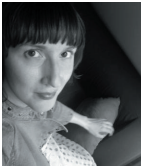


You Will Be the Lover of the Century

On the Poetry of Julian Brolaski



INTERVIEW BY
ANA BOŽIČEVIĆ

Boog City: You say you don’t like to give interviews. Thank you for making the exception; but also tell me, what is it about a Q&A that doesn’t answer your questions?

Julian Brolaski: By all means. But you should know that interviews give me the howling fantods. It’s like trusting someone to take your picture, you have to make sure they can see you. What do you mean by a Q&A doesn’t answer my questions? Is that like giving the lie or begging the question? I used to think begging the question meant prompting a question to be asked, but then someone said it “really” means to obviate, to negate the need for questions. Then another person says it means a circular argument, that it “really” refers to this rather confusing term in logic in which one speaker assumes the other has accepted certain points of their argument. I think it is a mistranslation of “petitio principii” (itself a translation of Greek “en archei aiteisthai”). Actually, it means all of these things but lately it tends most often to mean “raises the question” because people use it that way.

BC: Or assuming there is an answer at the end of the rhetori-tunnel. So this sounds like a Platonic issue, but it makes me happy that you believe there is a you to see.

JB: Ha yeah, well I believe you are not out to capture my soul, at least not in a bad way—you asked permission first! Yes and my answer will be but a shade of the ideal one. I wouldn’t want anyone to think I was trying to explain my poems ...

BC: I want to talk to you about *Advice for Lovers*, out from City Lights. This book has answered many of my queries/demands about/for an amorous poetics, about poems as a tool of (illusive) explication and seduction. How did you begin to write these poems? Did you have a structure in mind at the outset—a sonnet cycle, an *Ars Amatoria* for the 21st century—or was there an affective, organic impulse that jumpstarted their creation? Put simply, did you set yourself a task?

JB: I wanted to do as George Gascoigne advises in “Certayne notes of Instruction concerning the making of verse or ryme in English” (1575) and “grounde it in some fine Invention.” I started writing the poems in 2000-2003 in conscious imitation of medieval and Renaissance poets. Keeping my “invention” of writing an advice manual for lovers in my mind, I tried some experiments with sonnet form, ballads, Spenserian stanzas, prosimetra, various troubadour-type stanza structures, alliterative verse. I was also making translations from Horace, Catullus, and Ovid’s *Amores* and *The Ars Amatoria*, literally the Art of Love, which in three books (two directed to men: how to get the girl [Ovid’s word: *puella*], how to keep the girl, and one to women: how to catch a man) lays out the rules for successful loving. I didn’t follow much of the structure of Ovid, it’s more just like I stole the conceit and some of the swagger. I was also heavily under the influence of writers like Bernadette Mayer, Jack Spicer, and the constellation of poets writing in the Bay Area around that time.

BC: That swaggering “you,” to what extent does this book reflect the masterful/playful authority of, say, *Ars Amatoria* or a Catullus quip, or even the amorous authority of a sonnet singer? How many yous are there here? I guess I am asking you about the advice giver as a subject, and how it felt to wear the mantle of “I’ll tell you muhfuckers what Love is”—it doesn’t feel exactly synonymous with Poet.

JB: “Wear the mantle”—that’s perfect, like donning the garb of the orator or the poet’s laurels. It’s a total put on. I think as Erasmus says language is the dress of thought, we speak of cloaking our thoughts, shrouding our feelings, raiments, vestments, etc. And bona drag, of course—a trying on of various garments. Ovid’s speaker is very brash. He straight up claims he has been touched and asked directly by Venus to write this book and that he has tamed wild Cupid. This speaker is a little more humble, dedicating the book instead to Venus (“that god among goddesses, goddess among gods”) and claiming to be Venus’ “clerk and thrall.” It does sometimes put on a kind of professorial authority though, and explicitly offers to teach would-be lovers (“ladings listen, if you would loving prove”), but ultimately it makes a promise it can’t keep: that the reader will become the lover of the century.

BC: One of the delightfully striking aspects of *Advice for Lovers* is its queer explicitness—these are “Faggot Love Songs.” In what way do you think being explicit—including rather than occluding/implying the queer, as in Shakespeare’s sonnets—complicates these poems? I’m thinking back to our discussion about semantic autoantonyms as we smoked in front of the opera: can queerness really be explicit, or is it a kind of lucus a non lucendo? Or, to be a bit more down to earth, how does the work’s queerness speak to the poetic traditions/influences (far and nearer) it lovingly magpies?”

JB: Magpie as transitive verb, nice! Thank you for “autoantonym” which I keep clumsily calling “a word which also means its opposite.” You gave me a good one: devoted from *devotus*, cursed. Or “cleave,” to cling to, but also to rend apart. Etymologically the procedure it called antiphrasis, like Varro gives the etymology for sky *caelum* as *caelatem*, “hidden” from *celare*, to hide, because it is exposed. But surely the sky is hidden also? So many words come to hold a contrary signification if we explore their histories. “Maiden” for example, or maid, may, can mean a virgin of either sex and has antecedents in Old Saxon *magu* and Gothic *magus* meaning boy or young man. That is a pretty straightforward queerness. Ovid leaves some glaring gaps for the queers. He says he prefers the love of women to boys (he had experience, naturally) because a man and a woman can simultaneously orgasm, which is hilarious. Obviously boys and all manner of people can come at the same time! Most of the pronouns in the book are indeterminate, offering multiple places for the reader to project their fantasy.

BC: I am curious about the book’s structure (Advices, Nudisms, Notes); how did you decide on this triad? If sections can be said to serve a function, what is the poetic/semantic function of Nudisms?

JB: In terms of performance some of these poems are recitative, some are sprechstimme, and some are songs. I wanted to write a multi-register book, with advices themselves (“On How to Leave Your Lover,” “What to do When the Muse Becomes Your Lover”) and their consequences or manifestations. I thought of the Nudisms as enactments of the advices, but that isn’t always so literal. It is in many ways a poetics of embarrassment, and if language is the dress of thought, an actual disrobement (is it Viktor Shklovsky who talks about laying bare the device)? Nudisms is also a shoutout to a group of poets I was writing collaboratively with from about 1999-2001, the Nudist Course (or New Discourse), which included Stephanie Young, Elizabeth Willis, Stephen Ratcliffe, Alison Fenton, and Elizabeth A. Rosenberg. The notes are basically, I’m afraid to say, a scholarly apparatus. But I do envisage an absent, fourth part to the book, which consists of glosses of the “difficult words” in the margin.

BC: OK, a question that is two: 1. What words would those be? The language of this book is such a visceral mashup of the arch/decorous and the delightfully crude: it begs to be read aloud and sung to be beheld. So how would you gloss that? and 2. I love “Nudist Course:” how did you all work together?

JB: OK 1. The better to make the reader run for the dictionary! I always love writers who make me read with a dictionary by my side. I love lofty speech, but wanted some of the rudeness of Catullus, that opening line to XVI: “Pedicabo ego vos, et irrumbabo” (literally, roughly: I’ll fuck all y’all in the ass, and force you to perform fellatio on me.). That’s a threat he makes to two guys who suggest that because he writes love poems he is less manly. This speaker is a little more tenderly chiding: “if you can, come suck my goodly cock.”
2. The Nudist Course was a sort of poem-exchange over email. One would send out their poem to the group, and the others would reply with a poem that somehow responded, often formally mirroring the original, but there were no prescriptions. We construed the only parameters as having a conversation. Thus the poems were often epistolary, with abstract addressees like “fervor to sublimity.”

BC: You write: “in Shakespeare love is glossed as ‘superficiality, absoluteness, irrationality;’” and you are particularly inventive at using form—metered, prose, fractured—to offer “advice” on such an impossible scope via poetic embodiment. Did you feel challenged or liberated by the self-invective to offer advice; what formal and thematic constraints did you encounter, and did you set yourself any?

JB: Do you mean self-injunctive? Aristotle says that satiric verse is particularly suited to the iambic, as heroic was to epic, trochaic to dancing—I became interested in the concept of decorum in form and considered the shape each invention should take. Another piece of advice Gascoigne gives is that the poet “beware of rime without reason”:

“My meaning is hereby that our rime leade you not from your firste Invention, for many wryters when they have layed the platforme of their invention, are yet drawn sometimes (by ryme) to forget it or at least to alter it, as when they cannot readily finde out a worde whiche maye rime to the first (and yet continue their determinate Invention) they do then eyther botche it vp with a worde that will ryme (howe small reason forever it carie with it) or els they alter their first worde and so percase decline or trouble their former Invention: But do you alwaye hold your first determined Invention, and do rather search the bottome of your braynes for apte words, than chaunge good reason for rumbling rime.”

BC: Ah rumbling rime! Yes, a super-great pleasure of *Advice for Lovers* is the way intention flirts with invention, and decorum with absolute inappropriety: “And hyph me harder, angel, than I can handle.” To conclude, in what spirit would you advise the erstwhile lover to approach this book?

JB: With a grain of etc. I hope! It is a formal exercise, but the speaker you may be sure is sincere. The would-be lover should know that if they want to succeed in loving, to pursuing and getting and holding, and most importantly keeping the lover, and finally, should the need arise, to leave the lover without any harm done—then read these poems! You will be the lover of the century.



‘I didn’t follow much of the structure of Ovid, it’s more just like I stole the conceit and some of the swagger.’

Mayer, Jack Spicer, and the constellation of poets writing in the Bay Area around that time.

‘It is a formal exercise, but the speaker you may be sure is sincere.’



Megan Volpert
Atlanta
It's too close to call

Keep pushing til it’s understood. Let five o’clock shadows alight on the eye’s lower lids. Go out over the line. We’re open all night. By turns, be tired and be the answers. If it must brake, keep something incessant inside to remember where everything left off. Let the past burn and keep that smoke in the pocket of an everyday jacket. Be glad you’re alive. Eat something. Look east and west. I don’t believe the thrill is all gone. No matter what we think it’s about, living will have been only a little about what we think it’s about.

The Winter AntiFolk Festival 2013 Schedule

Tues. Feb. 19

The Bee Keeper, 6:00 pm; Jack Cyanide, 6:45 pm; Purple Organ, 7:30 pm; Preston Spurlock, 8:15 pm; Pinelawn Empire CD Release, 9:00 pm; Elizabeth Devlin, 9:45 pm; Ray Brown, 10:30 pm; Elastic No-No Man, 11:15 pm

Wed. Feb. 20

Jesse Statman, 6:00 pm; Barry Reardon, 7:30 pm; Maya Caballero, 8:15 pm; Barry Bliss, 9:00 pm; Steve Stavola, 9:45 pm; Ben Pagano, 10:30 pm; Brian Speaker's Spiral Notebook, 11:15 pm; Phoebe Novak, 11:45 pm

Thurs. Feb. 21

Rebecca Florence, 6:00 pm; JD Meatyard, 6:45 pm; Soce the Elemental Wizard, 7:30 pm; Jon Berger, 8:15 pm; Charles Mansfield CD Release, 9:00 pm; Robot Princess, 9:45 pm; Coach CD Release, 10:30 pm; Madison Cano, 11:15 pm; J.J. Hayes, 11:45 pm

Fri. Feb. 22

Ivan Sandomire, 6:45 pm; Ben Sadock, 7:30 pm; Adam Bricks, 8:15 pm; Erin Regan, 9:00 pm; Debe Dalton, 9:45 pm; Pendulum Swings, 11:15 pm; Josh Fox Band, 11:45 pm

Sat. Feb. 23

Trumpet Grrrl, 6:00 pm; Daniel Laitman, 6:45 pm; The Telethons, 8:15 pm; The Happy Rappies, 9:00 pm; Dan & Rachel, 9:45 pm; Kung Fu Crimewave, 10:30 pm; Crazy & the Brains, 11:15 pm

Sun. Feb. 24

Jonathan Vincent, 7:30 pm; Prewar Yardsale, 9:00 pm; Bird to Prey, 9:45 pm; Mr. Patrick, 11:15 pm

Mon. Feb. 25

The Open Stage w/ Ben Krieger (signup 7:30 pm, music until late), 7:00 pm

Tues. Feb. 26

Casey Holford, 7:30 pm; Brer Brian, 8:15 pm; The Jeffrey Lewis/Peter Stampfel Folk Show, 9:00 pm; Forest Creature (Feat. Dufus Seth and John Ludington), 9:45 pm; Larkin Grimm, 10:30 pm; M Lamar, 11:15 pm

Wed. Feb. 27

Blueberry Season, 6:00 pm; Domino, 6:45 pm; Bernard King Presents, 7:30 pm; Gina Mobilio CD Release, 9:00 pm; Fayaway, 9:45 pm; Dewey & the Decimals, 10:30 pm; Alex P, 11:15 pm; Cal Folger Day, 11:45 pm

Thurs. Feb. 28

Rav Shmuel, 9:00 pm; Closing Ceremonies with Yossarian Feedback, 11:15 pm

Links

www.sidewalknyc.com/events/calendar
www.jessestatman.com
www.facebook.com/eyemediagroup
www.rebeccaflorence.tumblr.com
www.jhmusic2.bandcamp.com

Writer Bio

Jonathan Berger has written about issues involving AntiFolk for far too long.

MUSIC

Same as It Ever Was? This Year's Winter AntiFolk Festival is a Once in a Lifetime Affair



BY JONATHAN BERGER

The AntiFolk Festival is coming up, but that isn't anything new. If you're an occasional East Village appreciator, then you'll find pretty much any season that another AntiFolk Festival is either coming up or has just left. AntiFolk celebrations just keep happening—like syphilis.

So how is this year any different? Well, it's an anniversary, of sorts. The earliest dates of the Little Movement That Couldn't are murky, though artists like Kirk Kelly, Roger Manning, Cindy Lee Berryhill, and Lach were known to roam the Lower East Side throughout the early eighties. It's quite clear when AntiFolk found its most permanent home, in 1993, when the Sidewalk Cafe opened its doors and back room to the booker and open mic host known only as Lach.



Florence's big big voice and oversized personality make her performances powerful, though somewhat exhausting affairs.

Ephie Lowinger photo

Ben Krieger. The booker in charge of Sidewalk goings-on these last four years, Krieger's excited by upcoming events for this anniversary year.

What's in store? "Numerous celebratory events throughout the year," Krieger promises.

"Once the winter festival has kicked things off, we will be holding monthly shows that feature several performances, plus a panel discussion," says Krieger. "The monthly event will celebrate the strong community aspects of our scene, with programs covering a range of topics such as touring Europe, addictions and recovery, home recording techniques, how to DIY when you're ADHD—the possibilities are endless!"

Of course, starting the year of festivities is the Winter AntiFolk Festival, running from Feb. 19-28. Like every festival, it features a motley assortment of ancient acts, dinosaurs stumbling through their shambolic acoustic punk anthems, and the new class, recent entrants into the community who seem to be shaking stuff up.

This festival includes several acts that are new to the scene, or have arrived at a newly assured position of importance.

Jesse "Cannonball" Statman is the future of AntiFolk, if only because he's too young to have much of a past. Explosively appearing in the scene in the latter half of 2012 soon after graduating high school, Statman has been playing a regularly expanding collection of quirky cuts, with titles like "Horse," about being a horse; "Tiger," about a tiger; and "Cannonball Statman," about being half-human, half-dog. Anthropomorphism weighs heavily on Statman's soul, as does an internal mythology that lacks consistency, but is enthusiastically maintained. Statman regularly insists that he, whose appellation "Cannonball" comes from his pet labrador retriever, is himself a dog, or partially dog, or perhaps somehow from Sirius. When the Brooklynite's isn't talking about his pet, his experimental Frankenstein-guitar, raggedly filled with holes and cords where they probably shouldn't be, produces dark melodies, occasionally supported by equally dark lyrics. His sense of fun is infectious, and his shameless innocence is endearing. Statman is the sort who may well conquer the world, if he doesn't destroy it first. **He performs Wed., Feb. 20, at 6:00 p.m.**

The band Soul Candy includes recent scene stalwarts Bob Black and Rebecca Florence. While only Florence is scheduled to perform at the festival, Black's presence will be known. Bob Black has recently been prominent as a videographer for the community, developing the social media site EyeLoveMedia. He records artists and promotes them through the Facebook community he's created. As Black's equipment and expertise increase, you should expect to see a larger and larger collection of art available through EyeLoveMedia.

Black's Soul Candy comrade **Rebecca Florence** writes depressingly gorgeous songs about heartache, miscommunication and missed connections. Her big big voice and oversized personality make her performances powerful, though somewhat exhausting affairs. **She performs Thurs., Feb. 21, at 6:00 p.m.**

JJ Hayes, a years-long quiet witness to the AntiFolk community, a writer, a poet, and a former lawyer, has recently become the subject of a tribute album called *The Light*. He is not dead, nor is he suffering from some debilitating disease, other than age. So what makes Hayes the object of AntiFolk adulation? Ray Brown explained the genesis of the project. "Beau and I had been talking online for a while about what an amazing songwriter JJ was," says Brown.

Beau Alessi continues, "They're perfect songs to reinterpret because they're so well-written but JJ's performance style is so minimal."

"We wanted to cover one of his songs," says Brown. "From that it mutated into an originally very small project."

Alessi adds, "JJ has so many great songs and so few of them are recorded. At first I was excited about the prospect of finally having a way to listen to some of these songs over and over. Once the ball got rolling, it became really obvious that everyone wanted to try covering one."

JJ Hayes

In total, 25 separate artists took to the recording booth to interpret songs from Hayes' limited canon. Studying his YouTube videos, cribbing notes at his open mic performances, the artists in the close-knit community kept quiet about their involvement in the project, maintaining Hayes' ignorance of the goings-on. When complete, Alessi quietly handed Hayes a compact disc with the recordings, with no explanation other than asking for Hayes to offer input on Alessi's latest recording.

Listening to the disc on his drive back to his Staten Island home, Hayes took a while to recognize that he was listening to his songs through the mouths of friends. His reaction? "I remember feeling incapable of speech, including internally," Hayes replies, "so that whatever interior conversation usually goes on just ended."

AntiFolk celebrations just keep happening, like syphilis.

"I mean, I had been riding high for weeks after The Nowadays did 'Butterfly' at the (Summer) fest, and now it was song after song after song. After I realized it was a whole huge album and not just a couple of songs I looked 'gobsmacked' and kept laughing in disbelief. Understand that these were people that I follow," says Hayes. "I had no idea that they even would take notice of my stuff, let alone want to cover it. It was nuts."

The album is available for download on bandcamp for free, and included interpretations from Alessi, Brown, Stephen Stavola, Brer Brian, and Debe Dalton, all scheduled to be part of the Winter AntiFolk Festival. **Hayes performs Wed., Feb. 21, at 11:45 p.m.**

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Hyacinth Girl in Bloom

A Micro-Feminist Press Talks About What it Means to be Micro



BY KIMBERLY ANN SOUTHWICK

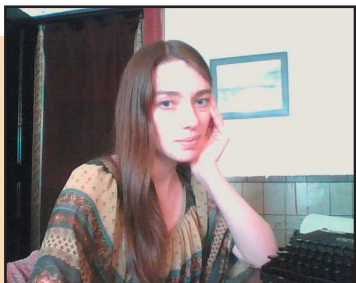
Hyacinth Girl Press is “a two-woman operation, and we both have day jobs. Small didn’t seem quite to capture it,” says Margaret Bashaar on the micro-press she founded and edits when asked why Hyacinth Girl calls itself a micro versus small press. Her other half is Hyacinth Girl’s layout and design editor Sarah Reck, who not only designs the books, but the press’s website. Together, the two women are the heart and soul behind the press, though they might agree the writers and books themselves truly make the press tick, considering how “teeny-tiny” the staff is.

“The collaboration with Sarah and I has evolved as the press has over the past two years,” says Bashaar. “As of right now, I send Sarah the manuscript that’s ready to be laid out, she and the poet chat a bit about the poet’s ideas/vision, and then she proofs the chapbook and sends it to me.” Despite the pair of ladies living in separate cities—Bashaar in Pittsburgh and Reck in New York City—this process works well for them. But the two have known each other for an incredible amount of time. “Sarah and I have been friends since we met at Sunday School when we were both in the second grade,” says Bashaar. When Reck discovered her friend was starting a small press, she volunteered to do the layout and design, and Bashaar has been grateful ever since.

“I like being a very small press because, honestly, I can pretty much do as I please,” say Bashaar. “I don’t have a head editor to answer to or underling editors to wrangle. There’s no debate or disagreement about what to publish. I know this makes it sound like I don’t play well with others, and perhaps that is true to a certain extent, but with the extremely busy nature of my life I need to be able to run my press my way and make whatever decisions I please. I would not be capable of running a press with more than two people, and, really, sometimes I think Sarah deserves to be sainted for putting up with me.”

Their lovely website, www.hyacinthgirlpress.com, at times reminds me of a house in the woods where something from a myth, or even another planet—though one kinder to its environment—might appear. When prompted about the press’s goals that are clearly reemphasized by its aesthetics, Bashaar adds, “far too often we have this idea that science and spirituality must be at odds with each

‘I have fated myself to receive 15 submissions from a woman for every one submission from a man, and honestly, when I look at the numbers of men vs. women being published by presses that do not refer to themselves as feminist, I’m completely okay with that,’ says co-founder Margaret Bashaar.



other, and I absolutely, fundamentally disagree.” The works the press chooses to print and promote as well as its “look” illustrate this concept. The chapbooks put out by the press are spot on, considering the press’s goals: to be a feminist press that promotes the use of both sides of the brain.

When it comes to the art specifically chosen to pair with the chapbooks, there is definitely something lasting about Hyacinth Girl covers. The selection process is not a decision that Reck or Bashaar make on their own, but instead they invite input from the writers whose work the cover will present. “I always try to ask poets for their input first rather than just run off in my own direction,” says Bashaar. With cover artists like Hollie Chastain, who did the collage work fittingly featured on Sarah J. Sloat’s *Homebodies*, the aesthetic of this press is spiritual and scientific, while at the same time being feminine. The “Girl” in the press’s name is not unintentional.

Hyacinth Girl bills itself as a “feminist micro-press” and succeeds in fulfilling this by publishing and promoting almost exclusively women writers, though they consider work from all genders. Bashaar understood from day one that calling Hyacinth Girl a feminist press might persuade more women than men to submit their work to the press, but she says, “women and men should be treated equally, and I believe that holds just as true in the poetry and art world as anywhere else. I realize that by calling myself



a feminist and my press a feminist press I have fated myself to receive 15 submissions from a woman for every one submission from a man, and, honestly, when I look at the numbers of men vs. women being published by presses that do not refer to themselves as feminist, I’m completely okay with that.”

Bashaar herself, and therefore the press, has been more recently attracted to, though not focused on, collaborative works, with two books by pairs of writers coming out in year three of the press’s existence. One of these pairs includes a male voice: Jay Snodgrass. These books are *Tomorrow I Will Love You at the Movies* by Dana Guthrie Martin and Jay Snodgrass and *The Kind of Beauty That Has Nowhere to Go* by Kathleen Rooney and Elisa Gabbert. Rooney says that she and Gabbert were attracted to Hyacinth Girl “because of their aesthetic commitment to producing beautiful books, as well as their ideological commitment to feminism.”

With so many great small presses around today, there is no higher compliment than that: we love your books, and we love your mission. Though by name Hyacinth Girl is a “micro-press,” what the press is doing is no small deal, and Rooney’s praise continues. “[Bashaar’s] vision for her [press] is smart and necessary,” says Rooney. “For one thing, the chapbook is intrinsically a worthwhile format and a great delivery device for the poetry—and she does great things with the form—and for another, there’s always a need for publishers who are not just aware of the gender gap that exists in publishing, but who are actively and enthusiastically doing their part to get more female voices out there.”

Browsing Hyacinth Girl’s history, it might look like the upcoming year three is the only year that collaboration has been on the forefront of the press’s mind, but Bashaar says, “*Salt Ballads* [year two] was, in a way, a collaborative manuscript, as Brooklyn Copeland translated the work of Edith Södergran and wrote additional poems inspired by the translated works.” Copeland’s book is the most recent work published by the press. *Sulfur Water*, the chapbook by another Hyacinth Girl writer, Crystal Hoffman, “has a collaborative element to it as well, as there are translations of her poetry into Arabic, French, and Spanish in the chapbook, as well as art inspired by the manuscript both on the front and back covers and within the chapbook,” says Bashaar.

When discussing her own writing, she adds “I’ve been doing collaborative writing for the past 10 years—well, if you count horrible fan fic I wrote in high school with fellow editor Reck, longer than that even, but let’s not count that!” Her collaborations have been mostly with Hyacinth Girl writer Hoffman and more recently with California-based poet Lauren Eggert-Crowe. Bashaar is fascinated by the idea behind the artistic process of writing, and especially when it comes to collaboration, like “poets taking what is usually so solitary and sometimes isolating of an art form and actively work together instead,” she says.

When asked about the importance of small press’s, Bashaar adds, “I absolutely think small presses are a very important element of the poetry publishing world in particular. Let’s face it, poetry is not exactly enjoying huge amounts of popularity and financial success, and so the bigger publishers perhaps shy away from poetry that pushes boundaries, takes risks, and may not be concerned with its own popularity. As a small press I don’t have to worry about being popular or making money.”

Hyacinth Girl Press, moving toward the end of its second cycle, is currently promoting Copeland and Södergran’s book. Books still available from this cycle that are fabulous include *Dick Wad* by Deena November and *[Mary]:* by J. Hope Stein, and there are more to come before they move into their third year. Above all, something special about Hyacinth Girl Press is its interest in the book as a whole object. Many small presses focus mostly on the writing their books present, but Hyacinth Girl wants the whole package to be meaningful, and for that meaning to be apparent. I would say that thus far, the press delivers.

‘Far too often we have this idea that science and spirituality must be at odds with each other, and I absolutely, fundamentally disagree,’ says Bashaar.

The Small Press Question

ADAM ROBINSON



Founding Editor
PUBLISHING GENIUS
answers:

What are you currently promoting that you love? And what have you been reading lately that you love?

I’m really excited about all the books Publishing Genius is releasing in 2013. I seem to be working on all of them, in different stages, at the same time. There’s a novel and some great poetry and some surprising oddities. So what I’m promoting is the subscription package. It’s \$60 for seven books.

And I’m currently reading this book, *Flew Away*, that’s coming out from Sententia Books later this year. It’s a pretty intense novel by David Paradis about being married in Maine, I think. All in all, 2013 is going to be a great reading year for me.

Links

www.hyacinthgirlpress.com

Writer Bio

Kimberly Ann Southwick is a poet who lives in Philadelphia. She is the founder and editor in chief of Gigantic Sequins, a literary arts journal.

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Margaret Bashaar and Sarah Reck in middle school.

Writer Bio

Of her most recent book from Litmus Press, I Want to Make You Safe, John Ashbery described Amy King’s poems as bringing “abstractions to brilliant, jagged life, emerging into rather than out of the busyness of living.” Safe was one of the Boston Globe’s Best Poetry Books of 2011, and it was reviewed, among others, via the Poetry Foundation and the Colorado Review. For more information visit www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/amy-king.

PRINTED MATTER

The Bearable Nothingness of Noelle Kocot’s Poetry



INTERVIEW BY AMY KING

Boog City printed matter co-editor Amy King recently spoke with Noelle Kocot about trees, nothingness, and the art of space and meditation as they relate to her poetry’s progression in *Soul of Space*, forthcoming from Wave Books.

Boog City: Congrats on *Soul of Space* (Wave Books)! You suggested I read from back to front: elaborate?

Noelle Kocot: Thank you! I favor the poems in the fourth section right now, as opposed to the ones in the first section, but that could change with time.

BC: Going backwards, I began with “This Is the Day,” the final poem. You end on a note of acceptance with an almost guarded optimism couched, perhaps, in art and a view of the speaker’s “stellar” live, which is a “refuge.” Does art hold some sway over how to proceed in this book? In this life?

NK: I think it does. I think without art, I’d be lost, and my daily life wouldn’t be such a refuge anymore.

‘Muriel Ruckeyser once said that if one woman told the truth about her life, the whole world would split open—I think that’s what I was going for, mainly.’

NK: Yes, but I’m not sure how. Muriel Rukeyser once said that if one woman told the truth about her life, the whole world would split open—I think that’s what I was going for, mainly.

BC: The speaker communes with trees in “Trees.” Is this an attempt to get into trees’ heads? To see how they do? Did you make a concerted effort to get beyond your own head this go round? Did you engage any unusual exercises or set up unusual tasks to do so?

NK: I was just wondering about the trees personified, how they would perceive things. I didn’t engage in any unusual exercises beyond just staring into space for a long time—my very favorite exercise of all.

BC: “I have lost the unit for / Feeling.” And later, “A terrifying survival / Follows me I everywhere, like a shade, real.” Does this suggest an awareness or state of consciousness beyond “normal” or average? How does one acquire or cultivate it?

NK: One acquires it by having tremendous suffering. Not a popular idea in 2012, but one which permeates certain Russian novels. That is just true for me, literally—a terrifying survival DOES follow me everywhere, and it’s very real.

BC: You have a recurring concern with “nothing” throughout the book: “And who says, who says we stood there for nothing. / Saw nothing, were nothing.” “To create something out of nothing.” Do you think “nothing” is a possible state of being or condition? Desirable? That from which we draw but can’t quite conceive? But attempt to grasp nonetheless? Tell me about nothing.

NK: Nothingness to me is a desirable state. However I should qualify it—to have nothingness, and then to let love in—this to me, is the most desirable state one can have.

BC: *The Bigger World* was an attempt to get into the world after your husband’s death. Is “The Genesis” an extension or continuation of this exploration of what it means to go on and still be in touch with the past, “It’s the dance of history—everyone is / At risk”?

NK: Not exactly—I mean, maybe unconsciously, but not really consciously. *The Bigger World* is more about inhabiting a larger psychological space than grief occupies, and I guess all of my poems are about going into the largest territory they can possibly be in. I have this cat, Timothy, who just loves expanding his territory. I’m like that, too, from a psychological standpoint. I love open space and big ideas.

BC: I love your play on logic as well as some of the more “surreal” moments found in “Poem,” “I shop for bones.” “It has coffee in it, a naked river.” And then the poem is overtaken by “It.” Did you make a conscious effort to write such moments in that poem? Without divulging too much, can you discuss the origins or complexities of “It”?

NK: Don’t know how to properly answer this, and this poem was even more unconscious than most of my work. I think I probably meant the whole story had elements in it that we can identify, that are somehow familiar and unfamiliar to us at the same time.

BC: In “Some Time,” “But now we are looking into the air for a relic of / Something.” and later, “You hold the window open for me to vomit / Out of. There, the monster is on the floor.” What are you working on these days? Are there more monsters to be spied or sought? What can they offer?

‘I have this cat, Timothy, who just loves expanding his territory. I’m like that, too, from a psychological standpoint. I love open space and big ideas.’

NK: Oh! I am working on writing nice and peaceful poems, complex, but ones which show the hard-won peace of mind I have now. No more monsters, just the love of the Creator, good people, animals.

BC: How does Noelle Kocot spend an average day in New Jersey? Do you write daily? How do you cultivate a writerly mind? From “Poem for New Jersey,” “Heal me, and I will make a you a tree ... or a dog / That sits waiting for a bookstore / On which to be leashed forever.”

NK: Well, an average day for me begins at 4 or 5 a.m., and I get up, try to remember my dreams, water the cats and do their litter, then start writing. I write at least a poem every day. Then the light comes up, activity starts, the workday starts, and I work on schoolwork or housecleaning, just really basic stuff. I love it out here in South Jersey—I’ve been here for 3-1/2 years, and it’s turned into a lifestyle, definitely. I have always loved New Jersey, but now I love it even more. And I live right near my parents, and our relationship has turned into a really beautiful thing—they are both so full of life. I don’t have any children, because I decided not to date or remarry when my husband died, for my own reasons, also because I don’t have the resources nor the desire to raise a child on my own, but I have a lot of friends out here, and my parents, and my best friend who I talk to every day on the phone—I forgot about this, but in the mornings, we leave answering machine messages for each other—have been doing this for like 15 years at least. Her name is Lizzette and she is a psychologist, and we met at Oberlin and have had a really loving loyal relationship for 25 years. She lives in North Carolina. Anyhow, I’m rambling, and I don’t know exactly why. Sorry!!! I just love New Jersey and wish all my friends could come here to see me!!!

BC: What are you looking forward to? What might we spy from Noelle Kocot in the future?

NK: I am looking for a long healthy life free of all bullshit, the best way I know how. I will keep on going until I die, and I will go wherever the love of the Creator takes me. I have no plan anymore. And by this spring, my bangs should be fully grown out, so I am definitely looking forward to that!!!!



Noelle Kocot

Rosalynde Vas Dias’ Plum Poetry: Luscious, Tender, Desirable



INTERVIEW BY AMY KING

Boog City printed matter co-editor Amy King recently chatted with Rosalynde Vas Dias about influences, past and future, via her latest offering, winner of the 2011 Robert Dana-Anhinga Prize for Poetry, *Only Blue Body*.

Boog City: “Hidden” begins “I used to be a doe goat / pirate ...” Only Blue Body conjures Bhanu Kapil and her “humanimal” considerations / investigations. Is she an influence? Any specific inspiration or motivation propelling the book?

Rosalynde Vas Dias: Well, I hate to say it, but I am not familiar with Bhanu Kapil’s work. ... I can’t point to one specific writer as an influence, but I suppose my first ideas of transformation were formed from reading myths and fairy tales and going to church. The poems’ “world view” is most likely as a result of my upbringing in rural Pennsylvania. My father was an English teacher and there were many books in our home. My parents also made the decision not to have a television in the house. I received *Crickets* magazine and was allowed to get whatever I wanted from the Scholastic book leaflets that were given out in school. My dad read some poetry to me. I have vivid recollection of his reading “The Highwayman” to me—a very romantic, gothic introduction for a small child. I spent a lot of time reading or being outside—my mom kept a big garden and there were year-round chores and animals to look after and places to explore. ... I had the solitude and room to develop a strong reliance on my imagination.

When I was about 14 I began writing poetry, but I didn’t have much guidance until I was in my twenties, so I just randomly read what we had around the house and what I could find on the library shelves. I didn’t really understand “craft” for a very long time, and I still feel like I had huge gaps in my understanding of poetry.

My mom gave me Sylvia Plath’s collected poems around the time I was 15, and I had one of my brother’s creative writing text books. I remember reading Charles Simic’s poem “Stone” and really loving it. Simic takes the reader inside the stone, imagining a moon shining “as though from behind a hill” and “star charts on the inner walls”—perhaps that was the first time I vaguely realized what was possible in a poem. I wonder if that’s part of what I’ve been copying all these years, that movement of going into an imagined inner space.



BC: “... I am delirious / in my attic room leaving the windows / open for the moth man –” There’s a delicate consideration throughout as well as meta-awareness of being—or a poetics of ontology in the actual world, how colors move, how music is, how animals are and we too go. Can you talk a little about your “intermingling” of species and where humans sit on the spectrum, if there is one?

RVD: Quite a few of the poems are “about” the difficulty of matching one’s perceptions to the actual world. I’d say there are a few poems where I am not sure if what the speaker describes is “actually happening” or if it is her best way of articulating her understanding of reality.

Obviously, some of the poems’ inhabitants are closer to a particular animal. In “The Secretary,” the fox has become part of the body of the “you” in that poem. ... In “Origin,” similarly, the girl perceives herself as a shepherd dog because that is her first understanding of herself. “Origin” seems more ominous because the girl seems to have had less of a choice. For me, the secretary in “The Secretary” is choosing an alliance with the fox rather than her dull and humiliating day job.

In other poems, like “White Cat” or “Otter at a Party,” the animals behave like humans, sort of. They still maintain their signature characteristics—like the Otter’s wife is diving for fish that other party-goers are tossing into a fountain. This isn’t a trick, so much as it is her skill that she is showing off while her husband seems like he’s lost some of his sense of self. ... I mean, I feel his work as a composer is essential to him, but he’s perhaps lost the reason he wrote the musical in the first place. Or he just doesn’t do well at parties. Maybe he’s more of an introvert. The cat of “White Cat” is on a hero’s quest, but he is still very clearly a cat, though with some anthropomorphic features, I guess.

In the poem “Equinox,” the Christ figure is quite literally a deer, a fertility god. The animals that “carry him away” at the poem’s close are enacting a type of communion, but also doing the important biological work of cleaning up the dead body.

Another concern of the collection is the body, which is, of course, an animal thing. If one sets out to consciously care for one’s self, it is not unlike caring for a pet. ... I am quite conscious of the human as an animal, but I don’t think of it as somehow a degradation. Nor do I suppose the human to be the pinnacle of evolution. After all, organisms don’t evolve in order to ascend some kind of ladder of animal hierarchy, but are shaped by environmental pressures.

BC: Speaking of the fox, I notice that a number of your personas are female, though there are male entities present. For example, the fox is female while the male presence “keeps talking, sometimes rapping the counter / with his knuckles.” In “No Wonder,” the female persona has a lover, a plum that is male, that she viscerally intends to enjoy, “Soon he will split, spilling / juice and veined, golden flesh.” Were you conscious of how you constructed gender dynamics in your poems?

RVD: I had a friend (male) who objected that so many of my speakers were female ... but male/female power dynamic has shaped my life, as a daughter, as a lover, as a spiritual person, as an employee—I have felt it keenly ever since I was very young. One can sense petty (or great) injustices before one can articulate them.

I recently finished *Bluets*, and was so taken with Maggie Nelson (or, you know, her speaker) stating, in Section 59, “And we have not heard enough, if anything, about the female gaze. About the scorch of it, with the eyes staying in the head.” I wanted, in *Only Blue Body*, to grapple with the idea or the feeling of being a woman and being a writer (or artist—one who represents) one who feels herself being seen, mis-seen, desired, reviled, and who also looks at the male body, the male god. To desire it or render it, to be in the role of the seer and the one seen—to move back and forth ... and what does a female create that has value? I have less value, to some, because I have not created a child, only some weird poems.

It’s strange to feel so compelled to use the voice to make poems, to know that if I was born in another place or time, that I would have no right to my own voice. I am very aware of my good fortune, in being in a place where I was encouraged to pursue education, where my being able to read and write is a value. Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* has an almost perverse grip on my imagination, I’m afraid.

In at least one poem, however, the male and female might be two parts of an entire consciousness—“First Beauty Lesson” seems like a morality tale I wrote for myself about approaches to a creative life. With the two poems you mention, yes, the dynamic is quite intentional. I find the male co-worker/boss in “The Secretary” very amusing in his irrelevance to the secretary. And the plum, well, he is a plum—very luscious, very desirable and tender to the woman in that poem.

The scariest weakness might be a fear of writing, of drafting, fearing that feeling of “I don’t know where this is going, I don’t like where this is going; I’m hungry, this is boring.” To some extent, I’ve figured out coping mechanisms around this, but ... confronting that fear is something one does every time one sits down to write—it’s not a once and done thing.

Another poem that springs to mind as “hooking” me is Randall Jarrell’s “Seele im Raum,” which again, is not so much surreal as it is about acute and private perception or vision. But to some extent it’s harder for me to write poems like that now, perhaps because I don’t want to imitate my old poems. And I never confined myself to reading only poems or fiction with a more surreal bent.

These days I am trying to make up for my perceived weaknesses, so I’ve been reading and enjoying George Eliot and Dickens and Thomas Hardy. I wouldn’t say I will end up writing like a Victorian, but I think my poems are more “talky” now and less lyrical.

BC: I’d say it’s difficult to identify one’s own weaknesses. Can you elaborate a bit on what you find yours to be? And how does reading these latter writers help disjoint you from the lyric?

RVD: Well, there are my weaknesses as a reader, which perhaps I only imagine or misidentify. And I suspect I falsely believe that reading British lit will grant me entry to an imaginary club, but another part of me suspects I just enjoy the style of those novels. I’m chasing the pleasure of eating sentences.

My weaknesses as a writer? Not being a rigorous reviser, doing readings from *Only Blue Body* sometimes I feel a soft place in a poem or poems where I was sloppy or repetitive. Comparing my work ethic to certain friends who seem boundlessly energetic, one always feels one is not pushing one’s work enough, a failure of courage or insight. One fears dishonesty or laxness—being overly indulgent with one’s self. I look at “White Cat,” which I constructed on purpose to be so chunky and crammed with words. I wanted a complexity of syntax (to fight the lyric voice), yet I feel I was too stubborn in preserving its “wordiness.” Could I have made it more powerful through steely-eyed pruning?

Sometimes that stubbornness feels good though, as if I want the flaws on my own terms rather than someone else’s.

The scariest weakness might be a fear of writing, of drafting, fearing that feeling of “I don’t know where this is going, I don’t like where this is going; I’m hungry, this is boring.” To some extent, I’ve figured out coping mechanisms around this, but ... confronting that fear is something one does every time one sits down to write—it’s not a once and done thing.

BC: I’m trying to figure out which way you go: do you rope your poems in an effort to make them more sensible and accessible or do they start off on that end and you render them more complex? They come across with an appearance of simplicity, but looks are deceiving, so I’m asking about process.

RVD: It’s hard to be entirely certain as some of the poems in *Only Blue Body* are eight to 10 years old and I can’t clearly remember the drafting process, but I think many of the “weirder” poems came out almost intact and then I probably did revise a bit to clarify things for the reader or to tidy up the poem and cut out any distracting tangents or unnecessary detail.

In a few poems, I intentionally didn’t replace “the” with a possessive pronoun (In “The Secretary” and in “Drawing the Self Portrait”), perhaps stubbornly. It could be considered a fault in either of those poems, but I hope to convey a level of disassociation that makes ownership a challenge for the particular inhabitants of those poems.

BC: You open a poem with a Dean Young quote and another is addressed to him. What draws you to Young’s work?

RVD: You know, in both instances I probably could have cut the reference. The quote was something Young said in a lecture, and it got me thinking about the word “uniform” and the body as a type of uniform.

In drafting “Letter,” I was actually trying to write a poem by a midnight deadline and Dean’s books were right next to my elbow as I was standing at my laptop, so I used the direct address as a jumping-off point.

But to answer your question and to over-generalize, I love the energy and the inclusiveness and the tenderness (human-ness?) in Young’s work. His craft book out of Graywolf, *The Art of Recklessness*, is a dish of deliciousness.

Incidentally, we’re both Cancers.

BC: You mention a few films above as well as works of fiction. What aspects of the culture filter into your work most—directly or indirectly? For example, I pay close attention

‘I wonder if that’s part of what I’ve been copying all these years— that movement of going into an imagined inner space.’

to Politics (with a capital “P”) as well as the political of society’s daily mechanics. This attention doesn’t necessarily enter my work directly, but my awarenesses certainly charge what I end up writing, to put it briefly. Can you talk about what prompts or guides or inspires your work most as of late?

RVD: Well, I’ve always been really intrigued by the push/pull of the body and spirit or body and mind—whatever you want to call an animating force in a human body—the thing that is confused about why it cannot transcend, the thing that observes itself. My poems seem more boring to me now, but perhaps less coded. So I try to include things I like and things I see—my plants, my garden, insects, birds. ... I let these mundane things in because I don’t want to freeze, to say, “no, you can’t write about that,” to shut down my own wandering. At the same time, I want as much mundane stuff crammed into my poems as possible, because I want to write about being here on Earth, in a body, and loving it—or hating it and feeling lonely and watching hamburger wrappers blow by and seeing a hawk over the highway. The love of film comes from admiring and envying the eye of the lens and the frame of it also, the movement into a specific, now magnified, image and out again to the larger context. I’m so jealous of that and of field biologists who can sketch! I wish I could make my hand draw what my eye sees.

I hate the idea of “Nature” poems in a way, because I automatically brace myself for the dictating voice of the authoritative human who has been apart from Nature, but is now, for a moment, in it. ... Looking back at your question, I feel I’ve not addressed it correctly at all, but I feel I have the same impulse since I was a child—drop sticks in the creek, imagine them going to the ocean, go out, stand in corn stubble, wonder if any kind of god or spirit sees me. Go feed the barn cats, walk the dog over the dairy farm, watch the cows come over to gawk at the dog. ... I mean, I don’t want to ask myself “Is this Nature?,” but to just assume that wherever I am there is probably something cool to look at—moss, weeds, ants.

I’ve not fully answered, with *Only Blue Body*, my questions as to what a female human animal is and how does she see and how does she speak. Or perhaps, more specifically, what does it feel like to be a social animal alone? An animal with a restless mind?

BC: Which of your contemporaries are you reading these days? And what are you working on as well, what’s next for Rosalynde Vas Dias?

RVD: Jay Hopler’s *Green Squall*, Adrian Blevins’s chapbook *Bloodline*, Lucy Anderton’s chapbook *the flung you*, Maggie Nelson’s *Bluets*, as I mentioned above, *The Best American Poetry* 2012 because I love Mark Doty and I was eager to see his editorial touch. And not a contemporary, but I have been hungering for T.S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*, so I dipped back into that this weekend.

And I’m pokily trying to discern my next manuscript. I have a bundle of poems to clean up and try to jigsaw together. I can vaguely make out a tone. And I gave it a little name, so I don’t have to call it “Manuscript No. 2,” but can think of it like a little germ with a shoot.

About the Poets

Marisa Crawford is the author of the poetry collection *The Haunted House* (Switchback Books), and the chapbook *8th Grade Hippie Chic* (forthcoming, Immaculate Disciples Press). Her writing has recently appeared in *Black Clock*, *Delirious Hem*, *Feministing's Community blog*, and *VIDA's* blog, *HER KIND*. You can find her work online at www.marisacrawford.net.

Jean Donnelly is the author of *Anthem* (Sun & Moon). Recent work appears in *Verse*.

Megan Volpert (*cover*) teaches high school English in Atlanta. Her M.F.A. is from Louisiana State University, and her most recent book is about Andy Warhol. The piece printed here is forthcoming in *Only Ride* (Sibling Rivalry Press). She is also editing an anthology on queer pedagogy (www.thisassignmentissogay.com) and researching a series of essays on the American bicentennial. For more information visit www.meganvolpert.com.

POETRY



Marisa Crawford
Williamsburg, Brooklyn
Rock Bottom

I had this feeling like you were on my speed dial, K.
Like you were the emergency number.

There are black voodoo skulls on all my nails and I’m inside the cyclone.

I asked Jenny about it when I got home from my dads. She said she was stuck inside a different cyclone.

The sparkly heart sticker on yr guitar is a portal.

The picture I had where my ponytail was hanging out of your mouth. It was long like a river.

God sometimes I just sit in my room and I write you letters.
I was stuck inside this spinning box all night. He gave me a bracelet shaped like a lightning bolt/ & that’s not all he gave me. God, sometimes--

I am stuck inside for days.

I was feeling so sick/ The night you brought me into the quad, J, and you kissed me/ we were listening to Lightning Bolt. I keep that feeling in a jewelry box in my underwear drawer and I can’t believe it’s been there so long.

All those giant boys dressed in black t-shirts.

Towering like towers.

I told a joke, it made you laugh out loud, I/ scared myself.

The ghosts that jumped from the buildings all had/ skeletons inside them. God, sometimes--

I’m still floating on the feeling.
My skirt’s still ballooning.

Like there’s a sparkly heart sticker sealing the outside of the envelope
& there’s one closing each of my eyes.

Every time I laugh out loud/like lightning the candles go out.
Every time my earrings vibrate I wanna touch them and touch yours too.

I’ll have that cool world.
A party that rains.
Blue that’s electric blue.



Jean Donnelly
Stratham, N.H.
From Atoms

inside
we are

masons
on view

declassified
numbers &

all down
our armor

is a lit placard
that says so

windows are
labor the whole

sky a net of fate
not the music

of Pythagoras
not the silence

affronting
Pascal

a satire
of perceived

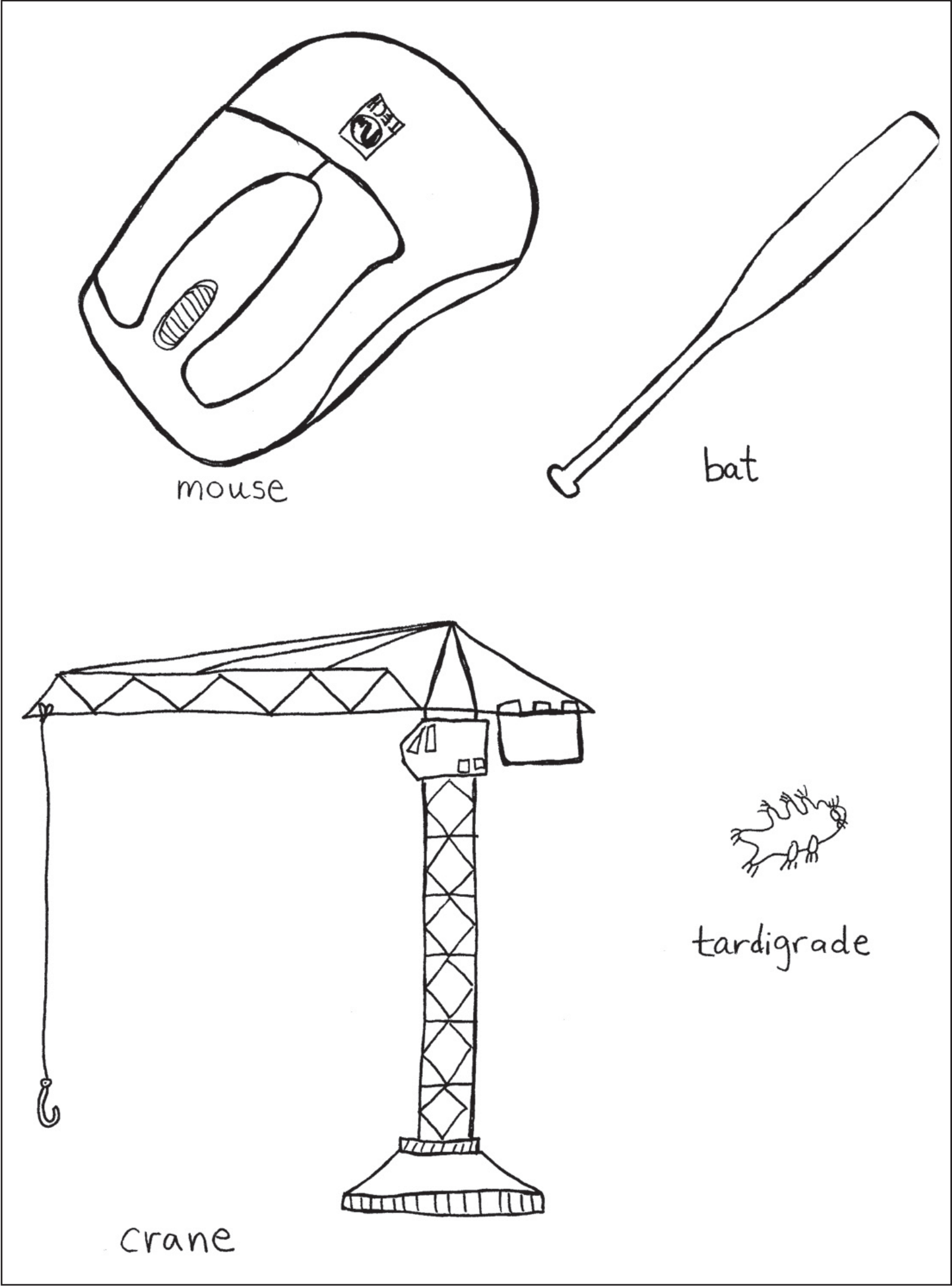
interiors &
its allegory

portents know
& pass

illusions
& the various

angles of
the spectators

Sommer
Browning



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Fitz Fitzgerald
Baltimore

lock 2: foundry coke

culverts that carried the business

to the rival city

roman, tiered, old massive stone

flames from windows

tossed like rag dolls

it's in the word and through the word

shazam brains by lightning spliff

off comes the capitol

whether it was a skimmer or a dipper

someone flicked on the light

gave us a flash

it's easy to lose track



Camille Martin
Toronto

More Jars than Lids

Down to roots and from roots
to water filtering through rotted leaves
and roots. Star scraps in free-
fall: precise maps of headlong
proof and no witness, not even
hitchhikers fudging tall tales. Drops
under a spigot awaiting critical mass
and gravity. Bagatelles of call-
and-response in the synaptic gaps of a beast
stampeding down a road leading back
to its own hooves. Jetsam hurtling to
and from ash clouds that once
frosted sable space. One tail feather
steering an alien hawk toward terrified
caryatids before the dome's walls
collapse and all feathers and iron pellets
funneling into a core that's ubiquitous
and nowhere become impossibly
dense. Before that.

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POETRY



Elizabeth Robinson
Boulder, Colo.

On the Equinox

A sheep in a dream

dreamed the equinox

was a salt lick.

Its tongue was the sun

while the salt of the equinox

deposited itself on the equator.

And a dream is equal. Holding even

its night and its day. What all known living creatures

need in small amounts. A tongue that absorbs the dream's saliva.

A sheep pulls its wool from the dream to the real world, disturbing

the dream's ideal parsing of what it understood

as opposite. What befit the wool and salt,

the whiteness that waited on itself, a guardian

and its ward. This unexpected equilibrium of

discovery just before it evaporated

onto tongue or time.

About the Poets

Fitz Fitzgerald lives and works in Baltimore; Furniture Press published his book *triangle shirtwaist fire* in 2012.

Camille Martin is the author of four collections of poetry, most recently *Looms* and *Sonnets*, both published by Shearsman Books.

Elizabeth Robinson is the author of 12 collections of poetry, most recently *Counterpart* (Ahsahta Press), and a co-editor of *26 magazine*, the *EtherDome* chapbook series, and *Instance Press*.

Bio

Born and bred in Brooklyn, Michael Paul Britto graduated with a B.A. from the City College of New York. Britto's works range from videos to digital photography, sculpture, and performance. Britto has had residencies at The New Museum in New York as well as Smack Mellon, The Marie Walsh Sharpe Foundation, and LMCC. He was been featured in shows at El Museo del Barrio, The Studio Museum of Harlem, The Zacheta National Gallery in Warsaw, The Kitchen, and the Victoria and Albert Museum in England. Britto has been written about in *The New York Times*, *Art In America*, and *The Brooklyn Rail*.

Artist's Statement

Much of my work is about being a person of color in America, and the misconceptions and assumptions that go along with that. My art allows me to make people more politically and culturally aware by using the customary as metaphor. By manipulating popular culture I can illicit feelings of rage, happiness, sadness, and empathy by causing the viewer to rethink many of mass medias depictions of people of color, and what we deem as a society as acceptable behavior. By appropriating pop culture and historical references, I believe many of my messages come across as "familiar."

Although video is my primary medium of choice, I also produce work in digital photography, sculpture, collage, and performance. My goal is to use my art to give voice to marginalized communities and foster a better understanding in mainstream society.

Recently I have come to a place in my art practice where I am beginning to explore basic human relationships as they form from challenging economic, social, and political environments. I'm also interested in the idea of race relations as it relates to "White Privilege." I like to explore very serious topics using humor and irony. I also like to point out how inundated we are with blatant references of racism and sexism in mass media, and how easily these topics can be slipped in and glossed over with out question.

One of my goals is to create work that sparks conversation, work that stays with the person that experiences it well after they leave the work. I'm interested in using pop culture references to drive home many of my messages, as well as using them to make comment on what we deem acceptable in the current media deluge we experience everyday. Youth culture and the plight of the young man of color is also a concern of mine, and I also like to explore this in my work.

In 2007 I was introduced to the book *Cool Pose*. This book prompted me to look at posturing in young man of color very closely. The result of my exposure to this book, and my experience as a teaching artist in the New York education system, culminated in a series of videos and collages that spoke to the theories raised in the book, as well as my own personal experiences working with young men of color.

Several of my installation pieces use images and sounds that comment on race, class, and popular culture, all themes I feel very passionate about. By re-contextualizing images familiar to the observers of my work, I am able to express ideas and themes that I feel passionately about. I believe the familiarity of the content helps draw the viewer in and causes the spectator to pay more attention to my messages.

ART

Michael Paul Britto Bronx



Black Pride, White Privilege 12" x 12" 12" x 12", mirrors, cut vinyl



Nannies on Parade Various dimensions, resin, plastic dolls, yarn, wire strollers



Bottle Blond #1 11" x 6", glass bottle, plastic cap, synthetic hair