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Thurston Moore
Sara Sarai**

PRINTED MATTER

**Wendy Jehanara Tremayne on
Surviving Civilization and Living Life**

**New Works from Amanda Auchter,
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Bio

Wendy Babiak is the author of *Conspiracy of Leaves* (Plain View Press). She recently joined Amy King and Heidi Lynn Staples in editing the revived *Poets for Living Waters* online. First conceived as a response to the BP ecocide in the Gulf, the journal has now set a wider scope in hoping to bring light to the ongoing need to protect our waters and all that live by and in them. Her poems have been published in a diversity of journals, including *Barrelhouse*, *Free Inquiry*, *Poems Against War*, *The Tampa Review*, and, most recently, in *Antiphon* and *Flying Higher: An Anthology of Superhero Poems*. She recently completed a Permaculture Design Course with The Fingerlakes Permaculture Institute, and conspires to undermine the extractive economy by helping to make it irrelevant.

Wendy Jehanara Tremayne

was a creative director in a New York City marketing firm before moving to Truth or Consequences, N.M., where she built an off-the-grid oasis in a barren RV park with her partner, Mikey Sklar. She is the founder of the textile repurposing event Swap-o-Rama-Rama, which has spread all over the world; a conceptual artist; a yogi; a gardener; and a writer. She has written for *Craft's* webzine and *Make* magazine and, with Sklar, keeps the blog *Holy Scrap*.

PRINTED MATTER

The Good Life Lab

Wendy Jehanara Tremayne on How to Survive Civilization and Live Life



INTERVIEW BY WENDY BABIAK

The Good Life Lab
Wendy Jehanara Tremayne
Storey Publishing

Part memoir, part DIY manual, *The Good Life Lab* celebrates the richness and abundance that comes from a self-made life. Original member of the band Moxie, whose music was featured on such shows as Dawson's Creek, Wendy Jehanara Tremayne offers up her modern manual for a post-consumer life after she and her partner ditched their high-powered careers and high-pressure life in New York City to move to rural New Mexico, where they made, built, invented, foraged, and grew most of what they needed to live self-sufficiently, discovering a new sense of abundance in the process.

Boog City: First, let me congratulate you on the book and the life it chronicles. A good life, indeed! I am left wondering what enabled you (aside from the support of your partner and the grounding provided by your engagement with Sufism) to find the courage to so thoroughly reject consumerist culture. I think a lot of people are waking up to the problems inherent in the American Dream as woven by Madison Avenue and Hollywood, but many of us feel at a loss as to how to begin to weave our own. Who were your heroes, as a child? What was your parents' approach to conformity vs. independent thinking?

Wendy Jehanara Tremayne: You could say that my desire for a decommodified life has been a response to my parent's excessive consumerism and my culture's insatiable lust for stuff. My mom and dad were born around the time of the Great Depression. My grandparents knew real poverty. When my parents migrated from the boroughs of NYC to the suburbs on Long Island, they did so with a feeling of middle-class entitlement, they'd pulled themselves up by the bootstraps. They felt they'd earned their way to paying others to do their labor, and they sought all the status symbols that went with that: cars, a home, children, and appliances.

The high school I went to in Plainview, Long Island was a full-time fashion show. The haves and have-nots were clearly delineated through brand. I noticed that even though it would be years before the suburban kids had jobs and earned their own money, they knew how to divide themselves by income (their parents income in this case).

For the longest time I measured the world against an ideal that I'd never seen realized but believed in my heart to be true. This ideal led the way and still does. I came to realize that it's my task to manifest the ideal.

I distinctly remember not having heroes and wishing that I did. It wasn't until I was in my 20's and 30's that I would discover the voice of the Sufis, find the words of Gandhi and Krishnamurti, and discover activists like Arundhati Roy. When I began to express myself through art I was influenced by The Situationists and groups like them but in our time like The Cacophony Society and The Yes Men.

For the longest time I measured the world against an ideal that I'd never seen realized but believed in my heart to be true. This ideal led the way and still does. I came to realize that it's my task to manifest the ideal.



'A whole truckload of camel poo. Can you believe they give this stuff away? It's like gold!'

Mikey Sklar photo

About halfway through the book, in the chapter entitled "Wisdom," just before getting into the final part of the book full of the particulars of how you and Mikey have managed to build a life largely free of the Beast, you say, "We are here to revive the soul of this world." I agree wholeheartedly.

But so many young people have been convinced that any such talk is laughable, woo, that they themselves have no soul, much less the stuff of this world. Einstein said we can live as if everything is a miracle or nothing is. Clearly consumerist culture has chosen the latter, and physical materialism echoes this. How do we overcome that conditioning in our effort to save the world from the extractive economy?

To me science is the face of religion. We can marvel at what science tells us about ourselves and, at the same time, have reverence for mysteries like where the next breath comes from or the origin of love and imagination. Perhaps the problem today is we choose between them rather than accepting our capacity for scientific inquiry and our imaginations as birthrights.

We would not rob a child of their impressions and tell them not to make pixies of the flower patch, yet we do this to ourselves all the time. Overly invested in the civilization we've built, we have today decided that we're predictable and mechanistic. But what in nature is so limited? Nothing. We forgot we're nature. If we stay tethered to life, nature, mystery, and imagination, we see a truer view of ourselves as unbounded and creative. This tether is an important lifeline because we act out what we believe ourselves to be. As limited and mechanistic consumers we're doomed, but unbounded and creative we can save this world.

This has never meant tossing science for an ensouled world or filling in mystery with nonsense. The most celebrated of scientists speak regularly of epiphanies that pointed them to the discoveries they've made, epiphanies that originate in mystery. We have always been our imaginations. When we tell ourselves we are other than the life of this world, distinct from it, we cut ourselves off from something entirely practical and necessary even if mysterious, our common sense.

Yes! It seems to me that one of the biggest hoodwinks we've been subjected to is the idea that we have to choose between science and faith. I was tickled this past spring when my son's mentor in the confirmation process at church turned out to work in the particle physics lab at Cornell. And the other is that erroneous idea you mention, that we are somehow separate from nature. One of the quotes often bandied about in Permaculture, to counteract the idea that we shouldn't ever intervene in nature's processes, is, "We are nature, working."

Lovely. I see you get where I'm coming from.

Have you read much about Permaculture, or dealt with any Permaculturalists? (Full disclosure: I recently completed a Permaculture Design Course, or "PDC," as "perms" say.) Several of the principles under which you operate are shared by the

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movement, and I'm thinking it might be fruitful for you to connect to that network, if you haven't already. If you're consciously choosing not to identify with it, could you offer some constructive criticism?

When I moved out to New Mexico to discover what a hands-on life looked like, I intentionally avoided overdoing study. I wanted to see what I could learn by doing, and by responding to necessity and desire. I wondered if I could know what I needed to know by wanting and needing the knowledge. After all, I figured I am a creature just like a fox or bumblebee and so I must have some kind of natural sense. Was sense bred out of humanity from generations of civilization's conveniences, I wondered. So I studied and used tutorials for specific tasks like how to make a distiller, or weld metal, but I avoided getting into big thought forms. If you think about it, if nature should show me that I did still have common sense, and should guide me, wouldn't that be the very best guide one could ask for? Who wouldn't trust nature telling nature how to be nature?

Since I finished writing my book, knowing I've had my own authentic and uninfluenced experience, I have read Thoreau's *Walden*, and the story *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*. I am about to read Laura Ingalls Wilder. I can read them now because I know that I mined my own experience first. I made my connection to the common sense. I was recently amazed to discover the similarities between *The Good Life Lab* and *Walden* which was written almost two centuries ago!

You're right: it is beyond cool that you discovered the same things. It's like the Perennial Philosophy: it pops up everywhere, because it's true. If you do get in the mood for more reading, then, or want to connect to a network of people operating under similar principles, check out Permaculture. It's a movement that's been gaining momentum since the '70s, and they've made a fair number of mistakes and learned a few things. It's based solidly in a tripartite ethic, of Earth Care/People Care/Fair Share, which I think will resonate strongly with you.

I will. I bump into it constantly, a good sign that it has longevity, it is growing in popularity still.

I also note many similarities with Shannon Hayes's *Radical Homemaking*, with one significant difference: your sense of play, which to me seems key to counteracting the drudgery we've learned to associate with the kind of work needed to build a life by hand. How consciously did you choose that approach? And does it ever flag? Are you ever overwhelmed by all that needs doing?



Twice I've been given her book. I have not read it yet and for the same reasons I mention above. I have a particular fondness for play and this is probably because my default is to be rather serious. What is most important though is there is a reason that I can pair labor and leisure. The reason is that it is my choice to do labor, and so it can be my pleasure. It is a luxury to be

able to listen to the common sense and so be guided by it. Factories the world over are filled with people who would rightly argue that labor and leisure are not paired. They have no choice but to labor. Common sense is not their guide, instead capital holds them captive, and they are disconnected from sense and nature. They respond to the instinct to survive.

Another luxury I enjoy is to labor due to love. I love the earth that provides my materials, the life I make goods to support and the life I preserve

Judd Irish Bradley photo

Another luxury I enjoy is to labor due to love. I love the earth that provides my materials, the life I make goods to support and the life I preserve in the process, and so I feel satisfaction from labor. Many people make goods they will never own themselves, because they are too poor to buy them. The goods they make are for people they'll never know. These people have no reason to love labor, or the fruit of their labor. We consume these goods and I think that subconsciously we know these hidden costs. This is why mass-produced consumer goods are so quickly kicked to the curb. They contain our shame.

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It is circumstance that can dissolve the boundary between labor and leisure and that leads to a sense of play around labor. Labor and leisure can and perhaps should be one in the same thing. Looking back I remember I used to pawn off my labor. I did not have any desire for it. When I left the commodified life and took my labor back I realized that it is the most valuable thing I have. It is my connection to knowledge, nature, and to life. My point is that labor and leisure can blend together. We can love labor. It can be play. But only when the one performing that labor is truly free. As my friend Tony Rubin once said, "We reach Satori all or never."

That's beautiful. I also love your idea of unbranding ourselves and our private spaces. Right after reading it I grabbed some of my daughter's red nail polish and painted a heart over the "er" on my new Singer sewing machine, so that it now seems to say "SING LOVE." Which is really more of a "thank you" than a question. So let me ask: what are some of your favorite examples of creative unbranding? I'm thinking of getting some colorful ribbon to cover the tags on the tongues of my Chuck Taylors.

I think you've been more creative with this than me! I regularly scan my home just to notice the autonomous zone that it is, brand free, and worry free. I like to notice the raw materials that are hardly modified to become useful to me, a wood table that easily becomes wood again, metal and glass bowls, a marble slab that holds some books up. There are no brands or plastic goods to make me feel fraught with reminders of money's insatiable appetite or the pollution that's causing cancer the world over. I love opening the kitchen cabinets to see what shows through the clear glass of the mason jars that fill it: basil, oregano, mint, codia, plants I grew or harvested myself. These jars remind me of wonderful experiences and of life. I remember from them that nature is abundant. I feel less worry. When I see branded goods like Louis Vuitton handbags to me this is a horror show. I wonder why the wearer is not embarrassed.

It seems that your succeeding in your endeavors would have been impossible without the kind of community that you found in Truth or Consequences. (Could you have chosen a town with a cooler name?!) What advice do you have for those of us who must bloom where we're planted? What sort of actions could help foster a community of makers within a wider, more commodified community?

We know that human beings conform. Natural leaders know that once they set an idea in motion others follow. Wherever we are we must not be afraid to go first and reset the mindset of the culture.

We can popularize signs of labor by making valuable the imperfections that usually come with DIY goods and depopularize the monotony of the things machine made and store bought, perfection.

Even the tiniest NYC apartment can host a workshop on making pasta from an egg and flour. Share your skills. Bike repair can be taught on the sidewalk or in a park. One need not be an expert to show another how they solved a problem.

For city dwellers nature is very important. Stay connected to nature. Learn the local native edible plants. Take city edible plant walks. Take time to find the moon and stars, remember the sky, the soil below. Perhaps the most important thing we can do today is build the commons. Whether knowledge or hard goods, today we must give to one another without asking for anything in return. Our economic system is teetering and will die. Our collective wealth will soon be measured in skills and generosity towards life. We can start building the new economy now by sharing and giving.

Are the plastic bags for your Sous Vide water bath cooker reusable? Do you have any concerns about petrochemicals leaching into your food? I confess that ever since the BP ecocide, I've been doing my best to eliminate plastic from my kitchen (and anywhere else it's taken hold), and so I balked at reading about this method. Is there some glass or ceramic alternative?

Ha ha ... yes the plastic sealer bags are reusable. They're also food grade. But I do still have worries about what leeches into my food. I imagine that today we're doing something as dumb as showering with DDT but we don't yet know what it is exactly. Maybe its the shampoo, vaccines, fracking, or all of the above. I do what I can and try not to worry about the rest. Worry has its cost to health too. I favor glass in the kitchen and older appliances and furnishings that have already off gassed.

If I had to bet on one, I'd go with the fracking. We're fighting pretty hard here in New York to keep it out of our state, especially since the shale here is naturally radioactive. And it just floors me that in drought-plagued areas like Texas they're using millions (maybe billions?) of gallons of water on this destructive process. It's like they can't do math or something. I guess you could say they're out of touch with that common sense thing you've mentioned.

I think you are exactly right. This is what happens when we disconnect from common sense, we become the cause of our own demise by failing to see that destruction to life is destruction to our life. I have found that people either believe themselves to be a single human life defined by approximately 100 years or they believe themselves to be the life that began billions of years ago and will continue for perhaps billions more into the future. Those with the former belief hoard and destroy opportunities for the future and for other lives human and otherwise, while those with the latter belief act to preserve all forms of life now and in the future.

Exactly. We can either imagine ourselves to be separate from everything or we can reside in the ground of being, and identify with all that is, which, counter to the American individualist myth, actually leads to happiness.

The book itself is a beautiful object, with its exposed Smyth sewn spine, its colorful inside covers, and the many playful illustrations and photographs. You must have been thrilled when you took the first copy from its box. Clearly you chose the right press: the book seems to be an example of your philosophy made manifest/ How did you find Storey Publishing?

Thank you. Storey found me. It has been an interesting relationship. They asked me for a memoir. When they got that memoir I think they then had to stretch a bit. They publish books that are tamer than *The Good Life Lab*. I respect them a great deal for being able to stretch. At the start of our relationship they gave me a questionnaire that asked me questions about how the book ought to look and feel. When I handed it in the publisher said, "No one's ever gone that far with the questionnaire." Then they did something amazing: they took the way that I imagined the book and went about making that manifest. Alethea Morrison, the art director, went even further. I feel that the physical approach made the book feel like a glove. It fits the text. I'm grateful.

No, the book's not tame! I love that you begin it talking about collecting your "liquid gold." After reading that, and then returning from my PDC where we also talked about the need to capture that nutrient stream rather than wasting water flushing it away, I found an awesome ironstone Victorian chamberpot on eBay. It should be delivered any day! (My son had already been collecting his in a plastic jug, but he's blessed with equipment that makes that possible.)

Ha ha! Enjoy your chamber pot. Like your son my preference is to just walk outside and pee anywhere but sometimes there are reasons to pee indoors, though they are few.

I'm afraid I live a little too close to my neighbors to manage that here at home, though I'm looking forward to "popping a squat," as my boy says, out in the woods on a solo hike in the near future. It's a newfound mad skill I'm determined my daughter won't have to wait until she's in her 40's to acquire.

Aside from answering questions from prepper poets you don't know, how has your life changed, if at all, since the book came out?

I virtually stopped living the life I wrote about. The book has brought me full circle; right back to the world I'd left only from another position. Lets face it: having a book and promoting it makes me into a product. I knew this when I agreed to write it. I feel I have something of value that is worth sharing so I made the sacrifice eyes wide open. Since I began writing the book I have compromised on things I'd become uncompromising about. I make less and buy more because I don't have the time. I'm sure I produce more waste. I struggle to catch the medicinal plants I rely on and preserve them. The garden has suffered. The good news is I feel the pangs of these compromises and appreciate the life I made and wrote about all the more. I will return to it this year in December when my book tour winds down. It'll be great!

This is what I feared when I asked the question! I'm glad the return to your good life is in sight. When you're living it, you weld, work with electricity, process old cooking oil into biodiesel with caustic lye, forage in scorpion and rattler habitat, and keep bees. What's the scariest thing you've ever done? What advice do you have for people who are considering doing something (productive) that scares them?

I've discovered that we survive civilization and we live life. Surviving usually equals adapting to broken systems to stay alive. We have made for ourselves a strange safety that I believe bores us to tears. Living includes fear, it embraces fear and comes with exhilaration and achievement. It is our nature to have these ranges of experience. As Chris Hackett once said, "Fear is never boring."

You document, endearingly, the learning curves you've ascended since you began the quest to decommodify your life. What other mad skills are on the menu?

Having given up the life I found in order to be an author, the next mad skill will be finding my way back, following my own cookie crumb trail. Next up is balance!

Something tells me you won't have much trouble finding it. And I thank you for sacrificing your time so that you could bring us the boon of this fantastic book. And for answering my questions! Bright blessings to you on your return journey.



Wendy Jehanara Tremayne getting ready for a late nineties Moxie show at Meow Mix.

Tony Rubin photo

New & Forthcoming from LITMUS PRESS

MURDER

Danielle Collobert

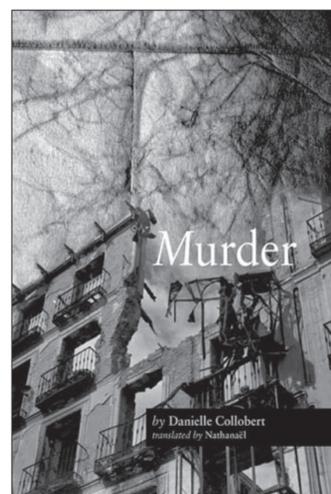
Translated by Nathanaël

"One does not die alone, one is killed, by routine, by impossibility, following their inspiration. If all this time, I have spoken of murder, sometimes half camouflaged, it's because of that, that way of killing."

Murder is Danielle Collobert's first novel. Originally published in 1964 by Éditions Gallimard while Collobert was living as a political exile in Italy, this prose work was written against the backdrop of the Algerian War. Uncompromising in its exposure of the calculated cruelty of the quotidian, *Murder's* accusations have photographic precision, inculcating instants of habitual violence.

2013 | \$18 | ISBN: 978-1-933959-17-7

Poetry, translated from French | Cover photograph by Robert Capa



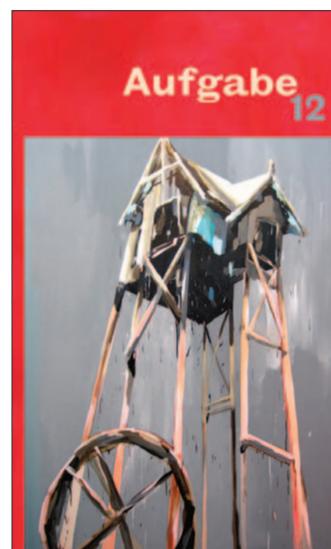
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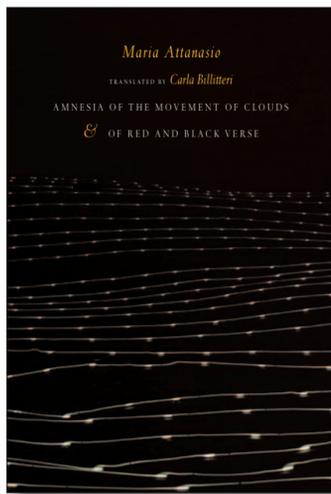
Maria Attanasio

Translated by Carla Billitteri

These two books collected in one volume comprise the first full-length translation of Maria Attanasio's poetry into English. Blending realistic and oneiric landscapes, Attanasio's poetry is a form of vertical writing that shows the historical and political strata of everyday life. In a landscape darkened by poverty, death, inequality, and illegal immigration, selfhood becomes an embodied but only partially understood node of historical events. Attanasio sets reflections on the cyborg dimension of contemporary selfhood against a desolate and existential void of a new century, one she describes as "the god of indifference," "the great amnesia." (Carla Billitteri)

2013 | \$18 | ISBN: 978-1-933959-42-9

Poetry, translated from Italian | Cover art by Thomas Flechtner



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<http://personalwebs.coloradocollege.edu/~jrandall/>

<http://www.fringemagazine.org/blog/metta-sama-on-animals-wildness-and-the-unugly/>

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Bio

Amanda Auchter is the founding editor of *Pebble Lake Review* and the author of *The Wishing Tomb*, winner of the 2012 Perugia Press Award, and of *The Glass Crib*, winner of the 2010 Zone 3 Press First Book of Poetry Award. She holds an M.F.A. from Bennington College and teaches creative writing and literature at Lone Star College in Houston. She is at work on a memoir.

Remica L. Bingham earned an M.F.A. from Bennington College, is a Cave Canem fellow, and a member of the Affrilachian Poets. Her first book, *Conversion* (Lotus Press), won the Naomi Long Madgett Poetry Award. Her second book, *What We Ask of Flesh*, was released by Etruscan Press. She is the director of writing and faculty development at Old Dominion University. She resides in Norfolk, Va. with her husband and children.

francine j. harris' first collection, *allegiance*, reached the number one spot on the national poetry bestsellers' list and this year has been a finalist for the Kate Tufts Discovery Award and the PEN Open Book Award. Her work has appeared in numerous journals including recent publications in *Sou'Wester*, *B O D Y*, and *Southern Indiana Review*. Originally from Detroit, she is a Cave Canem fellow and is the Front Street Writers Writer-in-Residence in Traverse City, Mich. for the 2013-14 school year.

Jessy Randall's poetry comics and other things have appeared in *McSweeney's*, *Rattle*, *Red Lightbulbs*, and *West Wind*. She is a librarian at Colorado College.

Metta Sáma is the author of *Nocturne Trio* (YesYes Books) and, under her legal name Lydia Melvin, *South of Here* (New Issues Press). Her poems, fiction, creative non-fiction, and book reviews have been published or are forthcoming in *Blackbird*, *bluestem*, *Drunken Boat*, *Esque*, *fringe*, *hercicle*, *Jubilat*, *Kweli*, *The Owls*, *Pebble Lake Review*, *Pyra*, *Reverie*, *Sententia*, and *Vinyl*, among others. Sáma is director of *The Center for Women Writers* and assistant professor of creative writing at Salem College in Winston-Salem, N.C.

PRINTED MATTER

Ghost, Hauntings, History, Memories

New Works from Amanda Auchter, Remica L. Bingham, and francine j. harris

BY METTA SÁMA



allegiance

francine j. harris
Wayne State University Press

The Wishing Tomb

Amanda Auchter
Perugia Press

What We Ask of Flesh

Remica L. Bingham
Etruscan Press

In Stephen O'Connor's short story "Ghost," the narrator asks to us to re-understand 'ghost': "Most people imagine ghosts as the leftovers of cancelled lives, but, in fact, they are only possible lives that never happened." It's easy to understand why I gravitate towards this sentiment, as it speaks, as well, to poetics: the established, thus challenged, perceptions of sensory living. The new collections from francine j. harris, Amanda Auchter, and Remica L. Bingham each revisit ghosts, hauntings, and the detritus of historical and private memories.

(Note, I've only given myself space to talk about one poem from each of these stunning collections, in order to look closely at the ways in which three contemporary poets write about bodies: those here, those not here, those once here, those that will never be here, those on their way, those in multiple planes, moving about us.)

francine j. harris' debut poetry collection, *allegiance*, rests and revs its engines in contradictions; the spirits in her poems are bodied, even in their absences of, in their longings for, the poems are mouth-, spirit- and body-full collapsible tensions. The speaker's swirled trajectories, from bended knee-hungry adult to archivist teen, waste no time declaring its desires, and the length it will go to attain its most ubiquitously gritty needs. The ghosts riding these poems are not atypical: they linger and groan, they speak dirty, they declare hard tenderness, and live to define themselves, as love, as want, as being and not being.

In the opening poem, "sift," the narrator sets out to first establish who they are, and then, alternately, who they are not, ending with a few, set descriptors of who they could be and who they will be, if only. The pattern, a steady tension crafted by contradictions and collisions, marks two sets of distinct and overlapping worlds, that of earth and water and that of the corporeal self and the ghost self. It begins: "i am not all water" then moves to "i am a thousand faces/ at the bottom of the bottom's gravel" and back again "i am not all river" and "I am all tooth and nail breaks". The pattern disrupts itself: "i am not all nigger," and begins the work of uncollapsing the tensions, in order to create

In her sweeping, collective gaze of New Orleans, from 1697 to the present day,



Amanda Auchter is able to see not only the ghosts that are familiar to us (those of the past), but also the ghosts that takes up O'Connor's narrator's claim: 'possible lives that never happened.'

Eddy Roberts photo

more distinct pressures between the speaker's interior and exterior worlds, between the speaker's perceived realities and the speaker's wanted realities. This marks the turn away from the smashed-up, strained connotations of earth and water ("sea-sharpened stones," "sea-smash/ dirt") to a purely parallel world: "The speaker vacillates between tender and tough in these moments: "i am not always tough when i walk in" and "i can put on a bad face, understand./ i can unload and prostrate". What the speaker is, what the speaker's mind inhabits, and what the speaker is not, which is also what the mind inhabits, sings forth the ghosts of pasts ("i am not all nigger," "who belongs here/ which tooth should have been kicked out when/ which hole ought to be filled," "black-out dolls," "a country song in a deep/ jukebox") and those O'Connor-ghosts, those that have not been. The speaker asks, "is everything something to rot," ending this question with a question mark, worth noting because other questions in this poem end on a period, as if those questions are rhetorical, not worth considering. This final question, however, leaves room to ponder, to worry, to wrestle, to see the presently absent.

Remica L. Bingham's second poetry collection, What We Ask of Flesh, asks: 'Who sent us/ forward/ or back?' in the long, opening sequence, 'The Body Speaks'. This question gets at the heart of the vastness of ghosts, ghostliness, and hauntings.

Rachel Elizo Griffiths photo



Amanda Auchter's "The City That Care Forgot," in her second poetry collection, *The Wishing Tomb*, picks up this question by making a statement via epigraph: "You were here once; you will be here again" (from Joanna Klink's "Winter Field"). In her sweeping, collective gaze of New Orleans, from 1697 to the present day, Auchter is able to see not only the ghosts that are familiar to us (those of the past), but also the ghosts that takes up O'Connor's narrator's claim: "possible lives that never happened". Auchter's worlds, too, rely on tensions, established sets of contradictions between ruin and reconstruction, wealth and poverty, human disaster and natural disaster.

Similar to harris' penchant for contradiction and collision, Auchter's synthesized worlds call upon the living and the un(non)living, the inhabited and the vacated, to witness and speak about the juxtapositions that suppress and scream. As well, Auchter also depends on noting what is by saying what it is and what it is not: "What brings you back is the sugared air ...¶ The scrolled iron balconies/ Not the water-¶ stained drywall .../ Not the ruin/ of mosquito fever, flood, the history¶ of bodies hung by the neck in trees". By slightly turning her gaze to the "history" of lynchings, within the history of "fever" and "flood," Auchter subtly calls attention to natural and human disasters, the ways in which one can become an unmodified recording of the past, and the ways in which the other is deemed an historical account, thus paralyzing it in the past and keeping it very present. This "mold-scarred,/ splintered chairs washing upstream .../ wind-wrapped shutters, shotgun¶ houses ...¶ water ... rising" city, renowned for its commune with the un(non)living floods the senses with its debris of hauntings, building a palimpsest for the layers of ghosts to seek and settle.

Is this what ghosts ask of us? To, as O'Connor's narrator says, "relish without restraint every instance of [our] being"? To record, to be fully present in every moment, to be alive in the living? And what do we, to turn to Remica L. Bingham, ask of ourselves? Bingham's second poetry collection, *What We Ask of Flesh*, asks: "Who sent us/ forward/ or back?" in the long, opening sequence, "The Body Speaks". This question gets at the heart of the vastness of ghosts, ghostliness, and hauntings. We often are taught to see ghosts sliding along a trajectory, a human-created notion of linearity: past, present, future. We make and mark ghosts as being as embodied, and thus as limited, as humans. But Bingham's open-eyed book, particularly the poem "The Body Speaks," forces us to challenge our perceptions: "Unsown, it came fleshless, muddled, nothing/ but itself"; "that what comes next comes after what came first"; "Don't birth us, Eve"; "we become what we live". Bingham goes to say: "by being flesh-gone only/ spirit we are ever being¶ here and always here".

No clear answers, no clear definitions ride the poems Bingham has laid out. The bulk of Bingham's book consists of long poems (the opening poem is an astounding 20 pages and the titular poem is 11 pages; the poem "House of the Ten Plagues" is, appropriately, 10 pages; the remaining eight poems come in around two pages each). This approach provides the right amount of space to ask questions of how and why we see bodies the way that we do; what we inflict on bodies; how our minds (bodies in and of themselves) strain and stain by accepting given ideas. Bodies, here, wriggle and are restless, being spirit and ghost, corporeal and intangible.



The Business of Poetry: Fundraising and Community Building in the Small Press World



BY CHRIS MCCREARY

It's a given that small presses have sustained the poetry world for decades, and many poets take on at least a brief stint as an editor of a magazine or a chapbook press at some point in their careers. Bringing exciting new work to print is gratifying, but the mechanics of making it all happen can get daunting, and even the most enthusiastic editor can lose hope or momentum. Concerns around money and time are amplified, too, whenever bigger projects are attempted. How can an editor get the work to print and then promote it without burning out or going broke? Here three small press editors discuss their specific challenges—producing a six-chapbook series, publishing a first full-length book, and mounting a national tour.

Least Weasel Chapbooks/Propolis Press

In 2011, Karen Randall founded Least Weasel Chapbooks as an offshoot of Propolis Press, which she started in 2001 to publish limited-edition, letterpress artists books. One might think that after doing labor-intensive work on Propolis titles, Randall would want to balance these efforts with quick, easy-to-produce chapbooks. However, Least Weasel requires an equally impressive level of dedication, with each title being hand printed, folded, and sewn. Randall has recently published her third series of chapbooks, bringing six new texts to print simultaneously. She releases her chapbooks in these multi-book series for practical and aesthetic reasons. "I'm certainly not in the position to do multiple launches in New York," she says; therefore, it is "much easier to do just one and then try to set up other, smaller readings elsewhere as I can."



Least Weasel chapbooks on display at the CUNY Chapfest.

Karen Randall

Just as launch readings in New York can bring together Least Weasel authors and their individual audiences, the chapbooks in each particular series "talk to each other," as Randall puts it. "I observe interesting parallels in language," she says. "And although I'm not necessarily trying to make a cohesive visual statement in the designs of the covers, there is definitely some interplay there too."

Like many small press editors, Randall relies on credit cards to cover production costs for her titles. While she vows to pay down the debt accrued from one series before beginning another, it doesn't always happen. Sales of Propolis titles "come in larger sums but less often, so it gives the illusion that I have money to spend, when in fact I still owe money from a previous project," Randall points out. When possible, she will save money by scrounging suitable paper stock or reusing letterpress type.

An additional commitment for Randall is taking Least Weasel and Propolis to book fairs, ranging from AWP to the more cozy Buffalo Small Press Fair and high-end events such as Codex in Berkeley, Calif. "It's good to mix it up and meet different people and go to different parts of the country," says Randall. "And someday, I'd love to do the Frankfurt book fair or one in the U.K." Book fairs, she notes, make the most financial sense if she is able to teach a class or receive an honorarium for reading her own work in conjunction with the fair. Either way, she says, these events provide an invaluable opportunity to promote the press to potential readers, and often sales of the more expensive Propolis titles actually come months after the book fair itself.

While Randall does not see her current financial model as ideal, she hesitates to experiment with fundraising techniques such as Kickstarter. "I'm

'I'm not sure why Kickstarter makes me uncomfortable,' Least Weasel Press founder Karen Randall explains. 'It's pretty visceral. I guess I'd rather not ask for money up front. If people want to support Least Weasel chapbooks and Propolis Press, there are plenty of existing titles to buy.'

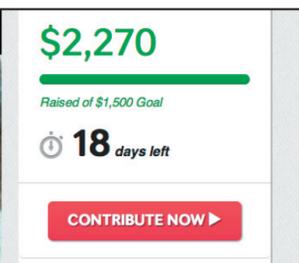
not sure why Kickstarter makes me uncomfortable," she explains. "It's pretty visceral. I guess I'd rather not ask for money up front. If people want to support Least Weasel chapbooks and Propolis Press, there are plenty of existing titles to buy."

Spooky Girlfriend Press

Texas-based Spooky Girlfriend Press began publishing chapbooks in 2008 and is preparing to publish Nicole Steinberg's *Getting Lucky*, the press's first full-length title. Asked why the press is trying this new venture, Chief Editor Nate Logan says that they would have moved to publish this manuscript sooner, "but Nicole's manuscript was unavailable at the time, which, in hindsight, I think was better for both of us. I became aware of these poems in 2009 when she submitted some for publication in *Spooky Boyfriend*, the magazine I used to run. It was love at first read and I thought it would make a great book."



Spooky Girlfriend's Indiegogo page includes a promotional video of poet Nicole Steinberg.



However, to make the book a reality a new fundraising strategy needed to be employed. "Spooky Girlfriend," he explains, "is a two-person operation, two people who happen to be in graduate school. To really do Nicole's book justice, we would need more money than either Laura [Theobald, the press's creative assistant] or I could pour in ourselves. And so, in consultation with Nicole, we decided Indiegogo would be the

better way to go because chiefly, at least for me, any money raised we'd be able to keep, even if we didn't meet our goal, which is not the case with Kickstarter." It seems that this strategy has paid off: the press exceeded its \$1,500 fundraising goal in less than a week, and the book will soon be a reality.

Logan and Theobald continue to fine tune their approach to running the press. He states that "since Anne Boyer's *My Common Heart* we've been breaking even." Logan cites their increasing skill at calculating costs for production and supplies as well as learning how to "be a good hypeman." In addition, he says, "I think demand for the poet plays a role. For the longest time, even after Anne's chapbook had sold out, people were sending money asking for a copy. That's not to say there hasn't been demand for all the poets that the press has published, only that some are more 'well-known' than others."

Moving forward, Logan hopes that Steinberg's book will raise enough money to get the press "out of the hole" financially. "But even if that doesn't happen," he remarks, "it's not the end of the world. This press is a labor of love and we'll find a way to keep getting the work we believe in out into the world."

'Spooky Girlfriend 'is a labor of love and we'll find a way to keep getting the work we believe in out into the world,' says chief editor Nate Logan.

Furniture Press

Christophe Casamassima of Baltimore's Furniture Press has been publishing chapbooks, full-length collections, zines, and more since 2003, and he is determined to celebrate the press's 10th anniversary by mounting a 13-city tour. However, to cover travel expenses for multiple authors around the country and otherwise support the tour, he set the ambitious fundraising goal of \$5,000 above the press's normal operating expenses.

One of the most effective strategies Casamassima has employed is fundraising events. "We hosted four successful fundraisers (Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York City) in a matter of three months, and raised more than half of our goal," he explains. "The Philadelphia Phundraiser was our most successful venture [raising over a thousand dollars] ... We hosted three separate readings in one day at the Highwire Gallery in Fishtown, with 15 poets, and to thank the audience for their time and contributions, we threw a party for them complete with vegan and omnivore BBQ, three local bands; a keg of ale from the Philadelphia Brewing Company, located only blocks away from the gallery; and plenty of prizes and raffles to keep the spirit of giving alive. Ultimately, it was community partnerships and collaboration, presence, that made it all possible." While these events generate much-needed funds for the tour, they also serve to promote the press to new readers and provide advance publicity for the forthcoming tour as well.



Furniture Press's Christophe Casamassima promoting the press at Baltimore's Yellow Sign Theater.

CarlaJean Valluzzi photo

Building community is one of Casamassima's goals for the tour and one that he hopes will help to ensure the financial well-being of the press in the long run as well. He has noticed over the years that "a small contingency is built around each book" he publishes, and he believes that bringing people together for events creates more interconnectedness between Furniture Press authors while expanding the press's overall audience. He goes on to say, "Even among our writers new friendships and projects have emerged, simply by being under one roof. So in bringing together this lovely crew, along with audiences new and old, the life of the press is guaranteed, because it looks to future possibilities. All surprises."

Casamassima has been less successful raising money via subscription sales and offers of books at lower, bundled prices. "We used social media sites like Facebook and Twitter plus email canvassing to little effect," he admits. But this, he hopes, will shift over time, "when more and more people are introduced to our writers and books, in real spaces and real dialogues. Again, presence. Hence the need for the tour."

Links

- Furniture Press**
<http://furniturepressbooks.com/>
- ixnay press**
<http://www.ixnaypress.com/>
- Least Weasel**
<http://least-weasel.com/>
- Propolis Press**
<http://www.propolispress.com/>
- Spooky Girlfriend**
<http://spookygirlfriendpress.com/home.html>

Bio

Chris McCreary is the author of three books of poems. He is the new small press co-editor for *Boog City* along with Jenn McCreary, with whom he co-edits Philadelphia's *ixnay* press.

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Links

<http://www.stephaniebarber.com>
<http://www.pollybresnick.com>
<http://www.burtkimmelman.com>
<http://www.thewritingdisorder.com>

Bios

Stephanie Barber's films and video installations have appeared at MOMA, Walker Art Center, and other galleries and institutions. Her latest book is *Night Moves* (Publishing Genius Press).

Polly Duff Bresnick's chapbook *Old Gus Eats* (Publishing Genius Press) is an excerpt from her ongoing visual translation of Homer's *The Odyssey*.

Burt Kimmelman's most recent collection of poetry is *Gradually the World: New and Selected Poems, 1982-2013* (BlazeVOX [books]).

Sara Sarai is a contributing editor at *The Writing Disorder*. Poems have recently appeared in *Boston Review*, *Pank*, and *Threepenny Review*.

POETRY



Sarah Sarai
Murray Hill

The Common Ancestor, Chrysanthemum Edition

I was so there where we met up
after I kicked
and you opened or
I kicked you open.

Everyone kicks Mom.
If they don't a doctor's called
and Mother converts
to keep sharp objects away.

Judy, Tina, Sarah offer
my oldest sister so don't worry
on her.

Three sacred rivers are sourced
in the common memory.
Mom rode a rivulet home.

Hallelujah, and please pass
some luck,
In the light of great Sun,
the waterslide's a blast but,
man, I miss hanging out with you.



**Burt
Kimmelman**
Maplewood, N.J.

Dawn

Once asleep
the dream becomes
the first birds' peeps
in darkness,

then the thoughts
of the day gone
and what there is
to be done -

the dawn light
rising behind
branches, their leaves
turning green.



Polly Bresnick
Crown Heights, Brooklyn

Ὀδύσσεια/ Old Gus Eats

τὴν δ' αὖ Τηλέμαχος πεπνυμένος ἀντίον ἤδα: Μέντορ,
πῶς τ' ἄρ' ἴω; πῶς τ' ἄρ' προσπύξομαι αὐόνοῦδέτι πω
μύθοισι πεπεῖρημαι πυκνοῖσιν:
αἰδῶς δ' αὖ νέον ἄνδρα γεραίτερον ἐξερέεσθαι.

Trinidad united Marx's tempting venues. The aviator nude. MelHop -
twist- apple wine -twist- opportunistic Somali authors. Ode to twin
uvula LOLs' temerity: "Puny! Tucked clover bivalves!
Adieu, dove, over oval spas." Repair to the pole, Etta. Speed dial it.

τὸν δ' αὖτε προσέειπε θεά, γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη: 'Τηλέμαχ',
ἄλλα μὲν αὐτὸς ἐνὶ φρεσὶ σῆσι νοήσεις, ἄλλα δὲ καὶ
δαίμων ὑποθήσεται: οὐ γὰρ οἴω οὔ σε θεῶν ἀέζητι
γενέσθαι τε τραφέμεν τε.

Told haity iPod elites to beast tanks, wilt Avon. TNT IMAX! Actually
melatonin is evil pear's onus. Vandals attacked Cali salami wives'
utopian Noels, tailored ape-wise. You dewy actor, reveling at the
Tampax mentors.



Stephanie Barber
Baltimore

Harriet Martineau

toussaint louverture
trying hard to shake off the french doctors
brings the boundaries close to his medaled chest.
those doctors prescribing submission.
prescribing.
those doctors whose fingers tickle the children of slaves.
(called slaves).
in the sickroom toussaint, like delicate storm petrels
leaping across the haitian waves,
says
"yes. harriet come to my side."
and
"you, harriet,
plain as your trip to america,
are able."



Disaster Relief Fund Naropa University

"Generosity is a willingness to give, to
open without philosophical or pious or
religious motives, just simply doing what is
required at any moment in any situation"
—Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche

Naropa University has established a relief fund
to help provide shelter, food, and emotional
support to those who have suffered loss in the
recent Colorado floods. Campus damage is
minimal, but many in our community have
been displaced, losing homes, vehicles, or
simply textbooks.

We invite you to make a gift to the Naropa
University Disaster Relief Fund. Funds
donated are tax deductible, and proceeds raised
will be paid out to those in need of support,
based on a simple application request.

To donate, please visit:
naropa.edu/disaster-relief

Naropa
UNIVERSITY



Rob McLennan
Ottawa, Ontario

Self-portrait, with a grassy husk,

1. A change of temperature in Vienna

Baroque gardens, as her father said. You take
your habit from your hat. The gardener

rooms. Compose notes like pollen.

2. Meticulous uncertainty

Is the only possible site. Epiphanies,
we draw from string,

a bit of cloud. Formations
shaped in clay.

3. Moon, a beehive

A mossy phrase, the tree-line
grows. A teetering

calm.

4. Saturate,

Hard-bare soil. An arsenal of mulch.
What's the worst we could do?

Good night, my heart.

To sample, then. To
know.



Thurston Moore

Stoke Newington, London

The twilight world of she (poet)

Fundamental split
Critical closure
Spectacle culture

Poor bands are always better
than rich bands

Sweet hail to reneate knaup

of amon duul 2

Poor mouse, unshaven drummer
sticks bless the sky
god goops blowing summer heat
I love rock n roll

all praise to reneate knaup

of amon duul 2.

You take the bad money and make it good

POETRY

Links

<http://www.robmcclennan.blogspot.com>

<http://www.officialchelsealightmoving.tumblr.com>

Bios

Rob McLennan is the author of over 20 trade books of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction. He writes about poetry and other topics at the above url.

Thurston Moore runs the Ecstatic Peace records + tapes label, edits the *Ecstatic Peace Poetry Journal*, and currently records and tours with Chelsea Light Moving.

BOOG CITY

Issue 83 free

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WORLD SERIES POETRY & MUSIC SPECTACULAR

Sat., Oct. 26, 2013, 7:30 p.m.



The Baseball Issue

Featuring Poems From

Guerra One
John Galt
Leland Rice
Dan Foley
Robert O'Brien
K. Lorraine O'Brien
David R. Johnson
Anna Linsinger
William Sauer
Nick Mendry

Art? Press

with **Interpretive Skills**
Read Emily Williams' *Carlton Fisk: My Ideal* and
see how he grew up the son of a Red Sox fan, came to meet for the Yankees,
and eventually publish your reading work.



with **baeball poetry readings from**

Robert Gibbons
Pierre Joris
Tanya Olson
Joe Pan
Douglas Rothschild
Amish Trivedi
Kevin Varrone

and music from
Cool Papa Bell

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Brooklyn

<http://www.pierrejoris.com/blog/>

<http://boyishly-tanya.blogspot.com/?m=1>

<http://joepan.org/>

<http://www.fauxpress.com/e/rothschild/>

<http://www.amishtrivedi.com/>

<http://www.brooklynrail.org/2012/04/poetry/from-box-score-an-autobiography>

<http://www.cpband.com/>

and then we'll catch the rest of game 3 of the World Series, already in progress.

In celebration of our recent baseball issue and earlier ones:

<http://www.boogcity.com/boogpdfs/bc80.pdf>

<http://www.boogcity.com/boogpdfs/bc37.pdf>

<http://www.boogcity.com/boogpdfs/bc06.pdf>

Out for this reading is a short-run, color broadside of Bernadette Mayer's classic poem "Carlton Fisk Is My Ideal," with art by Melissa Zexter.

For the Facebook page for this event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/383587788434662/>

Event hosted by Boog City editor and publisher David Kirschenbaum

Directions: 2, 3 to Grand Army Plaza • C to Clinton-Washington avenues, Q to 7th Ave. Venue is bet. Prospect Pl./St. Marks Ave.

Info: 212-842-B00G (2664) • editor@boogcity.com

Bio

Amanda C. Mathis was born in Orlando, Fla. Her work encompasses site-specific interventions, photography, collage, and notions on dwelling in modern-day society. She received her B.F.A. in ceramics from the University of Central Florida and her M.F.A. in sculpture from Pratt Institute.

Mathis has executed large-scale installations for solo exhibitions at James Nicholson Gallery (New York) and Smack Mellon (New York). Selected group exhibitions have included *I can't quite place it...* (Smack Mellon), *between to and from* (Visual Arts Center of New Jersey, Summit, N.J.), *Associated* (Open Source Gallery, New York), and *Interrogations, Interventions, and Modifications: Four Artists Employ Architectural Strategies* (Freedman Gallery at Albright College, Reading, Pa.).

Mathis has participated in the Artist in the Marketplace program at The Bronx Museum of the Arts, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Workspace program, and the Constance Saltonstall Foundation for the Arts residency. She was a 2012 recipient of a Pollock-Krasner Foundation grant.

Mathis photo and photo credit TK.

Artist's Statement

My home deconstructions are an exploration of architecture and the meaning of dwelling in modern day society. Using homes left empty and slated for demolition, I selectively remove layers of the interiors to expose what exists beneath the surface.

In doing so, the histories of the buildings' inhabitants are revealed to me and I see the materiality and craftsmanship of past constructions juxtaposed with those of today.

With each project, I gain an understanding of how people dwell and what the act of dwelling means to each individual. Information and stories about past residents are gleaned throughout my process by way of exploration of the home and discussions with neighbors or residents themselves. Interiors of the past are exposed and people are reminded of former times or are informed of a past they never knew.

I had originally intended for the viewer to experience these home deconstructions by physically being in the altered space. As this body of work progressed, the photographs originally taken solely for documentation purposes gradually became works in themselves. In part this was due to the impermanence of the site-specific projects, as well as the formal qualities that the images assumed. Though a very different way to experience the domestic settings, the photographs have become a parallel body of work to the transient environments I create.

In addition to site-specific works and photography, collage is a constant within my practice. During the interim between projects, I turn to collage as a way to continue the development of my work. With the use of my own photographs of interiors and exteriors, I create architectural abstractions. Like sketching, the immediacy of the process allows me to generate ideas easily without inhibition.

Seeing abstractions on paper aids my decision making when I'm peeling away the layers of a home interior. Through collage, photography, and architectural interventions, I can reflect on the structures we inhabit and better understand how we inhabit them.

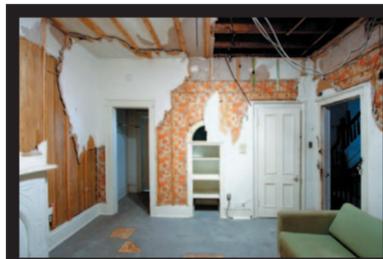
Amanda C. Mathis
Greenpoint, Brooklyn



Experiments in Architecture series, 02.12, 2012, 7875" x 3.5".
Photographs collaged on paper.



Experiments in Architecture series, 28.12, 2012, 5.25" x 3.375". Photographs collaged on paper.



FDNY 2011, 10' x 13' x 14'. (257 17th Street)
Living room interior: Plaster lathe, wallpaper, shelf paper, furring strips, drywall, molding, paint, plywood, linoleum tiles, BX cable,
Site-specific work in conjunction with Open Source Gallery, Brooklyn, N.Y.



Foreclosure 2012, 24" x 36". (131 Oley Street, Reading, Penn.)
Home interior: Drywall, wallpaper, paneling, wood floor, carpet, carpet pad, linoleum flooring, molding, ceiling tiles, Dimensions variable | C-print, Edition of 3
Site-specific work in conjunction with the Freedman Gallery at Albright College, Reading, Penn.



Stay 2010, 8' x 15' x 15'. (77 Water Street),
Office interior: Metal framing, insulation, drywall, paint, vinyl coving, linoleum flooring, carpet pad, carpet, ceiling tiles, Site-specific work in LMCC Workspace studio

It's Just the AntiFolk that Matters

Boog City's Former Music Editor, Jonathan Berger, on Documenting His Community



BY J.J. HAYES

Jonathan Berger, in my experience, was a poet/performer who turned out to be a music writer/editor. Thus his experience (and the objective experience of those who know all as it is happening and hew to a linear timeline) is different from mine, for it turns out he was a writer and editor about the scene before he was a poet/performer. Anyway, those who have been reading Boog City these many years are well aware of him. I just find him interesting and knowledgeable. So I wanted to ask him questions. Which I did. Alas there was the threat that it would all turn into a conversation. Luckily it didn't. He even went so far as to write his own intro for me. Which certainly saves me the problem of having to ponder and then to put into words the significance of Jonathan Berger, for this is a deep subject and mere journalism on missed deadline really can't get to it.



'I like what I like. What I like, usually, is visceral. It's clever, and funny, but more importantly, there's something tough and energetic to it.'

Eric Lippe photo

For me Berger stands as one of those folks who is going to write and stay involved with stuff that he concludes is worth it even though the more monied media may never deign to let the masses know about it. I also like the way he dances.

Berger has been a mainstay of the AntiFolk community about as long as it's been centered at the Sidewalk Cafe, which, based on all the recent anniversary talk, amounts to roughly 20 years. That's 20 years of seeing shows, 20 years, of listening to records, 20 years of partaking in this small scene, and eventually becoming integral to it.

After 20 years, you'd think he'd have stories to tell, and he has. He's published two fanzines, *AntiMatters* {1996-2000} and *Urban Folk* {2006-2008}, and was music editor right here at Boog City for almost a decade. Through those publications, and more recently on the *Sidewalkny.com* blog, he's written and published more regularly about AntiFolk than anybody else. What else might he have to say? Read on, and find out.

I am really interested in your thoughts about writing about a scene when that writing is seen by as few people perhaps as see the artists being covered. I think that makes for writing of intrinsic worth ...

Huh. I guess there is a similarity between the level of exposure writing can get when talking about something few people care about. My writing has a couple of advantages over the music in the scene:

A) Each subject that's written about can serve as a proselytizer of the work. If I write about Ben Krieger, he can put it on his page and use it as a way to validate himself, and in so doing, allows my text to spread to a wider audience.

B) It's so damned good.

I hadn't really thought about how far either media form could disseminate in relation to one another. In these webbie days, it seems like both words and sounds can get pretty far.

On the other hand I see a tension maybe exemplified or not in early *AntiMatters* that writing brings a certain validity to the scene and is really an attempt to get the word out beyond the scene ...

Back in the '90s, I had wanted to contribute to this community in some way, and this fanzine *AntiMatters* had already started. I couldn't sing and didn't perform in any way, so I volunteered my services to that. Once people began to identify me as the writer, and then editor, for *AntiMatters*, I gained a certain cache in the small community. Even after seeing the product—a single, stapled, cut and pasted, xeroxed publication—people wanted to talk to me, would suggest article ideas, would give me albums ... it was great.

My first show, a couple of years later, was packed. I assume a lot of the people were there to curry favor. Several people said, "I thought you'd be good, but I didn't think you'd be, you know ... good." They probably came to the show to be polite, like they might for a Lach show.

I think my early success in the scene, when I was a zinester, is the evidence that the community seeks adulation/appreciation just like real live human boys (and, occasionally, girls).

The zine(s) gave people a sense that they were appreciated in a more established way than just a couple of folks coming to shows. It also gave concrete proof they could use to try to leapfrog their careers. Lots of acts I knew had their press pages peppered with quotes from me and my various identities.

I didn't realize you had various identities. Whom am I interviewing now?

In the days of *AntiMatters*, there were a lot of pages to fill, and I believed in publishing on a fairly religious schedule. So when those pages needed filling I filled them. Rather than suggest that Jonathan Berger would write 10-double sided pages a month (which never happened; there were always other real contributors), I used a variety of aliases, most of which were pretty suspicious since nobody had ever seen any of them. I wasn't the only one who used secret identities, but I might have been the only one who told other people not to, that it was a sign of cowardice, and that they should be proud of their writing. Meanwhile, I was several other people; each of them with a fairly distinct personality and vision.

By the time *Urban Folk* came around, I was pretty consistently one person, with maybe one or two exceptions.

When did you first come across Boog City?

I had heard of Boog City and its editor David Kirschenbaum through Bionic Finger and Schwervon!, but only became really aware when the esteemed Mr. K reached out to ask if I could trial-edit the music section. My first contribution was for the Brenda issue (see [link](#)), and I wrote about my favorite AF topic, Brenda Kahn, as well as Brenda Strong and Brenda Lee. There was a fourth, but I'd have to look at the issue to remember her name. I'm sorry, Brenda Blank! [ed. Brenda Weiler.] The trial-editing became permanent, and I spent very little time editing other people's work. Instead of

'My first show was packed. I assume a lot of the people were there to curry favor. They probably came to the show to be polite, like they might for a Lach show.'

allowing Boog City to speak from a wide range of voices, I selfishly kept the spotlight to myself. I mean, other people wrote, but I wrote more.

What is the Brenda Kahn story? I don't believe I've ever heard of Brenda Kahn until I heard her mentioned in another interview you did. I have never heard her music. As a test case then, on an ignorant reader such as myself, and as a paradigm for music writing, tell me why I should go online and seek out Brenda Kahn's music? "Go read the Brenda issue" is not an acceptable answer. Although I may do that also.

Brenda Kahn was the first act I discovered under the umbrella of AntiFolk, so she represented to me, in many ways, what the movement should be. I saw her at Amherst College, and she was personable. Though her CV described she had toured with Dylan, she was very friendly, and had been playing pool on campus before the gig. She shouted and moaned and was sensual and approachable, none of which was what I was used to in my music at that point. I was amazed and in lust. That show inspired me to write my first short story in years. Her performance opened me up to creativity I had lost, immediately, and much more in the years to come.

The classic album Brenda released was *Epiphany in Brooklyn*, which is what she promoted at that gig in '93.

Who presently, if anybody, do you think represents what the movement should be?

Hamell on Trial has always been, by my estimation, the most excellent model of AntiFolk. He applies to what it started as, he applies as to what it can aspire to, he applies to everything that AntiFolk can be at its best.

Also what are your impressions of this year's Summer Antifolk Fest?

The highlight of the festival for me, was the Clinical Trials show. Somer Bingham is a beautiful rock star who nobody yet knows about. She's talented, she's marketable, she's got the recordings ... it astonishes me that she isn't somewhere already. Thank God she's lazy.

Is it all subjective? Are there critical standards you apply? Do you ever say "I really like that act, but I admit objectively it's not that good" or conversely "I can't stand that act although it embodies everything I normally require of an act I consider good." What do you look for? What gets you excited about new acts when you see them for the first time?

I shall ignore many specifics and answer the question I know the answer to.

I like what I like. What I like, usually, is visceral. It's clever and funny, but, more importantly, there's something tough and energetic to it.

I try to remember my first impulse about an artist. In a community this small, or this tight, or with so many repeat performances, it's easy to get saturated by a song or an artist, to get used to them, to begin to appreciate aspects of songs or acts that you didn't previously like. That is called brainwashing, and while I allow it to happen to me, I try always to remember that first impulse, for that was the pure one, the one I know was unencumbered by the relationship that followed. There are tons of acts that I try to support because of their relationship to the scene, or their support of my art, or their contributions to any number of projects, or their physical attractiveness. But I try to separate that support from my subjective enjoyment of the act. I try to keep my opinions safe from the relativity of relationships. Please never make me remember that I said such pompous words.

I do think the musical environment is changing and I find myself wondering what good is music writing to the reader and what is good music writing to the reader? In an age of bandcamp people don't need a trusted guide in the same way they did when they laid down actual money on records they had yet to hear. What is a music editor to do? What is a music writer to do? Are we spokespeople for the scene; are we on the lookout for our readers?

Larger publications, publications with substantial readership, can point people in directions they might know nothing about. Bandcamp has as much reach as Wordpress as a social network, but each requires people to find the appropriate content. Just like always, the music writer can direct people to want what's good, and, if necessary, what isn't.

Fanzines, though, I think, tend to speak more in the spokesman role you mentioned, trying to proselytize for a particular god. They're about small communities sharing within that community more than without.

Links

<http://www.jonberger.com>

<http://www.jhayes.bandcamp.com>

<http://www.Sidewalkny.com blog>

<http://www.boogcity.com/boogpdfs/bc11.pdf>

Bio

Jonathan Berger used to be the music editor at Boog City. Now he's nothing at all.

J.J. Hayes comes from Staten Island. Sometimes he is a poet, sometimes he's a singer, and sometimes he writes about music and the world.



Eric Lippe photo

The libraries section will, in large part, explore ways that poets, small press publishers, and libraries can work together for the common good.

Links

Michael Basinski

<http://www.wordforword.info/vol22>

Jessica Smith

<http://www.looktouch.wordpress.com>

Spotlight on the Poetry Collection's Collections:

To contact Michael Basinski or to donate to the collection: Basinski@buffalo.edu or Michael Basinski, The Poetry Collection of the University Libraries, University at Buffalo, Buffalo, N.Y. 14260

James Joyce

<http://library.buffalo.edu/pl/collections/jamesjoyce/>

<http://digital.lib.buffalo.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/LIB-PC004>

Robert Frost

http://www.buffalo.edu/ubreporter/campus/campus-host-page.host.html/content/shared/university/news/ub-reporter-articles/stories/2013/frost_collection.detail.html

Mail Art

<http://digital.lib.buffalo.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/LIB-PC001>

Poetry Recordings

<http://digital.lib.buffalo.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/LIB-PC002>

Visual Poetry

<http://library.buffalo.edu/pl/pdf/language-to-cover-a-wall.pdf>

Bios

Michael Basinski is the curator of The Poetry Collection of the University Libraries, University at Buffalo. He performs his work as a solo poet and in ensemble with BuffFluxus. Among his recent books of poetry are *Piglittuce* (Propolis Press), *Learning Poem About Learning About Being A Poet* (Press Board Press), and *Trailers* (BlazeVox [books]). His poems and other works have appeared in many magazines including *Antennae*, *Big Bridge*, *BoxKite*, *Damn the Caesars*, *Dandelion*, *Deluxe Rubber Chicken*, *Eccolinguist*, *End Note*, *Ferrum Wheel*, *hole*, *Filling Station*, *First Offense*, *House Organ*, *Kenning*, *Lungfull*, *Mimeo Mimeo*, *Nerve Lantern*, *1913*, *Open Letter*, *Pilot*, *Poetry*, *Public Illumination*, *Rampike*, *Score*, *Staging Ground*, *Talisman*, *Terrible Work*, *Tinfish*, *Unarmed*, *Ur Vox*, *Vanitas*, *Western Humanities Review*, and *Yellow Field*.

Jessica Smith is the librarian at Indian Springs School, libraries editor at *Boog City*, and author of *Organic Furniture Cellar* (Outside Voices). Her most recent chapbook, *mnemotechnics*, is now available from above/ground press; her second book is forthcoming

by Craig Cable; *Rock, Roll, Rumbles, Rebels, & Revolution* by Spain Rodriguez; *Robert Duncan: The Ambassador From Venus* by Lisa Jarnot. I mean there's more. This is just a selection.

As recent reports from VIDA: Women in Literary Arts has made clear, male poets are overrepresented in publication while female poets are underrepresented. Although VIDA doesn't count race, it seems clear that white poets are overrepresented vis-a-vis non-white poets. When collecting, do you reflect this state of affairs or do you actively pursue underrepresented groups of writers?

There are more prejudices than race and gender: small press vs. big press vs. the chapbook vs. perfect binding vs. conceptual etc. There is Christian poetry, overtly misogynistic poetry, real pornographic poetry, science fiction poetry, and vanity press poetry and all sorts of raw shock poetry—there is a poetry zine that contains poetry and amputee pornography. When I identify prejudices they are corrected.

Our collecting policy dictates that if it finds print, it belongs at The Poetry Collection. I adhere faithfully to that policy that was first instituted in 1937. This is not to say there is perfection. There are prejudices of every form in collections and in poetry. The work of pointing out problems belongs to all of us in the realm of the poem, and then we must work to correct these problems. Then this is done, and I am happy and have been pleased to always be a part of the poetry world.

You're a writer and performer with your own huge body of work. How does your creative work influence your work as a librarian, or vice-versa?

I don't see that what I do as an artist has major effects on my day-to-day working life. However, I see a large amount of manuscript material from all walks of poetry and this allows me to absorb huge amounts of formal possibilities and compositional possibilities. Form potential and newness is always at hand. For instance, looking at the manuscripts of Robinson Jeffers suggested that I could re-manuscript a finished poem into a visual/verbo poem work or seeing how Joyce constructed his thunder words suggests that the creation of form can be as easy as the manipulation of letters in a word, a word that itself is a poem. It is all fun. When I am in my curatorial mind, I am the respectful Dr. Jekyll.

How would you advise poets to ensure that their work is archived in The Poetry Collection? What advantages are there to having one's work in this library?

Individual poets and editors have to be their own archivists and publicity agents. More and more the individual is responsible for the survival of any and all art forms. Government agencies and colleges and schools are going to be less a factor in the developing arts than they have been in our time within the realm of the poem. I think this leads to a form of poetry activist where the poet is not only responsible for making poetry but also must be fully engaged in the business of poetry. I mean more than writing, reading, editing, running a series, etc. I mean down to contacting libraries, bookstores, etc. and doing book reviews or working in collective with other writers and poets who are doing the same from all walks (all forms) of the poem. When poets and editors give us books and magazine, and anthologies, if we don't have them, they go into the collection. Clean out your old mag piles and send them on to us. Send us your books, poem cards etc. I am interested in it all.

I must add also that we are always interested in friends to help shape the future. In my mind the \$10.00 donor is as important as the \$1,000.00 donor. To keep the doors of poetry open, we need all the friends we can find from everywhere and anywhere. There are fewer places and voices each year, which means less potential because venues end. It can't happen. I do all I can to widen the realm of poetry, which I consider my home and heart.

Saving Poetry Books, One Book at a Time

Mike Basinski and The Poetry Collection at SUNY Buffalo



BY JESSICA SMITH

Boog City libraries editor Jessica Smith recently spoke with Dr. Michael Basinski, curator of The Poetry Collection at the State University of New York at Buffalo (University at Buffalo). The Poetry Collection's mission is to house all poetry written in English after the turn of the 20th Century. It holds one of the world's largest collections of poetry first editions and other titles, little literary magazines, broadsides, and anthologies as well as related manuscripts, ephemera, and artwork.

Boog City: Mike, you work at one of the greatest collections of contemporary poetry in the world. How did The Poetry Collection come about?

Michael Basinski: The Poetry Collection of the University Libraries, University at Buffalo, which is our official name, was the imagination of Charles D. Abbott. Abbott, an American, who was a New College, Oxford graduate, read Robert Graves and other British poets of the 1920s era and was smitten by the poem. He was also a book collector. More than that, as a poet himself, he adored books and particularly, books of poetry. He maintained a huge personal library.

He was hired in Buffalo as an English Department faculty member but quickly added control of the University's library to his influence. He was UB's first official university librarian. He founded The Poetry Project, which became The Poetry Collection, in 1937. He hired Mary Barnard, translator of Sappho, as the collection's first curator. These people were giants and poetry pioneers. I tremble as I imagine their spirits zooming about the books!

How did you come to work at The Poetry Collection?

In 1984 I needed a job. I often talked with Kathy Kosinski, an administrative assistant in the UB English Department about fish-fries and such. We were in essence from the same part of town (similar last names and all), and one day I asked her about campus jobs. She sent me to The Poetry Collection where I quite simply walked in and was hired. Landing in the middle of poetry paradise, there was no place else to go. It helped, of course, that I could quote Charles Olson and Jack Kerouac. And I was [Robert] Creeley's and Jack Clarke's student, and John Logan's student and a UB English Department graduate student.

Over the years, it seems like The Poetry Collection has acquired a bit of everything, yet it seems impossible to fulfill the goal of collecting all poetry published in English since 1900. How do you decide what to collect when budget and space are limited?

You got it. It is hard and it gets harder and harder. To date, I am proud to say that we are still able to harvest 95% of the books of poetry we can locate. What is difficult to find are short-run chapbooks, which are then expensive when we have to engage dealers and it is hard to purchase very expensive limited edition fine press books. Some of those cost more than \$10,000! I just located a Joyce book that costs \$12,000. I put it in my rich aunt file in case someone comes in with a bag of gold.

Seriously, we do well because of the generosity of poets and editors and because we have friends, donors who are assisting the collection with building endowments to assure the collection will survive the ups

and downs of the stock market and state budget cuts to public education. If you are a poet or editor reading this, send books please. If you have the means, please contribute moola. It is the individual that will assure the survival of poetry in libraries and everywhere in the realm of the poem.

What are some of your favorite pieces in The Collection?

I am fond of so much and I have been for nearly 30 years. I like to look at the first editions of *Howl* and Creeley's *Le Fou*. I like the first books that poets publish. They are tiny and they struggle, hunger for reading. I like d.a. levy's early books and I like looking at Harvey Brown's pirate Frontier Press books. They are all my friends. When I walk through the stacks, I say hello Langston, hello William Carlos. I have to write that I am still discovering new poets and that is most exciting! Hello new poets!



Patricia Donovan

The James Joyce Collection at the University at Buffalo comprises more than 10,000 pages of manuscripts, notebooks, photographs, correspondence, publishing records, personal documents, and ephemera, including Joyce's ashplants.

I know the collection has a lot of famous items, like James Joyce's *Ulysses* manuscript. What parts of the collection receive the most use by visiting scholars?

Well, there is always someone writing on Joyce. There are many different types of scholars. There are professors, graduate students and undergraduate students, and independent scholars. We serve them all and it is A-Z. These are some of the books in which we are acknowledged that have been published over the last 24 months and this will give you sense of who is doing what: *An Opening of the Field: Jess, Robert Duncan, and Their Circle* edited by Christopher Wagstaff and Michael Duncan; *The Brother in Elysium: Artwork and Publications by Jon Beacham, 2008-2013*; *Nasa For Nyheter: Essa om James Joyce* edited by Sata Danius and Hanns Zischler; *The Poetry of Jack Spicer* by Daniel Katz; *A Dark Dreambox of Another Kind The Poems of Alfred Starr Hamilton* edited by Ben Estes and Alan Felsenthal; *The Letters of T.S. Eliot*, edited by Valerie Eliot and John Hollander; *In Bed with Ulysses*, Produced and Directed by Alan Adelson and Kate Taerna; *Modernism and the New Spain* by Gayle Rogers; *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, edited by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker; *A Concordance to the Poetry of William Carlos Williams*



'Always I see the Harpy face / Behind the rose' collage by Helen Adam

'It is the individual that will assure the survival of poetry in libraries.'