, ed. Jesse Seldess. Biannual. Issues 2-5. [j\\_seldess@hotmail.com](mailto:j_seldess@hotmail.com)

*The Aperiodic Journal of Pataphysical Succulentosophy*, ed. mIEKAL aND. Xexoxial Editions. [www.xexoxial.org](http://www.xexoxial.org)

Atelos, eds. Lyn Hejinian and Travis Ortiz. nos. 14-18 (2003): 14– Brian Kim Stefans, *Fashionable Noise: On Digital Poetics*, 15– Rodrigo Toscano, *Platform*; 16– Fanny Howe, *Tis of Thee*; 17– Lohren Green, *Poetical Dictionary*; 18– Tan Lin, *BlipSoak01*. fax (510) 704-8350

Un bureau sur l'Atlantique, eds. Emmanuel Hocquard, Juliette Valéry (Format Américain). Numerous titles (in French translation): Brainard, Brown, Doris, Gizzi, Jarnot, Kalendek, Luoma, MacLow, Spahr, Waldrop, C. Wiener. [wings.buffalo.edu/epc/orgs/bureau/](http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/orgs/bureau/)

Casa de Letras (Cuba), ed. Reina Maria Rodriguez: Henri Michaux (Spanish tr. Jorge Miralles), *Postes Angulares* (2003)

*Chain*, eds. Jena Osman and Juliana Spahr (with Cecilia Vicuña and Thalia Field). "a yearly issue of work gathered loosely around a topic." Annual. Issue 9: Dialogue (2002). [www.temple.edu/chain](http://www.temple.edu/chain)

*Cimarron Review*, eds. E.P. Walkiewicz, Tom Dvorske, Tim Bradford, Ai, etc. Quarterly. Issue 140 (Summer 2002). [cimarronreview.okstate.edu](http://cimarronreview.okstate.edu)

Coracle Press, eds. Simon Cutts and Erica Van Horn. *Missent to Iceland: Ephemera, Notebooks, Catalogues, Critical Books, Books by Artists, Poetry, Objects* (2002); *The Presence of Landscape: books, cards & printed objects* (1975-2000); Little Critic Pamphlets 5-6, 15-17 (1991-2002): John Bevis, *Direct from Nature; Utility Building*; Anne Moeglin-Delcroix: *Little Books & Other Little Publications*; Les Coleman, *For It Not To Be Worth the Paper It Is Printed On It Has To Be Printed; A Phylum Press Selection; Repetivity: Platforms and approaches for publishing* (2000); *the view from the horizon: constructions by Timothy Drever*, texts and maps by Tim Robinson (1997); Susan Howe, *Bedhangings II* (2002). Write to: Coracle Ballybeg Grange Clonmel Tipperary

*Crayon*, eds. Andrew Levy and Bob Harrison. Annual. Issues 1 (Festschrift for Jackson MacLow), 3 (Fernando Pessoa feature). [www.durationpress.com/crayon](http://www.durationpress.com/crayon)

*Chicago Review*. "international journal of writing and critical exchange" (and some visual art), ed. Eirik Steinhoff. Quarterly. Issues 47:4-49:2. Two are double issues featuring, respectively, "Stan Brakhage Correspondences" and "New Writing in German." [humanities.uchicago.edu/review](http://humanities.uchicago.edu/review)

*Crítica*, ed. Armando Pinto. "Revista cultural de la Universidad Autónoma de Puebla" Quarterly. Issue 87 (2001). [critica@sin.buap.mx](mailto:critica@sin.buap.mx)

Cuneiform Press, ed. Kyle Schlesinger. Lisa Giugliano, *Chapter in a Day Finch Journal*; Nick Piombino, *The Boundary of Theory*; Greg Biglieri, *Los Books*; Patrick Durgin, *Color Music*; Mike Kelleher, *Germ of Order* (broadside). [www.cuneiformpress.com](http://www.cuneiformpress.com)

*Dichten* (Burning Deck), ed. Rosmarie Waldrop. "a (not quite) annual of current German writing in English translation." nos. 4-6 (Ernst Jandl, Oskar Pastior, Ludwig Harig). [www.burningdeck.com](http://www.burningdeck.com)

*Diario de Poesia* (Argentina), ed. Daniel Samoilovich. Quarterly. [contacto@diariodepoesia.com](mailto:contacto@diariodepoesia.com)

*Drill*, ed. Michael Slosek. Biannual. Issues 1-2. [mslosek@fulbrightweb.org](mailto:mslosek@fulbrightweb.org)

Exit 18 Pamphlet series (Autonomea), ed. Peter Lamborn Wilson: *Anonymous*, *Hieroglyphica*; Robert Kocik, *Overcoming Fitness*; Michael Taussig interviewed by P. Lamborn Wilson, *Ayahuasca and Shamanism*. [www.autonomea.org](http://www.autonomea.org)

*The Gig*, ed. Nate Dorward. "a little magazine that publishes experimental /modernist poetry from the US, Canada, UK & Ireland, with a slant towards the last two." Triannual. Issues 1-15 (Special issues: 4/5, *The Poetry of Peter Riley*; 13/14, *Removed for Further Study: The Poetry of Tom Raworth*). Book imprints: Maggie O'Sullivan, *Palace of Reptiles*; *Six Poets: Views and Interviews*; Trevor Joyce, *Take Over*; *Undone, Say*. [geocities.com/ndorward](http://geocities.com/ndorward)

*ISLE* (Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment), ed. Scott Slovic. "the official journal of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment." Biannual. Vols. 9.2, 10.2 [www.unr.edu/artsci/engl/isle](http://www.unr.edu/artsci/engl/isle)

*Kiosk*, eds. Gordon Hadfield, Sasha Steensen, Kyle Schlesinger. "A Journal of Poetry, Poetics, & Experimental Prose." Annual. Issues 1-2. [wings.buffalo.edu/epc/mags/kiosk.html](http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/mags/kiosk.html)

Longhouse Publishers & Booksellers, eds. Bob & Susan Arnold. Brenda Iijima, *Audible Bio*; Ken Mc Cullough, *Walking Backwards*

*LVNG*, eds. Joel Felix, Michael O'Leary, Peter O'Leary. Issues 8-10 (2000-2002). [floodeditions.com](http://floodeditions.com)

*La Mariposa Mundial* (Bolivia), ed. Rodolfo Ortiz. [mariposamundial@latinmail.com](mailto:mariposamundial@latinmail.com)

Meow Press, ed. Joel Kuszai. Over 20 titles (chapbooks). [www.factoryschool.org](http://www.factoryschool.org)

*Mirage*, eds. Dodie Bellamy, Kevin Killian. nos. 95, 101-103, 110

*No: a journal of the arts*, eds. Deb. Klowden and Ben Lerner. Biannual. Issues 1-2. [www.nojournal.com](http://www.nojournal.com)

*ʻōiwi: a native hawaiian journal*, eds. Luna Hoʻoponopono, Hope Luna Hoʻoponopono. Annual. Vols. 1-2 (1998, 2001). [www.hawaii.edu/o/iwi](http://www.hawaii.edu/o/iwi)

Pavement Saw Editions. Alan Catlin, *Drunk and Disorderly: Selected Poems* (1978-2000). [pavementsaw.org](http://pavementsaw.org)

Phylum Press, eds. Richard Deming, Nancy Kuhl. Pamphlets by Bettridge, Briante, Foust, Graham, Kelleher; chapbooks by Eisenhower, Tejada. [phylumpress.com](http://phylumpress.com)

*Poetry Project Newsletter*, various eds. (currently Marcella Durand). Bimonthly. [www.poetryproject.com](http://www.poetryproject.com)

*Quarter After Eight*, ed. Tony Viola. "A Journal of Prose and Commentary." Annual. Volume 9. [www.quarteraftereight.org](http://www.quarteraftereight.org)

Reality Street Editions, ed. Ken Edwards. Allen Fisher, *Dispossession and Cure* (1994); *Five from Finland*, ed. and tr. Anselm Hollo (2001); Maggie O'Sullivan, *In the House of the*

*Shaman* (1993). freespace.virgin.net/reality.street

*Selvatica: An Almanac for the Month of January*, ed. Joe Richey.  
selvaeditions@comcast.net

*Serie d'écriture* (Burning Deck), ed. Rosmarie Waldrop. "Contemporary French writing in English translation." Marie Borel, *Close Quote* (tr. Keith Waldrop, 2003). www.burningdeck.com

Slope Editions. Jonah Winter, *Maine*; Jenny Bouilly, *The Body*; Laura Solomon, *Bivouac*. www.slopeeditions.org

*Source Material: A Journal of Appropriated Text*, ed. Damian Weber. Issues 1-2 (2003). damiandamiandamian@hotmail.com

*The Tangent*, eds. Max Boykoff, Jules Boykoff, Joseph Neal Sand, Kaia Sand. Issue 12 (2003). www.thetangentpress.org

26 "A journal of poetry and poetics," eds. Avery E.D. Burns, Rusty Morrison, Joseph Noble, Elizabeth Robinson, Brian Strang. Issues a-b (of projected a-z). www.26magazine.com

*West Coast Line*, eds. Glen Lowry, Jerry Zaslove, Roger Farr. Triannual. "writing images criticism" nos. 34-40 (2001-2003). www.sfu.ca/west-coast-line

*Wind*, ed. Chris Green. Triannual. no. 88 (Kentucky Issue). wind.wind.org

*Xcp (cross cultural poetics)*, ed. Mark Nowak. Issue 9: Writing (Working) Class (2001). www.xcp.bfn.org

### **Books:**

*The Book of Music & Nature*, eds. David Rothenberg, Marta Ulvaeus (A Terra Nova Book, Wesleyan U Press, 2001)

*A Book of Witness: Spells & Gris-Gris*, Jerome Rothenberg (New Directions, 2003)

*Earth Temples, Fires & Mandolins*, Stefano Resta (Wooden Fish Publications, 2003)

*In/Somnia*, Etel Adnan (Post Apollo Press, 2003)

*Italian Environmental Literature: An Anthology*, eds. Patrick Barron, Anna Re (Italica Press, 2003)

*The Monster Lives of Boys and Girls*, Eleni Sikelianos (Green Integer, 2003)

*slide rule*, Jen Hofer (subpress, 2002)

*Pegasus Descending: A Book of the Best Bad Verse* (eds. James Camp, X.J. Kennedy, Keith Waldrop, Burning Deck, 1971)

*The Silk Dragon: Translations from the Chinese*, Arthur Sze (Copper Canyon Press, 2001)

*Ugh Ugh Ocean*, Joanna Fuhrman (Hanging Loose Press, 2003)

*Walking*, Stephen Vincent (Junction Press, 1993)