



## **PHILALALIA Means I Love You Organizer Kevin Varrone on Philadelphia's Small Press, Poetry, and Art Fair Gearing Up for its Sophomore Year**

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### **ART**

Clayton Patterson

### **FILM**

A Filmmaker's Journey  
Through North Korea and its Media

### **MUSIC**

Dim the Lights for Prewar Yardsale's *Black and Blue*

### **POETRY**

Geer Austin, Michael Basinski, Linda Lerner,  
Marcy Nelligan, Michael T. Young

### **PRINTED MATTER**

Eric Amling's *Not-So Private Collection*

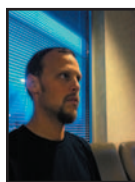
Did Beach Poets Read Beach Books

Jenny Zhang and Her *HAGS*

### **SMALL PRESS**

Riding to the Front with Dream Horse Press

# Outer Voices, Inner Readers Riding to the Front with Dream Horse Press



INTERVIEW BY GARY L. MCDOWELL

Boog City is excited to bring our readers a series of interviews between small press publishers and their authors. This issue we have Dream Horse Press publisher and poet J.P. Dancing Bear in conversation with author Gary L. McDowell.

**Gary L. McDowell: We know there are a plethora of small presses publishing primarily poetry, and we know that much more poetry is published yearly than can be read by even the most ambitious and kind-hearted reader, so why did you start Dream Horse Press in 1999? And how, despite the odds, have you survived (and thrived!) for the last 16 years?**

J.P. Dancing Bear: I've told this story many times, but I was working as a managing editor for another small press and one of the investors decided to yank the funding on a book I believed in very much. So Dream Horse Press was started to fulfill that original commitment I had made to the author. I don't know about thriving. We really don't make much money, I remember in the early years I posted losses to the IRS and then the first year we were profitable it was in the tens of dollars. Even now, the "profits" (really everything goes back into the press) are nothing that would inspire an entrepreneur. We publish somewhere between eight and 12 titles a year between DHP and our imprint, The National Poetry Review Press.

**The designs of Dream Horse Press books have evolved over the past 15 years, and I, for one, get a ton of compliments on my two DHP titles (*Weeping at a Stranger's Funeral* and *American Amen*). Folks love the covers, but they also love the fonts, font sizes, and margins. How do you choose cover art? How do feel the physical design (both interior and exterior) of a book of poems—which is such a multi-disciplinary art form, from the music of the language to the visual impact of poetic imagery—contributes to the book's overall "success"?**

Well, with the exception of one cover in the past 15 years, all of the Dream Horse Press titles have been paintings. I think paintings lend themselves to poetry book covers and cover designs well, especially for DHP. I admire so many other different presses and their approaches to poetry book covers, like Wave Books, but for me it's paintings. And I guess because we, at DHP, have that kind of connection with paintings, the cover designs seem to click.

**I think if you looked at each one of [our] books separately you might not think they were all being produced by the same press, because they have very different voices and styles!**

**Dream Horse Press runs several contests a year for chapbooks and full-length titles and publishes the winners of those contests. That said, you also publish other titles from among the contest entries, correct? As a poetry publishing model, I find this supremely advantageous: it allows you to bestow prestige on a "winner" but also publish the multiple titles you may also have found worthy. Can you talk a bit about this process? Do you have any other thoughts about how DHP finds their manuscripts?**



J.P. Dancing Bear.

Thanks! We are all about quality work. At the end of the day, people who have read a DHP title should feel comfortable picking up another DHP title to read. It will likely not be the same school of poetry, because I read with a very open mind about poetry, but it will be something that touches my "inner reader," which I have nourished for a long time. I'm a fan of good editors, and when there is one (maybe two) editors at a press, it shows. When you connect with an editor/press you develop a trust, and I will read almost everything that editor/press produces. Over the years, as editors come and go in a press, that means I've had different favorite presses that I follow. With the exception of our chapbook series (which CJ Sage picks) I do all of the reading for DHP. And I liked what CJ does with the chapbook series and so she has complete autonomy over the choices of The National Poetry Review Press. So I feel with each reading, with each choice, I read for my press' reputation and trust, and I know that CJ does the same. It has to be that way.

**One of the big problems a lot of poets face is gaining an audience for their work. How do Dream Horse Press books find their way to their eventual readers?**

I just talked about DHP's reputation for quality and I think that's the place where it all starts. I could rattle off several press names and you would think to yourself that they are mills. Yes, I could publish 30 to 50 titles a year, but something would have to give, and it would be quality. I would either have to give part of the selection responsibilities to someone else (guest judges or hired editors) or I would be forced to not read as closely as I do. Neither is acceptable to me. Now, if I retire from my day job, at some point, then I might open up a bit to more titles, only because we do turn down or away good titles simply because we don't have the bandwidth. But I digress. I think being an author with DHP gets a poet more name recognition, because we have to focus on the best we can offer to the reader. And I think we've gained a reputation for that kind of quality among poets and poetry readers. We are very proud of what our poets do, either with our press or in their careers. I like to think that there are readers like me who come to trust an editor or a press and so when one of our books is released, there's already an audience to buy the title because we released it.

**Though I know you say DHP isn't "thriving" economically—but really, what small poetry presses are?—you are thriving in terms of publishing exciting poetry. So with that in mind, what's next for Dream Horse Press? Any new things in the works? What are some of the forthcoming titles for which you're excited?**

Well, I'm super excited about all of the titles we have in the queue. I think people are going to love the new chapbook, *Disasterology* by Maggie Smith; *Goat From a Distance* by Jennifer Moss; *Queer Fish* by Sarah Giragosian; *Dreamburgh, Pennsylvania* by Gregory Lawless; and the chapbook *Gnomic Verses* by Nathan Kemp. And I think if you looked at each one of those books separately you might not think they were all being produced by the same press, because they have very different voices and styles!

**Excellent! I'm looking forward to all of the new titles, though I'll admit I'm particularly intrigued by the Lawless book. Anyway, how about you and your poetry, Bear? It seems to me you're a supremely prolific poet and have had a few books come out recently, no? Anything new or forthcoming we should know about?**

My most recent book of poems, *Cephalopodic*, came out a couple of months ago. It's a book of "otherly" love poems. Next year marks Salmon Poetry's 35th anniversary and I will have a book come out with them, *Fish Singing Foxes*, which is actually two books in one. The two books are two very near and dear to me. Both had done very well as individual manuscripts in that they had been finalists for everything, including the National Poetry Series, but book publishers never really committed to them until now. The first book is what friends and I used to call "the line poems" where the first line of each poem was a line of a contemporary's poem, but could not be a starting or end line. There were some other rules, like maintaining punctuation logic in the line, but mainly it was to celebrate the line. The other book was my gacela poems, which I wrote after years of being haunted by Federico Garcia Lorca's *Diván del Tamarit* and further years of studying the ghazal. And I am just finishing up a series of untraditional sonnets.



**As a follow-up to my previous question, how on earth do you balance it all? You have, as you previously mentioned, your day job. You have your life as an editor. You have your family and friends. You have your own writing and publishing. Tell us, Bear, how DO you do it?**

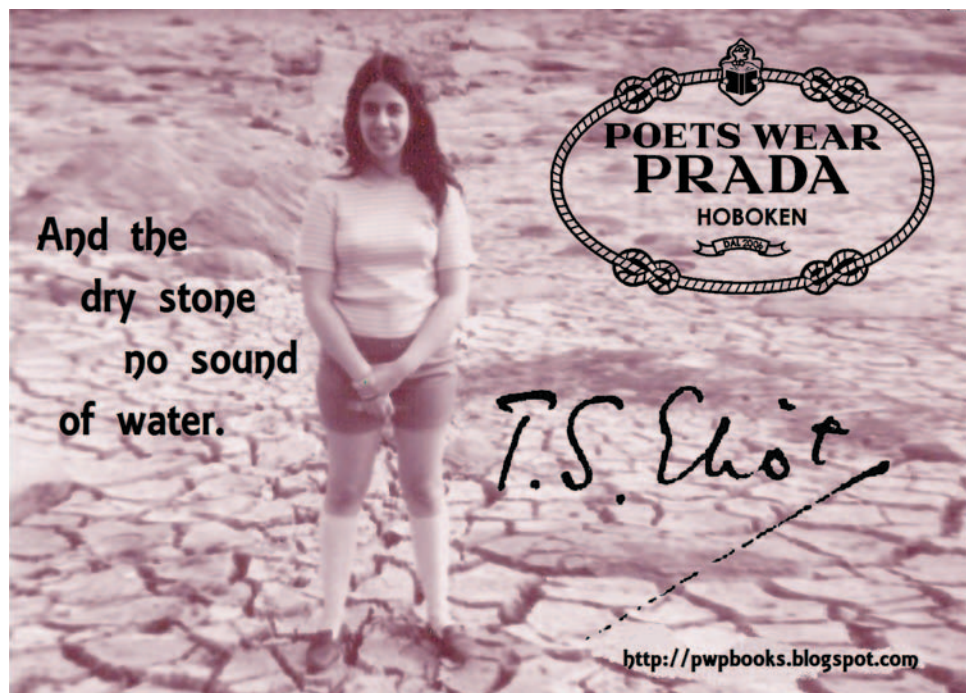
You're right, I kinda fibbed just talking about the day job, and why that holds me back from doing more with DHP. It's not mentioned anywhere here, but there's also the podencos (hounds) we rescue from Spain and rehome here in the U.S. That's another full time job, too. And there's the radio program that I've hosted for nearly 15 years. I try not to think of the workload. I focus on the one thing in front of me and try to get it pushed a little forward. Somehow it's all worked so far.

The short answer: it's not easy. You have to love it all. I mean everything, your day job, poetry, press work, the dogs, radio, family and friends.

J.P. Dancing Bear (<http://jpdancingbear.com/>) is editor for *The American Poetry Journal* and Dream Horse Press (<http://home.comcast.net/~jpdancingbear/dhp.html>). Bear also hosts the weekly hour-long poetry show, *Out of Our Minds*, on public station KKUP and available as podcasts. He is the author of 13 collections of poetry. His latest book is *Love is a Burning Building* (FutureCycle Press). *Cephalopodic* (Glass Lyre Press) and *Fish Singing Foxes* (Salmon Poetry), his 14th and 15th collections respectively, will both be released in 2015. His work has appeared or will shortly in *American Literary Review*, *Cimmaron Review*, *Crazyhorse*, and elsewhere.

Gary L. McDowell (<http://www.garylmcowell.com/>) is the author of five collections of poetry, including *Mysteries in a World that Thinks There Are None* (Burnside Review Press), winner of the 2014 Burnside Review Press Book Award; *Weeping at a Stranger's Funeral* (Dream Horse Press); and *American Amen* (Dream Horse Press), winner of the 2009 Orphic Prize in Poetry. He lives in Nashville, Tenn. with his family, where he's an assistant professor of English at Belmont University.

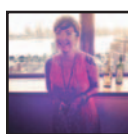
**So I feel with each reading, with each choice, I read for my press' reputation and trust, and I know that CJ Sage does the same. It has to be that way.**



PHILALALIA chieftain Kevin Varrone.



# PHILALALIA Means I Love You Philadelphia's Small Press, Poetry, and Art Fair Gears Up for its Sophomore Year



## INTERVIEW BY LYNNE DESILVA-JOHNSON

Lynne DeSilva-Johnson spoke with Kevin Varrone, poet, Temple University professor, former Pew fellow, and, crucially for our purposes, founder of PHILALALIA, "Philadelphia's annual small press / hand made poetry & art fair," which is preparing for a second run September 17-19 after its entrance to the scene last year.

On its website, PHILALALIA (<http://philalalia.com/>) is described as "a three-day celebration that brings together poets, printmakers, book artists, paper-makers, comics poetry artists, publishers, & arts enthusiasts to showcase, perform, & sell their work." It is entirely free and open to the public, and held at Temple University, where Varrone has taught for 11 years.

**Boog City: Hi Kevin! Thanks for agreeing to talk to us about PHILALALIA! Why this festival, why in Philadelphia, and why now? I know you've run your own press (Beautiful Swimmer Press) in the past, and have published on other small presses, but what made you want to take the leap to organizing an annual event like this?**

Kevin Varrone: Hi Lynne. Thanks for talking to me about PHILALALIA! As to why the festival: we have a really great poetry community in Philly and a number of great small presses and book artists, and there are a lot of poets and book artists at Temple, and, and, and ... so it seemed like we should have an event to bring all these things together.

**I know that my first festival, quite late in the game for me, was a real revelation—it inspired me to self-publish chapbooks, then to help others do the same by starting my own press. Tell me a little about your own experience with book fairs and festivals, both as an attendee and as a vendor, if you've been on both sides of the table. What was your formative experience with small presses and book fairs, if any?**

I am actually quite a book fair novice, having only been to two or three. But they were all a real revelation. I walked into each like a kid going into a toy store and walked out of each full of possibilities and ideas. I've never been a vendor at one, so I spoke with a lot of friends who have been and tried to figure out what makes these events work and be worthwhile for publishers.

**What other festivals do you attend regularly, or have you attended regularly during your "career" as a poet and lit educator? What have you learned from these experiences—what worked, what didn't—that you've brought to bear on your own planning process with PHILALALIA?**

I've gone to AWP before, but I much prefer smaller book and zine and art book fairs. What I love about the smaller events is the sense of a community gathering. In planning for PHILALALIA, I've talked to a lot of friends who run presses and attend a lot of fairs and relied a lot on their experience and expertise to try to make sure PHILALALIA would be a valuable experience for vendors. We also did a lot of follow-up after last year's PHILALALIA with participants and attendees and students and tried to get a handle on the specific things that people were most drawn to and enjoyed.

**What, if anything, did you take away from your first year of hosting the festival that you're responding to with changes in this year's programming or facilitation?**

Last year was a 100 percent learning experience. We're keenly interested in trying to make PHILALALIA a worthwhile experience for vendors and attendees, so we've lowered our table rates this year and we've tried to tailor our programming to the different audiences that attend on the different days of the fair. We have stuff scheduled that's geared toward Temple students and stuff that's geared toward the wider poetry community. We've also worked hard to broaden the scope of the fair to more intimately include people working with visual language (comics poetry, illustrators, etc.) and book and visual artists who are working closely with text. We're going to have an art exhibit this year and we're adding a lounge within the vending space, both curated by artist J. Pascoe (<http://jpascoe.com/home.html>), who teaches printmaking and book arts at Temple.

**Tell me about the players behind the scenes that make it possible. It seems similar to the Graduate Center's Chapbook Festival, in that PHILALALIA is set up to thrive in part based on the rich relationship between the arts community at large and the local one—supported by both the University setting and other Philadelphia programs and public figures. Can you talk a little bit about building these connections, and/or which were already set in place that made this feel viable, important, and exciting? I went to Swarthmore, and have deep Philly love, but tell our Boog readers why Philly is a great place for this festival now more than ever.**

Philly's a great place for this festival now because its long-standing poetry and art community has really coalesced in recent years and I think people outside Philly are beginning to be a bit aware of what's happening in Philly. PHILALALIA is very fortunate to be able to step into that momentum and we're really excited to be able to take advantage of the amazing resources of the city and its artists and Tyler School of Art and Temple Contemporary Gallery. There's a long list of people connected with these institutions and the fair who are bringing their talents and networks of artists to what PHILALALIA is trying to do. It's a great moment for art in Philly and our fair is trying to help punctuate that in whatever way it can.

**Have you ever brought your students to other festivals like this? Other than those that make it to AWP, do you feel like many of your, or other Temple U students, have had an opportunity like this one to be interfacing so informally with those physically designing, editing, and making books? As an educator for many, many years, I've always gotten super excited when especially undergraduates have their eyes opened to the grassroots efforts of many presses started on shoestring budgets—a process and possibility that perhaps is beginning to leak into the classroom more and more, but something I was totally unaware of in my own educational experience. Talk to me about your didactic intentions—did you find, last year, that students made up a good bulk of the attendees and participants in workshops, for instance? Are there curricular tie-ins in your own classes or others with the festival?**

Temple is fortunate to have many great Philly poets and artists teaching its classes, and many of those folks have been bringing the "making" part of these artistic endeavors into their classrooms for some time. To that end, PHILALALIA isn't so much a new thing as a way to focus those efforts in a single event/single location, perhaps. Both last year and this, we've worked hard to get TU students intimately involved in PHILALALIA. Last year, there was a large student contingent in workshops and at events, especially on the fair's first two days, when classes were in session. This year, there will be multiple undergraduate readings during the fair and there will be curricular tie-ins to a number of teachers' classes. The larger emphasis on comics poetry and visual language is a direct response to some of the feedback we received from students last year.

**Speaking of students, I'll like to take a moment to congratulate you for your hot pepper on rate your professor.**

Ha! Thanks. It's a strange world.

PHILALALIA

**Staying in the virtual world for a moment, I can honestly admit that I know very little about baseball, but I do know that I am super into *Box Score* (see link in bio), your remarkable, forward thinking hybrid photo-poetry-art app. Can you talk a little more about the flexibility and possibility in new forms and spaces made available to us by work like this? As a fellow hybrid print-AND-tech-possibilities enthusiast, I'd be curious to hear more about your thoughts on what's in store for our literary future. Are there any hybrid, digital workshops or futures in store for PHILALALIA or your other work at Temple? If not, how should or could there be? How can presses, festivals, and young poets learn and expand their practice and reach utilizing these new tools?**

Thanks for your kind words about *Box Score*. I don't think I'm really qualified to speak about what's in store for our literary future, but I think it will almost certainly be exciting. As far as PHILALALIA and technology are

concerned, we're primarily focused on the hands on, handmade, tactile work. There's certainly a place for technology in that ethos, and it's part of the long-term plans for the fair, but we'll be fairly low-tech this year. I've found that students, for example, are much more familiar with building websites and apps than they are with things like manual typewriters, so we're actually working more in that direction this year, with workshops on book making and production stations in the lounge that will tap into these hands-on methods. As we move forward and (hopefully) expand our scope and budgets, we are keen to seek out and implement the kind of hybrid print-and-tech possibilities you mentioned.

**What should I totally be asking you that I'm missing out on here?**

I'd love to mention one or two specific things about this year's fair if I might. First, we're really excited to have book artist J. Pascoe curating a lounge and visual arts show in the gallery space where our programming happens (Temple Contemporary Gallery). The exhibit, called Ink & Print, will feature a wide-range of text-centered visual work from artists, poets, and book artists (Afrofuturist Affair, Grimaldi Baez, Amanda D'Amico, Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Allen Crawford, Marianne Dages, Amze Emmons, Lee Hunter, Christopher Kardambikis, Isabel Lederman, Monica Ong, Ryan Patrick, Danielle Vogel, Harrison Walker).

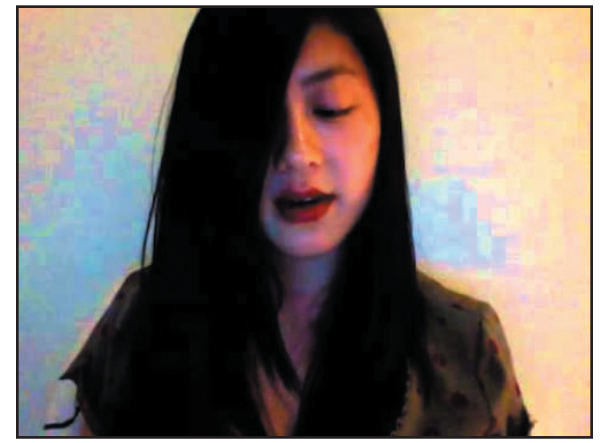
We're also very excited about our programming this year: We're going to have student readings and presentations on poetry comics and visual language; artist Allen Crawford, author of *The Illustrated Whitman*, will give a talk about his work; we have a panel on small press publishing and a related event at Kelly Writers House at University of Pennsylvania; and we have an amazing line-up of poets reading, including Buck Downs, Tanya Olson, Monica Ong, Hoa Nguyen, Danielle Vogel, and Yolanda Wisher and her band, *The Quick Fixx*.

Also, we'll be having a bunch of off-site events at venues throughout the city. We've partnered with Kelly Writers House for a Thursday evening event, and we'll have a full slate of off-site readings as well. There will be a lot of great poets and artists around, so it should be a lot of fun!

Lynne DeSilva-Johnson is a change agent working at the intersection of social entrepreneurship, transformational coaching, creative practice, and publishing. She founded and runs the self-hacking community arts organization, *The Operating System*, (<http://www.theoperatingsystem.org/>) and serves as managing editor of its small press enterprise (which, full disclosure, will be heading down to vend and participate in readings at PHILALALIA this year). A poet and social practice artist, she often hosts and curates events in and around New York, and has appeared at DUMBO Arts Festival, Bowery Arts & Science, The New York Poetry Festival, EYEBEAM, Naropa University, The Poetry Project, and many more.

Kevin Varrone's most recent book is *Box Score: An Autobiography* (Furniture Press Books). It's also available as a free poetry app for iPhone and iPad (available at the app store or at <http://boxscoreapp.com/>). He teaches at Temple University and lives outside Philadelphia.

# The Woman Who Laughs Too Loud Jenny Zhang and Her HAGS



BY CHRISTINE KANOWNIK

HAGS

Jenny Zhang  
Guillotine Series

The Hag is also what society doesn't want. The immigrant. The person of color. The person who refuses the trappings of Rational (read: masculine) Thought.

With a slight semantic shift a Hag is a woman who gleefully grabs her crotch. A woman who laughs too loud.

Jenny Zhang did something pretty huge in her chapbook *HAGS*. She actually did lots of things, but what I'm thinking about now is how she transformed and, I suppose, *reclaimed* the word "HAGS."

As we all know, "hag" is a term used mostly to describe a woman, usually an old woman, but not just any old woman, an old woman that is not desirable to the man who is calling her a hag. Women don't generally call each other hags.

That is where Zhang comes in. With a slight semantic shift a Hag is a woman who gleefully grabs her crotch. A woman who laughs too loud. A woman who does not raise her hand to speak. A woman who does the disgusting and the socially unacceptable. A woman who is "[s]o damaged and so loveable."

Hag as Other. Hag as rejected by Polite Male Society. A Hag is a woman that a man does not want to have sex with. From Amy Schumer's "Last Fuckable Day" to Jonathan Franzen writing about how ugly Edith Wharton was in *The New Yorker*, we can find that men's desires are as fickle and demanding as a woman's are supposed to be. And we've long let them dictate whether we are a Hag or not, especially when they are a famous author or blogger.

Like that day when I was standing outside of Benny's Burritos in The East Village, back when I first moved to New York. I was waiting for my friend to pee inside the restaurant when this dude approached me and would not leave me alone, trying to get me to go home with him. I wasn't interested but soon his friends joined him and proceeded to all call me ugly. I'd gone from desired to Hag in the time that it took my friend to wait in a bathroom line.

Attractiveness is largely subjective, so, guess what ladies, we all can be Hags! So let's BE HAGS.

The Hag is also what society doesn't want. The immigrant. The person of color. The person who refuses the trappings of rational (read: masculine) thought. Jenny Zhang lent me her copy of *I Love Dick* (I still have it Jenny, sorry). In the book, Chris Kraus quotes Alice Notley: "[b]ecause we rejected a certain kind of critical language, people just assumed that we were dumb." That reverberated in my head reading Zhang, who writes:

Dead white guys and not-dead not-white not guys hate it when you dismiss revered works of art and literature by saying, Ugggggggggggh. I hate this.  
And give no reasons why at all.  
If I live to a hundred, do I really have to spend eighty-five or more of those years explaining why I don't like this.

That's from *HAGS*. I love that quote. It is in response to Gunter Grass' *The Tin Drum*, which is actually a book I love. But I'm Polish. Or whatever, I don't know. But I refuse to talk anymore to anyone about how I don't want to read Jonathan Franzen, ok? But I do want to read Jenny Zhang.

So if I'm going to be a hag, I'm going to be a HAG. And I suggest we all accept our HAGdom graciously in whatever form it happens to take.

*Christine Neacole Kanownik is the author of The King of Pain (Monk Books). You can find her work in such places as EOAGH, H\_NGM\_N, jubilat, The Huffington Post, and The Poetry Project Newsletter. She lives in East Williamsburg, Brooklyn. You can find a delightfully depressing tumblr of curated GIFs at http://iamthekingofpain.tumblr.com/.*

*Jenny Zhang (http://www.jennybagel.com/) was born in Shanghai and raised in New York. She is a graduate of Stanford University and the Iowa Writer's Workshop. Dear Jenny, We Are All Find is her first book.*

**Jenny Zhang did something pretty huge in her chapbook HAGS. She actually did lots of things, but what I'm thinking about now is how she transformed and, I suppose, reclaimed the word 'HAGS.'**

# Eric Amling's Not-So Private Collection



BY SETH GRAVES

From the Author's Private Collection

Eric Amling  
Birds, LLC

In his first full-length title, *From the Author's Private Collection*, Eric Amling successfully transfers the tensions of the collage aesthetic from the visual art realm—where he has earned some praise and gallery representation—to the poetic one. His opening piece, "2010-2015," emerges from the premise of erasure; each page of the long poem purports that its lines are cuts or recommended cuts of his own writing: "Some lines on aesthetics cut from this book:/ The quiet spectacle of infrared deer/ An x-ray of a complicated handshake."

Amling's narrator reaches for arrangement in a collage-like state of aimless millennialism: "I'm looking for a streamlined artistically-styled peace." The poems straddle a glam/forlorn fault line, "I come back to my hotel and run a bath of salt and lavender/," the voice tells us, "I knew I had no grace when stepping out of the tub; I've no agility, no definition." Fittingly, the humor here varies: affected alienation, where, "I'm not exactly a master/ I'm not even in se ance mode," will run into smug irony: "We don't need a good line anymore./ This is the contemporary art we've been meaning to get into./ Fluid as hell." There's John Ashbery, surely, and Frank O'Hara, too, especially in the way the poems curate and speak of curator's concerns in tandem, the way they sway into conversations of class and celebrity: "I got burned up by vanity and folly./ This is Eve Babitz./ Cigar ash ignited her skirt whilst driving home from a Hollywood party./ She claimed to have suffered from 'squalid overboogie'."



In the gestalt of these fractured poems, there's a meaningful commentary on the ways we cellularize existence and cloister ourselves from each other in a quest for difference, the ways we're removed from the tactile while inside the screen: "Get out of my commercial/ My environment is unique."

*Eric Amling (http://ericamling.tumblr.com/) lives and works in New York City. His work has been exhibited in various cities in the United States. From the Author's Private Collection is his first book of poetry.*

*Seth Graves is associate editor of Coldfront (http://coldfrontmag.com/) with poems available in Barrow Street; Bort Quarterly; H\_NGM\_N; La Fovea; No, Dear; The Boiler Journal; The Mackanic; and elsewhere. He teaches at Pace University and the John Jay College of Criminal Justice and attends the English Ph.D. program at the Graduate Center, City University of New York.*

**Amling's narrator reaches for arrangement in a collage-like state of aimless millennialism**



**RELEASE PARTY!**

w/ Diana Hamilton & Monica de la Torre

Sat 9/19 @ 7pm

Pierogi Gallery  
177 N 9<sup>TH</sup> St  
Brooklyn

futurepoem.com

# Did Beach Poets Read Beach Books?



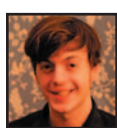
## INTERVIEWS BY MARK GURARIE

There's a certain and special kind of exhaustion that strikes the beach reveler at the end of their day on the dunes that is like no other, something about a day spent lazing in the sun, reading in sunglasses, occasionally swimming that makes that dusk colored trip home all the heavier, that much more of a slog. To be sure, this feeling strikes many a poet—and really most anyone—at the end of summer, when the days start growing shorter, when the sweaters come out, when those halcyon, hot days turn back into memories.

Months back, when summer was still something to look forward to, Boog City asked a few poets about what books they were planning on bringing to the beach this season, and what poems they associate with that season. Now that summer in New York has started to fade, it seemed only proper to follow up and see what they thought of the summer's reading. It also seemed appropriate to ask if they had any favorite poems that brought to mind the moodier, more dynamic autumn and the change in seasons.

Peter Longofono was no stranger to the dunes this summer, so I asked him for a brief report on the summer's reading.

### Boog City: How was your summer reading? Any stand outs?



Peter Longofono: I'm super late to the party on this one, but Elisa Gabbert's *The French Exit* (Birds, LLC) did me right in. Lines I couldn't ever write, methods of disintegrating the pat phrase, sharp navel-jerks out of the assumed range of the poem. Lines like:

When the boredom hits,  
I hit the boredom

like a glass door. Oh my god,  
what am I for?

And what poem do you consider indispensable in the Fall?

This may be cheating, but I do feel that none do the changing of the seasons better than the old haiku masters. Here's one by Issa, translated by David G. Lanoue:

autumn cold—  
wherever I go people  
have homes



For Francesco Grisanzio, as for many in the poetry community, this last summer, which saw the passing away of James Tate, was tinged with a touch of melancholy.

### Boog City: What did you bring with you to the beach? Any highlights?

Francesco Grisanzio: I've been reading a lot of James Tate recently, what with his passing and new book. *Dome of the Hidden Pavilion* (HarperCollins) was, of course, fantastic, but a bittersweet read for me. It's very much in the vein of *The Ghost Soldiers* (Ecco Books) and *Return to the City of White Donkeys* (HarperCollins)—two favorites that got me interested in poetry and taught me how to approach writing it—and kept getting me thinking that this would be a regular thing, that every few years I'd get a new book from Tate that delivers exactly what I want it to, his wit, his weirdness, just a tremendously joyous read. But that would be quickly followed with the sobering remembrance that no, this is it.

### What poem represents the end of summer for you?

And thinking of poems about the upcoming fall reminds me of a Tate poem that I read a while back, but appears as the first poem in the new collection. I first saw it when Yahoo News, of all places, ran a series of commissioned inaugural poems for Obama's second term. Then, it was titled "Dear Mr. President" (<http://news.yahoo.com/james-tate-poem-for-the-inauguration-of-president-barack-obama-233833135.html>) but in *Dome* it's "Mr. Leaves."

Francesco Grisanzio (<http://www.bortquarterly.com/>) is the author of the chapbook *Stories & Centauries* (Strange Machine Books). He lives in Bushwick, where he co-edits BORT Quarterly.

Mark Gurarie (<https://bubblgumandpoppers.wordpress.com/>) is a graduate of the New School's M.F.A. Program in Poetry, and his writing has appeared in Brooklyn Review, Everyday Genius, Paper Darts, Publishers Weekly, The Rumpus, and elsewhere. He works as an adjunct instructor online and free-lances as a copywriter. He also occasionally blogs about irrelevant matters at the above url.

Peter Longofono's (<http://www.theoperatingsystem.org/4th-annual-napomo-303030-day-20-peter-longofono-on-paul-celan/>) poems and criticism have appeared or are forthcoming in Boog City, Coldfront, H\_NGM\_N, Luna Luna Magazine, tenderloin, and The Operating System. He lives in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

## MUSIC



Dina Levy art

## Dim the Lights for Prewar Yardsale's Black and Blue



### BY JESSE STATMAN

During the last week of August 2015, residents of Downtown Manhattan began to notice the streetlights in the city were unusually dim. I noticed this, too, and walking from Park Slope to the East Village over the Brooklyn Bridge that week, the feeling of the city and its inhabitants was alarmingly laid-back and cool, contrasting the humidity and toxicity in the air we've all gotten used to putting up with on late summer days. When this sort of subtle, often trivial change occurs, we artists are among the first to take note, so this haunting image of mysteriously darkening streetlights might soon be reproduced in songs, films, paintings, and poems, as a metaphor for a fading romance, or a loss of innocence. But to hear this event documented and preserved in a raw, excruciatingly realistic work of art, without a touch of over-the-top corny symbolism, we'd have to talk to Mike Rechner and Dina Levy.

Husband and wife duo Rechner and Levy have been plugging themselves into the no-fidelity music machine known as Prewar Yardsale since 2000, to transform oddball occurrences like bootleg records being sold on the street, elevated platform stands, and eating ice cream, into tripped-out, punky antifolk tunes, rocking a distorted acoustic guitar and found percussion (normally a bucket). In their recorded material

and live performances, Yardsale is joined by a rotating cast of equally oddball lead guitarists, including Jeffrey Lewis and Kung Fu Crimewave and The Fem Doms' Luke Kelly.

I don't think there's a Prewar Yardsale song about the fluctuating power levels of New York City's streetlights (yet), but these changes gave the city optimal light conditions for listening to Yardsale's new EP *Black and Blue*, three months after its Spring 2015 release. The solipsistic, infernal landscape of *Black and Blue* is a few shades darker than the band's previous output, with gloomy, downtempo songs of heartache and isolation ("Carol" and "Where did you go"), and chaotically uptempo, hostile rock anthems (the title track and "The money's not right").

The title track kicks off the EP, with the uniquely powerful sound of Dina Levy rapidly beating a bucket with a drumstick to a fittingly erratic, off-tempo pulse, melting into Mike Rechner's raging acoustic power chords, soon to be complemented by strange, ghostly vocal harmonies. The tempo slows down considerably with "Carol," sending the listener into a melancholy trance, under the hum of Levy's keyboard and the droning strum of Rechner's guitar. This song behaves like a frozen frame from a romantic comedy, dipped into an interdimensional hydrogen vat, and brought back into ordinary reality via microwave, in the form of a scene from *Un Chien Andalou*. He sings to "Carol," desperately asking "Carol" why he loves her, and she loves "some other guy." "Carol" responds, in an uncanny, awkward monotone, telling Rechner about a baker's dozen lovable qualities about this "other guy," who, based on the qualities she lists, is more likely to be a church or an S&M dungeon than a human being. Much like New York's darkening streetlights, the mysteries of this love triangle are never solved, and we wonder if the bizarre love triangle isn't just a figment of our imagination, as the streetlights themselves could be.

The lyrics of *Black and Blue* capture the Orwellian isolation and absurdity of rapidly-gentrifying, post-9/11 New York City in a personal, non-grandiose way, with songs like "Where did you go" detailing the all-too-common experience of planning to meet up with a friend, being mysteriously blown off, and wondering where that friend went. In typical antifolk fashion, the songs relate to the listener on a human level. There's no exploitation of trendiness or overblown Hollywood pretension to hook the masses.

The songs have an addictive quality to them, but it's a do-it-yourself kind of addiction, like the thrill of running around an abandoned underground cave. As with Prewar Yardsale's other recorded material, the inventive art rock sounds of *Black and Blue* are exciting and layered from start to finish, without excessive "wall of sound" overdubbing.

Yardsale has a knack for working magic with minimal instrumentation, and this is especially clear on the closing track "Chickfactor Psychosis," where the only instruments played are the bucket and Mike Rechner's vocals. Their minimalist, straight-forward attitude is more in the vein of The Velvet Underground than The White Stripes, with Dina Levy's bucket drumming and dreary psychedelic flute paralleling Moe Tucker's stand-up drumming and John Cale's droning violin. The EP's recording engineer, Nick Nace, accompanies the band on guitar for some songs, as does Luke Kelly. Yardsale's entire catalog is worth a listen, and most of it, including *Black and Blue*, is available on the band's BandCamp page (in bio below).

Jesse Statman (<http://cannonballstatman.bandcamp.com/>) was born and raised in Park Slope, Brooklyn in a house with a dog named Cannonball. There's a high probability Statman just reappeared in New York, after making music on tour, somewhere on this planet. There's an even higher probability you'll hear him tell a story about a Red Roof Inn on the outskirts of Columbus, Ohio more than once in your life. Michael S. Miller photo.

Prewar Yardsale (<http://prewaryardsale.bandcamp.com/>) have been on the New York antifolk scene since 2000. They have released over five albums, and a Peel session on BBC. They make psych-tinged no-fi antifolk, with distorted acoustic guitar, found percussive instruments, keyboards, and vocals. Their music could be compared to the Brian Jonestown Massacre, The Velvet Underground, and White Fence.

**'I've been reading a lot of James Tate recently, what with his passing and new book. *Dome of the Hidden Pavilion* (HarperCollins) was, of course, fantastic, but a bittersweet read for me.'**

**—Francesco Grisanzio**

**There's no exploitation of trendiness or overblown Hollywood pretension to hook the masses. The songs have an addictive quality to them, but it's a do-it-yourself kind of addiction, like the thrill of running around an abandoned underground cave.**



**Geer Austin**

Ditmas Park, Brooklyn

**You go there in the summertime**

The island is a capsized golf cart  
with the occupants spilled out to one side.  
On the beach, pinkish sand leaks out of green dunes.  
Gazanias among the dune grass  
shoot orange darts like a man in a pub.  
The smell of sunscreen wafts up from the beach  
like a message from a chemical company.  
Salt speckles the tongue  
like a topping on dark chocolate.  
The surf resonates like the subway at 4 a.m.  
when the train operator applies the brakes  
with a gentle touch  
so as not to awaken the homeless.  
And you picture Ava Gardner traversing  
these dunes rubbing the leathery leaves  
of the Gazanias with the tip of her nose.  
And Coltrane listening to these winds  
and thinking *the Creator has a master plan*.  
Perhaps Bald Island was uninhabitable  
when snail mail was the chosen form  
of communication and blowing chunks  
meant something unprintable. But this isn't  
a family rag. The lugubrious fire fighter  
of convenience comes here for solitude.  
To get away from the omnipresent pole.  
And Chaz observes him from behind  
a clump of grass. He will become  
the man who speaks to the wind.  
The island will become the man who  
whispers a response. What will it say?  
*Ich verstehe nicht, was Sie sagen.*



**Marci Nelligan**

Lancaster, Penn.

**I Hold Up a Mirror  
and They Attack Me for It**

What must I do to own women;  
how many testicle lock-boxes do you think?

Folks, there's a lot of dynamics here  
that none of us understand,  
multiple choice or multiple orgasms,  
what's it going to be?  
We all know it's their fault. Women  
are beheaded, stoned, whatever,  
if they drive, have affairs.  
In certain countries  
women, they're raped,  
they're killed.

You need to be independent.  
You need to be your own boss.  
But just on the surface.

God said, 'All right, Eve,  
if we are going to pay  
you to have sex,  
we want something for it.  
We want you to post  
the videos so we can watch.

I'll tell you, you people  
of Washington  
I love the women's movement  
— especially when I'm  
walking right behind it.



**Michael Basinski**

Buffalo, NY

**Nothing To Eat Left**

It might have been something in the water in Cheektowaga  
or something buried in the Walden Fields out by the tracks  
unbounded spring swamp leach and pollywog ponds polyurethane  
filmed in gasoline yellow and blue  
train oil hotfoot circles expanding  
spandex losing sleep with letters slowly  
losing their tails



**Linda Lerner**

Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn

**Coyote Promptings**

that trickster my old lover from last century is back:

my nerves pick up his scent  
and I'm cheering him on as

he eludes capture running down the streets of NY  
thru lower Manhattan crossing city & state lines  
into Queens NJ defying authority once again  
forcing people to leave their digital sanctums  
*catch me catch me*  
on 9th ave. or is he now on 23rd st. the same coyote  
roaming thru our backyards

*catch me catch me if you can*  
sounds in their gut & they're off.

I can feel him messing with my mind again  
as he tugs at my memory and think  
I'm too old to start this again,  
knowing it's a lie, that even after  
all these years it wouldn't take much...  
and knowing that is knowing  
all I need to know...



**Michael T. Young**

Jersey City, N.J.

**Ground Level**

When I think of death I think of drowning,  
something rising over my head,  
something other than air filling my lungs.

But when I think of life I think of hiking  
up Hawk Mountain, summer light  
warming narrow, rocky trails,  
patches of mountain laurel, poison ivy, mushrooms,  
bluebirds calling from balconies of maple.

Finally there's a view over farm fields,  
a bolder to rest and rub a twisted ankle,  
a green horizon to cut the mind on.

But when I think of that sky's blue, all that air,  
its uncompromising gentleness, I think  
of being told that when you dream of falling,  
you never hit bottom.

So one time, as I drifted off  
and the dream began,  
I decided to force my way to ground level,  
to know what it would be like to catch up  
with what the mind puts off.

**Poetry Bios**

Cloverleaf by **Geer Austin** (<http://imfromdriftwood.com/sylvias-place-week/>) is available now from Poets Wear Prada. He leads writing workshops for underserved populations through the New York Writer's Coalition. **Michael Basinski** is the author of many collections of poetry and other writing, and works as curator of The Poetry/Rare Books Collection of the University Libraries, State University of New York at Buffalo (<http://library.buffalo.edu/pl/>). **Linda Lerner** is co-founder of the online resource Poets on the Line (<http://www.echonyc.com/~poets/>), and the author of Takes Guts & Years Sometimes (NYQ Books). **Marci Nelligan** (<http://jacketmagazine.com/35/dk-nelligan.shtml>) is the author of Infinite Variations (Black Radish) and The Book of Knowledge (Dusie Press). She teaches at Franklin and Marshall College. **Michael T. Young** (<http://www.michaelyoung.com/>) is the author of four collections of poetry, including The Beautiful Moment of Being Lost and Living in the Counterpoint.

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# Clayton Patterson

## Lower East Side



Jeffrey Cyphers Wright photo

<http://patterson.no-art.info/>

When Clayton Patterson and Elsa Rensaa moved to the Lower East Side from Canada in 1979, he began to document the neighborhood in photographs, video, and audiotape, and collected ephemera. "I didn't realize it at the time," he would tell The New York Times some 30 years later, "but I was capturing the last of the wild, free, outlaw, utopian, visionary spirit of the Lower East Side."

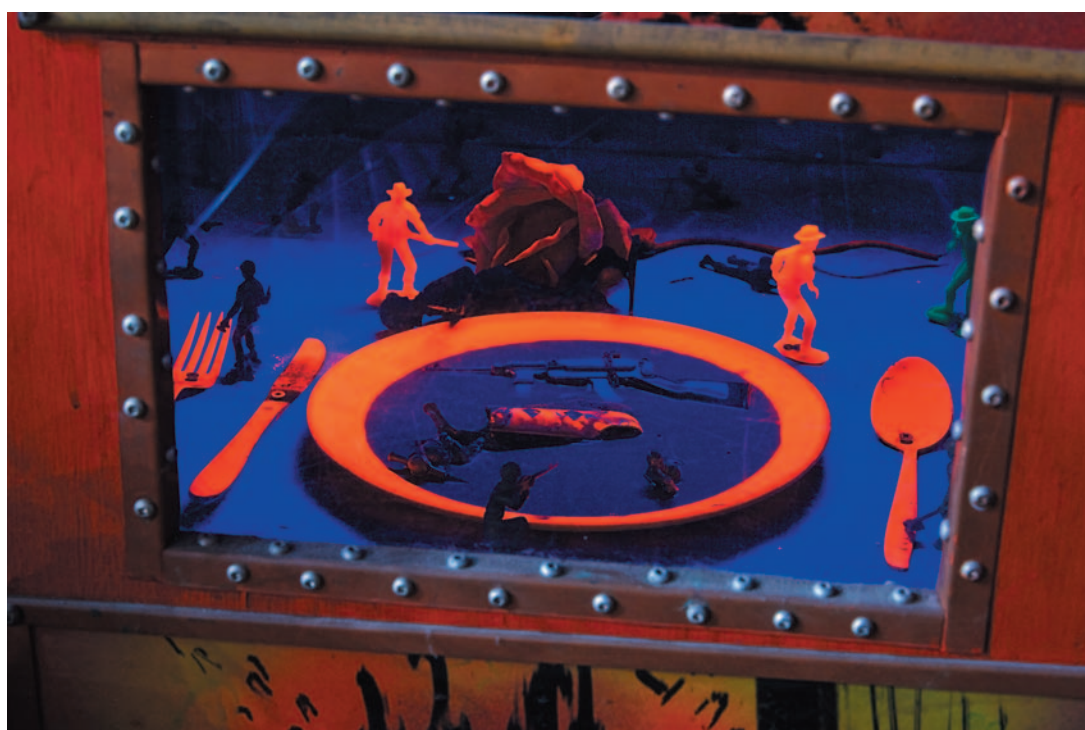
He did more than record. He has participated in and affected Lower East Side culture as an artist and gallery owner, editor and publisher, organizer, promoter, provocateur, and, over the last few years, historian and eulogizer. Any one piece of that is best understood in the context of all the others.

### Artist's Statement

I've always walked the line between questioning authority and having a "career." I take my inspiration from the streets, my neighborhood, the people. My work operates on multiple levels: as a political statement, as commentary about contemporary art and the art world; and to document history. As an artist, I use what life offers me. Making sculpture, taking photographs, writing, painting—there's a relationship between all the things I make: it's about remaining creative and following that path.



**Bat Snake** (2014), embroidery



Interior shot of installation featuring **Blue Boy and Pinky In The House** (1976), mixed media



**Dualing Kit** (1982)

# Looking North Through a Questioning Lens: A Filmmaker's Journey Through North Korea and its Media



BY JOEL SCHLEWOWITZ

**Songs from the North**

Soon-Mi Yoo  
Anthology Film Archives, <http://anthologyfilmarchives.org/>  
32 Second Ave.  
The East Village  
September 18-24

A young boy is on stage speaking tearfully before a microphone as part of a North Korean theatrical spectacle. Other children are on stage lined up in small groups, some wearing dark green military outfits while others, like the boy, are dressed in school uniforms with white shirts, short dark trousers, and bright red scarves. They listen intently as the boy at the microphone sobs out his monologue, his young voice hoarsely proclaiming: "Fathers, mothers, my father committed a terrible crime against our country. Even though I was at the top of my class I could not dream of being a representative for the national celebration with a father like that! When my sick mother heard of this dream-like news, that I was invited to be a representative, she was so shocked that she died crying, with me in her arms." The camera cuts away to the smartly dressed audience, focusing on a man in a dark suit who wipes a tear from his eye.



What are we to make of it? What "terrible crime against our country" did the boy's father commit? He does not say. Perhaps this comes as no great surprise. Topics that are off limits for explication vex our understanding of ordinary people's lives in North Korea, as filmmaker Soon-Mi Yoo discovers on her filmic journey. The boy continues his soliloquy by pledging his fealty to the Kim regime: "I cried in front of my mother's picture, and said to her: 'Mom, Father couldn't protect me but the Marshal did. You couldn't fulfill my deepest wish but the Marshal, our Marshal did.' Truly, my father, my mother is my dear Marshal Kim Jong Un."

The sequence appears towards the culmination of Soon-Mi Yoo's feature length filmic essay *Songs from the North*. It is one of several extended excerpts of North Korean media interwoven with diaristic video footage chronicling her visits to the Hermit Kingdom. *Songs from the North* will be shown later this month at Anthology Film Archives in The East Village.

The film's use of North Korean media is one of its distinctive elements. We are accustomed to seeing the country's spectacles of authoritarian propaganda for their unintentionally farcical aspect, the absurd qualities of the regime's incessant message of leader worship, the anxious mood of national paranoia, and the crass exploitation of the grievances of bloody war and wounded pride for the sake of universal obedience to the

state. All of this obscures what is experienced by the citizens themselves.

*Songs from the North* begins with Soon-Mi Yoo's curiosity with everyday life of people in North Korea. Her sense of inquiry finds itself impeded by the pragmatic obliqueness of the everyday people she meets. An important survival skill in a country where some casual remark may be taken for a treasonous act of lese-majesty.

Early on in the film, while visiting a tourist site, Yoo's camera looks upon the face of a man, perhaps one of her North Korean handlers on this carefully orchestrated tour, lingering on the expression of thoughtfulness in his eyes as he gazes off screen. We hear her voice from behind the camera as she asks him to share his thoughts. Is he thinking about Kim Il Sung? The screen goes dark, the introspective face replaced by a series of intertitles with white letters on black: "Mr. Kang turns away./ This happened more than once. They turned from my camera when I asked about Kim Il Sung./ Each with their own private yearning."

Intermittently an interview with her father helps to fill in the blanks, as he speaks about his background as a young leftist whose friends went north to join the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or North Korea. He stayed in South Korea, looking after his mother, now before his daughter's lens able to be fairly candid with his thoughts about the clefted country.

Yoo's intertitles describe the North's longing for and a fear of reunification: "The trauma of separation continues to haunt the North Koreans. They are obsessed with reunification, unlike the South Koreans./ For the North Korean elite, Germany is a cautionary tale. Above all, they want to know what happened to their East German counterparts."

During her visit Soon-Mi Yoo records images of a drive through the green, coniferous countryside along a narrow asphalt road. Ahead is a truck with group of people crowded into the back, and a voice offscreen tells her: "No pictures. Please don't take pictures." As she explains in her director's statement: "I had to look for answers in the footage I brought back and in the North Korean material—songs, cinema, spectacle, publications—that I researched."

The juxtaposition between video diary and appropriated North Korean media produces a synergy through their strange interrelation with the film. It is as if we were seeing these soap opera-like video melodramas, black-and-white war movies, children's theater, and august government ceremonies over the shoulder of the North Korean audience for whom they were intended. There is an unexpected poignancy in what might seem ludicrous without such a framing. As we learn through another pair of intertitles: "Legend has it that Kim Il Sung and his partisan troops sang 'Nostalgia' when they were surrounded by the Japanese troops in 1937 in colonial Manchuria./ When the Japanese heard the force of their singing, they lost their will to fight and withdrew." Above all, Yoo gives us a clear sense the particular modern folklore forming the regime's sense of itself.

After looking out the window of her hotel room on a frigid, snowy morning at people in the distance dashing across a wide Soviet-style plaza, a tram crossing the frame in the distance, Yoo wonders about the life experienced here: "Is North Korea the loneliest place on earth?" She finds herself in the hotel restaurant, where a young woman in a bright red uniform sweeps around the curving dark wood bar. "Of all the things, why film me cleaning?" she protests.

Joel Schlemowitz (<http://www.joelschlemowitz.com>) is a Park Slope, Brooklyn-based filmmaker who makes short cine-poems and experimental documentaries. His most recent project, "78rpm," is in the final stages of post-production. He has taught filmmaking at The New School for the past 15 years. Schlemowitz photo by Robyn Hasty.

**'The trauma of separation continues to haunt the North Koreans. They are obsessed with reunification, unlike the South Koreans. For the North Korean elite, Germany is a cautionary tale. Above all, they want to know what happened to their East German counterparts.'**

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Jessy Randall and Suzie DeGrasse

They should make a movie called "Hugh Grant's Wacky Sisters" but not let Hugh Grant be in it.



your hair looked better before.



I wonder if any new books have come out about how to be more successful.

