

Altpoetics



May 2015

GHOST WALKS

by Christopher Barnes

GHOST WALKS 1

...Recoiling from a handset's faceless suspicion

To the House of un-American Activities,

Liaison with Michigan State fuzz, subversive dream team.

Mr. Cloak-and-Dagger barrelled around

At Marilyn Monroe's outlay.

She wasn't bound to Centralist steering

But threw light on the Daily Worker's gist...

Doss before shadows lurk

At Caversham house.

Moonbeam nor candle

Good-omens the lounge.

Highly-strung air-pockets.

A riding-carriage hurtled

By decapitated stallions,

(Dislodged bellowing)

In running sore instants

Through rigid walls.

GHOST WALKS 2

...Streets apart bogus incriminations?

Adventures which house no mortal coil.

Broadway. Marilyn Monroe, blonde strumpet,

Spites veneers in print.

The Red illuminate's eye-apple

Is, in defiance, American...

Possessed Sir Rowland Alston

Was, on Tib's eve, run upon.

Underbid a bird in the hand

For the bottomless pit.

Ulcered face-down at Odell Castle's mud flat,

After a hundredweight of moons crumble,

He gushes to spur our mortician's filly,

Cat's-pawing all-edges wreckage

In dominant men's boneyards.

GHOST WALKS 3

...It was ratted out:

(Big Shot) elected not to unload his bride,

Hanging up on Marilyn Monroe.

Her hit-man lingers, never busted.

Here-to-there he prowls.

Everyone he mauls

Harks back to muffled peroxide.

That's how the yarn unravels...

Pantry heart-wood groans

In Weathercock Lane.

Bad-air orbs itch at night.

An ill-wishing father

Swore off his progeny

Famishing her to the marrow

Bricked-in with a dark horse swain.

Highway men rat-tat-tat.

A love-lit mamma's spectre

Is hospitable to bones.

GHOST WALKS 4

...Eunice Churchill's wary.

Marilyn Monroe's clinging onto (redacted).

The rouged bombshell's thin-skinned,

Explicit, besotted,

About to slope off.

A two-day foray with our in-the-pocket nark,

And his prying marriage knot...

High-handed, thundering, Lady Hoby

Drubbed her brat to oblivion.

She throbs lengthening passageways

When the breathing trap window shutters.

Tear-drops. Rinsing hands

In a lurking crock,

Regressing mid-air buffering screams.

GHOST WALKS 5

...Our coast watcher postulated: Marilyn Monroe

Scribbled to (The Furtive Man)

Affording him Liberty,

Musing his body politic to the Left,

Rallying a speak of flirting

With being clued-up...

At Millbrook's hog-back cloister

William and Mary Huett's tomb effigies were amputated.

Gauntlet, neck-lace, sprig-ish vesture,

All square pegged.

Rectory drudge eared their whining

Born in the coal heap vault,

Her prayers unnerved, stone dead.

Poetic Statement:

There are many ways of being 'spooked'. The energies of the past still hold some powers. Many places in England are said to be haunted. Marilyn Monroe's life was also 'spooked'. People thought she was paranoid. Now due to a Freedom of Information request we know she was followed continually by FBI informants. The Warhol images of bright to faded Marilyn's seem even more poignant today. The past is never quite over.

Bio: Christopher Barnes' first collection LOVEBITES is published by Chanticleer. Each year he reads at Poetry Scotland's Callender Poetry Weekend. He also writes art criticism which has been published in Peel and Combustus magazines.

Three Poems

by William Doreski

Near McGhee

My house with its two brick chimneys, spooky verandah, and one-room el may not impress you, but this beige stretch of Arkansas doesn't intend to impress.

Note that I've parked my Ford pointing toward the road.

Note that the open maw of my mailbox is ready to receive whatever letters or parcels you send.

Write to me as if writing home.

You've never been to Arkansas?

Neither have I, but if I can just get that Ford started and if the mailman brings word of you we can celebrate, at some distance, not being in Arkansas together, the dust ghosting in the windy fields.

Staten Island, 1957

Who'd think that on Staten Island
you'd meet the original
old gentlemen, bowler and tall
riding boots, jodhpurs, all black
to set off his furry little beard
and expression rimmed with blood?

Snow trims the streets. A tree
exclaims open-armed behind him,
but its warning is useless. He tips
his hat and smiles and smiles and smiles,
and the deflation of your ego
follows with a hissing sound.

Thank him. Note the papers
tucked under his left arm. They bear
your name and require your signature.
But read them with care. They're legible
only in the early winter dark.

Après la fête mémorable

With a paper towel I swab
wine-drips from the corridor,
Best leave no clues. The party
caused very few casualties,
but some screamed so loudly
crows swooped from the cold sky
to gather slops. Police arrived,
nosed about, left grinning. You swept
from the room with tiara glowing
like a crown of brimstone. No one
followed to comfort your comfortable
but old-fashioned body sheathed
in the most impertinent latex.

By now you've wheeled your Alfa
back to your sea-view where ghosts
craft fogs to fit your vision.

Not even the most hideous verbs
can warp you once you install
yourself in a snoozy bubble bath
with all of your privacies tingling.

Meanwhile I sort out the mess
this semi-public event left.
Beer cans bagged for recycling,
wine jugs, paper waste bundled.

Tomorrow I'll drive to the landfill
and discard the evidence. The last
victims, blooming with headache
will rise early, cursing me,
but will recall you as a cloud
on which a mob of angels danced.

No transubstantiation occurred.

No one rose to godhead, no one
spilled over in millions of hues.

Enjoy your bath. The tide creeps in,
slathering, and the crows mate
aloud with sea gulls, clattering
like an avalanche of scrap.

Poetic Statement:

My poetry explores the seams and gap between the world our bodies live in and the cloud our minds occupy. Reality and imagination, in Stevens' terms, but I reject the notion that what lies outside the body is more real than what lives in the mind. The ideal poem would in every line, sentence, phrase juxtapose those two worlds and force them to fight to a draw. The actual poems I write—lacking the power to fulfill my own ideal—struggles fitfully from one competing notion of the real to another. Images flex, break, collapse into other images. Little dramas lead somewhere or nowhere. Two people, often, offer competing notions of the space they jointly occupy, and terminate dangling in a vacuum. Sometimes the poem learns something, a temporary stay against the middle of the quotidian. Often it doesn't go far enough to properly conclude. The tension between the line and the sentence—a stock property of English-language poetry for centuries—takes the form not of free verse but of rough accentual verse, descended from the venerable ballad meter of the late middle ages. Or I surrender to the flux and write a prose poem, which like an amoeba struggles to draw a boundary between its own form and the formless world.

Bio: William Doreski's work has appeared in various e and print journals and in several collections, most recently *The Suburbs of Atlantis* (AA Press, 2013).

Five Poems

by Marcia Arrieta

monologue cloud

mandala winter decipher analytical

character psychology coincide curious

archetype symbol reaches quixotic

daybreak honor regard unknown

conscious somewhere observes comparative

100 days — evolution lines

(after Dorothee Lang's photos)

flowers in space muted backgrounds—homes, jobs, roads

reshaping the moments passageways into unknown countries

underground cities invaders art within time red mosaics white wings

contemporary conversations collaged pieces of light interfused fabric

torn, peeled, scraped doors passages of the mind into interior sky

a matter of perspective angle movement to reinvent sculpture

redefine the geometric without interpretation to remember the divine

windows open into other windows roads dreams trees

the clouds & the earth lamppost a view to the sea circles & motion

worlds ways re/creation the road & the countryside the trees write the story

an unopened dahlia rain the blue rectangle & the face add music miles

& miles the bridge & the translucence of clouds *miles to go before I sleep*

variations wonder sea anemones starfish pink dahlia look closely at the center

architecture resiliency the resiliency of angles & open space—waves & stones

silent fields & the leaves of grass matrix dark & light *miles to go*

colors, spirals the eye in the garden the eye in art intricacy freedom/manipulation

frontier the primitive water & art & time reflections notes pyramids moths
in the garden mending bumblebee & butterfly fields of poetry
the flame & the wallflower dimensions details again the lamppost
climbing the tower building the tower Jung Jeffers travelers

the doors open & close & open waves & passages steel structures
directions—I take a feather from the sky & place it on the track
the door in the mountain the door in the oak islands & forests cubist lives
memories raindrops roses castles angels statues cathedrals spirals stained glass

through the countryside to the shore elves birds gnomes wings & flight complex
nevertheless simplicity one half moon discoveries walk along the railroad tracks
the journeys—reflections in the train windows—summers long ago
facets & rails angles & angels surreal the light the vision the voyage

mystery of survival influences geographies images in sand in wind faraway
from the city bridges & birds we gather twigs we arrange branches circles/squares
windows/doors meteors & dragonflies the owl peers through the oak between notes
between lines hourglass the flowers lamppost the miles

in response to a green field

[in search of the sublime]

there is snow on the steps

shadows & islands

integrate existing trees

volumes & space

the abstraction of white lacquered bronze

spiral outward circling

roses in the garden

vast interiors

integrate water

abstract sky

philosophy the moon

or the sighting of a bird's yellow wing

*

insight

solitude

*

sparingly

the

words

like

a

lotus

flower

or

hermit

emerge

*

where eagles & owls gather

the curve of blue

"The final belief is to believe in a fiction, which you know to be a fiction,
there being nothing else."

--Wallace Stevens

duets precise indigenous artistic

untitled poppies in spring shadows & sun
rain nurtures the earth

a reflection in snow steps across corridors

the book's pages are assembled west & east
architect water architect time

fragile the order listen to the clouds & thunder

courage: unequalled equations

the Griffin emerges in collaboration with Yeats

Poetic Statement: Language continues to inspire and amaze me, leading me into unknown territory, into connections I would never imagine.

Bio: Marcia Arrieta is a poet, artist, & teacher who lives on the canyon in Pasadena, California. Her book triskelion, tiger moth, tangram, thyme was published by Otoliths. She edits and publishes Indefinite Space, a poetry/art journal.

Two Poems

by Martin Cohen

Selfness

(Inspired by the poem "The Joy of Writing" by Wisława Szymborska)

These words
These words evoke
These words evoke themselves

As they appear, there is wonder

They wonder how they appear

They wonder how they appear to wonder

They dance and are danced,
dance for you and dance with you

They ask you to dance
And they know, as you know,
that you and they are already dancing

They long to hold you, spinning and sighing,
remembering what has not yet happened,
becoming part of you,
lifting from the page,
lifting you from their page,
infiltrating

"They"? What is this "they"?
There is only me here
But is this the same as "me"?

And there is you

The mysterious you
Unknown to me
Linked by them
From me
To you

Hi

Sometimes I am the creator
Molding the words as I want
Leading them across the page, my page

Sometimes I am the scribe
The words appear, revealing themselves to me
And I follow them to their somewhere, their page

How do the words appear?
Sometimes squeezed from a mental sphincter
Sometimes autonomously pop into existence
Sometimes nothing - oh, the ache of the nothing

When dancing
When uncertain
There is always the "basic step" to fall back on

There is no "basic step" here
Words must come
Source unknown mysterious

Please

Lifting words beyond words is the goal
We hope for "Goooooooooal!"
Rarely happens

These words would love to be able to do this

These words have an additional goal
They want you
When you are looking at them
To not realize
That you are looking at them

To do this
These words create themselves
Bursting into existence
Forming their own pocket universe
Hoping you will join them
Knowing they are just words
Wishing they might help you
for a while
forget
that that is all they are

You'll be sorry – or wish that you were

Don't believe anything in this poem.

Don't even believe that it's a poem.

Actually, I'm not sure -
not sure of poemedness,
not sure of a lot.

One thing that I am sure of:

this poem is about you, about me, and about this poem.

This poem's mission: to boldly go where no poem has gone before.

And for very good reasons.

A warning:

If you're looking for meaning in this poem,
you're looking for meaning in all the wrong places.

However, this poem transcends itself,
understands its context,
knows that it is being read RIGHT NOW,
and thanks you very much.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you.

You're so nice.

I really like you a lot!"

This poem also wants you to realize that
even if
as Dean Martin sang
you're nobody till somebody loves you
and you

find yourself somebody to love
still
that does not mean that you are somebody
only
that this other person is.

"Bet you never thought of that! See, I'm smarter than the average poem."

Is this a poem,
or a nightmare from which
you are trying to wake?

Your thoughts are yours, these words are mine.

What can they have in common?

Semi-sweet nothings oozing into your ear, your mind, your -
where else can this oozification take place, anyway?

Answering that question would make this a different poem
and, whatever this is,
this is not a different poem.

Actually, this poem sometimes wishes
that it were a different poem,

a very different poem.

Poor unfortunate poem.

However,

this poem also realizes

how fortunate it is

to be able to be

so self-indulgent

and, quivering,

gives itself a great big hug.

"As a great American philosopher said,

'I am what I am and that's all what I am',

and that's good enough for me!"

The Tralfamadorians, the Brobdingnagians -

they know, have known, always will know

what they are, were, will be doing.

Not me.

My life has definitely featured non-plannedness.

"Me too.

I never know what's going to happen next."

The gun was grabbed,
a scream was heard,
the trigger was pulled,
the bullet was shot,
and the brains were splattered.

The preceding sentence is passive-aggressive.

The preceding sentence is not.

The preceding sentence is not understandable in isolation.

The preceding sentence is.

The preceding sentence is not.

The preceding sentence is not.

"What was that?

Ow!

That really hurt!

Sure hope that doesn't happen to me again."

Peter Piper may have picked a peck of pickled peppers,
but I persistently produce a plethora of poorly parsed poems,
hoping for happy endings, uncertain, yet.

Squee? Will I ever get a squee?

"Here comes the big finish.

Ooh, I'm so excited!"

When the rent is due,

I do-be-do, do-si-do,

to-be-or-not-to-be,

and rock-around-the-clock.

Still, parsley makes most foods look prettier,

and I find that comforting.

"Aaah. Was that good for you, too?"

Poetic statement: The these poems were inspired by the poem "The Joy of Writing" by Wisława Szymborska. When I have read them (the second one, especially, is a fun performance piece), they have been described as "meta", but I prefer the term "self-aware poem".

Bio: Martin Cohen is a retired computer programmer who loves dancing (favorites are West Coast Swing, Waltz, Foxtrot, and Salsa), writing (and reading) poems, and solving math problems.

Ravi Shankar *What Else Could It Be*

Carolina Wren Press Poetry Series #17 (2015)

Review

by

Katie Yates

Many places come happily to mind in Ravi Shankar's collection of ekphrastics and collaborations, *What Else Could It Be*. I get wind of another generation of New York School intrapersonal message systems from the collaborations, and then, by association, the ekphrastic work lines up with habits of the New York School writers. I am relieved to find the Objectivists and some flavor of the Beats alongside new formalism, and relieved that one could be with this book for more than one sitting.

I found references close to my personal lines of study and process in these works: Tibetan Buddhism, yak milk tea, and prayer flags, (All Tomorrow's Ancestors), a favored vocabulary 'crowdnoise' like Louis Zukofsky's poem *80 Flowers* in (Rodeo Cowboy No. 1), the contemporary Norwegian novelist Karl Knausgaard (My Saga: One) in (Maine Islands 1938) 'hunted swordfish and buried their own in graves of red ochre,' some hip micro fiction in (The Living Trust Mill) 'the holy relic of the green card, a sliver of one true green card wrapped in tissue,' the odd bit of Alfred Lord Tennyson via (Along the River of Palms), 'or the solstice moon of the moon that lows and bellows the names of all lovers,' and maybe Andre Breton in (Singapore Spring) 'like the repressed memory of a lion's tooth dreaming all night.'

From (Wanton Textiles) I take pleasure in Persian (ghazal) style repetition 'in love with the girl who confuses astrology with astronomy brings head in the headlights and mauve walls. Being in love with the boy who confuses ejection with ejaculation, organism with orgasm, supernova with superstition' or is it more our longing for sustained narrative. Plus my favorite piece (Sun Wu Kong and Hanuman Share Secrets), the playful sequences of 'Then all you would have to do is follow the trail of lights on this dark night, and walk with me until the moon returns.'

There's a lovely bit of H.D. in the phrases such as 'the bone the skin the shell the body that intimate shape' in (Broca's Area). One might relish the Frank O'Hara in (The Day the Voice Died) 'It is nearly 1:50 in New York a Thursday Dante Alighieri and George Lucas's birthday'. I enjoy the spacing in (Desert Math), find friendship with George Herbert (The Altar in (Two Water Towers) then sweet conversation with Mina Loy in (A Square of Blue Infinity) 'From where I'm sitting/there is no dark, the whole sky is lit up like a stadium.'

There's a pretty schema in (Love and Decay) 'Graze on the face like a fly on honeydew bend over toward someone so that your entire body alights imperceptibly, on the cusp of action,' a surprise with (Architect Attacked by a Goshawk, or the Unsilent Night) 'Wave a stick, someone else proffers. I want to go on a hawk-mourns another, nothing ever happens,' and there's a final *coup de grace* in (Last Turn on the Left) 'I thought I was following this wending road toward the sea's terminal blues, thought the heart was taking me thereby its weight and chill. I thought I was being led.'

I can only respect this chorus (Louis Bourgeois, Priya Chabria, Mel Chin, Jim Daniels, Daniel Donaghy, Sean Dougherty, Camille Dungy, Vernon Frazer, Rosemary Fiore, Tiffany Higgins, Rodger Kamenetz, Lena Kallergi, Nancy Kuhl, Francis Kai-Hwa Wong, Mong-Lan, Megan Leivad, Harriet Levin, Reb Livingston, Eileen Myles, Alvin Pang, Clare Rossini, Ed Ruscha, John Schott, Sonya Skarloff, Lisa Spaar, Joseph Stanton, Melissa Stein, Monica de la Torre, Brian Turner, Quintan Wikswo, and Terri Witek, just now because I am often turned off, some part of me turns off, in the middle of most collections of poetry, as the meaning of the work becomes predictable. Perhaps you won't feel isolated by *What Else Could It Be*, because it is true that you belong to the city the book takes you to, that there are places you know, to which you will come back, locations which not only heal but which might just as well mirror fate. Ravi Shankar's collection does something to this order of things.

Katie Yates is a writer & poetic house manager in New Haven, CT.