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Ahearn, Barry

Tulane University

Samuel Menashe: The “Neglected Master” in the Eighties[KF1]**PANEL 01A: BEARING WITNESS**

The 1980s were a difficult period for Samuel Menashe. He would repeatedly offer his poems to major commercial publishers and, just as repeatedly, would be turned down by them. He could not know at the time, but in the 1990s he would be published by Penguin, and in the 21st century he would win a measure of fame as a “neglected master” and be published by the Library of America, one of the very few living poets to be accorded this honor. His search for a publisher in this decade, however, did result in the release of his *Collected Poems (New and Selected)*[KF2] by the National Poetry Foundation in 1986. The focus of this paper will be on what led to the NPF publication, especially how the championing of his work by Hugh Kenner was crucial. The paper will also describe Menashe’s reaction to the circumstances that led to the publication, his thoughts about the place of that book in the overall arc of his career, and to the degree to which his failure to interest a large commercial publisher in his work is reflected in his poetry. We find, for example, in such poems as “Salt and Pepper,” increasing intimations of the onset of old age without the concurrent critical attention that Menashe felt he deserved. In fact, the theme of elusive fame runs strongly through his poems in this decade. We shall see that although Menashe was pleased to find a publisher in the 1980s, he eventually had mixed feelings about the National Poetry Foundation. The paper will draw on three sources: (1) close reading of some of his poetry from the decade; (2) the Menashe archive at the Berg Collection and the correspondence therein with Kenner and Carroll Terrell; and (3) personal conversations and correspondence I had with Menashe during these years.

Anderson, Stephanie

University of Chicago

*The Submerged Date in Coolidge and Eigner, 1982-84***PANEL 06A: TEMPORALITY**

The practice of dating and calendrical poetics is variously motivated: think of the date as graffiti, a gesture that possesses a tradition and a right to speak; think of the date’s epistolary echoes and how it contains collectively held knowledge. It can be an anchor, and it can function as enumeration—as an ordinal, showing position. For Larry Eigner, dating began from the latter impulse, as part of an archival practice: “Kind of lucky I began dating things as a regular thing in October ’59 after Don Allen sought for dates to things he took for *The New American Poetry* [...]; before that I considered luck might more than likely run

out, I might be jinxed and get writer's block if I dated, it'd be overconfidence, counting chickens before they hatched..." (*The Collected Poems of Larry Eigner*, ed. Curtis Faville and Robert Grenier, vol. 1, p. xv [KF3]). Eigner indicates a danger in dating, in assuming that one's practice can remain constant and worthy of future study. But as the reproductions of his typescripts in *The Collected Poems* reveal, the anchor of the date quickly becomes a formal property of his texts—part of the “grid” (Grenier) of the typewriter page—especially as the poems attempt to depart from the constraints of single locations and perspectives by precisely playing with spatiality. In the first issue of *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*, Clark Coolidge refers to “air” as Eigner’s “medium”; I take part of the import of this statement to be that Eigner’s poems both provide material shape to the ineffable—air, time—and show the inevitability of momentum as lines thrust the reader down the page. In a poem dated March 17-April 6 83, Eigner writes, “what sounds / and sights / given / time / ways / down / you look / now you see now you don't / heads and tails.” Time—and the date—both weighs and is a way; it is like glass, both rigid and flowing; it is distantly submerged and glintingly solid. In short, it moves beyond ordinal sequencing but still structures. Coolidge carves the date into the end of *The Crystal Text*, where it appears almost as a formula: “25VIII82–9VI83.” His crystal becomes totemic for a daily practice that is not one of enumeration but of fractal recursion—a structure resulting from slow compression; a dating deeply submerged. He writes, “The stillness of the crystal says Time, time is your / medium. And time is also the fallenness / of all your virtue” (100). Perhaps here, like Eigner, Coolidge expresses reservations about the “medium” of “Time,” or the “overconfidence” of a dated practice. Yet in this text Coolidge undertakes thematically, via the crystal, what he sees Eigner doing via the materiality of the text: “a hard movement of the words / allows equal solidity to the spaces between. / otherwise such seemingly ‘fragmented’ structure / fall [sic] to the bottom” (*L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*, Issue 1). In this paper, I show how Eigner and Coolidge both excavate the multi-faceted date, and employ its slow motion to structure these works written between '82 and '84.

Ang, Brian

Independent scholar

Language Writing and the Present

PANEL 11C: POLITICS, LANGUAGE WRITING, AND COMMUNITY

“What is the difference between method and technique? One could say that technique is the principle of construction in the writing. In other words, how the writing is written. And method is the principle of construction which begins with the activity of the writer as a whole, the extension of the act of writing into the world and eventually into historical self-consciousness.”

—Barrett

Watten, “Method and Surrealism: The Politics of Poetry” (1981)

This paper will examine methodological constructions in Language writing for the purpose of furthering potentialities for present poetic praxis. It will examine Language writing's early propositions of poetic value, politicizing referential critique and the emphasis on language, enabling increases in the agency of technique for non-instrumentality and its strategic diminishments of obvious political content, and its self-critical contextualizing developments toward investigations of social meaning and struggle and more nuanced positions. Toward the present, these examinations will be read with the recently emerged conceptual writing's methodological propositions of diminished reading and the emphasis on concept, as guiding resources and commitments for propositions of methodological development, including the examination of precedent works since Language writing within this propositional matrix.

Archambeau, Robert

Lake Forest College

PANEL: 11D GNOSTICS, MYSTICS, AND HERETICS OF THE REAGAN YEARS

Panel participants: Robert Archambeau (chair and organizer), Joseph Donahue, and Stephen Fredman

In the popular imagination, the 1980s are years of materialist excess, economic self-interest, and the triumph of capitalism. Perhaps it should not come as a surprise that these were also years when a number of important poets turned away from materialism to examine, and participate in, versions of the spiritual life. John Taggart, John Matthias, and the performance artist Laurie Anderson (who undertook important poetic works in the 1980s) were all born within a few years of each other in the 1940s, came of age during a period of prosperity, dissent, and spiritual exploration, and all experienced disillusion with the dominant culture of the 1980s. Their responses are diverse: Taggart's poems for the Rothko Chapel seek a world of art and spirituality removed from the everyday; Anderson's poetic work seeks an angelic, apocalyptic resolution to the various social crises of the 80s; and Matthias turns to the history of Catholicism and its repressed heretical off-shoots as a way of trying to reconcile himself to a violent and alienating world. Together, these three papers show a spectrum of spiritual responses to the specific problems of the Reagan years.

Archambeau, Robert

Lake Forest College

History, Totality, Silence: John Matthias' "A Compostela Diptych"

PANEL 11D: GNOSTICS, MYSTICS, AND HERETICS OF THE REAGAN YEARS

Much of John Matthias' work from the 1970s consists of his attempts to address what he terms his "post-activist consternation," his sense of disillusion with American culture and politics following his intense involvement in 1960s Bay Area radical protest culture. In "An East Anglian Diptych" and "Notes from an Apocryphal Midwest" he had tried to reconcile himself to specific places: to the English countryside and to Indiana, where he settled. In his most ambitious poetry of the 1980s, the long poem "A Compostella Diptych," Matthias turns to the history of the ancient pilgrim route crossing France and Spain, seeing it as a microcosm of Western history. He tries, again and again, to see in the shape of that history a meaningful totality, something that would rise above the "catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage" seen by Walter Benjamin's angel of history. All attempts to see a meaningful totality in history, though, become subverted by narratives of persecution: Matthias punctuates his pilgrim narratives with the history of the heretics slaughtered in the name of Catholicism. In the end, he turns from attempts at a totalizing history and addresses himself to a transcendent silence that serves as the precondition for all history.

B

Babbie, Raymond Tyler

University of Washington

H.D. in the 80s

PANEL 09B: RESPONSE TO MODERNIST POETRY IN THE 1980S

At the 2012 Louisville Conference on Literature and Culture since 1900, H.D. scholar Eileen Gregory presented a paper[KF4] on Levinas and affect in the context of modern women poets. She began with remarks about her early scholarly engagement with H.D, explaining that her early work focused on H.D.'s strength but at the cost of not considering her suffering. This might indicate a shift in the study of H.D., as Gregory was one of the leading voices in the explosion of H.D. criticism that occurred in (and just before) the 1980s. A look at Michael Boughn's *H.D.: A Bibliography 1905-1990* shows how the scholars of the 80s embraced H.D.: in the 1970s there were 31 articles in periodicals written on H.D., the same number as were written in the 60s. In the 80s, scholars penned 172 articles. My paper will examine the scholarship of H.D. in the 1980s, its context as part of the burgeoning feminist criticism of the time, and H.D.'s influence on poets of the 80s. This last point of interest of course includes her famous influence on Robert Duncan, whose serially published H.D. book continued to emerge in the 80s and has finally been released in its entirety. It may also include other poets, especially the feminist poets allied with the feminist scholars who formed the vanguard of H.D. studies. At its heart, this paper is a grateful look at the golden age of H.D. criticism. It will provide a survey of that remarkable poetic salvage operation—the redemption of H.D. as an important modernist poet. It is also an attempt to locate the agendas (however valuable, however sympathetic to me personally) advanced by this criticism—criticism that was largely characterized by a small group of active scholars. Almost half of the 172 articles written in the 80s were written by the 19 scholars who wrote multiple articles on H.D. As Eileen Gregory's remarks made clear, these scholars are maintaining their critical attention to H.D. as they reevaluate their earlier work. H.D.'s strengths cannot be understood properly without noting her suffering and her weaknesses. Her revision of femininity should be taken with her revision of masculinity, especially in poems like "The Walls Do Not Fall." Finally, any consideration of her radically modern poetics must account for the ways that H.D. relates to tradition. Identifying potential missing pieces in the project of the 80s will naturally require some explanation of which issues have been resolved or confronted by the next twenty years [KF5]and others which have yet to be addressed.

Beer, John

Portland State University

Addressing the Audience, One by One: Fiona Templeton's YOU—the City

PANEL 10C: INTERROGATING AGENCY, AUTHORSHIP, AND REPRODUCTION

Fiona Templeton's *YOU—the City* [KF6] first produced in 1988, took individual audience members (or “clients”) through a meticulously designed set of encounters constructed around its downtown New York site. The work functioned to engender layers of disorientation—linguistic, kinesthetic, and aesthetic—in the service, I argue, of a more comprehensive reorientation; as the title suggests, this reorientation takes place both within the conceptual space of subjective and intersubjective relations and within the physical environment of the city. Templeton's aims mirror significantly those of earlier theatrical avant-gardes, from Artaud through the Living Theatre and “happenings” of the 60s. At the same time, her work breaks in significant ways from these predecessors, and these cleavages are largely analogous to those between her contemporaries the Language poets and such predecessors as Duncan, Olson, and Ginsberg. In particular, a careful analysis of *YOU—the City* focusing particularly on its engagement with the various syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic registers of the central pronoun “you,” draws out the work's reconceptualization of the relation between artist and audience. Contrary to a widely-held view of much work related to Templeton's, I claim ultimately that *YOU—the City* is best viewed not, or at least not primarily, as anti-aesthetic. Rather, its deconstructive strategies aspire to constitute, via the aesthetic, a particular form of political subjectivity, an aspiration that since Rousseau has been theorized as intimately connected with the operations of theater.

Bernheim, Erica H.

Florida Southern College

Clouds That Will Open to Nothing: Revelations and Rules in James Dickey's Later Poems

PANEL 05B: NECESSARY EXPERIENCE

Until his death in 1997, James Dickey was teaching, lecturing, and—most importantly—writing. While his earlier poems are more willfully and deliberately concentrated upon what Dickey himself referred to as his “country surrealism,” the speaker in many of Dickey's poems published in the eighties are more focused on the relationships between outsiders and insiders, rather than on positing the speaker as an insider, an observer of nature from multiple perspectives, the Dickey of “The Sheep Child” or “The Heaven of Animals”. Dickey's later work, however, primarily published in the eighties, and heralded by “Falling,” a poem in which everything interior is brought by force to face the exterior (and yet the poem remains consciously very much inside the mind of its subject), and Dickey's poems in *Puella* (1982) and *The Early Motion* (1981) acknowledge and reflect a very different set of concerns, and it is interesting to note the exclusion of all but six poems from *Puella* in Dickey's *The Whole Motion: Collected Poems 1945-1992*. The presence of family and familial relations in these poems brings the speaker closer to the elements of desire which so often eluded him in earlier articulations. The burden of Dickey to bring up his family (both literally and figuratively) haunts the speaker throughout these poems, the speaker has become “one of them,” a person

who could be seen congregating at cemeteries (as in “Deborah as Scion”) thinking about the past while holding his futures close by. In these later poems, there are rules, implied and explicit which govern the reading, some contextual and others perceived. The attention shifts away from the body, while acknowledging its maturation, but in a notably more subdued mode of discourse, existing in a background constructed of discarded toys; even the titular poem, “Puella,” chooses an ancient language to signify a young girl and her journey (under the eye and pen of her husband) from youth to something resembling maturity. The paper I am proposing will re-examine various poems of James Dickey’s, published in the eighties and signifying a closure, both linguistic and perceived, in the poet’s oeuvre.

Betts, Tara

Rutgers University

Dismantling the House: Marginalized Voices in Early New Formalism

PANEL 01E: DIFFERENTIALS: A NEW LOOK AT NEW FORMALISM

The “new formalism” of the 1980s has been commonly defined as a conservative literary movement aiming to revert to the white-male-dominated poetic past. And certainly the early years of the movement, before the publication of the anthology *A Formal Feeling Comes* in 1993, were formed by the legacy of the European-American male poetic tradition. As Audre Lorde wrote, “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” But for poets of color and women poets who felt the need to write in traditional form during the 1980s, the situation wasn’t so simple. What was it like to be a feminist woman poet or an African-American poet during the era of early New Formalism? On this panel, *A Formal Feeling Comes* editor Annie Finch will discuss her experience as a feminist formalist poet in the 1980s, while poet and critic Tara Betts will discuss the work by poets such as Rita Dove, Charles Fort, Marilyn Nelson, Dolores Kendrick, Elizabeth Alexander, members of the then newly formed Dark Room Collective in Cambridge, who stepped away from free verse in the late 1980s to embrace a movement of meter and rhyme. In dialogue together and in discussion with the audience, Betts and Finch will explore the ambivalences, exhilarations, challenges, and dilemmas that formalism raises for poets whose voices were historically excluded from poetry’s formal traditions. In the process, the panelists will address issues that still resonate for any politically aware poet who wants to engage with the formal dimensions of poetry and its technical elements.

Bowen, Jeremiah Rush

University at Buffalo, SUNY

Offensive Poetics: Practice, Extension, and Productivity in the Poetics of Bruce Andrews

PANEL 09C: BRUCE ANDREWS

It has been widely observed that the growing cultural capital of Language writing in the 1980s posed an unwelcome challenge to the hegemony of lyric traditions in both mainstream and counter-cultural poetry communities. Yet too often this challenge is understood merely as a clash of poetic *styles*, or a dispute over the proper form and content of poetry. This view masks the more consequential clash between opposed understandings of the generic *purpose* of poetry. Arguing for a correlation between linguistic composition and social composition, Language writing attempted to transform hegemonic language practices by productive and transformative interventions into those practices. But if poetry can claim a distinctive role in the transformation of social practices (one that can be distinguished from the persuasion found in other genres and practices), then language itself must be capable of more than representation; language must be seen as a social practice that operates extensionally and productively. While many poets associated with Language writing theorized this correlation between language and politics, Bruce Andrews was among the most explicit in this regard. Drawing on Andrews' characterizations of alternative theories of language in "Writing Social Work and Political Practice" and his distinction between explanation and praxis in "Total Equals What," this paper focuses on Andrews' crucial intervention into the redefinition of poetry's purpose, which hinges on his critiques of both the dominant referential and 'representational literature,' [KF7] and the 'structuralist experimentalism' [KF8] employed in some Language writing. A reading of Andrews' poem "Praxis", from *Getting Ready to Have Been Frightened*, demonstrates his alternative to both of these practices, an alternative that highlights the productive and relational character of signification. Andrews' explanation and enactment of the function of language correspond in key ways to the extensional theory of signification proffered by French philosopher Gilles Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition*. The benefit of an engagement with Deleuze's theory of signification is not simply that his philosophical rigor enriches our understanding of Andrews' sketch; Deleuze's presentation of that theory in relation to a concept of practical learning opposed to the imitative acquisition of knowledge carries important implications for conventional notions of poetry's pedagogical function. Poetry that proceeds from a representational model of language necessarily concerns itself with communicating existing states of affairs, giving rise to problems of what and how a writer should represent and how a reader should interpret. On the other hand, poetry that proceeds from an extensional understanding of language necessarily concerns itself with the training effected by language practices, giving rise to questions for readers and writers about context, purpose, and action. This distinction between poetry as representational product and poetry as productive practice deserves our continued attention, as it underlies many current debates regarding accessibility, the relevance of the avant-garde, the importance of conceptual writing, and poetry's political efficacy.

Brickey, Russell

University of Wisconsin, Platteville

The Rebirth of the Confessional Lyric

PANEL 01C: EXPANDING AND PROBLEMATIZING THE LYRIC

The 1980s are often referred to as the era of the “post-Confessional.” I would argue that, just as the Romantic dispensation infused the ideology of Modernist poetics, so too the Confessionals—with their aesthetic of deep, painful introspection and penchant for bringing the most private psychological processes into the sun—have fueled a great deal of Postmodern poetry, and the influence of the mode has actually defined a healthy sub-genre that dominates much of the poetry from the 1980s on. The Confessional lyric is most obviously associated with the 1950s; the lyric’s development can be felt in the New York School and particularly in the San Francisco Renaissance when Confessional expression arguably reaches its apogee with Allen Ginsberg’s *Howl*. But after this, it seems, poetry deliberately took a step back from the excesses and melodrama of the “Confessional I.” Landmark poets such as Robert Pinsky and Jorie Graham began forging a new aesthetic based upon the interplay of language and image, and poetry in general moved towards celebrations of the cerebral (following the auspices of John Ashbery and Robert Creeley). However, at the same time during the 1980s, a number of seminal poets emerged who often write in the Confessional mode or with a pronounced Confessional aesthetic: Mark Doty, C.K. Williams, Stephen Dobyns, Rita Dove, Gary Soto, Tess Gallagher, and, most prominently in this regard, Sharon Olds—just to name a few. In fact, the Confessional aesthetic has quietly become the major force in much of American verse, outstripping other schools which developed in the Confessional wake (Deep Image, L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E) for sheer volume of influence. In particular, my proposal looks at the poetry of C.K. Williams, Rita Dove, and Sharon Olds as torch-carriers of the Confessional mode of expression. Williams is a poet of Whitmanesque American tragedy; Dove is a poet of racial politics and intolerance; and Olds is a poet of sexuality and the abject. When applicable, I also draw parallels between the other poets listed above as exemplars of Confessional expression. Finally, I would argue that a version of the Confessional aesthetic can and perhaps should be embraced as the most appropriate form for lyrical expression after 9/11. We find ourselves now in a position of digging deep and dredging up emotions and insights which may be frankly dangerous to the national American psyche. Poetry has made only partial inroads into the rage, pain, horror, and loss associated with the terrorist attacks on Manhattan. This argument is bolstered by *Poetry After 9/11: An Anthology of New York Poets* (Melville House, 2002) which offers poems clearly fitting into the Confessional aesthetic.

Brinkley, Tony

University of Maine

Raine, Adra (co-author)

University of North Carolina

Claude Lanzmann’s Shoah and the Poetry of Witness

PANEL 01A: BEARING WITNESS

We "run up against the limits of language," Wittgenstein wrote in the 1930s, and "the running-up-against *points to something*." In the *Tractatus* he had ended by recommending silence about that which we cannot speak, but now—in the transition from the *Tractatus* to *Philosophical Investigations*—he proposed a repeated saying of what he had previously regarded as nonsense. Wittgenstein's comment at the time was with reference to Heidegger, and his insight was oddly Heideggerian. There are limits to what can be said (in Heidegger, the ontological difference, in particular, between presencing and what is present, between Being and beings), and in what we say, those limits are shown (in the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein had made a similar point about the form of a depiction that cannot depict but can only display itself). For Heidegger this showing offers the un hiding of what is hidden—the recognition, perhaps, of what was hiding in plain sight—that for him is characteristic of the experience of truth, and while in Heidegger that experience is presented as ontological, in Wittgenstein it is merely evidentiary, indicative of a meaningfulness that would otherwise go unexpressed. Charles Peirce distinguished between the semiosis that depends on the link between sign and interpretant on the one hand and between sign and referent regardless of interpretation on the other. On the one hand there are icons and symbols ("symbol" is Peirce's name for signs) and, on the other hand, indices. When we run up against the limits of language, the running up against is an index. It is possible to read *Philosophical Investigations* and the many preliminary studies published after Wittgenstein's death as attempts to interpret language acts indexically. It is possible to read the ontological difference that Heidegger marked as an index which opens to the ethical in Levinas, an othering rather than a presencing which addresses me in the second person and which I experience as my responsibility. At some point what might otherwise be only a question of philosophical speculation begins to feel like a categorical imperative: to read the index that its referent effects—that means what it means regardless of interpretation—as an ethical demand. At what point? For many of us in the 1980s who were engaged in a variety of theoretical speculations, that moment became inescapable when we first saw Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* because Lanzmann filmed the Holocaust (although that name no longer seemed adequate) in a way we had not imagined possible. Theoretical speculations seemed more than inadequate if they could not engage this experience, and as John Cage might have said, for the moment we were less interested in what we understood than in changing our minds. At the time, literary theory had emerged for us as a more or less rigorous discipline because, as Paul de Man suggested, it had been infused with linguistics, in particularly Saussurian linguistics and its analysis of the arbitrary sign, but *Shoah* offered the indices, signs in no way arbitrary, with the force of traces of the other. How did Lanzmann do this and how was it changing our minds? The paper I am proposing will work with these questions. How did Lanzmann film what he did? How did the filming challenge theoretical perspectives and question interpretative paradigms? The paper will also consider the practical effect of this challenge on an emerging poetry and poetics at the time, associated in particular with Carolyn Forché's work and the poetry and poetics of witness. Peirce speaks of experience as a secondness that insists on what is there despite us and compels recognition (what I took to be a shadow turns out to be a snake, and I feel compelled to notice). [KF9]The indexical offers the force of an experience which at its extreme becomes traumatic, but if *Shoah* recalls terror, it does so with a tranquility that is almost Wordsworthian which Lanzmann learned from Proust and that he filmed as unwilling memory—

Shoah begins with a return to Chelmno that recalls Wordsworth's return to Tintern Abbey. Is the poetry of witness as practiced by Forché and others another belated Romanticism? If so, does it allow for a re-evaluation of Romanticism, of the imperatives it can entail and that Modernism too conveniently dismissed? Benjamin's *The Angel of History* was published in 1994, but it began in the 1980s with these imperatives.

Brown, Fahamisha Patricia

Metropolitan College of New York

Black Women Poets of the 1980s

PANEL 11A: AFTER THE BLACK ARTS

In a 1990 essay, "Wrong or White," poet June Jordan wrote, "I am not a 'divisive issue' . . . There are many wars going on, and one of them is universal and it's gender-specific against my particular, non-European, and female presence in the world (*Technical Difficulties* 145-146)[KF10]. Jordan's assertion reflects what appears to be a common stance in much of the poems published by Black women during the 1980s. Assertions of identity proclaimed race and gender in defiance of boundaries of time and nation. Poets as varied as Lucille Clifton, Jayne Cortez, June Jordan, Audre Lorde, and Sonia Sanchez claimed a platform that defied a culture that read Black as male and Woman as white. In poems that confronted traditional stereotypes of "strong" or "angry," Black women poets affirmed an aesthetics of activism whether in the struggle for women's rights in the USA or in the experiences of women in the struggle against apartheid. Their work links African liberation struggles with the struggle for Black and female empowerment in the United States. The sameness and difference of the varied experiences of Black women around the world inform poems that articulate conditions among their gender/people/race and world. These poems offer clear-eyed commentary on contemporary issues of identity and struggle. This paper explores the ways in which both established and new Black women poets claimed a space for their particular angle of vision.

Brown, Tim W.

Independent scholar

ROUNDTABLE/PANEL 03C: CITY ON THE MAKE: HOW CHICAGO INVENTED SLAM/SPOKEN WORD IN THE 1980S

Bruno, Franklin

Independent scholar

Wittgenstein Abuse

PANEL 05C: FOREGROUNDING AND RETHINKING THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Wittgenstein's writings are an explicit source for a good deal of poetry published in the 1980s—Michael Palmer's *Notes for Echo Lake* (1981); Ron Silliman's "The Chinese Notebook" (1986); Rosmarie Waldrop's *The Reproduction of Profiles* (1987)—and his thought has often been employed to underwrite the poetics of Language writing, both by poets themselves, and by such critics as Marjorie Perloff, whose *Wittgenstein's Ladder* (1994) remains an influential guide to "the Wittgensteiniana of the eighties." The purpose of this paper is to examine whether the uses toward which Wittgenstein's work has been put accurately reflect the content of his philosophical theses (if not the "theories" that he claimed not to produce), especially those concerning linguistic representation. These theses, I argue, have often been misunderstood or overstated: a signal example is the use of views put forward in *Philosophical Investigations*—views for which the slogan "meaning is use" and the buzzwords "language-game" and "grammar" are shorthand—to support a sweeping critique of language's referential function. Some of these uses are better seen as strategic than willful; others may reflect a limited interest in or familiarity with the historical philosophical debates in which Wittgenstein's work intervened. Instances of the latter kind raise two questions, which I will attempt to answer briefly: does the aphoristic and sometimes dialogic character of Wittgenstein's writing, with its dearth of explicit reference to other philosophers, invite misreadings in poetry's name? And: to what extent, if any, is poetry accountable to a "responsible" presentation of its theoretical sources?

Büscher-Ulbrich, Dennis

University of Kiel, Germany

Reagan-Era Word Bombing? Bruce Andrews, Dissensus, and the Critique of Subjectivity: The Poet as Editor as Reader

PANEL 09C: BRUCE ANDREWS

Bruce Andrews's radically "reader-centered" and notoriously "difficult" poetics (McGann, Perloff, Dworkin, Lazer) has produced one of the most rigorously politicized and prolific bodies of US-American poetry to have emerged from the distinctly avant-garde moment generally signified by the term "Language poetry." Given the socio-practical dimension of collective avant-garde activity, it seems obvious that Andrews's textual politics has been collaboratively forged in the process of avant-garde or 'post-avant' praxis to a significant extent. Ironically, while Language Poetry's continued institutionalization/canonization has secured a non-marginal place for Andrews's work, the specificity of both his critical-theoretical stance and compositional method (*vis-à-vis* other Language poets) have often been sidelined or ignored. With this in mind, I want to offer a theoretically inclined analysis of Andrews's most distinctive writing practice by way of a broadly Rancièrian reading of selected key texts (and recordings) from the 1980s. Not so much "difficult" as *different*, Andrews's

centrifugal writing evinces a neo-Brechtian/quasi-Debordian shift of attention from literary production to writing conceived as editing, i.e. of linguistic-discursive raw material, to allow for a more decidedly social address. Andrews's social modernism attempts no less than to contest and help reveal the historical contingency of a) the ideologically-functional discursive formation of the subject and b) the totality of capitalist social relations by soliciting what I suggest to call a "dissensual" mode of reading/listening. A key notion in Rancière's theoretical framework, "dissensus" signifies a "disagreement [*mésentente*] about the perceptual givens of a situation," of what it *is* that is given to the senses and what allows subjects to make sense of it, what can be perceived (aesthetically) and thus addressed (politically). During the heyday of Reaganomics and the mediatized explosion of the "culture war," Andrews's texts—instead of offering an imaginary author-reader dialogue—tried to occasion "re-readings of previous social readings" (Ming-Qian Ma) by presenting the reader with a choreography of social and linguistic raw material ceded from its original contexts and effectively projecting social antagonism into the reading/listening experience. While the unlikely pairing of radically disjunctive contexts and (almost) syntactically coherent prose is "reminiscent of spambot computational processing" (Goldsmith), [KF11] Andrews's syntactic collisions and semantic as well as prosodic juxtapositions are *intentional*, not aleatory. Refusing to "eliminate" subjective mediation, Andrews's 'informalism' fleshes out Adorno's emancipatory call "to use the force of the subject to break through the deception of constitutive subjectivity." As the editing process allows for sufficient distance from a conventional author position and recasts writing as editing, and eventually as reading, Andrews's poetry self-consciously presupposes an "emancipated reader," thus avoiding what Rancière calls "stultification" While there is no handily available "cause-and-effect" formula for the politicization of poetry, Andrews aimed rather precisely at facilitating the dissensual "rupture between sense and sense" that Rancière posits as constitutive of political subjectivization. Eventually, I argue with and against Rancière that Andrews's modular compositional method—the distinctive juxtapositional montaging of discursive raw material and its constructivist contextualizing of the reading subject—constitute sophisticated means not only to solicit critical reader response but to rupture aesthetically the consensual framing of a non-antagonistic social whole where radical emancipatory politics is ruled out from the start.

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C

Cadeau, Charmaine

High Point University

“Time After Time”: Creeley in the ‘80s**PANEL 06A: TEMPORALITY**

Reflecting on the 1980s, it is difficult not to hear an echo of Cyndi Lauper’s song in Robert Creeley’s “All Wall” in *Windows*, a collection published in that decade: “Time. Too much time too little/not enough too much still to go time,/and time after time and not done yet time/nothing left time to go time. Time.” While substantial scholarship on Creeley’s collaborative work with musicians exists, the subtler shift in his line from hesitation toward fluidity throughout this period is less visible. This paper will explore the tension between Creeley’s notation and intonation. Roger Gilbert argues that the hallmark of poetry from the 1980s is “an obsessive play of shifting surfaces.” For Creeley, these surfaces are performative and material—surfaces that many conservative critics overlooked, like Alan Williamson noting Creeley’s “minimalism has become more and more an end in itself” (1980), Richard Tillinghast observing the brevity ignores “the large human issues traditionally associated with major poetry” (1983), and even *Publishers Weekly* suggesting that “Sometimes it seems as if Creeley’s new poems are merely an exercise in being Creeley.” Marjorie Perloff suggests critical attitudes such as these contributed to his exclusion from Helen Vendler’s Harvard anthology of this era. Ron Mann’s film *Poetry in Motion* (1982) showcases several performance poets, Creeley included among them. Significantly, the footage of Creeley begins with the camera panning in on his notebook. We first see only his poems where his handwriting is “just the voluptuous, sensuous symbol.” The poet and his voice slowly begin to fill the frame. Today, we experience Creeley’s work primarily through text, and memory alongside digital archives of performances guide our sense of how to read his work. Ben Friedlander, in his introduction to the *Selected Poems*, defends his selections, writing everything is always “altered by excerpt,” but following Paul de Man’s work, how ‘readable’ is Creeley when performance is also excerpted from our reading? My discussion focuses primarily on the collection *Windows*, using the figure of inside/out to think through the process of reading Creeley today.

Carpenter, Brian

Independent scholar

“The weather is hopefully different”: Hope and Time in Norman Fischer’s Early Books**PANEL 03B: MASCULINITIES**

From *like a walk through a park* (1980) to *Turn Left In Order To Go Right* (1989), Norman Fischer published 5 books in the 1980s that range from works with a strong regularity of formal patterns (*Why People Lack Confidence in Chairs*, 1984; *The Devices*, 1987) to others that compile a range of disparate writing styles and prose narratives (*On Whether or Not to Believe in Your Mind*, 1987.) Across all the variations of styles in these books, the writing undertakes a study of its own boundaries and incapacities, regularly editorializing upon its own ways of proceeding. In formal terms, a common phenomenon in both the poems and prose pieces is the repetition, re-occurrence, and modification of previously appearing and soon-to-appear phrases and concepts. Fischer's poems treat the arising and re-occurrence of different chunks of language and experience as equivalent, or at least interchangeable. This attitude leads to the question of whether the poetics that itself arises across these books is at odds with the concept of development over time, or, more simply just uncomfortable with this concept and unable to conceive of how to speak of it. In addition, these re-occurring elements themselves take up the very theme of their re-occurrence. This theme in turn also repeats and modifies itself across the interweaving times of these books. What results is an ongoing consideration and reworking of hope as a kind of operation that writing carries out, but is also bound by. The writing is always riding on the present moment of its writing, periodically becoming aware of its coming and going. The act of attention to this unfolding of time is a form of hoping, which manifests as writing. Fischer's ordination in 1980 as a Zen priest, his residence at the San Francisco Zen Center's Green Gulch Farm during much of this period, and his ongoing practice in this tradition make up a large portion of the philosophical milieu and quotidian detail of this period of his poetry. But rather than measure levels of Zen in Fischer's poetry, this paper will also consider the ongoing dialogue that the poetry has with itself over these early books and consider this dialogue in relation to Fischer's Zen lineage, as a tradition that speaks against the badmouthing of language and delusion. The paper will also give some consideration to the influence of Philip Whalen in Fischer's writing, both as a poetic predecessor and as a fellow Zen priest, as well as to the strains of Buddhist philosophical influences in some portions of the San Francisco poetry milieu up to and through the 1980s.

Casline, Alan

Independent scholar

Demise and Survival: Steps Towards a Place of Meeting for John C. (Jack) Clarke and A Curriculum of the Soul

PANEL 11B: REMEMBERING JACK CLARKE: POETRY AS NEGENTROPIC PROJECT

Exploring the structure and intent of *A Curriculum of the Soul (CofS)*, the multi-authored “great project” of Albert Glover and Jack Clarke was envisioned as a volume of work that was to carry the energy of the influential merger gained in graduate classes that became boundless meetings of possible poetic life under the tutelage of Charles Olson. At the beginning time for CofS, Clarke wrote in a February 13, 1971 letter to Albert Glover of his clarity and demonstrative strength of certainty toward the “great project” they were set out on: “I find that if the *theoretic* structure is clear in my own mind / at the outset there is no temptation to use the occasion / of having a reader or audience to clarify or prove what one /already knows; instead both can

proceed directly – to find out! / methodically, I should say.” In *A Curriculum of the Soul* fascicle #10 *Bach’s Belief*, Robin Blaser uses the first few pages as entrance for writing his fascicle as he understood Jack Clarke saw *A Curriculum of the Soul*, to try to clear poetry of religion and enter in a shared world constructed of text, reclaiming words or putting a corrected spin, scrapping the dirt off the roots. So what about language and how enter a created world? I propose a presentation outlining a shared world constructed of text as Jack C. Clarke envisioned. The actuality of this shared world that impacts on the question of time and history is based on my exploration of *A Curriculum of the Soul* both in fascicle and book form. Additionally, my unpublished essay, *Between Two Heart Beats*, written as homage to Jack, has begun finding Clarke’s language within a shared vocabulary of a multi-generated “mythological present.” I will have either from manuscript or if available from a new 2012 Rootdrinker Institute publication *Time Factor: Passages, poems and letters from correspondence between John C. Clarke & Albert Glover 1971-1991*. As these letters, interviews with Albert Glover and my own experiences with *Rootdrinker* show, the 1980s were a decade of demise and survival. Clarke’s character held strong as the mechanical and emotional tests found in the poetic community threatened to fracture the multi-authored project while in a still incomplete form. Robert Creeley’s *Mind—No Mind* mixed message became fodder for interpretation for poets in Clarke’s circle and out. The “place of meeting” (for Clarke a mystical goal) was one he continued to offer in speculation and through friendship and shared life in poetry throughout the 1980s.

Chapman, Chris

University of Notre Dame

The Secret World of Victor Coleman

PANEL 03B: MASCULINITIES

In this paper I undertake to demonstrate that within Toronto’s avant-garde art scene of the 1980s there was an element of playful counter- counter-discourse evident in the poetry of its controversial practitioner, Victor Coleman. Coleman is most infamously known as that poet whom Gary Geddes saw fit to remove from his anthology, *Fifteen Canadian Poets* (Oxford), for prim reason. Coleman’s work in founding Coach House Press in the 60s, and as the Director of “A Space” (Toronto’s artist-run centre dedicated to alternative poetry, dance, video and performance) in the 70s is, with his poetry, what is really worth remembering. The reception of Coleman’s poetry by the authors of what has now become something like the canon of Official Canadian Literature overlooks the way in which Coleman’s work, while at times wild and satiric, paid homage to A.A. Milne and his poetry books for children, *When We Were Very Young* and *Now We Are Six*. In fact the innocence that accompanies Milne’s poetry is evident throughout Coleman’s work and is that which gives it its element of playful counter-counter-discourse. By closely examining pertinent selections of Coleman’s work in *From the dark wood* (1985) and *Corrections* (1985) I will demonstrate this element of innocence as it is encoded in his otherwise difficult poetics. Coleman himself remarks that it was Milne that taught him, as did WCW, the secret of the variable foot. Both, then, in its tone and in its

form, Coleman's reputation as the "bad boy" of Canadian poetry deserves reconsideration in light of its secret affiliation with Milne, a reconsideration that begins most obviously with his poetry in the 1980s.

Cie_lak-Soko_owski, Tomasz

Jagiellonian University, Poland

International language poetry: from Charles Bernstein to Andrzej Sosnowski

PANEL 06E: LANGUAGE POETRY: INTERNATIONAL CLUSTER

Charles Bernstein wrote in 1981 "we are initiated by language into a (the) world, and we see and understand the world through the terms and meanings that come into play in this acculturation, coming into culture where the culture is the form of a community, of a collectivity. () words have meaning in use." This is a good starting point for both rethinking language-oriented or language-centered poetry, and exploring the relationship between contemporary theories (and practices) of reading and Language poetry of the 80s. This more fluid poetic paradigm, as Marjorie Perloff named it, provided an opening for the poetics" based on the recognition that the poet's most secret and profound emotions are expressed in a language that has always already belonged to the poet's culture, society, and nation"(Perloff 1996). My work aims to make late modernism less centric, to produce the diversification of modernisms places (Mao, Walkowitz 2008: 739). And that is why I would like to compare two language poets, Bernstein and Sosnowski, poets of special sensitivity to the language pool (Sosnowski's work appeared for the first time in book form in English in 2011's *Lodgings*, translated by Benjamin Paloff.) This comparison, to put it most concisely, is an important issue in understanding the poetry emerging in the 1990s and in the twenty-first century firstly, the poetry of programmatic nonreferentiality; secondly, poems defeated of reader expectation (Perloff 2010: 8-9). The subject of my interest is also the deconstructionist climate of the eighties (resisting the illusion of transparency, about moments of suspension within the texts of poems, see J. Hillis Miller 1985: XIV) as much as the mode of first interpretations (Perloff largely structuralist, McGann grounded more firmly in a sense of poetry as ideological critique, see Reinfeld 1992: 6).

Clinton, Alan

Santa Clara University

The Encyclopedic Impulse: Poetry Before the Internet

PANEL 09C: BRUCE ANDREWS

In retrospect, the most remarkable thing about the poetry of the 1980s was that it occurred during the last decade before the widespread dissemination of the Internet. In this sense, certain writers such as Bruce Andrews, exhibiting what I will call an

encyclopedic impulse in their writing, can be viewed as simultaneously retrograde and forward looking. In as much as Language poetry has a didactic impulse, Andrews represents the encyclopedic side of this impulse, the confrontation with how poetry may take notes from the encyclopedia while also recognizing its limitations both historically and formally. Drawing upon Edward Mendelson's 1970s theorization of the encyclopedic novel and its unpredicted flourishing (thanks, largely, to the invention of the word processor) in the 1980s, I would like to explore how Andrews imagines and implements the encyclopedia as a model for poetry as a form of leftist cultural studies. Indeed, Andrews reveals the limitations of a writer who has signed the encyclopedic contract, fashioning himself as an "innocent surgeon bludgeon." Yet his procedure takes the form of what one might call a committed automatism: "This probably sounds very distracted, but I'm just writing things as I think of them." Such commitment, however, may be laced with a panoply of personal illusions, as Andrews warns: "Puerto Rico prohibits marriage; roosters are gentry, hens are the I.R.S.—Africa at mellow commode, hot air ballooning girls are my Northern Ireland." Nevertheless, the ethical imperative of totalizing yet imperfect theories of ideology requires one to confront the situation of capitalism as one encounters it, no matter how immune to traditional analysis that situation may appear, no matter what factors may potentially "adulterate" that analysis. This falls in line with Andrews' understanding that the "overall shape of making sense [needs] to be reframed, restaged, put back into a context of 'pre-sense'" because encyclopedic poetry, and for that matter, the "methodology" of the writing must take the form of investigation and discovery rather than pronouncements concerning an unchanging system. Capitalist ideology itself, in its attempts to justify, reinforce, and perpetuate such a system, ensures that ideology as a scientific object will remain, to use Luis Buñuel's Lacanian phrase, an "obscure object of desire," especially since ideology as a Marxist object of study is not only constituted by language and desire, but by a capitalist system whose very nature is dedicated to infinite flux and expansion. If "Disneyland now encompasses everything west of Arizona," it may be the case that a "more serious camera photographs the amnesia—" both what capitalism has forgotten about itself and what we have forgotten about a capitalism that does not yet exist. It is exactly toward this capitalism that does not yet exist that Andrews directs his automatic, constantly changing encyclopedia.

Clune, Michael

Case Western Reserve University

Language Time: The Case of Suspended

PANEL 07D: BAD PROPAGANDA FOR TIME

The animating principle of avant-garde 80s poetry might be expressed by the anti-Chomskian proposition that thought and experience are determined by the shape of particular languages. More radically, Language Poetry suggests that thought and experience are generated by the form of particular sentences, rather than seeing all possible forms of sentences as generated by a universal human mental capacity. Bob Perelman's "Five Words Can Say Only" offers a particularly elegant realization of a

linguistic stance detectable in writers from Hejinian to Palmer. Recent anthropological research into languages with non-relative directionality offers scientific support for the view of language that emerges in Language Poetry's own interpretation of its practices (as opposed to Oren Izenberg's Chomskian interpretation). But my paper seeks to elaborate Language Poetry's basic ideas not theoretically, but historically, by situating Michael Berlyn's 1984 text-based computer game *Suspended* within the horizon opened by the poetics of avant-garde life writing. I examine the form of life that emerges from this game's restriction of the form and content of acceptable sentences. My thesis is that *Suspended*'s unique thematization of the anti-Chomskian thesis enables us to glimpse the curious mode of freedom that this thesis entails. This freedom emerges as the dark counterpart to Chomsky's vision of the human as infinite sentence generator. It is the singular, secret hero of Language Poetry.

Cohen, Sarah

University of Washington

Jorie Graham in the 1980s: Reconsidering the "Workshop Poem"

PANEL 01C: EXPANDING AND PROBLEMATIZING THE LYRIC

In the poetry-world debates of the 1980s that pitted language poetry, on the one hand, against what Charles Bernstein terms "official verse culture," on the other, the "workshop poem" is frequently evoked as an artifact of failure. It is the result of a poetics, as Marjorie Perloff puts it, "committed to drawing pretentious metaphors about failed relationships from hollandaise recipes." But as we look back on the poetry of the eighties, and in light of recent scholarship on institutions and literature, including Mark McGurl's *The Program Era*, it may be time to reconsider the workshop poem. This paper examines the case of Jorie Graham, an exemplary denizen of the workshop scene who taught throughout the eighties at her own alma mater, the Iowa Writers' Workshop. It argues that the creative writing workshop and its cultural milieu served as a site not merely for vapid expressivity but for a deliberate and intellectually engaged performance of institutional self-fashioning. Focusing on Graham's 1987 "breakthrough" book *The End of Beauty*, I argue that Graham's work responds to the institutional setting that both confers and problematizes its lyric authority by means of a complex and ironized self-reflexivity that mirrors the dynamics of the writing workshop itself. This poetics posits language and experience as public, performative, and socially mediated even as it stages the desire for a language of authentic interiority. Not only does Graham's philosophically engaged work challenge Perloff's assertion that workshop culture was "a kind of bland cottage industry, designed for those whose intellect was not up to reading Barthes or Foucault or Kristeva," it is also explicitly engaged with the project of rethinking lyric subjectivity in the light of these thinkers' insistence that we see the self as constituted by cultural forces. Furthermore, Graham's poetry helps to shed light on the subset of these forces formalized in and mediated through academic "workshop culture," a powerful and multivalent institution geared toward the production of poetry, poets, and "poeticness." Throughout her oeuvre, Graham's work reflects, explores, and makes use of the materials of the workshop and of workshop culture: an

emphasis on process over finished product, an understanding of textual charisma and authority as continuous with socially performed persona, and a recognition of “selfhood” as mutably determined by institutional and professional circumstance. A reconsideration of this work can help us find new and productive ways to map the poetic landscape of the 1980s and today.

Conners, Carrie

LaGuardia Community College

“The Good Life”: *The Politics of Hedonism in Marilyn Hacker’s Love, Death, and the Changing of the Seasons*

PANEL 02A: MARILYN HACKER

The 1980s are often associated with greed, conspicuous consumption, and excess. Because of these associations and the focus they place on the individual, it has been dubbed the “Me Decade.” Marilyn Hacker’s sonnet sequence, *Love, Death, and the Changing of the Seasons* (1986) in some ways seems the perfect example of this characterization of the 1980s since it focuses on the speaker’s pleasure and revels in the excess of food, drink, and sex. Yet, as this paper asserts, Hacker’s representations of indulgence are not shallow; they constitute a political act. The sonnet sequence tracks the course of a lesbian love affair—often in explicit detail that leaves little to the imagination—but more importantly, it depicts the women’s hedonistic lifestyle. By emphasizing the pleasures, both physical and intellectual, that the lovers experience with one another, she shows that this relationship embodies “the good.” Hacker’s hedonistic value system flouts the dominant heteronormative social values that marginalize homosexuals and deem their sexual orientation as morally objectionable. Her hedonism, which extends and references the literary history of writers using hedonism to articulate political critique, empowers individuals to decide what constitutes “the good,” advocating for individual agency and denouncing a moralistic, socially prescribed value system that offers one version of “the good” applicable to all. Hacker’s hedonistic revelry not only rejects such one-size-fits-all ethical models; it also indicates that those who blindly cling to such moral codes might be missing out on the good life. Hacker cleverly engages with the history and conventions of the sonnet sequence by expressly calling attention to them and then humorously manipulating them in order to indicate and critique the patriarchal tradition of the genre. Instead of seeming discouraged or limited by the history of the genre, Hacker exuberantly plays with the perceived barriers, encouraging a fresh, expanded understanding of the genre.

Couch, Rebecca Steffy

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Spanning the Space that Separates: Space, Difference, and the Nation in Adrienne Rich

PANEL 09A: ADRIENNE RICH AND DIANE DI PRIMA

Carolyn Heilbrun's 1984 Presidential Address to the Modern Language Association marks an important moment for academic recognition and authorization for women in the profession and feminist literary scholarship, its significance highlighted by its inclusion in the millennial special edition anthology of *PMLA* in 2000. In it, Heilbrun makes clear the extent to which the poetry and prose of Adrienne Rich, especially her landmark talk at the 1971 MLA conference, "When We Dead Awaken," teaches and inspires generations of women and feminist scholars. What Heilbrun cannot predict, of course, is the spatial turn that Rich's writing will take in the mid to late 80s, in which location, positionality, and—increasingly—the problem of the nation take precedent in a revised and expanded feminist politics, even as feminism in the U.S. and in the academy undergoes critique and revision at the intersections of postcolonial, ethnic, and critical race studies. The grammatical dissonance of her question, "Once again: who is *we*?" that ends "Notes Toward a Politics of Location," for example, recalls the central tension of U.S. democracy's claim of consensus and multiplicity. As Joshua Jacobs argues in a compelling study of the monument and counter-monument in Rich's work, Rich has, since the 1980s, "envision[ed] her subjects and readers as active contributors to contemporary American national identity" (*Contemporary Literature* 42:4, 728); Jacobs thus places Rich in an American tradition of poetic monumentalization that includes Whitman, Crane, and Rukeyser. In this paper, I take up Rich's essay, "Notes Toward a Politics of Location" (1984), *Your Native Land, Your Life* (1986), and *An Atlas of the Difficult World: Poems 1988-1991* (1991), to investigate the concept of space that emerges from Rich's engagement of both individual positionality and the nation. I argue, first, that space becomes a trope for difference itself, for Rich in the 1980s, the production of which must be acknowledged and simultaneously overcome. This trope, then, gets worked out aesthetically by means of what I will argue is a kind of visual documentary aesthetics, linked to the poetic lineage that Jacobs draw, but also to the photographic essay. Though the documentary tradition shares with the monument an engagement in acts of communal representation, it also, in contrast, works serially to reproduce a shared identity through individual difference. By calling upon this aesthetic tradition, Rich invokes the radical histories of the U.S., thereby contesting dominant narratives of American democracy and cultural identity even as she deploys the national frame.

Culley, Peter

Independent scholar

Leisure Poetry

PANEL 06E: LANGUAGE POETRY: INTERNATIONAL CLUSTER

The emerging consensus on the history of Vancouver poetry in the 80s is that Language Writing appeared when students and faculty of the David Thompson Poetry Centre relocated to Vancouver, and its influence formalized by the New Poetics Colloquium in 1985. The colloquium has been frequently compared to the UBC conference in 1963, both as an event from

which new ideas reverberated and an ongoing chapter in the American colonisation of the Canadian Mind. Events "on the ground" were more complicated, and much of my own very mixed feelings got encapsulated in my invention of the term Leisure Poetry, a mocking but heartfelt attempt to carve out a space for a louche but informed Bohemianism in an increasingly effortful and professionalized literary community.

D

Deming, Richard

Yale University

*Senses of Echo Lake: Michael Palmer, Stanley Cavell, and the American Philosophical Tradition***PANEL 02B: ESTRANGING THE LOGOS: MICHAEL PALMER'S BOOK OF ECHOES**

In 1965, the influential American philosopher Stanley Cavell served as a reader for Michael Palmer's senior project at Harvard College on Raymond Rousel. Although that initial relationship between Cavell and Palmer was more a practical arrangement than the product of ongoing tutelage or mentoring, it does provide an interesting entry for thinking about the ways that Palmer's poetry, specifically *Notes for Echo Lake* might be read through the lens of Cavell's work on the intersection of language and ethics that starts appearing in 1970 and becomes so crucial in the 1980s. The connection between these two figures is especially compelling if we also consider that *Notes for Echo Lake* came out the same year (1981) and with the same press (North Point) that published the expanded version of the seminal *Senses of Walden*, Cavell's philosophical reading of Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau, like Palmer, is a writer who retreated to a lake to write a book that works through the ways subjectivity itself fashions and is fashioned by relationships formed through and mediated by language use. "Who did he talk to / Did she trust what she saw/ Who does the talking /Whose words formed awkward curves," Palmer's propositional, interrogative lines both ask and posit. The paper will not be a tracing of influence—direct or otherwise—but will bring out the way that Cavell's ideas about context being itself a text to be read can locate Palmer's work within an American literary/philosophical continuum. Most crucial to this line of inquiry is an investigation of the self-conscious wrestling with and against authority, especially the author's own authority even as it stakes out the possibilities of community and communication. Cavell's work will be brought to bear on *Notes for Echo Lake* as well as Cavell's invocations of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and J. L. Austin. The intent of the paper will be to show how Palmer's poetry and his poetics enact philosophical conditions rather than simply illustrate the applicability of such issues to the poems themselves. In the self-reflexivity and self-consciousness of Palmer's poems, we see reflected the conditions by which poetry both offers a possibility—what we might call hope—of connection and address to the Other even while it exposes to doubt that same possibility that we can ever reach the Other.

Dewhurst, Robert

University at Buffalo, SUNY

*Rimbaud in New York: Expressionist Lyric in the '80s***PANEL 11E: POETRY AND VISUAL ARTS**

In the wake of the stark conceptualism and minimalism of the 1970s, in the 1980s a rich but short-lived revival of “expressionism” and “lyricism” occurred in the visual arts. This paper will track the aesthetic current of so-called “neoexpressionist” art (embodied, in painting, by radiant talents like Jean-Michel Basquiat and David Wojnarowicz) into poetry, contextualizing neoexpressionism as a generational event with an inter-media appeal that was much broader than is typically observed. My paper will not simply identify poetic analogues for the expressionist strategies that were renewed by visual artists during the decade, but will suggest a more fundamental exchange between poetry and visual arts in the ‘80s. In doing so, I will seek to retrieve the pejorated word “expressionism” as a critical term for avant-garde literary studies, and one that is instructive in reading an under-acknowledged but vital tendency in ‘80s poetry. By way of example, I will place special emphasis on two outstanding volumes of “neoexpressionist” poetry: *A Fresh Young Voice from the Plains* by Eileen Myles (Power Mad Press, 1981), and *God with Revolver: Poems 1979_1982* by René Ricard (Hanuman Books, 1990). In 1986 the National Poetry Foundation published the seminal Language writing anthology, *In the American Tree*, which appeared with the simultaneously evocative and enigmatic subtitle, “Language, Realism, Poetry.” While the 1980s are today probably best remembered by radical modernist poets and scholars as the halcyon days of Language writing, expressionists like Myles and Ricard pursued an altogether different version of “realism” during the decade that boldly inhabited lyric and expression precisely at the moment when these modes were coming under intense scrutiny and censure by the theoretical discourse around Language writing. Theirs was a realism indebted to what Maggie Nelson has astutely named the paradoxical “true abstraction” of the New York School tradition; or an approach that could be described another way as what Barbara Guest, in 1989, would beautifully term “fair realism.” Today, at a moment when the conceptual art of the ‘70s has newly inspired the prominent neoconceptualist writing of the present, Myles and Ricard stand as compelling reminders of a countertradition. My paper takes its title from a performance work that arguably inaugurated the turn to expression in ‘80s visual art: Wojnarowicz’s striking 1978-9 photographic series, *Rimbaud in New York*. While “neoexpressionism” is a term that has been confined to the critical discourse around ‘80s visual art, my paper will closely read Myles and Ricard to establish the interrelated claims that: a) innovative lyric flourished in the ‘80s (despite contemporary polemics); and b) visual arts expressionism in the decade should actually be understood, in part, as a fascinating and charged moment in the history and theory of the lyric.

DiMaggio, Sara

Pennsylvania State University

“this live belly—whose—mine?”: Imagining the Pregnant Subject in Anne Waldman’s First Baby Poems

PANEL 10C: INTERROGATING AGENCY, AUTHORSHIP, AND REPRODUCTION

In her 1998 essay "The Poetics of Disobedience," Alice Notley writes, "one had to disobey the past and the practices of literary males in order to talk about what was going on most literarily around one, the pregnant body, and babies for example. There were no babies in poetry then. How could that have been?" Scholarship about women's poetry of the latter half of the century has focused on the entrance of the every day of the maternal into poetics, suggesting that writing about maternity created a shift in the ways in which poetry could capture women's temporal experience. However, absent from this scholarly exploration is the first half of Notley's claim—writing about the pregnant body itself, which, I argue, becomes a central way of understanding temporality and subjectivity in women's poetry of the eighties. Although poems about pregnancy have been studied, they tend to be read as part of a progressive trajectory that has motherhood as its goal, rather than as poems that express a unique, closed state, separate from motherhood itself. Anne Waldman's *First Baby Poems*, published in 1982, introduces the tension of a split subject through a series of confused identifications—split selves, animals, formal shifts. This tension of the self is distinctly separate from the post-birth half of the book, in which subjectivity is more distinctly separated (although, in maintaining the shift into maternity, subjectivity remains altered). In so studying the separation between pregnancy and maternity within this text, I hope to identify the unique qualities of pregnancy and temporality within Waldman's work and within the larger body of maternal studies of women's poetry—to suggest that the temporal and physical shifts of pregnancy as recorded in Waldman's work represent a significant shift in understandings of the intersection between form, subjectivity, and the female experience.

Donahue, Joseph

Duke University

John Taggart and the Rothko Chapel

PANEL 11D :GNOSTICS, MYSTICS, AND HERETICS OF THE REAGAN YEARS

Certain American poets of the 1980s revived poetry's long standing relation to religious experience. Poets such as Ed Roberson, Alice Notley, and Gustaf Sobin anticipated critical theory's recent "theological turn" in their development of a poetics acutely attentive to a range of ritual practice and psychic materials, and directed toward a nuanced rendering of the phenomenology of the beyond. Amid the poets seeking to recover poetry's cosmological and speculative capacities, John Taggart is of particular interest. No poet of his generation has so thoroughly taken up task of rethinking the ritual function of poetic song, most especially in his major poem of the 1980s, "The Rothko Chapel Poem." This paper will examine the structure and meaning of Taggart's complex and powerful poem. With brief attention to the history of the Rothko Chapel and to Rothko's own spiritual ambitions for his commission, I will turn to what I call the Taggart Chapel, the textual enclave, so to speak, set within the architecture and icons of the Rothko Chapel. In this enclave Taggart stages a Kierkegaardian masque. He imagines through a series of mesmerizing tableaux a deeply agonized ritual text for the post-Vietnam era. "The Rothko Chapel

Poem” provides as well an occasion to consider the intersection of American poetry with pressing contemporary concerns, most especially, in regard to this paper, the relation of poetic form to narratives of secularization. The paper will conclude with a consideration of the poetry of the eighties in regard to a recent book by the historian of American religion Catherine L. Albanese, and her argument for the recognition of what she calls “the American metaphysical religion.”

Duncan, Joel

University of Notre Dame

Autonomy or/as Complicity: John Wilkinson & Ron Silliman

PANEL 10D: ARTIFICE OF OTHERNESS

In *The New Sentence* (1987) Ron Silliman affirms the autonomy of the laboring lyric subject against the reification of referential language. This aesthetic autonomy of the lyric work from capitalist referentiality is met by the autonomy of the reader, conceived by Language Poets as part writer of the work. The bourgeois premise of this autonomy has been critiqued by British poets J.H. Prynne and John Wilkinson, primary figures in what has begun to be known as The Cambridge School. For Wilkinson in *The Lyric Touch* (Salt, 2007) “whatever autonomy poetry secures or claims, shames the author complicit with the historical and material conditions required for such relative independence.” In Wilkinson’s 1986 collection *Proud Flesh* (Salt, 2005) this complicit autonomy is figured as an always-already wounded body, which is at once somatic, linguistic, and romantic. Both Silliman’s and Wilkinson’s preoccupation with autonomy emerges during the evisceration of the traditional working class movement in Europe and the U.S. after 1968. Contra a standard narrative of subjectless writing in Language Poetry, Silliman affirms his subjectivity as white, male, heterosexual, and working-class, as a reaction to the flourishing of identity politics in the 70s, and even more strikingly theorizes the labor of writing and syntax precisely when the collective laboring subject of the worker’s movement is disappearing. A distinct version of the anxiety over the absence or failure of a collective revolutionary subject informs British poetry emerging in this period, which is theoretically informed by Adorno and Horkheimer’s despair over the possibility of revolution post-WWII, which Moishe Postone has related to Adorno and Horkheimer’s traditional Marxist narrative of the forces vs. relations of production, where revolution is figured as the control by workers (forces of production) of the anarchic capitalist marketplace (relations of production).¹ Postone’s argument is that the bureaucratic society witnessed by the Frankfurt School looked like the proper management of productive relations, and yet labor was not liberated; hence their despair and flight to a critique of transhistorical Reason. The attention of Cambridge School writing to the historical failure of a liberated language, which nevertheless becomes determinate through its negative presence, becomes the failed autonomy of not only hypotactic meaning (as with Silliman), but any connotative meaning which

presupposes the absolute autonomy of a lyric speaker and their resources of language. The irony is that British poetry of this period is often thought of as concerned with lyric in a way Language Poets are meant to have abandoned.

¹ *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was first published in English in 1973. See Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993).

Dunton, Sara

University of New Brunswick

Critical Casting of H.D. and Mina Loy in the 1980s: From the Shadows into the Spotlight

PANEL 09B: RESPONSES TO MODERNIST POETRY IN THE 1980S: CRITICISM, POETRY, AND TRANSLATION

Our present-day appreciation of poets H.D. and Mina Loy owes much to the concerted efforts of feminist critics in the 1980s. Responding to the notable absence of both women's poetics in scholarly anthologies, and to the limited attention to their work, these critics pushed the careers of H.D. and Loy into the spotlight of literary discourse. Virginia Kouidis's biography, *Mina Loy: American Modernist Poet* (1980), and Susan Stanford Friedman's groundbreaking analysis, *Psyche Reborn: The Emergence of H.D.* (1981), launched a decade marked by extensive critical inquiry. The explorations of Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Carolyn Burke, Adalaide Morris, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (to name but a few), and the publication of *H.D.: Woman and Poet* (NPF, 1986), and *H.D. Selected Poems* (ND, 1988), have since become touchstones for scholars of modernist women's writing. This paper examines the context and content of these influential works from the 1980s, and considers how, and why, they shaped the reception of H.D. and Loy in that decade.

E

Enggass, Dale

University of Utah

“...An up to date way to read”: *Cut-ups, Film and Peter Seaton’s The Son Master***PANEL 06D: POETRY ON FILM AND VIDEO**

In the early 1980s, New York City’s Downtown arts scene brought together a potent mixture of avant-garde artists and political activists in an environment that fostered improvisatory methods and encouraged collaboration across disciplines. Chief among this scene were many of the East Coast poets who came to be associated with Language poetry such as Charles Bernstein and Bruce Andrews, co-editors of *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Magazine*. As these and other poets whose work frequently appeared in Bernstein’s and Andrews’ magazine have achieved increasing critical acceptance and attention, one figure who seems to have gotten lost in the shuffle is Peter Seaton. Seaton, who published three books of incredibly dense, almost Steinian prose in the late seventies and early eighties, seemed to fade from the scene in the second half of the latter decade and very little, if any, critical work has tackled his small but intriguing output. In the hope of generating further critical interest in Seaton, this paper will ground Seaton’s *The Son Master* (1982) within the context of the Downtown arts scene and argue that Seaton’s at-times impenetrable syntax can be viewed as an experiment in cut-ups and splicing similar to Henry Hills’ contemporaneous experiments in film. Seaton’s splicing together of incongruous clauses creates a language that is at once opaque and constantly suggestive, providing the reader with a capacious site for making meaning even as it destabilizes all semantic possibilities. Stylistically, Seaton’s work floats somewhere in between Clark Coolidge’s experiments in syntactic disruption and the paratactic leveling of the New Sentence as defined by Ron Silliman. Seaton’s idiosyncratic position thus complicates received narratives of Language Poetry and the 80s avant-garde—particularly Silliman’s analysis of prose poetry. Seaton’s sentences often seem to be constructed from disparate parts, as if he were splicing together clauses, or even phrases, from multiple narrative or thematic strands. It is this spliced quality of Seaton’s work that is most immediately reminiscent of Henry Hills’ trio of early eighties films *Plagiarism* (1981), *Radio Adios* (1982) and *Money* (1985). Each of these films are micro-edited mash-ups of musicians, dancers, and poets performing, reading, and improvising in the midst of New York City’s bustle. All of these performances —each a potential narrative strand—are cut-up and rearranged through an intensive process of micro-editing, creating a feverish and discordant, but also intensely rhythmic and strangely intuitive, fusion of image and sound. Indeed, Hills’ films seem to be enacting both visually and aurally the same sort of disruptive, de-contextualizing play with language that the poets associated with *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Magazine* were engaging in. Seaton was close friends with Hills and on the periphery of (if not actually participating in) the making of these films. But whatever the level of direct influence Hills’ micro-editing may have had on Seaton’s writing, reading this writing as filmic reveals a deeply rhythmic structure and poly-semantic organization in which separate strands of language are chopped up and reconstituted in new

contexts. *The Son Master*—like Hills’ films—uses these rhythmic and structural qualities to create active, attentive readers. Seaton’s prose may be highly disrupted and difficult to latch onto, but its refusal to “mean” in any normative sense also renders it surprisingly hypnotic and engaging.

F

Fedorova, Natalia

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

*Videopoetics in the 80s***PANEL 06D: POETRY ON FILM AND VIDEO**

The paper is aiming to look at the early days of videopoetry development in international perspective through the works of Ernesto Melo e Castro, Gianni Totti, Vitto Acconci, Tom Konyves, Richard Kostelanez, Elena Katsuba, Konstantin Kedrov and Alexandre Gornon. "Poetry film" first appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century when there was a turn in the organization of cinema perception practices (introduction of cinema theaters and policy of distribution rights). The transitory nature of cinema allowed it to embrace written words in its structure, as in Michael Curtiz's *My Brother is Coming*, or in D.W. Griffith's work *The Unchanging Sea* as based on Antal Farkas's poem "The Unchanging Sea," and suggested by Charles Kingsley's "Three Fishers." As noted in Funkhouser's *Prehistoric Digital Poetry* it was in 1968 that Ernesto Melo e Castro created his videopoem *Roda Lume*. However, the 80s should be counted as the real birth of video poetry as a genre; a time when videocameras and personal computers had become widely spread. The videopoetry as a phenomenon forms in the 1980s, due to the works of Ernesto Melo e Castro, Gianni Totti, Tom Konyves and Richard Kostelanez, Elena Katsuba and Konstantin Kedrov. Philippe Bootz. In *Poetic Machinations* several videopoems produced in France in the 80s are mentioned and an even broader catalogue of videopoems of the period is provided by Caterina Davinio in *Technopoesia e realtà virtuale*. Melo e Castro suggests that it is the canonization of the text in the '60s that serves as an immediate reference and introduces an important concept of "the rhythm of movement and the changing colors, all pointing to a poetics of transformation and to a grammar of integration of verbal and non-verbal signs." A new theoretical look at the videopoetics in the 80s through national and language barriers, and provides contextualization and should allow understandings of the nature and results of mediation of the word at the given period.

Finch, Annie

University of Southern Maine

PANEL 01E: DIFFERENTIALS: A NEW LOOK AT NEW FORMALISM**Finkelstein, Norman**

Xavier University

From "C" to D: Michael Palmer from the Eighties to the Nineties (and Beyond)

PANEL 02B: ESTRANGING THE LOGOS: MICHAEL PALMER'S BOOK OF ECHOES

In this paper, I will (re)examine some of the transformations in the poetry of Michael Palmer from the eighties to the nineties, changes which continue to resonate in his more recent work. Drawing upon a number of the observations about Palmer's poetry in this period which I make in my book *On Mount Vision: Forms of the Sacred in Contemporary American Poetry* (Iowa, 2010), I will argue that the crisis of radical secularism and skepticism, expressed in the postmodern linguistic indeterminacy of Palmer's poetry of the eighties, reaches its most extreme point in *Sun* (1988). In the ensuing years between this volume and the next, *At Passages* (1995), Palmer's work changes dramatically: it becomes more intimate, more overtly lyrical, more expressly affective, and increasingly concerned with matters of inwardness and of spirit. Although the subject remains decentered and the representational qualities of language continue to be interrogated, the mysteries of signification and the status of the Book which have always concerned the poet become reconfigured into "the b—the buzz—of blessing" ("Under the Perseids," *At Passages* 79). To exemplify these changes, I will address two relatively short sets of poems which, to my knowledge, have not been much discussed: the two sequences called "C" in *Sun* and the *Six Hermetic Songs* for Robert Duncan in *At Passages*. Complicating the issue of a transformation in Palmer's poetry of this period is the fact of Duncan's death in 1988. The death of this great friend and mentor could well have led the younger poet further into the realm of what Palmer, speaking of Duncan, calls "the dimension of the Spirit, with that troublesome, rebarbative capital letter." In any case, we will examine what happens when the poet moves from the "mute flooded paper" of verbal reflexivity (*C, Sun* 54) to the "night-songs and bridges // and prisms" (*Six Hermetic Songs, At Passages*) which begin to constitute his more recent work.

Foster, Ed

Stevens Institute of Technology

PANEL 07C: NEW ENGLAND IN THE 1980S: HUB OF THE POETIC UNIVERSE

Participants: Ed Foster (chair and organizer), Burt Kimmelman, and Pete Moore

Foster, Ed

Stevens Institute of Technology

The Calvinist That Just Won't Go Away: Creeley, Bronk, and Dickinson

PANEL 07C: NEW ENGLAND IN THE 1980S: HUB OF THE POETIC UNIVERSE

Speaking of New England and its influence on American literature, critics conventionally focus on Emersonian transcendentalism. In fact the Concord sage was an aberration in New England, owing more to Coleridge and Germany than to well established cultural traditions of New England. To find cultural origins for New England and the texts it has produced, it is more profitable to look to the work of Francis Bacon (1561-1629), whom New Englanders, even in the late nineteenth century, reverently referred to as “Lord Bacon.” Bacon popularized the inductive method, emphasizing attention to observable fact. A strict empiricist, he required that generalization be pursued only when based on fact. His influence on the Puritans, who were to settle New England, was profound, particularly when his ideas merged with the “two books theory,” widely accepted at the time, which claimed that the natural world was, like the Bible, a text through which God revealed his intentions. To study the natural world was parallel to studying scripture. Correspondingly, the curriculum at schools in New England, including Mount Holyoke, where Dickinson was a student, was firmly grounded in science as it was understood and practiced then. One consequence was an intellectual temperament that privileged objectivity and attention to fact and encouraged a literary sensibility that focused on the palpable and concrete. One can see this, for instance, in Dickinson’s poetry: “Microscopes are prudent / In an Emergency.” Two twentieth century poets, who identified themselves with New England’s intellectual traditions were William Bronk and Robert Creeley. In my paper, I will center on Creeley’s *Memory Gardens* (1986) and *Bronk’s Manifest; and Furthermore* (1989), the language in both of which is often sharp, spare, and concrete: e.g., Creeley’s “icicles / like teeth” and Bronk’s “Broken sky mirror, / blue-shadowed snow.” In turn, both poets admired Dickinson, not Emerson, whom Bronk in fact said he could never read.

Fraser, Alison

University at Buffalo, SUNY

Authorship and Autonomy in Susan Howe’s The Liberties

PANEL 10C: INTERROGATING AGENCY, AUTHORSHIP AND REPRODUCTION

Susan Howe’s *The Liberties* (1980) interrogates the written relationship of Jonathan Swift and Esther Johnson (renamed “Stella” by Swift) as it appears in Swift’s *Journal to Stella*, an incomplete manuscript of his letters to her while she lived in Ireland and he in England. Previously, critics have pointed to Howe’s application of Benjamin’s “Theses on the Philosophy of History” onto *The Liberties* and her biographical connection with Ireland, to argue that Howe presents a critique of Swift’s treatment of Johnson in *The Liberties*. However I argue that instead *The Liberties* is sympathetic with his attempts to represent Johnson/Stella and acknowledges Howe’s own failed attempt to revivify Johnson’s lost voice. In other words, I reconsider Swift’s own relationship to the Queen’s English and his and Johnson’s so-called “Little Language,” as well as Howe’s own relationship with Ireland and language, in order to offer another perspective of the text. Ultimately *The Liberties* is a failed project (for how can Stella now be given an authentic voice?) and in this it is akin to the failure of the *Journal to Stella*; neither

manages to bring Johnson/Stella to life. I examine the similarities between Howe and Swift's backgrounds, as well as their textual treatments of Johnson/Stella, to argue that assumptions of authorship and agency are disrupted and reversed. In this case, a significant opportunity for reevaluating Stella of *The Liberties* is created: as seen through the lens of Benjamin's automaton, she achieves agency in the redoubling of her position in Howe and Swift's projects.

Fredman, Stephen

University of Notre Dame

Strange Angels: Laurie Anderson and Spirituality at the End of the Cold War

PANEL 11D: GNOSTICS, MYSTICS, AND HERETICS OF THE REAGAN YEARS

While Laurie Anderson is best known as a performance artist, musician, and composer, she is also the author of significant poetry, with her work in this genre reaching its greatest intensity during the decade of the 1980s. In this paper I will turn to Laurie Anderson as poet, and specifically address her intertextual creation of an alternative spirituality, one outside of established religion. It is in terms of this spirituality that Anderson engages the Reagan-era issues of the end of the Cold War and the AIDS epidemic. Her album *Strange Angels* (1989) is an interactive matrix of angelology with three major threads. The first of these reaches back through Wim Wenders' and Peter Handke's 1987 film *Wings of Desire* (the last major portrait of the Berlin Wall) to the angels of Rilke's *Duino Elegies*. The second reaches back through Benjamin's angel of history to Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus*. The third reaches forward through the Robert Mapplethorpe's portrait of Laurie Anderson to Tony Kushner's 1993 play *Angels in America*. Anderson's lyric work artfully ties all of this material together, making the angels' descent into the Western world at the apocalyptic "end of history" stranger and stranger.

Fredman, Stephen

University of Notre Dame

PANEL 03A: POST-GENERIC WRITING IN THE 1980s

Participants: Stephen Fredman (chair and organizer), Kaplan Harris, and Peter Middleton. Respondent: Marjorie Perloff

The 1980s saw the emergence of a new, post-generic writing out of the poetic avant-garde of the 1970s. Residing at the crossroads of poetry and narrative—incorporating modes such as fiction, autobiography, documentary, the essay, and the

memoir into a linguistically self-conscious prose—post-generic writing has become a staple of today's literary landscape. Building on the breakthroughs achieved in poet's prose of the 1970's (Creeley, Ashbery, Fraser, Bromige, early language poetry), many writers in the 1980s expanded and consolidated the post-generic territory by employing techniques such as the new sentence, the new narrative, and performance writing to these narrative modes. The panel will approach this large, literary-historical topic through gradually expanding lenses, looking first at an individual writer, then at a regional complex of groups of writers, and finally at national and transnational issues in post-generic writing. **Marjorie Perloff** will read the papers ahead of time and offer an in-depth response to them as well as her own thoughts about post-generic writing in the 1980s.

Fredman, Stephen

University of Notre Dame

Post-Generic Writing: Poetic Innovations in Prose

PANEL 03A: POST-GENERIC WRITING IN THE 1980S

Stephen Fredman will look at the specifically poetic stakes in post-generic prose of the 1980s. Why can prose works that display the characteristics of fiction, autobiography, documentary, or performance art still be said to derive from, comment upon, and directly participate in the work of poetry? The talk will engage some prominent cosmopolitan examples of post-generic writing, such as work by Kathy Acker, Susan Howe, and Theresa Cha.

Fuller, Katie

University of Maine

New York Dolls: Frank O' Hara, David Trinidad, and the New York School Legacy

PANEL 06B: GAY POETICS: AIDS, PLACE, POSTMODERNISM

This paper explores the indexical sign of the "doll" as a symbolic bridge between the New York School poetics of Frank O' Hara and David Trinidad. O' Hara's work establishes a colloquial perplexity, admiration, and sometimes even disdain towards the doll image and its multiple representations, ranging from the toy of his youth to the camp icons of his adulthood. Through the continued use of popular culture and camp imagery, Trinidad's work, during the 80s and beyond, extends and complicates the presence of the doll metaphor. While both poets' use of the image establishes the ludic lyric synonymous with the New York School, it also complicates and extends a potential coded gay language, as initially noted in O' Hara's work by the scholar Bruce Boone in 1979. I follow the way in which the appearance of "dolls" within Trinidad's work in the latter half of the century alters the use of this language in the changed social context of eighties, while, like O' Hara, it continues to represent

the playful use of objects inherent in New York School poetics. Trinidad's adoration of dolls and their associative aesthetic raises important questions for contemporary variations of the school, particularly as the image has become a symbolic nexus for issues pertinent to sexuality— Trinidad himself has asked whether he might indeed be part of “a whole generation of gay men collectively consecrating their camp icons” (Trinidad, 28). By reading O' Hara's poems featuring dolls and doll- like femininity, among them "Memorial Day 1950" and "Poem (Lana Turner has collapsed!)" alongside Trinidad's similar work ("Miniature" and 1985's "Living Doll), this paper argues that the prolific use of all things doll in subsequent generations of New York School poetics, and certainly in Trinidad's own poetry, is indebted to O' Hara's preceding use of that image, especially as it relates to Boone's notions of gay language.

G

Galgan, Wendy

St. Francis College

*"We always have good sex on Tuesday nights.": Marilyn Hacker's Love, Death, and the Changing of the Seasons***PANEL 02A: MARILYN HACKER**

Marilyn Hacker traces the rise and fall of a passionate love affair in *Love, Death, and the Changing of the Seasons*, her tour de force "novel" in received forms. Questions of love and food and sex and abandonment are constrained within the rigidity of these forms, of course, but it is this very constraint that allows the quotidian details of Hacker's life with and without her Beloved to double and redouble within each poem until the reader finds herself completely drawn into the story of two women whose affair is rendered in exquisite (and eventually heartbreaking) physical and emotional detail. At a time when American poetry was opening up to new forms and no forms, new perspectives and ground-breaking poetics, new ways of thinking about and writing about and talking about poetry and its possibilities, Hacker chose to use what some feminist critics labeled "masculine forms" to tell her story of the love one woman has for another. In this paper, I discuss the ways in which Hacker's use of these forms, rather than signaling a complicity with the phallogocentric hegemony of "Western Civilization" and its poetry, instead allows her to "steal" the forms (à la Ostriker) and use them to create a vibrant, earthy, strikingly carnal collection of woman-centered poems. Received forms, especially the sonnet, allow Hacker to give full license to her wonderfully original voice. As Carol Muske said of *Love, Death, and the Changing of the Seasons* (writing in the June 21, 1987 edition of *The New York Times*), "No one sings quite like this. A cappella, she's a whole choir. Elegant and versatile in the strictest forms, she is inventive and exuberant in content." It is that inventiveness, that exuberance, that shine though the constraints of the forms Hacker has chosen to use to tell this most personal of love stories. And it is those forms—structured and constrained as they may be—that release the poet's voice and allow it to soar.

Gillespie, Ben

Johns Hopkins University

*Inevitable Collapse: Rosmarie Waldrop and Prose Poetry***PANEL 01D: GENDER AND GENRE**

Prose poetry has enjoyed a great deal of attention since it first developed popularity with Charles Baudelaire. Poets from Eliot and Paz to Ginsberg and Simic tried their hand at the form with varying degrees of success, but few have embraced it as fully and convincingly as Rosmarie Waldrop beginning in her 1987 collection *The Reproduction of Profiles*. While the prose poem

proved a curious experiment for others, it became a way for Waldrop to deny visual appearance on the page as constitutive of the genre of verse; in denying the poem its basic unit of the line, Waldrop forced the reader to encounter her blocks of text in their most ambiguous form, drawing upon individual instincts of the rhythm of language to determine reading. Key to Waldrop's craft was the assertion that one cannot recognize a poem merely by sight — after all, she and her husband Keith had acquired a small printing press and created Burning Deck, bolstering her awareness of the imaginary space of the page through her new role as publisher. While a keen sense of the page as a sort of canvas is evident in her earlier, more conventional work (e.g. *The Road is Everywhere or Stop This Body* features miniature road signs embedded in the text), it is not until Waldrop begins to treat the page as a body of signs and the sum of those signs as symptomatic of genre that she leaves canonical poetic formalism behind. It becomes apparent in Waldrop's poetry in the 1980s that she is rallying against what she sees as the underlying teleology of language — its modulating extrinsic finality and the deterministic nature of that finality. This paper will consider the fundamental stakes of Waldrop's turn to prose poetry through a variety of historical, critical, and poetic lenses. Important points to be addressed will be Waldrop's own defined boundary between prose and verse as well as other artists who shared similar concerns about the nature of language, from her predecessors like Mallarmé and Hofmannstahl to her contemporaries like Guest and the members of Oulipo. Of great significance is Waldrop's own critical work *Against Language*, which she produced while a doctoral student at the University of Michigan, a text that helps to provide some perspective for elements that she addresses in her poetry. The 1980s represent a pivotal moment in Waldrop's career as her poetic paradigm becomes much more explicit, and *Inevitable Collapse* will strive to pinpoint that moment and address it while tracking its various catalysts and consequences.

Gilmore, Susan

Central Connecticut State University

Primer Time: the 1980s Poetics of Gwendolyn Brooks

PANEL 09D: TRANSMISSION, TRADITION, AND CHANGE

I will explore the pedagogical impulse in a series of works by Gwendolyn Brooks for children as well as adults. Starting with *Primer for Blacks* (1980) and proceeding through her guide for child writers, *Very Young Poets* (1983), Brooks focused increasingly in the 1980s on writing poetry books as primers that would instruct and liberate designated audiences to live and write more freely. I will examine Brooks's gestures toward the natural and the global for the ways in which Brooks attempts to not only speak to the times but also shape new poetic modes accordingly. Brooks's "To those of My Sisters Who Kept Their Naturals" from *Primer for Blacks*, with its epigrammatic resolution "Never to look a hot comb in the teeth" and its salute to sisters who "reach, in season / . . . below the richrough righthtime of your hair," suggests the African American woman

writer's poetics must likewise eschew the hot comb of traditional aesthetics for a "richrough righttime" poetics. Brooks is all the more explicit in "Winnie," when the speaker voicing perhaps both Brooks and Winnie Mandela declares:

I am tired of little tight-faced poets sitting down to
 shape perfect unimportant pieces.
 Poems that cough lightly—catch back a sneeze.
 This is the time for Big Poems,
 roaring up out of sleaze,
 poems from ice, from vomit, and from tainted blood.

Brooks's directive to write poems from tainted blood informs the increasingly global reaching out of her 1980s poetry to imperiled children in South Africa at the height of the anti-apartheid movement in *The Near-Johannesburg Boy* (1986) and at "home" as in "Thinking of Elizabeth Steinberg, Friday, November 13, 1987," an elegy that offers the abused and murdered Lisa the acknowledged-as-meager comfort that "You help us begin to hear. / We begin to hear the scream out of the twisted mouth . . ." We need to read Brooks's blood-tainted elegies alongside her complementary and urgently corrective primers. Brooks dedicates *Very Young Poets* "TO ALL THE CHILDREN IN THE WORLD" who wish "'TO TELL PEOPLE THINGS.' / That is what YOU want to do! / That is what you CAN do!" My aim is to illuminate the ways in which Brooks's 1980s poetics take on timely modes that are both politically fraught and empowering. My article for *Sagetrieb*'s issue on Women Poets of the 1950s addressed Brooks's longstanding interest in verse journalism. Here, I'll investigate the primer as the mode by which Brooks aims to not just report the times but formatively shape a decade and generation.

Golding, Alan

University of Louisville

Armand Schwerner's Scholar-Translator: Notes, Paratexts, Avant-Garde Poetics and Institutional Form(ation)s

PANEL 09D: TRANSMISSION, TRADITION, AND CHANGE

"The commentator takes on a more active part. His 'notes' become 'poems.' What does that mean? What are the differences in the first place? 'Poem' is what?" And again: "Prose is eloquence, wants to instruct, to convince; wants to produce in the soul of the reader a state of knowledge. Poetry is the producer of joy, its reader participates in the creative act. Thus Commentary and Text in *The Tablets*. (Is that distinction stupid?)" The mode referred to in these remarks and questions from Armand Schwerner's "Scholar-Translator" is represented most famously in American poetry by T. S. Eliot's notes to *The Waste Land*, of course—a mode in which poets use footnotes or endnotes to offer supplemental comments, to parody (while

adopting) the conventions of scholarly explanation, or to exploit the note's potential for creating a hybrid, polyvocal, dialogic text. Using Schwerner's *The Tablets* as my central example, my goal in this talk is to think about the increasing visibility of poems, often serial poems, within an experimental or post-New American lineage that are constructed out of foot- or as endnotes that put them to some central formal use. As background and context, I consider the use, purpose and effects of the apparently academic "note" in a body of innovative poetry, the chronological range of which suggests the sustained attraction of this formal maneuver: examples can be taken from the New American poets, from the Language writers of the next generation, from sympathetic contemporaries and fellow travelers, and from younger, post-Language poets. While the poetic note has a substantial history, dating back at least to Pope's *Dunciad*, its use (along with related kinds of paratextual apparatus such as the index) has a special force in New American and post-New American poetry precisely because of that poetry's historically skeptical relationship to the academy. To examine the avant-garde "note poem," then, provides us with a fresh way to analyze the increasingly complex, entangled relationship between alternative poetics and the academy, even as the note poem itself constitutes its own evidence of that relationship. Using the 1989 Atlas Press edition of Armand Schwerner's *The Tablets I-XXVI* as my central example, I consider how the work uses notes as central to its formal construction and, in so doing, provides ways to assess, respond to, or complicate critiques of the avant-garde's purported academic assimilation. If, traditionally, poetry is text and institutional conventions and commentary are paratext, the note poem blurs these boundaries to engage in its material form with one site of its own reception. If poetry is the scholar's art, as Wallace Stevens would have it, American poets, and particularly American avant-gardists, have with surprising frequency used the scholar's forms, even if in ironic and resistant ways. *The Tablets* is built out of headnotes, endnotes, the intercutting of "scholarly" commentary, fake citations, constant variant readings, self-commentary, translations into non-existent languages. From one point of view in the poem, these appeals to pedagogical authority and scholarly convention are "all a plot to make [the student] accept a nuclear self"—"Fuck them. They constitute Authority." To examine Schwerner's use of these forms and conventions, however, also enables us to complicate and rethink the historical opposition between avant-garde poetics and academic institutions.

Green, Jeremy F.

University of Colorado Boulder

Raworth at Length

PANEL 09E: EUPHEMISMS FOR AN EMPIRE

Tom Raworth's *Collected Poems*, published in 2003, restores the chronological order of his writing, gathering material published out of sequence by a wide range of small presses. What that makes clear is that much of Raworth's output during the 1980s took the form of long poems, among them some of the most compelling in his oeuvre, including "Catacoustics," "West Wind" and "Sentenced He Gives a Shape." Critical responses to this work have rightly investigated the play between

textual fragments and larger syntactical units of sense, but they have done so at the expense of addressing other strategies, such as the use of heteroglossia, graphic topoi, and collaged blocks of text. More important, though, has been the neglect of social reference in the poems, for these are insistently political poems, expressing acerbic disgust, anger and regret at the damage done by the cutting edge of Thatcherism. What this paper will suggest is that the strategies the poems employ are informed by the political conjuncture of the early 80s, the period in which neoliberalism took shape even as it made strategic and contradictory use of a nationalistic political imaginary, a simulated stability composed of necrotic images of the nation's past glories. This is most obvious in "West Wind," where wry asides—in a poem constructed entirely of "asides"—puncture the absurd imperialist pretensions of the Falklands War. Splintered snapshots of British history flash up as the national body is surgically fitted with new technologies of control, and multinational corporations—"euphemism for empire" ("Catacoustics")—take up individual bodies as conduits of data and capital flow. In Raworth's long poems of the 1980s, the ratio of signal to noise is uncertain, and the space in which cogent political critique might resonate is compromised by the noise of capital. But these poems offer as antidote a language in flight, a poetic discourse that sounds out the workings of power in the emergent neoliberal condition.

Greenberg, Arielle

University of Tampa

PANEL 05D: FEMINISM IN THE 1980s

Participants: Arielle Greenberg (chair and organizer), Linda Russo, and Catherine Wagner

Greenberg, Arielle

University of Tampa

W(h)ither Feminist Poetics in the 80s?: Some Speculative History

PANEL 05D: FEMINISM IN THE 1980S

With "W(h)ither Feminist Poetics in the 80s?: Some Speculative History," **Arielle Greenberg** will pose questions about what happened to and with and around feminist poetics in the 1980s within the context of the Second Wave feminist movement and other cultural phenomena. For example, what were the fall-outs for feminist women poets from Confessionalism? What did mainstream feminist poetics and innovative feminist poetics have in common during that time period? What texts were most vital, and have proven to be most influential, to a sense of feminist poetics? What did the Spoken Word or Slam movements contribute to the ongoing feminist project? What was happening around feminist poetic discussions of race or class in the wake of Reaganomics? What was happening to feminist poetics in the wake of the Language/Narrative culture wars in the

academy? What presses and magazines existed that made an impact? She won't try to answer all these questions, but she's hoping to have a conversation about them with other people in the room.

H

Hall, Matthew

University of Western Australia

The Privilege of Exemption: The Politics of Representation in J.H. Prynne's Bands Around the Throat

PANEL 02D: J.H.PRYNNE

The proposed presentation will examine the manner in which Prynne's poem, *Bands Around the Throat*, his most widely re-published piece, constructs and represents trauma suffered by international subjects and the manner in which positional contingency both implicates and exempts the poet. The presentation will undertake analysis of Prynne's poetic thinking and theoretic underpinnings, as they are exhibited in the collection. This aim will be exhibited by examining the ekphrastic, historic, political and literary references within the poem and to show the influence and commentary these external references provide in establishing a framework of understanding for the collection. The 1987 publication of *Bands Around The Throat* is an exemplary example of the text operating as a direct appeal to the constant threat of systemic control systems. The text constantly rearticulates the inadequacy of safety measures put in place by the system and provides a scrupulous account of fear as a dissuasive belief entrenched in systems of control. Most directly, the poems address African violence, the nuclear meltdown of the Chernobyl reactor in 1986, the social and political systems under Thatcher, as well as systems of financial and economic control (seemingly predicting the Black Monday NYSE collapse). The parallels exhibited between the economic and nuclear fallout work to expose contiguities between systematic controls and their inevitable failure. The dialectic position of the poet is established through these historical examples as well as through references to 'necklace killings' in apartheid South Africa and the development of psychoanalytic theories of fear as tested in laboratory conditions. By providing examples of belief as juxtaposed through primitive, technological and Christian constructs, the poem firmly encamps the reader within a system which hinges on positional contingency and authority of representation. In this regard, the poem's conceits function by focusing on systems of violence, the instrumentalization of fear, and calling into question the privilege of exemption and rhetoric. In many respects, the poem functions by distending the divide between measures of power and control and a necessary belief in the instruments and operations of this power. By examining the latent symbolic violence of colonial symbols as well as the recasting of the Chernobyl crisis as an information crisis and not a human catastrophe, the presentation will aim at addressing positions of social authority, the poet's position, and the manner in which the privilege of exemption conditions the representation of socio-political events in the 1980's. The presentation will provide a brief introduction to the work of J.H. Prynne, for those unfamiliar with his oeuvre, introduce an account of how to read the disseminating matrices of informational exchange within a Prynne poem, and will examine the political events which the poem addresses. In doing so the presentation will shed light on the poet's position in relation to events of social trauma, and address the manner in which this relation and the representation of trauma is mediated by a dialectic engagement.

Halpern, Rob

Eastern Michigan University

*"Where No Meaning Is": Robert Glück's Jack the Modernist and the Expulsion of Desire***12 PLENARY PANEL: DISCREPANT ENGAGEMENTS**

The writing movement known as New Narrative began to emerge in the late 1970s. Bruce Boone offers a partisan description of the socio-literary landscape that conditioned the movement's possibilities in his short postscript to Robert Glück's *Family Poems* (1979), "Remarks on Narrative: the Example of Robert Glück's Poetry." Boone writes, "The poetry of the '70s seems generally to have reached a point of stagnation, increasing a kind of refinement of technique and available forms, without yet being able to profit greatly from the energy and accessibility that mark so much of the new Movement writing of gays, women and Third World writers, among others" (29). For New Narrative in the 1980s, this energy and accessibility would organize itself in prose narrations, but not without an acute awareness of—and luxurious borrowing from—all the techniques and formalisms that characterized the most advanced poetries and non-narratives of the day. Already in *Family Poems*, Glück was writing verses heavy on plot and character, as Boone makes clear. But in his first book length narrative, *Jack the Modernist* (1985), Glück goes on to exploit "the function of narration as a device for registering social meaning" (Boone), as he blows out all the stops and offers one of the most exhilarating narratives to emerge from the poetry world. In my talk, I will situate Glück's move to sustained narration against a backdrop of community organizing and a politics of desire.

Harris, Kaplan P.

St. Bonaventure University

*The Long Poem Which Is Not One: Beverley Dahlen's A Reading in the Magazines***12 PLENARY PANEL: DISCREPANT ENGAGEMENTS**

Kaplan Harris will discuss Beverly Dahlen's long poem *A Reading*, which has been in progress since 1978. Following the publication strategy of long poems like *The Cantos*, *Passages*, and *Drafts*, Dahlen has collected the unfolding subsections in a series of standalone editions, from the inaugural edition *A Reading, 1-7* (Momo's Press, 1985) to last year's unnumbered chapbook *A Reading: Birds* (little red leaves, 2011). What distinguishes Dahlen's poem from comparable long poems is her resistance to publishing the standalone editions until after a protracted interval of deferment and revision. Theorizing this interval—they ferment for a decade in some cases—arguably invites a panoply of interventions usually identified with avant-garde and avant-feminist poetics: simulation of messianic time, estrangement of the "author function," suppression of the

lyrical ego, and more. Further, Dahlen's delayed publishing strategy invites comparison to Arthur Rimbaud, Emily Dickinson, Laura (Riding) Jackson, George Oppen, Robert Duncan, and a host of other poets who turn away from writing or publishing on political and aesthetic grounds; Dahlen does, of course, send her work out into the world, but not before she projects or hurls it into a future time far outside the present of writing. At least this is one main way that her work is often discussed. I seek to complicate this reading by tracking the small press magazines where she first published individual sections of the poem. The magazine record is, in almost every case, not marked by the long intervals of deferment and revision. Instead the magazines reveal a spatialized network in which Dahlen's poems are distributed across a heterogeneous company of contributors, editors, publishers, and readers—which no single movement or school suffices to capture. Seeing *A Reading* in its distributed, uncollected print ecology reveals the social embeddedness of the long poem as it stands between multiple, often discrepant groups and ideologies.

Harris, Kaplan P.

St. Bonaventure University

The Geography of Genre

PANEL 03A: POST-GENERIC WRITING IN THE 1980s

In "The Geography of Genre," Kaplan Harris will resituate the historical justifications for narrative politics that Silliman, Boone, and Fraser variously channel via Lukács by focusing instead on the regional significance that the Bay Area acquired in the wake of 1960s/1970s activism. Narrative takes on a regional specificity because so many writers testify to the transformation that took place both personally and in their writing when they traveled west to settle in San Francisco. The talk will explore diverse examples from the spectrum of Bay Area groups in the 1980s. Writers discussed may include Kathy Acker, Steve Abbott, Dodie Bellamy, and Camille Roy.

Heintz, Kurt

Independent scholar

ROUNDTABLE/PANEL 03C: CITY ON THE MAKE: HOW CHICAGO INVENTED SLAM/SPOKEN WORD IN THE 1980s

Herd, David

University of Kent, UK

Declining National Culture: The Dislocated Poetics of A Various Art

PANEL 09E: EUPHEMISMS FOR AN EMPIRE

This paper is about the relation between poetry and country. The country in question is England, a geo-political formation that does not have the status of a nation, but which can sometimes function in discourse as if it does; a country, in other words, which is not identical with a nation state but which has, nonetheless, attracted national sentiment. The literary-historical claim the paper makes is that since the Second World War, poetry written in England has learned to live without reference to such rhetoric. One can date the final dissolution of the relation between poetry and 'England' to the 1980s. In 1987, writing in the introduction to *A Various Art*, the anthology he edited with Tim Longville, Andrew Crozier opened with the following proposition: "This anthology represents our joint view of what is most interesting, valuable, and distinguished in the work of a generation of English poets now entering its maturity, but it is not an anthology of English, let alone British poetry." Crozier's refusal to engage with "the constructed totalities that represent national culture" had both poetic and political motivation. As he saw it, "[T]he frame of reference of national culture and the notion of quality have been brought into uncomplicated mutual alignment, as though the prestige of national origin constituted a claim on the world's attention ... The longer this show runs on the less it exhibits the organicism implicit in the notion of a national poetry (however complex and dividedly other the nation has become) and the more it bespeaks new Imperial suitings." As it gestured towards the recent history of poetry, Crozier's reference here was to *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry*, the title of which didn't register the fact that some of the poets represented came from elsewhere. The larger and more pressing background was political, Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government of the time having laid claim to the flag. The question was, where did the refusal of any such project leave poetry? Crozier put it this way: "What we claim is both the possibility and presence of such variety, a poetry deployed towards the complex and multiple experience in language of all of us. This is by no means, of course, ever one and the same thing, and the poets collected here will be seen to set their writing towards a range of languages ... but their variety and mixture equally point to the important common characteristic of these poets, commitment to the discovery of meaning and form in language itself." In selecting from the poetry he and Longville sought to represent in *A Various Art*, it was crucial to Crozier that the category of nation should cease to be an editorial default position, that thought and language should not be allowed to settle so readily on circumscribed geo-political ground. Through a reading of *A Various Art*, this paper will consider what such a dislocated poetry looks like in practice. It will read the anthology as a significant (if variously flawed) document of 1980s aesthetics, the full implications of which have yet to be picked up.

Hinton, Laura

City College of New York (CUNY)

Behind Hiddenness: Mei-mei Berssenbrugge's Artist-Book Collaboration with Richard Tuttle

PANEL 11E: POETRY AND VISUAL ARTS

This paper will discuss the Berssenbrugge-Tuttle poetry-art collaboration in the artist's book called *Hiddenness*, a museum-quality, high-production artist book commissioned by the Whitney Museum Fellows in 1987, and reproduced in only 120 copies. I first discuss the role of the artist book in the 1980's as a visual-verbal hybrid operating on multiple levels, and a form that raised consciousness of integrated artistic experimentality with poetry and the graphic / plastic arts, a form that attempted to forge – paraphrasing the theoretical work of Joanna Drucker on the subject -- a heightened awareness of the formal underpinnings shared by both visual and literary languages. Exploring those shared languages takes my paper into a discussion of linguistic-spectatorial perception processes themselves, and the language mechanisms behind the visual field versus the non-visible. Drawing on the philosophical theories of phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty as well as the more recent discussions of fetishism from film studies and the visual arts, I suggest that the collaborative visual-verbal effects of the artist book *Hiddenness* were to reproduce the conundrums of reading, interpretation, and sight -- all of which displace a given spectator's "positions," and insist, instead, on multiple sources of spectatorial desire, knowledge and "fascination." The "hiddenness" of the visual field becomes as important to the spectator as the visible in these contexts. My paper briefly reviews the making of *Hiddenness*, drawing on my own published interviews with Berssenbrugge and an analysis of the artist-book materials used – which create its visual-textual "layers." I am able to give a Power Point slide show to accompany the paper presentation (some of these images reproduced by Jacket: <http://jacketmagazine.com/27/hint-bers.html>). These photographs provide glimpses of this rare artist book (my own photographs taken at the Berssenbrugge-Tuttle loft in New York City, and including images of Berssenbrugge herself with their book copy). My paper then suggests ways in which a spectator-reader might experience this book, to discover and decode some of the inner-workings of the visual-verbal hybrid through spectatorial engagement. Through discussions of fetishism, I argue that the book *Hiddenness* engages with a conceptual paradigm of "hiddenness" in poetry and art; it examines the representational image itself as an ever-slippery illusion or mirage that can forever fade from the line of the spectator's sight. As one "reads" the "book," a series of never-ending relationships are inaugurated—amidst the spectators' desires and the spectators' various potential "positionings," as well as amidst the art object(s) themselves. The artist book seems actively engaged with multiple subjects and objects, as is typical of Berssenbrugge's future poetry to come. Inside the surface "look" of the "book" *Hiddenness* is a probing critique of vision that questions any stability in "the icon" of "the image"—of the book, of poetry or multi-media visual art—through the self-reflexive critical process that I am arguing that this hybrid book initiates upon viewing / reading. I might say that *Hiddenness* becomes a study—through the abstraction of Tuttle's images, the shape of the book itself, and the images' (non-) relation to poetic text—of what it means to perceive an image, *in relationship* with an/other. In choosing Tuttle as collaborator (she would later marry him), Berssenbrugge extended her poetry project in her career of the 1980's into the tenuousness of lyric as radical "activity"—to quote Leslie Scalapino —or motion. Lyric motion at this radical edge of poetry in the 1980's is particularly important to women writers, as they constantly re-engage various potential interpretative positions—and their modes or seeing,

"being," and reading / writing—within a concrete set of visuals that might include gender. Berssenbrugge was working in a context of other experimental women writers (like Scalapino but many others) who were engaging in the this motion-based, slippery perceptual "activity" through lyric. The poem Berssenbrugge wrote for *Hiddenness* would later be published in her own *tour de force* poetry collection, *Empathy* (1989, Station Hill Press), under the title, "Honeymoon." And her collaboration with Tuttle in *Hiddenness* would inspire her future visual-verbal collaborations and artist book experiments with the multi-media artist Kiki Smith. These artist books would be created not only as rare high-end gallery artists books, but also made available through small-press mass-market editions for us all to see and read.

Hinton, Laura

City College of New York (CUNY)

On "New or Neglected Relevant Women Poets": The Feminist Interiors of HOW(ever)

PANEL 07B: "A SISTERHOOD OF EXPLORATION": THE FEMINIST PROJECT OF HOW(EVER)

This paper is a guided tour through the features of the landscape of *HOW(ever)*'s interior design and content—with an emphasis on this journal's regularly occurring columns and features. In addition to publishing the poetry of women poets in the mid-'80s—"new or neglected" but made newly quite "relevant" to the scene of avant-garde American writing in general—the paper journal *HOW(ever)* ran three regularly appearing features whose content I will examine: "Alerts," "Postcards," as well as a "Letters to the Editor" section, the latter of which often contained lengthy and important essays by what we today consider major feminist-poet figures. The journal also ran intriguing, humorous visual-art work alongside poet's work, introducing the concept of a feminist hybridity much less well known in the 1980's than today. The journal's regular features combined with its experimental poetry/hybrid-writing design helped to generate an interactive community of women writers in and beyond the San Francisco Bay Area well before internet software made "inter-active" a household world. It helped to create and/or expand the geographies of those often overlooked female writers experimenting with a more conceptual form of poetics. While many in the more main-line post-modernist writing communities would still consider "experiment" a male preserve by the early '90s, the community initially generated through the internal pages of *HOW(ever)* would set the stage for a feminist burst of creative activity / literary-critical activism in resistance to that gendered model of the American avant-garde -- beginning with volumes like Mary Margaret Sloan's *Moving Borders* in 1998, a conference devoted to women and the lyric at Bard College at the turn of the millennium and other feminist volumes and venues of women's experimental writing shortly to come (including *HOW(ever)*'s rebirth as an internet journal, *How2*, in the late 1990's.)

Hollenberg, Donna K.

University of Connecticut

"Singing Light in Darkness": John Taggart's Poems for Mark Rothko

PANEL 05A: RECURSIVE POETICS

In a recent overview of Taggart's poetry, Peter O'Leary delineated three phases, the "Objectivist Phase," when Taggart was most deeply influenced by Oppen and Zukofsky; the "Minimalist Incantation" phase, when many of his poems referenced the Vietnam war; and the phase of "Meditative Plaint," which has its source in doubt and grief. In my paper on Taggart's two poems for Mark Rothko, the Abstract Expressionist artist whose work with blocks of color Taggart admired, I will argue that close attention to Rothko's work enabled Taggart's growth from phase two to phase three. In the first poem, "Slow Song For Mark Rothko," which appeared in Taggart's *Peace on Earth* (1981), the book which established him in the 1980s, the connections he makes between giving, taking, and singing, as well as, "in the most quiet way," achieving "self-lighted flowers in the darkness" are related to Rothko's large luminous rectangles of the 1950s as well as his writing about art in such pieces as his "Tribute to Milton Avery." Here Rothko describes Avery as "first a great poet," who had the courage to give us "sheer loveliness," in "a generation which felt it could be heard only through clamor, force and a show of power" ("Tribute to Milton Avery," 1965). Taggart's second tribute to Rothko, "The Rothko Chapel Poem," in *Loop* (1991), is a long poem, using silence, in part, to divide its sections, comprised of blocks of verse which imitate the blocks of Rothko's dark triptychs. The poem is about the experience of being in the Rothko chapel. Its main theme, "red made deep by black," views passion as celebration (e.g. "wedding") and more deeply as suffering, but suffering intended to bring enlightenment of a kind. We find this enlightenment, I will conclude, in the third phase of Taggart's poetry, in such poems as "The Compulsion to Repeat," from *Pastorelles* (2004), which deftly demonstrates Taggart's vision as well as his poetics in reference to the vital importance of "a life of images of what cannot be in one's life."

Holsapple, Bruce

Independent scholar

Getting Past the "Lyric Block" & the Individual as Ego: Poetic Method in John Clarke's In the Analogy

PANEL 11B: REMEMBERING JOHN C. (JACK) CLARKE: POETRY AS NEGENTROPIC PROJECT

John Clarke's masterwork *In the Analogy* (1991) is a formidable book, even after informed readings. The five lectures that compose *From Feathers to Iron* (1987), on the other hand, detail a method of composition that clearly forwards the initiating work of Charles Olson from the 1960s when Olson and Clarke were at SUNY Buffalo. In that book, Clarke cites several controlling texts or presences, William Blake—Jack was a Blake scholar—Olson and sources from Olson, the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, for instance, and the Orientalist Henry Corbin. And in both of his books, Jack quotes extensively

from Novalis. In point of fact he adapts several concepts from Novalis's *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopedia*, such as "the Antithetical Synthetic Recognition," "felt thought," and "the Strengthening Method." The soul, according to Novalis, is that through which everything becomes whole, and I am especially interested in the role Novalis plays in Jack's thoughts, for example, in the project Clarke calls "World Completion." My project is to use Jack's sources, mostly Novalis, as leverage by which to explicate one of Jack's key phrases, "Momentary Irregular Incursion," and so open up the methodology put forth in *From Feathers to Iron*, for I see in Jack's method a means by which to understand experience not as discrete sensations or patterns of motivated behavior, but rather specific paths and aspirations, as well as an approach to Jack's own poems. I'll work towards the "deep telluric connection" Jack intuits between nature and imagination, by way of how his poems push, as I see it, to bring the future to bear on the present.

J

Jaussen, Paul

Case Western Reserve University

*Messianic History in the Diasporic Life Poem***PANEL 07D: BAD PROPAGANDA FOR TIME**

In “Song of the Andoumboulou: 1,” Nathaniel Mackey evokes the past through a ritualistic address, folding poetic practice within historical memory: “The song says the / dead will not / ascend without song” (Eroding Witness, 33). These lines, drawn from the West African Dogon funeral rites from which the poem gets its title, initiate an open-ended long poem (or “life poem”) dedicated to the movements of those dead, particularly the many bodies strewn across the history of African slavery and displacement. While the song’s self-reflexivity may suggest the ontological concerns of postmodern art, the historical record with which Mackey’s poetry is concerned refuses to merely devolve into the empty time of pastiche, a criticism of postmodernism most famously leveled by Frederic Jameson and which, in turn, may be one of the frames with which we view the temporality of 1980s poetry. Instead of pastiche, Mackey’s practice is suggestive of a more fragile yet critical historicism, namely that of Walter Benjamin, whose famous claims about the vulnerability of the dead are echoed in Mackey’s song. Benjamin’s threatened history argues that the living owe a debt to the dead while anticipating a messianic, utopian event that can never be fully predicted or expected, arriving at any moment. For Mackey, this modest messianism is the consequence of historical trauma, producing a “post-expectant futurity,” in his terms, that harbors, but does not procure, hope. As a result, the messianic historicism of Mackey’s work generates a simultaneous diachronic and synchronic horizon for poetic composition, and, in the case of the life poem, a form of endless writing that “stages” but doesn’t arrest or control the future. This essay will explore these messianic echoes in Mackey’s poetry and prose, reading his transgeneric writing in dialogue with Benjamin, Jameson, and, potentially, Kamau Brathwaite, one of Mackey’s significant influences. I hope to show how the diasporic life poem offers an important contrast to a postmodern temporality that is critiqued by Jameson, and even an exception to what we might think of as “1980s poetry.”

Jenkins, Grant

University of Tulsa

*The Other of “Community:” Erica Hunt and the History of Language Poetry***PANEL 11A: AFTER THE BLACK ARTS**

This paper seeks to situate Erica Hunt's life-long focus on the issue of community within the context of the Language poetry scene in the Bay area in the late 1970s early 1980s and later that decade in New York City. The innovative poetry communities in both cities had a profound impact on not only Hunt's aesthetic but also on her ethics, which depends in her life and work on the evolution of her notion of community itself. First, the presentation will first locate Hunt in San Francisco and its burgeoning Language poetry scene by gathering instances of public acknowledgments of Hunt's presence at readings, her influence on their writing, and her publication in various Language-related venues. Part of this history will involve relating new information gathered from unpublished interviews that I have held with the poet over the past decade. Secondly, the paper aims to give a general sense of not only how Language poets articulated a sense of their own poetic scene (often in conflict with 'rival' scenes or even between themselves) but the philosophical notion of community at large. In many statements of poetics and even more journalistic columns and letters, writers like Ron Silliman, Leslie Scalapino, Carla Harryman, and Charles Bernstein make a certain notion of community central to their association and production. This section of the paper attempts to generalize their complex and competing notions of community. Lastly, the paper compares to that larger discussion about community and Hunt's particular notion of community as expressed in her prose and poetry. I look mainly at her books that in part reflect on her experiences in the 1980s, *Local History* (Roof 1993) and *Arcade* (Kelsey St., 1996), but I also draw on her other books and published writings, which are relatively few considering the length of her career as a writer. Ultimately, the paper argues that Hunt's poetics depends in large part on a notion of community in which the inclusion of difference—particularly, of the Other, what cannot even be measured as “different” or “same”—sets a welcoming tone, even in the face of social isolation, nuclear apocalypse, and environmental degradation.

Jewell, Megan Swihart

Case Western Reserve University

Between Collaboration and Convention: (HOW)ever's Influence on Criticism

PANEL 07B: “A SISTERHOOD OF EXPLORATION”: THE FEMINIST PROJECT OF HOW(EVER)

My paper examines the ways in which *HOW(ever)* engaged with conventional narratives of literary history, not only with its exclusive focus on the works of modernist and contemporary innovative women writers, but with its emphasis on collaborative reading and writing practices. Such practices work against what co-founder and editor Kathleen Fraser has identified as a distinct form of masculinist logic underlying conventional forms of academic literary criticism. In interviews, editorial statements, and essays, Fraser has linked the dominant mode of academic argumentation to the male bias within traditional poetry canons when recalling both her early experiences with New York School poets in the late 1960s and 1970s and her entrance into to the academy as a teacher of creative writing. This paper primarily examines Fraser's early experiences in the academy in relation to *HOW(ever)*'s emphasis on the collaboratively-generated process of its own composition. Further, I will

discuss how *(How)ever's* formal engagement with traditional critical discourses influenced the shape of the subsequent body of criticism on innovative modernist and contemporary women poets that was first being produced in the 1980s, flourished throughout the 1990s, and has since become an established field of scholarship. Finally, what might contextualizing the genesis of *(HOW)ever's* emphasis on collaboration tell us about the reception of academic criticism on women writers as well as ongoing debates within and about that field?

Jones, Meta DuEwa

University of Texas at Austin

*Ntozake Shange's Peripatetic Poetics of the Eighties: Locating Diaspora in A Daughter's Geography***08 PLENARY PANEL: OF TIME AND BODIES: NEW BLACK AESTHETICS / NEW BLACK CRITIQUE**

Consumers and producers of wine alike believe major indicators of product quality are the location, specifically region, and the year grapes are harvested, namely vintage. A similar premise of my paper is that place, specifically geography, and time, namely, the era of the eighties, are both remarkable features in the production and consumption of the stellar caliber of Black women's poetics. The 1980s, as a vintner or sommelier might say, were particularly good years. When concentrating on that harvest of Black women's literary fruits, critics tend to focus on the crop of prose fiction. As it is well known, Alice Walker and Toni Morrison received the Pulitzer Prize for *The Color Purple* in 1982 and *Beloved* in 1988, respectively. During that time, the yield in the world of poetry merited an equally celebratory feast—after what some have regarded as an especially lean season. Rita Dove, for instance, was also awarded a Pulitzer in 1987 for *Thomas and Beulah*—and was only the second African American poet to do so, nearly four decades after Gwendolyn Brooks's heralded *Annie Allen*. 1987 was, coincidentally, the same year that the poet, novelist and critic Melvin Dixon published *Ride Out the Wilderness*, a pioneering analysis of “geography and identity” in African American literature.” (Dixon, however, focused exclusively on prose in the volume). 1981 was also a fertile year for another poet my talk will focus upon, Ntozake Shange. In that year alone she won both the Los Angeles Times Book Prize for Poetry and a Guggenheim fellowship. She also performed “Bocas: A Daughter's Geography,” (under the title “Mouths” which is the English translation of the Spanish “bocas”) a choreopoem that she subsequently published in 1983. In *A Daughter's Geography*, Shange uses the literal and metaphorical signs of reproduction and (in) direction to practice and perform diaspora in a peripatetic fashion. This racialized inheritance features both place and displacement. Both are symbolized by “a daughter/ mozambique,” “ a son/ angola” and “twins / salvador & johannesburg” who “a long time ago . . . boarded ships/ locked in / depths of seas” and whose “spirits / kisst the earth / on the atlantic side of nicaragua costa rica and whose “shackled” limbs engendered cries that for Shange became “the panama canal/ the yucatan.” Shange's nostalgic and transhistorical engagement with slavery's history between and beyond the “middle passage” is also present in poems such as “Tween Itaparica & Itapua,” where the poem's speaker's parents, ostensibly tourists, become living participants who touch the vestiges of slave history. As she notes “itaparica is an island/near slavador/where my mother sat on a cannon/that useta guard slave ships comin to the New World.” The father, by comparison, engages in a pedestrian encounter when he “got his 17th century feet back / walkin on hot cobblestones.” Shange shifts from the familial to the collective “we” and includes the reader in this geographic and historical journey: “we are walkin/ it is still hot round the curve of our heels.” It is this shift, the turn towards place and the placement of diasporic history by walking—and writing—through it that illustrates what I call Shange's *peripatetic* poetics. My talk will illuminate those “specific poetic devices [that] enable

extraterritorial imaginative travel” in her work that offers “implications for a poetics of transnational identity” (Jahan Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics*, xi). I will consider her move beyond the placement of Africa as a geographical center of Black Arts canonical literature and her creative play with the Caribbean’s colonial pasts and postcolonial presences. Ultimately, *A Daughter’s Geography* creates a visual, cartographic, and nostalgic play with transnational places and black geographic spaces that marks a differential orientation the moves beyond the Black Arts era and its past—spaces in which Shange is traditionally located. I seek to emphasize the epistemic and creative value of Shange’s transnational poetry-of-place. In so doing, I will look “*Back to the Future*”—to borrow the title of a classic eighties blockbuster—to see how she anticipates the ambulatory moves present in later formally innovative poets such as C. S. Giscombe who focus on geographical placement and displacement diasporically. To return to my initial metaphor for fermenting fruit, literary and otherwise: like a seasoned wine maker in a climactically varying region, carefully minding the topography and the temperature of the literary fruits of the eighties will produce a harvest and a bouquet worth savoring—from its nose to its “mouth,” *la boca*.

Jones, Patricia Spears

La Guardia Community College, Queens College

04 PLENARY PANEL: NO MORE SECRETS: THE POETRY PROJECT IN THE 1980S

Patricia Spears Jones will discuss new audiences and issues of diversity and inclusiveness of the Poetry Project 1980s. As a poet, former Poetry Project administrator and board member, critic and resolute attendee of New York’s wider arts community, Jones will frame some of the forces that contribute to the 80s legacy. She will discuss a few of the essential poets of the Poetry Project circa the 1980s.

K

Kaminski, Megan

University of Kansas

*Leslie Scalapino's "Lovely City": Mapping the Body in Urban Space***PANEL 07D: BAD PROPAGANDA FOR TIME**

In Leslie Scalapino's poetry the public sphere often merges with private experience. This merging is clearest and most significant in her exploration of the city. For Scalapino, the city is a site for a myriad of interactions, locating the body in space in relation to people, animals, architectures, and technologies. Specifically, the city functions as a way to explore the interior self in relation to the exterior world, while at the same time working to question the limits and construction of the self and subjectivity. The body and its sanctity as a vessel of personal lived experience is in question, with the boundaries between public and private space constantly blurred. In many ways, Scalapino's poetry maps the ways in which the body becomes a public site moving through in the very public space of the city-polis. The people of the poems triangulate themselves through the city's time and space, using its structure to map their selves. The themes of perception and mapping echo in the syntactical structures of the poems, configuring relations between the natural and mechanical worlds, the erotic body and the laboring body, and the self as experienced and the self as observed, all through the framework of the city. Words repeat and meaning is reconfigured in each utterance, as if the words are street signs that constantly shift and reappear. Scalapino unfolds the urban landscape in a series of compact lyric moments, showing that city life is perhaps a way in which all this encroaching publicness reveals itself most clearly. My exploration of Scalapino's treatment of the city as site for inquiry is grounded on two books of her poetry from the 1980's, *that they were at the beach* and *way*.

Kaufman, Erica

City University of New York (CUNY)

*Rewriting the Epic Hero(ine): Anne Waldman's Revisioning of the Epic***12 PLENARY PANEL: DISCREPANT ENGAGEMENTS**

In *Iovis* (volume 1), Anne Waldman declares that she will "speak a new doctrine to an old form" (5) and describes the project, saying "for this poem I summoned male images, 'voices,' & histories as deities out of throat, heart, gut, correspondence & mind" (3). Begun in the mid-1980's, Waldman's epic project (which spans twenty-five years) takes on and reinvents a traditionally male poetic form. Traditionally, as Joan Malory Webber points out in *Milton and His Epic Tradition*, "the epic hero is asked to live as a flawed man in a flawed world" (42). Right from its start, Waldman's epic does not accept the "flawed"—instead she

interrogates and chronicles a world in perpetual disarray, consistently challenging the conventions of the epic's hero structure. This *new* form of epic is hybrid in form and gender—because we “all live the epic life” (as Waldman states in “Epic & Performance”) as time progresses, both political and poetical forms must do the same. This paper aims to engage and explore Waldman's revisioning of the epic, specifically through examining how the traditional form is exploded so that a new feminist rendering, particularly resonant for the 1980's (rise of neo-liberalism, Cold War, surveillance society), reverberates through. I will attempt to align Milton's use of “arguments” as an epic framing device, his embedding of variant forms within the epic as a whole (i.e. sonnets), and his in medias res hero narrative with Waldman's section headings, seamless moves between poem, prose, epistle, and visuals. As Waldman writes, “what got clearer was architecture, was my power & that if you kept coming back around section by section you'd reach my ultimate protest which reduced me to an object of desire.”

Kimmelman, Burt

New Jersey Institute of Technology

The Emergence of LangPo and NeoObjectivist Poetry and Poetics in the 1980s

PANEL 05C: FOREGROUNDING AND RETHINKING THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

This paper will discuss the tensions among two groups of NeoObjectivist writers during the period of Language Poetry's ascendancy and beyond, within the context of activities of a broader North American avant-garde (tensions which were in part played out in the pages of National Poetry Foundation publications and, even after the 1980s, in the NPF conferences starting in the following decade). The paper will inevitably assess LangPo's contribution to the literary canon and through that assessment the paper will more broadly consider the possible relevance of not only Modernism, but also of the various experimental poetics as codified in the Donald Allen anthology *The New American Poetry*, to today's avant-garde movements.

Kimmelman, Burt

New Jersey Institute of Technology

The New New England Mind: Perry Miller, F. O. Matthiessen, Henry David Thoreau, William Bronk, Susan Howe, and the Reimagining of Place

PANEL 07C: NEW ENGLAND IN THE 1980S: HUB OF THE POETIC UNIVERSE

Examining the respective surfaces of the poems of William Bronk and Susan Howe, no sign of the mutual admiration they held for one another would be evident, since their poetics seem at first glance to be quite divergent from one another (yet essentially the two bodies of work seem to be in synch). Howe's and Bronk's works are akin for reasons having to do in part with these

two poets' individual pasts, such as their respective self-distancing from Harvard, an institution that, iconically in the work of Perry Miller and F. O. Matthiessen, fostered an artistic, historiographical, as well as a literary-critical sensibility both poets would abjure in their own ways. The result of this rejection was a working out of a new conceptualization of "The New England Mind," more or less in parallel with the other poet, and particularly for each of them in a significant way through a manifest affection for Henry David Thoreau. This paper will attempt, in a reading-through of Bronk's and Howe's writings involving Thoreau and of his work too, to spell out what a new "New England Mind" might be, and finally, if there is time, the paper will consider other New England poets, some variously connected poetically with both Bronk and Howe, and contrast them to the writings of other New England poets past and present who might still, arguably, be working within the framework that Miller's title *The New England Mind* typifies.

Kinnahan, Linda A.

Duquesne University

PANEL 07B: "A SISTERHOOD OF EXPLORATION": THE FEMINIST PROJECT OF HOW(EVER)

Participants: Linda A. Kinnahan (chair and organizer), Laura Hinton, Megan Swihart Jewell

In May of 1983, the first issue of *HOW(ever)* appeared. Its founding editor, Kathleen Fraser, was joined by associate and contributing editors Frances Jaffer, Beverly Dahlen, Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Carolyn Burke, to announce a journal focused on "women poets who were writing experimentally" but without much recognition or visibility. In its opening messages from the editors, *HOW(ever)* voiced a recognition of the integral dynamics of production and reception linking creative work with diverse reading communities of poets, scholars, activists, and readers of all kinds. Moreover, the editors spoke to the limitations of a dominant understanding of "feminist" or women's poetry prevalent throughout the Second Wave, which promoted accessible, expressive poetry reporting on women's experiences, primarily through the lyric voice and model. Asserting that linguistically and formally experimental poetry also performed feminist work, the journal's opening issue sought to "make a bridge between scholars thinking about women's language issues, vis-à-vis the making of poetry, and the women making those poems," creating a "place in which poets can talk to scholars through poems and working notes on those poems, as well as through commentary on neglected women poets who were/are making textures and structures of poetry in the tentative region of the untried" (Kathleen Fraser, *HOW(ever)* 1.1, p. 1). This panel focuses on the important work taken on by this journal during the 1980s, particularly as it activated and expanded that decade's ideas of feminist poetics. In particular, this group of papers will explore the journal's format, arrangement, and content in relation to the following issues: disrupting conventional relationships between scholarly and creative work, and between the author and her work; making visible the work of contemporary experimental women writers and recovering a lineage of earlier writers; advancing and exploring the feminist

work of formal and linguistic innovation; encouraging non-traditional forms of critical engagement, including collaboration, cross-genre work, and considerations of the visual page; and expanding ideas about and practices identified as “feminist poetics.” This panel will argue that this slender journal played a highly significant role in theorizing, constructing, and enacting a feminist experimental poetics that opens up conversations central to discussions of poetry of the 80s and continuing until the present day. As Rachel Blau DuPlessis commented in the journal’s final issue, it “was a space of positive resistance to and powerful critique of the period style in poetry” and a “space for a sisterhood of exploration” (VI.4, 15). How was this “sisterhood” constructed over the space of nine years and 24 issues?

Kinnahan, Linda A.

Duquesne University

Visual Texts in HOW(ever)

PANEL 07B: “A SISTERHOOD OF EXPLORATION”: THE FEMINIST PROJECT OF HOW(EVER)

Beginning with the second issue of its first volume, in October 1983, and until its final issue over nine years later in January 1992, each issue of *HOW(ever)* used the first page to prominently place a visual image, usually taking up much of the page. At times, the images are directly related to the textual production of a particular poet; at other times, the page space is used to visually signal a thematic and/or formal focus for the issue. This paper will explore how the field of the visual page functions throughout the run of *HOW(ever)*, taking up the following questions: In what different ways do these images function, in relation to individual issues and to works published within the issue? How do these visual spaces contribute to a construction of the “experimental” pursued within the journal’s lifetime, especially in relation to concepts of the “feminine”, “feminist”, “marginal”, and “innovative”? How do these visuals build, suggest, and/or promote interfaces between the visual and the verbal in contemporary poetry? How does the journal’s use of visual material construct ways of thinking about visual poetics, particularly in contemporary and feminist contexts?

Konyves, Tom

University of the Fraser Valley, Canada

Videopoetry: The Birth of a New Genre

PANEL 06D: POETRY ON FILM AND VIDEO

It is indisputable and adequately documented that poetry has evolved since at least the late 1880’s, when Stéphane Mallarmé began experimenting with the fusions between poetry and the other arts that were to blossom in the heady years of Futurism,

Dadaism and Surrealism, where the tension between the words themselves and the way they were displayed on the page was explored. It is now universally accepted that visual or concrete poetry – designed with the page in mind – is widely practiced, thoroughly anthologized, with numerous books and scholarly articles devoted to what has become a valid *genre* of writing. With the advent of the new technologies of cinema and, half a century later, video, it is no lesser a statement of fact that poetry began to further explore the new media, first described as *filmpoems* and, more recently, in the form of *videopoetry* – a label now also widely accepted as a legitimate offspring of visual poetry, if not an entirely new genre of poetry. While a few experimental filmmakers managed to produce what they called a *filmpoem*, sometimes termed a *cinepoem*, it has been its technology-assisted successor, videopoetry, that captured the imagination of young poets in the mid-‘80s, leading to an unprecedented surge in the production of work that has evolved by degrees to its present state, wherein Vancouver, Berlin, Buenos Aires, Rome and New Delhi are attracting thousands to annual videopoetry festivals. June 1, 1983 could be considered a significant turning point in the transformation of filmpoems to videopoems; the advent of video technology is beginning to enable poet-filmmakers to circumvent the costly process of film production. On this day, “Words and Moving Images,” a conference hosted by the Cinema and Photography Department of Concordia University in Montreal, is about to present a 4-day series of talks and screenings. For the most part, the screenings present works from The San Francisco Poetry Film Workshop, the founding project of the National Poetry Association, organized by the workshop's director, filmmaker and poet Herman Berlandt. By 1983, the advent of video technology is beginning to enable poet-filmmakers to circumvent the costly process of film production. Poets are still limited to “institutional” access—universities, artist-run centres and cooperatives—to experiment with (what is to become) a new form of poetic (as opposed to cinematic) expression. This presentation offers a brief insight into the beginnings of videopoetry, including pioneering works of the 1980s by Richard Kostelanetz, Anne Waldman, Su Friedrich, Jan McLaughlin, Alexis Krasilovsky, bpNichol, Ernst Jandl and the presenter, Tom Konyves. website:<http://www.amproductions.com/videos/artsandsci/videopoetry/PoetryPerformance.html>

Kunin, Aaron (not attending)

Pomona College

PANEL 07D: BAD PROPAGANDA FOR TIME

Participants: Aaron Kunin (chair and organizer), Paul Jaussen, Megan Kaminski, and Michael Clune

Our title might sound confusing, but in fact it names the exact topic of this panel. The NPF conferences sort poetry into ten-year increments. This periodization encourages a kind of historicist scholarship that locates poems in cultural moments. We consider historicism to be bad propaganda for time insofar as poems do not live in decades. In order for a poem to have a history at all, it has to cross cultures and epochs. At the very least, it has to last longer than an instant. However, the traditional humanist view of literary history that privileges the lastingness of some special poems may also be bad propaganda

for time, insofar as no object lasts forever. The three papers on this panel consider poems from the 1980s that seek to participate in time rather differently. Michael Clune finds in the text-based computer game *Suspended* an unlikely meeting place for Perelman's constructivist account of poetic language and the humanist project of stopping time. Aaron Kunin finds that Guest, rather than trying to redeem lost time (like Milton or Proust or Bishop), instead offers loss itself as compensation. Paul Jaussen finds in Mackey's life poem "Song of the Andoumboulou" a messianic time that threatens to puncture rectilinear history. Perhaps these papers represent a third kind of bad propaganda for time, insofar as the projects they describe are physically impossible. To this we reply that the impossible — what a poem can say but can't do — is a poem's fictional element. No feature of a poem is more worthy of study than that.

L

Lamm, Kimberly

Duke University

*Listening to Musicality (1989): Barbara Guest's Collaborative Poetics and the Possibility for Feminism in the 1980s***PANEL 11E: POETRY AND VISUAL ARTS**

The 1980s are often considered the decade when second-wave feminism dissipated as an active and visible force in Euro-American political and intellectual life. For the most part this is correct. However, there is new scholarship in feminist theory and history, represented by Claire Hemmings and others, that brings nuanced attention to the feminist 1970s and argues that feminism was not wiped away by the neo-conservative backlash, but transformed into stealth articulations that require interpretative subtlety. In many ways, the demise of feminism in the 1980s allows Barbara Guest's relationship to it—no doubt tentative, implicit, and subtle—to come into view, as Guest's feminism was stealth from the start. This essay examines one of Guest's collaborative book projects with the visual artist June Felter—*Musicality* (1988)—as a way to think through Guest's relationship to feminism, first of all, and also draw upon Guest's commitment to the imagination above all else to bring nuance and range to contemporary perceptions of the relationship between feminism and poetry in a post-1980s world. I argue that *Musicality*, a collaborative poem/painting composed by two women artists, is crucial for understanding Guest's subtle engagement with feminism and attests to her aesthetic of restraint, which carves a careful balance between the forces of the imagination and a "fair realism" (the title of another Guest book from the 1980s) ethically attentive to the contours of the recognizable world. In its efforts to shape a collaborative architecture in which a feminist imagination could be lived, perceived, and listened to, the "fair realism" of *Musicality* serves as an interesting counterpoint to—but not a full dismissal of—the postmodernism that emblemizes intellectual life in the 1980s. Read from the vantage point of *Musicality*, which demonstrates that feminist collaborations can be imagined, realized, and heard in times of political attenuation, I will argue that Guest's work can contribute substantially to our understanding of the crucial role imagination can play in feminist thought.

Lampe, Brooks

The Catholic University of America

*Density and Image: Clark Coolidge's Solution Passage***PANEL 01B: CLARK COOLIDGE**

Although Clark Coolidge's work is primarily read in the context of Language poetry, he also represents a point of convergence between multiple traditions and fields of knowledge. Jazz musicology, for instance, exerts a significant influence on his work,

as Aldon Neilsen has shown,¹ and Andrew Joron elucidates Coolidge's composition process to his interest in geological science.² More recently, Charles Borkuis postulates Coolidge as an example of an interactive zone between Language poetry and surrealism, wherein both traditions "hold to an antimimetic view of language that resists explaining, translating, or illustrating experience."³ Coolidge's distinctive style, centered on a twisted syntactic technique, can be productively contextualized from all of these vantage points. After focusing on the phonemic level of language in his early career, Coolidge's style in the 80s wrestles with more complicated aspects of textuality. In addition to shifting toward jazz as a source for invention and rhythm, he tends to incorporate loosely thematic and topical structures, as is demonstrated in two of his most frequently highlighted works: *The Crystal Text* (1986) and *At Egypt* (1988). In these books, the extreme syntactic fragmentation of his earlier works, such as *Space* (1970) and *The Maintains* (1974), is counterbalanced with undercurrents of lyric compression, persona and self-reflexivity. Falling in between these phases in his career are the short, alluring poems of *Solution Passage: Poems 1978-81* (1986). In my presentation, I wish to investigate this transitional phase in Coolidge's development through an examination of the style of *Solution Passage*. In particular, I am interested in the function of imagery as a contrasting variable that Coolidge plays against syntax. Tom Orange's insights about arrangement and density in Coolidge's experimental work serve as the framework for my analysis.⁴ By examining the unstable interface of syntax and imagery in these poems, I hope to observe facets of, in Borkuis's phrase, the "agonistic schism of shifting valences" between textual writing and surrealism in Coolidge's work.⁵

1 Aldon L. Nielsen, "Clark Coolidge and a Jazz Aesthetic." *Pacific Coast Philology* 28:1 (Sep.1993): 94-12.

2 Andrew Joron, "The Crisis of the Crystal" *Aufgabe* 1 (2001), <http://litmuspress.org/aufgabe1joron.html>.

3 Charles Borkuis, "Writing from Inside Language: Late Surrealism and Textual Poetry in France and the United States." In *Telling it Slant: Avant-Garde Poetics of the 1990s*. Eds. Mark Wallace and Steven Marks (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 2002), 243.

4 Tom Orange, "Arrangement and Density: A context for early Clark Coolidge." *Jacket* 13 (April 2001), <http://jacketmagazine.com/13/coolidge-o-a.html>.

5 Borkuis, 245.

Lang, Abigail

Université Paris-Diderot

The Franco-American Conversation in the 1980s

PANEL 06E: LANGUAGE POETRY: INTERNATIONAL CLUSTER

The 1980s not only mark a high point in the long-standing special relationship between French and American poetry but also a change in nature. While the exchanges had mostly been carried out through translations, anthologies, accounts, and usually with a one or two generation delay, the 1980s brought poets themselves in conversation together. And it would be hard to overemphasize their mutual delight in discovering foreign peers with whom they share so much in terms of poetics and poetic forebears. In retrospect, Hocquard writes that in “1980, I become conscious of the possibilities for a productive relationship (based on numerous shared ideas and similar approaches to the problems of writing) between French and American poets of the same generation.” Necessarily, the 1970s had paved the way for this timely encounter, the French actively catching up on American poetry after Faucherau’s 1968 *Lectures de la poésie américaine* had introduced the objectivists and Black Mountain, and Roubaud’s anthology-in-progress and translations imposed Stein, Antin and Rothenberg and gradually brought home the lessons of the New American poetry’s “oral turn” (including speech, the vernacular, the poetry reading), so crucial for extricating French poetry from its high-flown tone, Mallarmean petrification, and *littérature*. While Rosmarie and Keith Waldrop, and Paul Auster, started to disseminate the notion of the book as transgeneric unit of composition, this poetic influx may have been partly drowned by the massive import of “French theory” at the time. My aim is to chart and comment upon a decade of French-American exchanges, from the delayed 1980 publication of Deguy and Roubaud’s *Vingt Poètes Américains* to the 1989 Royaumont objectivist conference, a high water mark, or rather the tip of the iceberg as it was observed and discussed as far as the Bay area, giving rise to a short polemic in *Poetry Flash*. Bringing together Bernstein, Bromige, Davidson, Hejinian, Palmer, Rakosi, Rodefer, Hocquard, Royet-Journoud, Auxeméry and Di Manno, it was also attended by poets of a younger generation who would start publishing in the 90s and pursue the transatlantic conversation : Alferi, Cadiot, Doris, and Wiener in particular. Many collaborative projects were initiated through the Royaumont Objectivist conference, including translations and anthologies as well as Hocquard’s *Un Bureau sur l’Atlantique*, a Franco-American center of contemporary poetry whose goal was to intensify the exchange of work between poets of both languages.

Lau, David

University of California at Santa Cruz

Work from the 80s by Will Alexander and Nathaniel Mackey

PANEL 11A: AFTER THE BLACK ARTS

In this conference paper I will look back on some book and magazine publications by Mackey and Alexander from the 80s. Of particular interest to my paper will be Mackey’s magazine *Hambone* and the inclusion of Alexander in several early issues. I’ll also spend some time unpacking Mackey’s collection, *Eroding Witness*, alongside Alexander’s early small press collection, *Vertical Rainbow Climber*. I will seek to bring out some of the questions and problems of aesthetic development in the late legacy of the Black Arts movement, whose most challenging musical developments had deep impacts on these two poets—as

did Amiri Baraka's poetry and musical writings. For both poets, the cultural geography of Los Angeles plays a significant role. I will argue that the turn of the 80s in LA, the years where Mackey sets his epistolary novel series, needs to be understood in some detail as an artistic and political setting for the work of these two distinctive poets. To that end, I'll try to interrogate some of Mike Davis's account of 1980s LA from his famous essays in *City of Quartz*. Finally, I'll try to use the vantage point these explorations obtain to make some periodizing claims about the decade. Recalling Fredric Jameson's two essayistic articulations of postmodernism in the 80s, I'll seek to push on some of the formulations in Jameson's account of the cultural logic of late capitalism. With the onset of Reagan's counterrevolution, what historically was happening behind the backs of these artists and intellectuals? What can our current situation of historical and poetic impasse learn from this earlier situation of experimental poetic practice?

Lenhart, Gary

Dartmouth College

04 PLENARY PANEL: NO MORE SECRETS: THE POETRY PROJECT IN THE 1980S

Gary Lenhart will discuss the poetics sustained and carried over from the 70s and earlier, that under pressure from the varied aesthetic and social currents of the 1980s, led to a new sense of poetic commitment and opening up of sources. He will focus on significant works and writers out of the Poetry Project scene that may have become obscured.

LoLordo, V. Nicholas

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Reading Eighties Reading: The Yale School and the Language Poets

PANEL 05C: FOREGROUNDING AND RETHINKING THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

At the dawn of the 1980s, deconstruction understood itself to be the most "advanced" theory of reading; moreover, while invocations of "post-modernity" often accompanied that theory's self-reflective moments, specifically modernist/avant-garde terms were also in use (Lindsay Waters, discussing deconstruction's once-famous "resistance" to the academic institution of literary criticism, refers to deMan's reading techniques as "Avant-Gardiste"). The institutional barriers between literary study and "creative writing" might account for the fact that deconstruction took no notice of the mainstream style in American poetry of its own time (the workshop poem or "scenic lyric"). But what to make of the fact that this innovative critical practice failed entirely to notice poetic contemporaneity in general? Specifically, how to understand the consequences of deconstruction's lack of interest in the innovative poetry of its own moment, in the peculiar tradition we call "avant-garde"? I will frame this

question in terms of what Jacques Derrida calls the "faux bond" (as described by Herman Rapaport): "the no show, failed encounter or missed interlocution that creates some kind of linkage, despite itself... the missing of an encounter whose meeting place was at least staged and whose conditions were at least partially realized." The encounter I wish to stage is that between (Yale School) deconstruction and language-centered writing, the two movements most concerned with theoretical understandings of poetic practice in the 1980s; the particular topic I will focus on is the subject of the lyric and its relationship to ideas of materiality; my examples will include readings of Wordsworth's "Lucy Grey" poems by Paul de Man and Steve McCaffrey (the latter being the figure whose career during this decade most nearly resolves the "faux bond" in question). Ultimately, I will argue that de Man's account of "the prosaic materiality of the letter" and the material poetics elaborated in the development of language poetry differ on the substance of post-modernity itself.

Luna, Joe

University of Sussex, UK

Bleeding Inside the Mouth: Debt, Dream & Despair in the 1980s Poetry of Douglas Oliver and J.H. Prynne

PANEL 02D: J. H. PRYNNE

Two descriptions of "the 80s" as a monolithic, all-encompassing historical unit devoid of social prospect and human warmth provide the starting point for discussion and close-reading of two important texts of the 1980s British avant-garde, Douglas Oliver's *The Infant and the Pearl* and J.H. Prynne's *Bands Around the Throat*. Ed Dorn crucially, if not famously, sums up the decade in its infancy as the original capitalist techno-utopic dream re-born, "the first solid-state decade"; Andrew Duncan, from the heady perspective of 2003, paints a grim picture of an era which seemed to him "virtually eventless," in which within "the domain of absolute artistic corruption, there were two trends: one of neo-conservatism whose appeal was based on overt compliance, in a grey featureless sobriety, [and] one of mindless and incredible activity, with the surface animation of an advertisement or a sweet wrapper." These trends, screams Duncan, "reflected the dual nature of the ruling order, both as conservative [...] and as a merciless commercial capitalism where power is virtualized as electronically mediated persuasion." What hope, then, for a radical disclosure of the bounds of such immense historical curtailment? Duncan's reading of the period as one in which the mainstream poetry of the 1980s presented the official "answer to the radical poetry of the 1970s" by rejecting "stylistic research" in favour of surface affect and stylistic vacuousness chimes disturbingly with Dorn's metaphor of congealed manufacturing fervour. What irruptions into these conservative circuits, what digressions from official verse culture in the 1980s can we detect amid the ruins of the radicalism of the 1970s? Without pandering to an over-simplified historical structure which would see in avant-garde poetry the "response" or "resistance" to the politics of the day, I read two books that Duncan ignores in his study, *The Infant and the Pearl* (1985) and *Bands Around the Throat* (1987) to encounter the specific

modalities and inner logics of debt, dream and despair. Both books are well aware that their “response” to contemporaneity will remain stagnant and useless unless the very parameters to liquify the “solid-state” in which they find themselves are built into their verses; thus, Oliver's retro-*Pearl* pastiche announces the poet's dedication to socialism as an essentially ontological asceticism, removed from the vicissitudes of “harm,” whose ideologue is the nightmarish vision of a politics reified into the obscurantist phantom of a single politician: Margaret Thatcher. Prynne, on the other hand, never at home in the dream fused into autobiography which is the basis for Oliver's poetics, instead bites hard into the monetary condition of harm itself, not as abstract propensity of the state, but as the very basis for the individualist, bourgeois consumption of which policies like *Right to Buy* were the dialectical reflex. Both poets, then, maintain a radical politics dedicated to the transformation of subjectivity under the most egregious of circumstances, circumstances in which the oneiric and economic reality of despair forms the bedrock for an understanding of the politically committed poem in the 1980s.

1 Andrew Duncan, *The Failure of Conservatism in British Poetry* (Cambridge: Salt, 2003), pp.228-231

Lyons, Kimberly

Independent scholar

04 PLENARY PANEL: NO MORE SECRETS: THE POETRY PROJECT IN THE 1980S

Participants: Kimberly Lyons (chair and organizer), Patricia Spears Jones, Gary Lenhart, Eileen Myles, and Elinor Nauen

The Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church was a significant location and generator for many of the currents and developments in the experimental and beside-the-main-stream poetics of the 1980s. As one of the sites of celebration and mourning for the many losses due to AIDs in the poetry and art worlds of the 80s, the Project by necessity had to respond. NYC's East Village, radically affected by the real estate and finance “boom” of the 80s and the further inroads of Reaganism, became ground for new genres of performance and vocalization. The Poetry Project evolved as a desirable location for trying out performative texts, plays, mixed media readings and evolving forms of experimental writing including the evolving tendencies of Language poetics. All the new work at the Project was received with complicated and lively responses and the Project was the scene of much informal dialogue and argument—and formal discussion at the Symposiums—around the viability of spoken word, performance genres and postmodern theory as generators of poetry. As an institution, the Poetry Project in the 80s grew out of its “Secret Location on the Lower East Side” and had to contend with new administrative obligations and its growth of audience, fame, and ever-increasing numbers of poets and performers asking for a place there. The 80s saw the Poetry Project under the helm of three very different directors (Bernadette Mayer, Eileen Myles, Ed Friedman) with three visions of inclusiveness and three strongly delineated programming eras. Yet, it was during that decade that the Project consolidated as a

venue with international reach in the avant-garde literary community. All of these dynamics continue to affect the direction of the Poetry Project today and the larger world of literature and poetry.

M

Malcolm, Jane

Université de Montréal

“A female other, I”: From Notley’s *Heiresses* to Mayer’s *Sonnets*

PANEL 02C: ALICE NOTLEY

This paper examines language poetry by women in the 1980s as a negotiation of feminist subjectivity and gendered inheritance. Tracing a genealogy from Alice Notley’s *Dr. Williams’ Heiresses* (1980) to Bernadette Mayer’s *Sonnets* (1989), I argue that these two texts bookend a decade of poetry vitally concerned with the historical and affective links between poets of the modernist tradition and the rebirth of critical feminism. On the one hand, Notley in *Dr. Williams’ Heiresses* seeks to reframe poetic influence and ancestry in terms of fraught paternity, absent mothers, and ambivalent gender, arguing of her contemporaries, “As a matter of fact, these females couldn’t even believe that their fathers *were* their fathers.” The cheeky, conversational tone of the piece, its subversion of the “lecture” format, as well as its casually humorous autobiographical details belie Notley’s profound concern with the place of her work (and that of her female contemporaries) in a genealogy of modernist and post-modernist poets. Mayer, who is an imaginary interlocutor in *Dr. Williams’ Heiresses*, grapples in that text with her own parental figure, Gertrude Stein: “One of them, Bernadette Mayer, fell in love with Gertrude Stein.” Mayer’s *Sonnets*, on the other hand, signify a shift from the macro to the micro and concern themselves with a more private feminist genealogy exemplified by their explorations of interpersonal relationships (the sonnets are dedicated to Mayer’s own mother) as well as the intimacies of the female speaker’s everyday. Mayer’s sonnets, by virtue of their playful, citational form, purposefully subvert the sonnet tradition by reclaiming female subjectivity (“a female other, I”) and, perhaps most importantly, a poetics of overt female sexuality and desire. Moving from Notley’s rallying cry to Mayer’s lyricism, this paper hopes to engage with the shifting feminist lenses that defined these women’s poetic practice in the 1980s (and beyond).

Marsh, Alec

Muhlenberg College

Two Poets in the Age of Terror: Adrienne Rich and Peter Dale Scott

PANEL 09A: ADRIENNE RICH AND DIANE DI PRIMA

I will be giving a paper on two works of the 1980s, Adrienne Rich’s *Your Native Land, Your Life* (1986) and Peter Dale Scott’s *Coming to Jakarta: A Poem About Terror* (1988), the first volume of his *Seculum* trilogy. Both poets are deeply concerned with poetry’s relationship with history and the special responsibilities of the poet to historical truth. Scott struggles openly

with the legacy and influence of Pound's *Cantos*—"the poem including history," while Rich writes, in her great poem "North American Time"—"Poetry never stood a chance/ of standing outside history" (Rich 33). Rich is well known for her political and feminist prose, which accompanies her main work, a poetry that can be read as an ongoing state- of- the- union message. Scott, is better known for his prose work on the JFK assassination, on the nexus of drugs, oil and arms trading that still drives US foreign policy. Both remain potent public intellectuals, activists in "a violently politicized and brutally divided world" (Rich 2007, 5). The history Rich and Scott confront in the 1980s is the on-going history and legacy of terror—specifically US terror directed, in the name of anti-communism, at the first peoples of the earth and those who raise their voices against it. Scott's "poem about terror/ beyond the confines of my mind" (Scott 18) is a descent into hell with a Virgilian, rather than Christian message—his duty is to justice and to discover "the darkness that rules us"—as he says in another poem. Rich's "One Kind of Terror: A love poem" an elegy for her sister, is about, on the one hand cancer, on the other the on-going "Revolution" (Rich 54). Resistance through poetry in the face of overwhelming state power is the message of both books. Can resistance through poetry have any real world effect? Isn't it true that "Everything we write/ will be used against us/ or against those we love" (Rich 33)? Both poets are worried about the problem of their own acculturated "aestheticism." For this reason both poets explore their relationships with their fathers. Scott's father Frank Scott was a well-known Canadian poet as well as a progressive politician whose work for the Canadian Socialist Party in the 1930s meant that the Scott's telephone was tapped by the RCMP. Things didn't go so far with Rich's father, a textbook Jewish intellectual "building/ his rootless ideology/ his private castle in the air" (Rich 8). Rich, who is trying to recover her Jewish roots at this time is unhappy that she finds herself also rootless and blames the loss of rooted connection for her husband's death (Rich 19). She is digging for a grounded ideology, "sweating the Middle East through my brain/ wearing the star of David" (Rich 18). Scott turns away from the anglo-Catholicism of his family towards Eastern religion, the Buddhism of Berkeley, where, somewhat to his own surprise he has found himself a tenured professor of classics. Both poets turn the problem of aestheticism to one of privilege, growing up in homes with books and art. Rich worries about the "verbal privilege" granted her by her excellent education at Radcliffe. She even worries whether the poet's solitude, the simple quiet space within which to compose and write, is itself a "privileged" space, a "privilege we can't afford in the world that is" (Rich 77). Scott worries about the "inveterate / poet and connoisseur/ Li Po" (Scott 45); he notes "there have always been poets" (Scott 62) but what of it, in the face of the "destruction of rain forests/ 8000 species a year/ power and submission" (Scott 62)? He thinks of his "excessive inheritance" "as a refugee third-generation Canadian poet" (Scott 90). For Scott, poetic privilege is figured in images of height. He worries about "the fake/ clairvoyance of altitude" (Scott 13) as his plane curves north above Cape Cod. He sees that "*If we are to escape// we must go another way*" (Scott 69). Thus, both poets try to persuade themselves that what they are doing is "honest work" (Rich 68), that they are exposing power by speaking truth to it. Rich: "Reading and writing/ are not sacred / yet people have been killed/ as if they were" (Rich 109). Scott is "writing this poem/ about the 1965 massacre/ of Indonesians by Indonesians" that he had difficulty publishing. When it was published, his publisher Malcolm Caldwell was subsequently murdered—"seeing as this is / precisely poetry" Scott names the suspected killers, CIA connected, who were helping cover up the deaths of at least a million

people to create a favorable "investment climate" in Indonesia (Scott 24-5). My paper will flesh out these themes in compare-and-contrast fashion in order to question what the function of the poet was in the American Age of Terror and what it remains today.

McComas, Paul

Independent scholar

ROUNDTABLE/PANEL 03C: CITY ON THE MAKE: HOW CHICAGO INVENTED SLAM/SPOKEN WORD IN THE 1980S

Melnicove, Mark

Independent scholar

Bern Porter's Found and Sound Poetry of the 1980s

PANEL 07E: BERN PORTER

Mark Melnicove's Dog Ear Press published three books of Bern Porter's found poetry in the 1980s: *The Book of Do's* (1982), *Here Comes Everybody's Don't Book* (1984), and *Sweet End* (1989). And, at The Eternal Poetry Festival, Melnicove and Porter collaborated in a series of sound poetry performances throughout the decade. In this multimedia talk/performance, Melnicove will reflect upon Porter's philosophy and poetics, using archival text, imagery, film, and audio. Situating Porter's work within the history and future of found art, visual language, and sound poetry, Melnicove will provide a personal perspective on Porter's seminal position in twentieth-century American and international poetry.

Mendoza, Mark

Miami University, Ohio

Versioning in Bob Cobbing's Work

PANEL 05A: RECURSIVE POETICS

In this talk I explore the maturation of "versioning" as a practical concept in the work of the prolific but often overlooked innovations of the British poet Bob Cobbing, with a focus on work emerging from the context of the 80s. At the start of the decade, Cobbing had produced many of what he termed "visual versions" of lines from the recursive structures of word permutation poems, using the same theory or "rule" of numbers or names. Each poem is then part of a hyperpoem that

encourages readers to compare poems in order to formulate their own sense of the poem's historical constitution(s). "I think the writer writes for the poem, not for himself or anyone else [. . .] One is trying to make the poem as much like itself as one possibly can, give it a new existence" (Cobbing, 1981). In 1983, he wrote a great number of "Processual Poems," extending the series to both *A Processual Double Octave* and *Prosexual* in the following year, effecting a rich confusion of figure and ground with its parallel in audio culture practiced by the emerging call for remixes in disco and the deep sonic experiments of dub (the term "versioning" having been used by reggae musicians in London in the 80s to refer to the borrowing of rhythms and beats). Cobbing spoke of "family resemblances" that exist between different instances and variations of the poem. Just as importantly, by pointing to the different *versions* that the poem "is," the poet is also arguing for the crucial role that a relative autonomy from a dependence on an actual event has to play in poetry. Each print promises its own unique performance as an adaption that permits a flexibility for performance and renewed opportunities for spontaneous composition. The poet's use of parasitism and para-citation, as well as simply happening upon previous experiments and fugitive pages, leads to a recognition of alternative and shifting frames available for the recontextualization of poems. Links are forged from single poems to larger textual constellations, the poem and reader/performer/listener left to wander in the then-novel conceptual field of hyperspace. Collaborator and critic cris cheek observes that "a family resemblance 'between' situated performances of *versions* maps an empirical constellation of imperfect consonance onto a polyphony of immanent community." As a virtuality, the poem is fleeting, but can be revisited through versioning. Cobbing's concern, before poststructuralist theories became a fixture on the academic scene, was that the nonphonetic moment of writing not betray a life that motivates difference in the becoming of being. Each different version can be considered an autographic original. Writing is always *rewriting*. It is an activity that displaces material away from the site of its original appearance or attending context. Writing means to submit linguistic material to a specific variation that includes a resounding or shift in its contextual register, its universe of reference, or its temporal designations.

Mesmer, Edric

Buffalo State College

Top Stories of the 1980s: Feminism, Consumption, and the Avant-Garde

PANEL 06C: FEMINIST AVANT-GARDE

From 1979 through 1989, from the local art scene of Buffalo, New York, to the underground of New York City, Anne Turyn edited the "prose periodical" *Top Stories*. More than fiction, the serial chapbooks comprising *Top Stories* lend a frame to the emergence of politically conscious experimentation engaged by unaffiliated feminists working across divergent media. While the works featured are not poetry, per genre, they exude a poetics involved with genre bending, and feature many writers long affiliated with innovative little magazines. I want to return to the archival shelf which holds *Top Stories* and see what it has to

say about labor and gender and art in the 1980s, all things fraught economically—something we know well now in our moment. The avant-garde of the '80s also engaged with interdisciplinarity, alterity, and disjunctive aesthetics. This can be seen in Turyn's curatorial: from the elliptical narratives of Laurie Anderson and Donna Wyszomierski to the visual works of Jenny Holzer and Janet Stein, and from the socially adventurous representations of Kathy Acker and Cookie Mueller to the gendered paradoxes of Linda Neaman and Lynne Tillman. I think we can take Turyn's selection as demonstrative of changes in the relational politics between 1980s aesthetics, feminism, and genre, and the social ambiguities or dichotomies these may have reflected, or have come to reflect. These valuations bring many questions to bear, even as they refuse focus and command, I believe, reevaluation. The fact that *Top Stories* remains a cloudy and unrecognized scene—both in history and within academia—draws attention to aims incommensurately between feminism and consumerism, art and labor, reception and the '80s avant-garde. Now: to turn to the archive.

Mesmer, Sharon

Independent Scholar

ROUNDTABLE/PANEL 03C: CITY ON THE MAKE: HOW CHICAGO INVENTED SLAM/SPOKEN WORD IN THE 80'S

Participants: Sharon Mesmer (chair and organizer), Tim W. Brown, Kurt Heintz, Paul McComas, and Deborah Pintonelli

Arising from the city's punk scene, the phenomenon of the slam appeared in 1981, when local entrepreneur Al Simmons put together "teams" of poets to compete, boxing-match style, at a punk/new wave nightclub. That same year, young female poets were gathering themselves into possibly the first girl-directed poetry "school," publishing magazines, forming poetry bands, doing readings/performances and producing poetry videos. And at the same time, the term "multi-cultural" had very broad-shouldered and inclusive implications, as a democratic, community-based writing ethos developed in the city. This roundtable, comprised of poets, editors, publishers and documentarians who were "present at the creation," will discuss and debate the confluence of social, cultural and personal markers that made this Midwestern "Big Bang" of practices and projects possible, and how feelings of dissatisfaction/possibility, as well as the impulse to create/promote a local mythology out of the city's working class, ethnic and feminist "aesthetics," infused poetic practices and projects. The roundtable will also address how the reverberations of that city/that time can still be detected in popular culture, and in contemporary—and vastly different—poetry movements like flarf.

Meyer, Andy

University of Washington

*Unmapping the Self: Feminism, Wildness, and the Open Text***PANEL 06C: FEMINIST AVANT-GARDE**

This presentation examines the development, during the 1980s, of what could be called a feminist poetics of wildness. It begins with Lyn Hejinian's rejection of "closure" early in the decade (and her partial rejection of *écriture féminine*) and ends with a discussion of the "openness" of Susan Howe's late '80s poem, "Thorow," published in *Singularities* in 1990 and revisited in 2005 in *Thieft*, an experimental audio collaboration between Howe and electronic musician David Grubbs. In the 1980s, as poetry "after theory" (or, perhaps, *in* theory) began to resist old notions of "authorship" in favor of an author that dissolves, as it were, into the forest (acting, in Howe's configuration, as "scout" for the reader), some poetics in the 1980s can be characterized as a series of experiments in "opening" the poem, resisting the ideological voice of the self in favor of that of the pluralistic "subject." By "opening" the poem, the text presumably welcomes a wider range of subjective voices—feminine, marginalized, silenced (although notably, in "Rejection," Hejinian insists the experience of an open text is "androgynous"): it opens the "wilderness" of the text itself. Thus, the serious poet is ethically bound to resist reproducing the ideology of the dominant sex or class (much like resisting the "settling" of the wilderness accomplished by late capitalism). Howe's "Thorow," however, is surprising in this regard because of the ways that she negotiates the spaces the text generates, sending the author "as a scout" as if to report back the fragmentary messages of voices lost in the wilderness of history. But with its alienating fragments and word collages, is her text, thus, "open" in the sense Hejinian imagines? If open texts "invite participation" (as Hejinian puts it), how do readers RSVP if they can't "read" the invitation in the traditional way? The sounding of "Thorow" in *Thieft* raises further questions about how readers might "listen for" the messages emerging from the wilderness. By exploring both the "openness" of Hejinian's own text (its multiple versions—in, for example, Bob Perleman's 1985 collection, *Writing/Talks*, Peter Baker's 1996 collection, *Onward: Contemporary Poetry & Poetics*, and on the National Poetry Foundation's website — themselves reject a kind of closure) and that of Howe's "Thorow" and *Thieft*, this paper suggests that experimental poetry in the 1980s was preoccupied by a particular theoretical desire to remap—or *unmap*—the terrain of the lyric self, surrendering poetic language to a burgeoning sense of a "new" wildness and a new set of risks and possibilities with which poetry still contends today.

Mickelson, Nate

City University of New York

*Towards a Gay Poetics of Place: AIDS and the Vulnerability of Urban Environments***PANEL 06B: GAY POETICS: AIDS, PLACE, POSTMODERNISM**

The proposed paper explores the role of place and relationships to place in poetry responsive to the AIDS crisis. Specifically, the paper traces shifts in the depiction of place by gay poets such as Paul Monette, Marc Doty, and Thom Gunn, among others, as the crisis intensified through the late 1980s and into the early 1990s. It is shown that as the decade progresses more poets responding to the crisis, and more gay poets, in particular, begin to project the uncertainty, anger, and sorrow associated with AIDS onto specific places—for example, urban neighborhoods, public parks, and other landscapes—whereas earlier work tends to converge around lyric expressions of private despair and calls for political action. Using Michael Klein’s remarkable 1989 anthology, *Poets for Life*, as an archive, the paper observes that the ravages of AIDS are frequently represented through images of the decay and destruction of physical infrastructure. In Marc Doty’s “Turtle, Swan,” for example, anxiety over the a lover’s HIV status is correlated to an oil stain in the parking lot of a local business that becomes, over the course of the poem, a focal point for the disintegration of the community. The shift to engaging AIDS through place is related to a broader shift among gay writers in the 1980s toward claiming public places as symbolically and physically fundamental to the formation of individual and community identity. The paper suggests that by evoking the vulnerability of familiar physical environments in responding to the AIDS crisis, gay poets provide readers in the 1980s and now with a palpable means for comprehending its profound and tragic scope.

Middleton, Peter

University of Southampton, UK

Inquiry as a Post-Generic Strategy; Lyn Hejinian and The Cell

PANEL 03A: POST-GENERIC WRITING IN THE 1980s

Peter Middleton will primarily be discussing Lyn Hejinian’s poem *The Cell*, a transitional work written between 1986 and 1989, poised between the much better known texts *My Life* and *Oxota*, as an extended experiment with a possible new genre of poetry which might become what she calls “a scene of science.” By exploring her use of scientific sources, and the poem’s reflexive investigations of visual perception as an extension of consciousness, the talk will suggest that the poem’s mingling of the influences of Gertrude Stein, pragmatist philosophy, and a home-made neuroscientific experimentation, is an unstable attempt to demonstrate that poetic language can have epistemological force. Like other poems of this period, *The Cell* pushes back questioningly against the encroachments on poetry of the universalizing dogmas of post-structuralist models of language that were so dominant in 1980s literary and cultural theory. The achievements and exclusions resulting from this dominance, not least on the poetry of this time, are still coming to light. *The Cell* is one of a number of works that tacitly recognizes the deceptive character of this grand theory, which as Luce Irigaray shrewdly observed, often pretends to a scientific rigor until challenged, when it laughs and says that it is only literature or poetry.

Moore, J. Peter

Duke University

*Our Boston Accent: Eileen Myles's Vernacular Poetics***PANEL 07C: NEW ENGLAND IN THE 1980S: HUB OF THE POETIC UNIVERSE**

This essay analyzes the vernacular attributes of Eileen Myles's early poetry from the standpoint of sociolinguistics. It is from this perspective that I chart her intervention into the history of American speech-based poetics. In her recent memoir, Myles writes, "I learned in graduate school about dialect. People were willing to accept that black people do talk different. That might be okay. What about my bad English? I was standing outside the castle" (200). Taking the castle here to mean the conscribed world of acceptable "white speech" and "white poetry," we see in Myles's use of a speech-based poetics the drive both to continue and to revise the terms for inclusion into the New American tradition. It is here that she departs from the developments of Language Poetry, which famously claimed the postwar romance with speech was inextricably bound up with "simple ego psychology in which the poetic text represents not a person, but a persona, the human as unified object" (Silliman). Rather than eschew speech, Myles produces a vernacular style that challenges the presumed connection between speech and authenticity, allowing her to frame artificiality as a resource not only for poetic innovation but also identity construction. As this panel is focused on the work of New England writers, my essay will attend primarily to Myles's "An American Poem." In this poem Myles explicitly connects her vernacular style to the social context of her upbringing in Boston. Referring to it as the key to her oeuvre, Myles splices details from her biography with a set of fictitious circumstances in order to construct the identity of a woman, who confesses to being an absconded member of the tragically illustrious Kennedy family. In attending to the line, "'People have / always laughed at / my Boston accent / confusing 'large' for / 'lodge,' 'party' /for 'potty,'" I argue that what makes possible this palimpsestic performance of identity is the poet's keen understanding of her own language variety. If the speaker is able to both inhabit the roles of Eileen Myles and wanton Kennedy, it is because this reference to speech functions as a hinge. In order to make this argument, I examine footage of the poet performing "An American Poem" and analyze her speech patterns from the perspective of William Labov's "Social Stratification of (r) in New York City Department Stores." In treating the poem as sociolinguistic data, I aim to trace the relationship between her oral accent, her written vernacular and her imagined community, as she writes, "I am no longer / ashamed, no longer / alone. I am not / alone tonight because / we are all Kennedys."

Moriarty, Laura

Independent scholar

Editing the 80s: Jerry Estrin's Vanishing Cab

PANEL 10A: SMALL PRESSES AND MAGAZINES

I propose to present a personal and critical memoir about Jerry Estrin, focusing on issues 2-6 of his magazine *Vanishing Cab*. This approach will allow me to talk about Jerry's hands-on approach to editing, about his interactions with the contributors and about the community that was the context of both *Vanishing Cab* and Jerry's work as a poet. This community was comprised not only of poets from the Bay Area where Jerry and I lived during the 80s but also of writers from around the US and from Europe. Contributors to *Vanishing Cab* included Ken Wainio (who was a founding editor), Bob Kaufman, Adam Cornford, Nanos Valaoritis, Jack Hirshman, Andre Codrescu, Bernard Welt, Jean Day, Clark Coolidge, Marc Lecard, Helmut Heissenbuttel, Thomas A. Clark, Erica Hunt, Michael Palmer, Peter Seaton, Denis Roche, Kit Robinson, Carla Harryman, Larry Price, Diane Ward and Bruce Andrews, among many others. As a background to discussing the magazines, I will present a brief personal portrait of Jerry Estrin and his work. I lived with Jerry from 1976 until his death in 1993. We were married in 1988. In the nearly twenty years since Jerry's death, I have not written at length about his life and work, nor have I written about or placed the extensive archives he left behind (though I have spent time arranging the material and paid others to help me do it.) This presentation would allow me to take on a small part of a larger writing project concerning Jerry that I have long contemplated. In the 80s the group of writers whose work came to be called language writing were important proponents of experimentalism in poetry, following Stein, Zukofsky, Spicer and others. Jerry Estrin's writing and editing were arguably very much in that tradition. However, his work also came out of a poetics that sometimes seemed at odds with what he perceived to be the dominant paradigm of language writing. A number of groups existed on the literary scene at the time (ones connected with New College of California and with New Narrative for example) who had a wide range of poetics. Jerry's work and his editing found a place among these sometimes conflicting groups. He was passionate about his own poetics, continually questioning and renewing his sense of what he was doing. He participated in some fairly intense battles over these poetics while retaining strong friendships with the people involved. Because this engagement was very much reflected in his editing of *Vanishing Cab*, thinking through Jerry's work and life by reflecting on this publication seems like an excellent way to add to a discussion of the Poetry & Poetics of the 80s.

Mulvania, Andrew

Washington & Jefferson College

Charting "Zones" of Influence: Charles Wright's Zone Journals and the Poetry of the 1980s

PANEL 01C: EXPANDING AND PROBLEMATIZING THE LYRIC

Coming as it did at the end of the decade of the 1980's, Charles Wright's *Zone Journals* (1988) represented the culmination of the expansion of the lyric form that had begun in Wright's work at the beginning of the decade, an expansion that marked a

radical and representative shift away from the tight, image-driven lyrics that had characterized much of Wright's work—and indeed much of American poetry—throughout the decade of the 1970's. As such, the form of *Zone Journals* constitutes a major shift in the style of one of the more important American poets of the last three decades of the twentieth century. This shift toward the more expansive form of the “journal” was both of its time and ahead of its time, arguably influencing a similar impulse toward increased expansiveness in contemporaries such as Jorie Graham and others. No less an eminence than Helen Vendler, that great kingmaker of the 1980's poetry scene, reviewing *Zone Journals* for the *New Republic*, placed the book in the company of “other notable modern journal-volumes of the 50th year [Wright's age during the time period covered by many of the poems],” including Robert Lowell's *Notebook* (however different in form), A.R. Ammons' *Snow Poems*, and James Merrill's *Divine Comedies*. In this paper, I would like to discuss the form and the achievement of the poems in *Zone Journals*, examining them in the context of Wright's work both before and after and arguing for the influence of the *Journals* on Wright's contemporaries—an influence marked by an increase not only in the scale of the lyric poem but also in its emphasis on quotidian experience in the subject matter of the poem. In doing so, I hope to demonstrate the significance of the *Zone Journals* for American poetry and poetics in the 1980's, and for the poetry that came after. If Charles Wright began the decade of the 1980's by winning the National Book Award (in 1983) for a book that embodied the dominant zeitgeist of the American poetry scene of the 1970's (the brief, image-driven lyrics of *Country Music*), he ended it by writing the book—*Zone Journals*—that would push outward the boundaries of the lyric through much of the 1990's, thus book-ending the decade as one of the more important figures of the poetry and poetics of the 1980's.

Myles, Eileen

Independent scholar

04 PLENARY PANEL: NO MORE SECRETS: THE POETRY PROJECT IN THE 1980S

As a poet, performer, writer and critic largely born out of the developing aesthetics she encountered at the Project, as participant in 80s performance and queer cultural scenes in the East Village and as Artistic Director at the Poetry Project in the 80s, Eileen Myles will provide a wide ranging overview of the collision of new forms, mutating genres and cultural audiences who made up the dynamics constellating at the Project.

N

Nauen, Elinor

Independent scholar

04 PLENARY PANEL: NO MORE SECRETS: THE POETRY PROJECT IN THE 1980S

A longtime observer and participant in the Poetry Project scene, Elinor Nauen will discuss emerging poetry out of the Poetry Project, “lost” 3rd generation works and the essential aesthetic tendencies that she reads as prevailing among the younger poets on the scene now.

Nedeljkov, Svetlana

University of New Brunswick

*They Did Pound in Different Voices: Translations of Ezra Pound into Serbo-Croatian (1961-1980)***PANEL 09B: RESPONSES TO MODERNIST POETRY IN THE 1980S: CRITICISM, POETRY, AND TRANSLATION**

Ezra Pound’s idea that “English literature lives on translation” (*How to Read* 10) seems blindingly obvious if one takes into consideration the ever-present occurrence of translation in the poet’s own work. Given that, Pound’s oeuvre seems to be the quintessential example of a poet-translator who experiments with various translation techniques. The challenge in using Pound’s translation theory to translate his own texts would lie, therefore, in addressing how to transport cross-cultural references from English to the host language while preserving the meter and melody of the original. This paper will explore the translations of Pound’s work into Serbo-Croatian, published from the 1960s to the 1980s. By analyzing the translation techniques in the Serbo-Croatian texts and examining them through the lenses of translation theories and contrastive analysis, the aim of the paper is to illuminate the poetic achievement of early Serbo-Croatian translators such as Ladan, _oljan and Danojli_.

Need, David

Duke University

*Adjacency and Voice in the Dream of the Everyday: Fanny Howe’s “the lives of a spirit” and Bernadette Meyer’s “Midwinter Day”***PANEL 01D: GENDER AND GENRE**

Using two texts exploring women/other's subjectivity from the 1980's, this paper explores contrasting approaches to phrasing the everyday. Taking de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) as a touchstone, I differentiate notions of the everyday based on repetition and adjacency and those based on notions of immediacy and unity in being. I suggest that the former restores depth and difference to the everyday that post-1980's critical discourse and language practice takes as necessarily effaced, while the latter leaves a critique of the subject tacit. In particular, I contrast Howe's use of repetition and adjacency in relation to the everyday as a significant alternative to other thematizations of the everyday or quotidian (e.g. Mallarmé or Williams). A critical dimension of this reading is that gender structure makes it possible for the adjacent to be understood as a subject/authorial position and by reading Howe and Mayer against each other, here show us the kinds of ways in which women's writing might unsettle (or might continue to unsettle) the production of dominant ideological narratives (whether these are those of the state or are narratives of resistance).

Nichols, Miriam

University of the Fraser Valley, Canada

Allegories of the Medusa: Nicole Brossard's écriture féminine and the Unfreezing of the Real

PANEL 06C: FEMINIST AVANT-GARDE

For feminists of the 1980s, Medusa was an emblem of wronged womanhood, female rage, and alternative identity. On one side of the decade, she was linked to *l'écriture féminine* following Hélène Cixous's famous "Laugh of the Medusa" (1975), an essay in which Cixous associated her with uncategorizable upflowings of female creativity as well as the feminist challenge to the concept of "lack" in the Freudian-Lacanian account of female identity formation. On the other side of the decade, she appears in Annis Pratt's Jungian re-reading of the archaic feminine in *Dancing With Goddesses* (1994), where Pratt argues that Medusa is to be reclaimed as a figure of the strong woman who appears monstrous within the distorting terms of patriarchy. From the feminist perspective, the Medusa meant an interruption of what counted for real and the simultaneous presencing of alternatives. Since the 80s, both *l'écriture féminine* and psychoanalysis have lost much of their power to astonish because the cognitive liberation they offered so excitingly has since hit a wall in global capitalism and the white noise of digital media where many speak and few are heard. What still resonates, however, is the battle of the women's movement for representation in the double sense of the term as self-fashioning in language and political voice. Using the allegorical framework of the Medusa, I will read selections from Nicole Brossard's *Aerial Letter* (1985, trans. 1988) alongside the contemporary efforts of progressives to claim a voice that matters in the context of globalization. In Nicole Brossard's phrasing: "I am subversion, I am transgression. If not, I do not exist" (Brossard 69).

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Nielsen, Aldon Lynn

Pennsylvania State University

08 PLENARY PANEL: OF TIME AND BODIES: NEW BLACK AESTHETICS / NEW BLACK CRITIQUE

Participants: Aldon Lynn Nielsen (chair), Mecca Jamilah Sullivan, Evie Shockley, and Meta DuEwa Jones

In a recent conversation in Boston, a graduate student asked Ed Roberson what his thoughts were on the Black Arts Movement. Roberson began his reply by stating, "I consider myself a part of it." Even in a time of reconsideration of the BAM, Roberson's is not the first work that comes to mind when people think of that era, or of the 1980s, and few critics examining American poetry of the 1980s have, even now, considered the stunning breadth of black American poetry during that decade. Following Rita Dove's negative assessment of the Black Arts Movement in her own early work, the controversy surrounding Trey Ellis's proclamation of a "New Black Aesthetic" in the 1980s (a strong precursor to talk of post-civil rights/post-soul/post-racial literature in the new millennium) gave rise to little critical curiosity about what African American poets were actually doing. Even with the rise of such mainstream phenomena as Hip Hop studies, and of MFA-trained black poets, academic criticism seemed for a very long time to be rooted in the same pre-BAM assumptions that can be seen activated in Helen Vendler's recent responses to Rita Dove's *Penguin Anthology of 20th Century American Poetry*. This panel, in contrast, represents the best of new thinking about African American poetry. Mecca Jamilah Sullivan is the author of *Blue Talk and Love* and recently completed her PhD dissertation at the University of Pennsylvania. Evie Shockley's collections of poetry include *The Gorgon Goddess*, *A Half-Red Sea* and *The New Black*. Her first critical volume is *Renegade Poetics: Black Aesthetics and Formal Innovation in African American Poetry*. Meta DuEwa Jones, another poet/critic, is the author of *The Muse Is Music: Jazz Poetry from the Harlem Renaissance to Spoken Word*.

O

O’Leary, Peter

University of Chicago

*Poem of the End: Michael Palmer’s Apocalyptic Sun***PANEL 02B: ESTRANGING THE LOGOS: MICHAEL PALMER’S BOOK OF ECHOES**

Michael Palmer’s *Sun* was published by North Point Press in 1988; on February 3 of the same year Robert Duncan died. *Sun* resonates with oblique tunings to Duncan and his work, not in the form of direct impression or influence but in the sense of the catastrophic aura that surrounded Duncan and his work during the 1980s, owing to the collapse of his kidneys in 1984, and during which he was teaching in the poetics program at the New College in San Francisco and which saw the long-awaited publication of the two volumes of *Ground Work*. Palmer was on the faculty at the New College at this time where Duncan was regarded as a charismatic, dynamic, and demanding teacher, but not without problems, connected in part to Duncan’s sometimes hyperbolic involvement with the material he was teaching. “To some,” writes Palmer, “Robert’s improvisatory, associational style of teaching presented a challenge particularly hard to meet, and his expectations could seem at once capricious and insufficiently articulated. His relation to his subject matter was highly emotional and personal, and he was capable of flaring quite dramatically in class when the discussion seemed to be taking a bad turn.” Duncan’s heat was infectious; Palmer (and others in the program) has described a volatile environment in which students were particularly susceptible to maladies somatic and psychic. *Sun* is an unusually cool book of poetry. It represents the apex of what might be described as Palmer’s detached style in which phrases take the temperature of language and in which the poetry arpeggiates, as if keys stroked on a piano, words and phrases through ties and variations of thought and expression. This is particularly evident in the anaphorae Palmer invokes in several of the poems: “Because,” “Poem of the End,” “Write this,” “First question,” and so forth. On the acknowledgments page, Palmer notes his debt to “the various writings of Oliver Sacks.” Among these writings is an essay, “The Twins,” published in *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (1987), but which originally appeared in *The New York Review of Books* in 1984. In this essay, Sacks describes autistic twins diagnosed as imbeciles (based on tests) who nevertheless engage in what he takes to be a remarkable exchange of strings of numbers. By luck, he realizes that the twins are exchanging prime numbers, the meaning about which he speculates in terms of what he calls a “harmonic sensibility.” One of the poems entitled “C” begins, “Paper universe of primes”. In light of Sacks’ writings, and in terms of the emotionally challenging climate at New College during the 1980s, I propose to read some of the “minor” poems in *Sun* (namely, “Fifth Prose,” both poems entitled “C,” and the second poem entitled “Sun”) as evidence of harmonious tunings to the disharmonious soundings of Palmer’s connections to Duncan and his work. Put another way, I want to propose a reading of *Sun* as an apocalyptic case study of Duncan’s physiological deterioration, poetic endarkenment (to use Duncan’s word), and ultimate

death in the 1980s. Besides Palmer's poetry and Sacks' essays, I intend to use one or two of Duncan's late poems, as well as writings by Palmer about Duncan.

Orange, Tom (not attending)

Georgetown University

Clark Coolidge in the Eighties, or, How Not to Read The Crystal Text

PANEL 01B: CLARK COOLIDGE

This paper argues that while Clark Coolidge's notoriously "difficult" poetry can be seen taking a turn in the 1980s towards more thematic orientations that encouraged significant scholarly attention, it still presents a densely-textured surface that resists traditional interpretive strategies. The year 1978 signals this turn better than any strict decade marker, in terms of Coolidge's published and unpublished work. Angel Hair brought out the collection *Own Face* that year, containing short lyrics written in the preceding five years. Coolidge states in a letter to Michael Palmer that these poems were written "between the cracks" in the so-called "longprose" work that occupied the bulk of his writerly attentions in those same five years. Although portions of this projected 1000-page work appeared in periodicals during the 1970s as well as the 1981 Potes and Poets chapbook *A Geology*, Coolidge essentially abandoned the project at over 600 pages in late 1978, adding a final section in 1981. (It remains unpublished today, although Fence Books plans to bring it out in the coming years.) The "longprose" work found Coolidge riffing or "woodshedding" on various areas of personal interest (music, films, visual art, geology and writers he admires) and thereby essentially honing a personal grammar that would yield the styles and themes that in many ways continue to characterize his work today. The 1986 publication of *Solution Passage: Poems 1978-1981* and *The Crystal Text* encapsulates this dual inclination towards collections of discrete lyric poems on the one hand and singularly occasioned book-length works on the other--as well as scholarly dispensations towards the latter. Reviewing for the *Village Voice*, Geoffrey O'Brien commented: "Either of these books by itself would be a peak; to be given both at once seems a natural wonder." And yet critics have invariably been more drawn to *The Crystal Text*, largely, I argue, because of the allure of thematic coherence the book appears to promise. In fact, direct and even indirect treatments of the poem's purported subject occupy an extremely small portion of the text. Borrowing a page from Brian McHale's discussion of John Ashbery's "The Skaters" and its critical reception, I show the limitations of traditional interpretive strategies wedded to unlocking the "meaning" of the crystal.

Owens, Richard

University at Buffalo, SUNY

Lately Poor Eyes: Prynne Under Thatcher

PANEL 02D: J. H. PRYNNE

Reading J.H. Prynne's *The Oval Window* (1983) as a stunningly opaque but nonetheless explicit response to the decisive socio-cultural and economic transformation of Britain under Thatcher, this talk situates Prynne's poetic inquiry into the widespread valorization of image and surface as a searing critique not only of Thatcherism but also the baseline logic of flexible accumulation during the last decades of the twentieth century. Indeed, a deep preoccupation with objects that mediate, reflect, distort and refract images (i.e. windows, screens, mirrors, machines) dominates all of the untitled poems collected in *The Oval Window* such that, as Prynne remarks, "from now on too, or soon lost, / the voice you hear is your own / revoked, on a relative cyclical downturn / imaged in latent narrow-angle glaucoma." Image, sound and sense are, for Prynne, irreducibly entangled in an overdetermined complex of relations, allowing us to hear an intimately familiar but aggressively disembodied aspect of ourselves imaged into blindness for public consumption. While these lines, like most of the poems from *The Oval Window*, appear hermeneutically enigmatic, they tend to seem less intellectually disengaged when considered in the context of Thatcherite populism and the increasing crystallization of neoliberal economic policy. Commenting on the ascendancy of conservative populism in *The Politics of Thatcherism*, a selection of essays published the same year as *The Oval Window*, Stuart Hall writes, "'Thatcherism,' far from conjuring demons out of the deep, operated directly on the real and manifestly contradictory experience of the popular classes under social-democratic corporatism." Coupled with this statement, Prynne's lines on the loss and redeployment of "voice" can be read as an attempt to think through the same problem we find Stuart Hall struggling with: the nearly incomprehensible popular success of a political formation deeply antagonistic to popular social, economic and cultural interests. If it is, however, a riposte to Thatcherism, *The Oval Window* maintains a vigilant distance from the discursive tendencies of political analysis, opting instead to think through the contradictions of the moment by attending to the flat interpellating planes that mediate, reflect and dominate.

P

Perlow, Seth

Cornell University

*The Ends of Form: Historical Collapse in Digital Poetry and New Formalism***PANEL 01E: DIFFERENTIALS: A NEW LOOK AT NEW FORMALISM**

This paper compares the structures of historical thinking in two contemporaneous movements of American poetry seldom discussed together: the genre-defining digital poetry of the mid-1980s and the New Formalism that sought a return to traditional verse forms during the same period. Both groups view linguistic form as a means of relating to literary and political histories, and both organize these formal approaches to history around variations on the idea of collapse. In *First Screening: Computer Poems* (1984), bpNichol uses the Apple BASIC programming language to set his visual poetry in motion. Rather than producing a lively dance of words on the screen, however, the animations of *First Screening* perform a collapse of kinetic typography: words and lines tumble to ground instead of playing before our eyes. This encounter between poetry and computers thus bespeaks a preoccupation with the collapse of familiar approaches to vispoetical structure, and Nichol's animation seeks a new grounding for the traditions of poetic experimentation to which he contributed. Nichol embraced an avant-garde tradition against tradition, a longstanding effort to disrupt, challenge, and indeed to collapse the authoritative structures of literary influence and value. Though the technologies Nichol used have since become obsolete, Jim Andrews and others have adapted *First Screening* for current platforms and made it available on the Vispo web site. Hence, the work's very availability to readers rests upon another kind of collapse, that of the technological histories that separate present-day technologies from those of the mid-1980s, when user-friendly computers first emerged. Only by emulating obsolescent technical forms can we access Nichol's work at all. As a bridge into the technological past, the "emulators" that make his texts visible help us to read Nichol's relation to literary history itself as one shaped by ideas of collapse and rupture, rather than continuity and contact. Contemporaneously with the digital experiments of bpNichol and others, the ostensibly traditionalist work of New Formalists such as Brad Leithauser and Dana Gioia was strangely accompanied by pronouncements about the "revolutionary" character of their poems. In a variety of journals and anthologies that emerged in the mid-1980s, this group's verse responded to perceived collapses in the conventions of poetic form and valuation itself. Referring to an ostensibly irretrievable past of metrical writing, they articulate a very different sense of the formal and political collapses that attended American verse culture as the twentieth century drew to a close. Contrary to popular opinion, however, the New Formalists do not aim simply to resurrect a stable of collapsed poetic forms. Instead, through their playful modulation of familiar poetic shapes and meters, they explore what it might mean to write from within the ongoing collapse of a particular set of formal and aesthetic commitments, an approach whose future seems already subjected to a compression it cannot hope to survive.

Peters, Michael

Independent scholar

*Algorithmic Contexts Surprising "Poetry": Jackson Mac Low in the 1980s***PANEL 05A: RECURSIVE POETICS**Big Epigraph: Mark E. Smith's lyrics from "U.S. 80s-90s" (*Bend Sinister*), released in 1986:

had a run-in with Boston Immigration ... _
 nervous droplets due to sleeping tablets, no beer, no cigarettes
 slam spikes gin cigarettes beer in ban the cops are tops ...
 welcome to the 80s 90s; welcome to the US 80s, 90s... like 50s, 1890s ..._
 welcome to the US 80s, 90s; welcome to the 1890s

Kentucky dead keep pouring down ... by death stadium_
 no more amused dressing room_
 my ambition, but one chance in three billion ... like cones of silence ...
 cast aside over-inflation theory of the panic insists ...
 look at page 19, small column, lower right-hand side_
 welcome to the US 80s, 90s ...

Big backdrop: US, c.1980. The sleeping tablet of Ronald Reagan's "Morning in America" begins to take somnolent effect in the socio-political bloodstream of America. Toxic concoctions of speculation and de-regulation begin to foment. The era of American "conservatism" begins. About the same time, post-structuralism gains access to the bloodstream of American higher education from inside. Its teeth appear like a chimera's: As Foucault put it in *The Order of Things* (1970), "knowledge prowled in the darkness." Re-charged by the return of the sign, effulgent knowledge was back in its static place in a new, matrix'd-network of language—where it had always been a socio-cultural fixative. But static knowledge was now seething with post-liberal anxieties. Like a panther, knowledge could still drop down from the serif'd tree-limbs of night to claim its victim. The vast network of language had socio-cultural implications, panopticons, and apocalyptic tones. Thus wrote Derrida, "I speak only one language, and yet, it is not mine." With anthropomorphic power over everything, language was doing things to us. But where did all this profound analysis of knowing lead? Was it language's fault? Where was knowledge *really* prowling in the 1980s? My answer: In data spreadsheets, economic analysts and brokers were harnessing the algorithmic means toward an end: Prediction, or possibly, "taming chance" as Ian Hacking would put it, but taming it to sell it back into

the accumulating supply-side economical vortex of unbridled free trade. Mac Low's microscopic alternatives: In this bleak environment Jackson Mac Low conducted inverse algorithmic experiments on terrestrial materials. Language was the prime material; but unlike the economic analysts of the 1980s, Mac Low's algorithms were not employed in analytic predictions. No, Mac Low's spreadsheets *were* poetry—but only “poetry” on the surface. Mac Low had always been fabricating thresholds of discovery, and this paper will examine his work from the 1980s by addressing his multiplicity of “writing ways.” This is important because a way of thinking about language remains, even now, although it is somewhat forgotten in the post post-structuralist feeding frenzy: *Viz.*, the means of making language your own, or as close to your own as a non-egoic composer can get. Closer inspection will reveal beautiful, artificial mechanics taking place beneath the surface of Mac Low's “poetry,” which appears almost conventional at the surface. Old and new algorithmic technologies were always merging and emerging with Mac Low. But his wefts of formalism and improvisation will be examined in algorithmic contexts—both the device and the aim of surprising poetry. With Mac Low, an erosion of the old determinism and the emergence of a radical formalism brought about new informal determinisms that were always bent, always torqued away from the sinister—aimed at discovery and pleasure with both mythic and materially wild results.

Pintonelli, Deborah

Independent scholar

ROUNDTABLE/PANEL 03C: CITY ON THE MAKE: HOW CHICAGO INVENTED SLAM/SPOKEN WORD IN THE 1980s

Pritchett, Patrick

Harvard University

Thinking in Ruins: Ezra Pound, Gustaf Sobin, and The Stones of Provence

PANEL 10B: LIQUID PRECURSORS

Ezra Pound's walking tour of Provence in 1912 was part journalistic road trip, part medieval séance. For Pound, Provence was sacred: as the cradle of troubadour poetry it was integral to his vision of a new idiom comprised in equal parts of phantastikon and the propulsive energies of modernity. Provence supplied the luminous details that permeated his work from its earliest phases to the last of *The Cantos*. Much of Pound's conception of poetry as a revitalizing force, I will argue here, rests on how it conceives of and stages ruins. What ruins allow Pound to reclaim is access to archaic forms that can also speak to the estrangement of the modernist present in such early poems as “Na Audiart,” “Near Perigord,” and “Provincia Deserta.” The ruins of Provence, with their tantalizing aura of a lost gnostic-erotic tradition offered a way to map cultural identity through

ruined speech. Ruins for Pound offer the possibility of a poetic necromancy—a way to speak to or for the dead. Through the still vibrant trace of the ruins of troubadour love songs the past can mediate the present, affecting a kind of transhistorical prosopopeia. Where Pound looked to medieval ruins for inspiration, his aesthetic descendent, the American poet Gustaf Sobin (1935-2005), who lived most of his life in southern France, looked to the more remote ruins of the Neolithic. For Sobin, ruins are the sites where remnants not only persist against loss, but give it a second, luminous body. In this paper, I want to trace the ruin-as-nexus as it runs through Pound and Sobin’s commitment to modernist aesthetic. Sobin’s scrupulous attention to form—the shattered lattices of his stanzas—ruin or deform the body of the poem. Ruin becomes not simply the pretext, but the substrate on which to build a scaffold of visionary redemption. Along with Pound’s early paeans to troubadour culture, I will focus on Sobin’s companion poems, from “Trobador” (1980), “A Portrait of the Self as the Instrument of its Syllables” (1986) to later poems such as “Languedoc” and “Late Bronze, Early Iron” in an effort to locate the toponymic imaginary of ruins, or what he calls “luminous debris” the fragments of time that still illuminate the present through a complex refiguration of homages and violations, of sacred ruinations. As with Pound, the logic of Sobin’s poems compel us to think in ruins, taking up the challenge of time itself: how it is lived and how it may be redeemed; not by an appeal to nostalgia or vanished utopias, but by committing to *what remains*. Ruin’s utility as a category of poetic form comes from the power of the broken to still speak—not the whole, but the shadow of the whole. To think in ruins is counter-intuitive: it means resisting the lassitude of entropy. As Pound intuited, it is to write not of last things, but of first things, to attain a kind of dream poetic of lyric degree zero, by which ruins become foundational. Sobin’s engagement with an earlier phase of ruins in the Provençal landscape permits him to work through Pound’s moral ruins and the aesthetic failure of *The Cantos*. The appeal to the Neolithic seeks to repair the damages wrought by a fetishized Provence.

Pritchett, Patrick

Harvard University

PANEL 02B: ESTRANGING THE LOGOS: MICHAEL PALMER’S BOOK OF ECHOES

Participants: Patrick Pritchett (chair and organizer), Richard Deming, Norman Finkelstein, and Peter O’Leary

This panel will look at one of the key figures of 1980s experimental poetry, Michael Palmer, aligning his poetic output in that decade with the work of other writers and thinkers, principally Ludwig Wittgenstein, Stanley Cavell, and Robert Duncan. Though the main focus of each talk will be on the trilogy of influential works Palmer published in the 80s (*Notes from Echo Lake*, *First Figure*, and *Sun*) the discussion will extend beyond that timeframe to address what is now widely acknowledged as a turn in Palmer’s work, first announced by the appearance, in 1995, of *At Passages*.

R

Raine, Adra

University of North Carolina

Pretty in Pastiche: Theorizing the Postmodern Reader

PANEL 06B: GAY POETICS: AIDS, PLACE, POSTMODERNISM

This paper is a hybrid, and a provocation. It begins as a discussion of the poetry of Tim Dlugos and David Trinidad as inheritors of the New York School poetics of Frank O'Hara and James Schuyler, and turns into an exploration of how children of the 80s read poetry. At its heart, this paper is interested in how poetry that displays the stamps of "postmodernism"—irony, parody, play, irreverence, high-low collapse, disillusionment, disunity, delight in artifice—at the same time, and without tension, exhibits characteristics that the properly postmodernist work would seem to exclude: sincerity, seriousness, coherence, belief, and revelation (i.e. meaning). I argue that for a generation born after the Vietnam War—children of the decade of Reagan, Madonna, Star Wars, DeLillo, Deconstruction, Baudrillard, and Jameson—the stakes of poetry, language, and culture are different than what they were for a previous generation (particularly children of the 60s), reflected not only in their taste and temperament but most notably in their reading practices. I will offer an account of these reading practices based on my own experience as a reader (I was born in 1978) supported and/or troubled by some cultural theorizing.

Raine, Adra and Brinkley, Tony

University of North Carolina, University of Maine

Claude Lanzmann's Shoah and the Poetry of Witness

PANEL 01A :BEARING WITNESS

Reynolds, Sean

University at Buffalo, SUNY

"I could not let eu go": Robert Duncan Falls for the Wrong Verb

PANEL 10B: LIQUID PRECURSORS

This paper will examine Robert Duncan's translation of Pindar's fragment 131(96), which ultimately was published as "The Recital of Pindar," a coda to his poem "Eidolon of the Aion" in the 1984 collection *Ground Work: Before the War / In the Dark*. Much of my discussion will approach the translation by means of Duncan's unpublished draft of an introduction to his

“Eidolon” poem. My analysis will further pose a fruitful contrast between Duncan’s earlier “A Poem Beginning with a Line by Pindar,” his meditation on the manifestations of *Eros*, and this late translation of Pindar, which Duncan describes as a manifestation of his *Thanatos*, or his death-drive. This paper will make significant contributions not only to our reading of the poem “Eidolon of the Aion,” but also to our understanding of Duncan’s late poetics and his approach to translation. Duncan was first introduced to the fragment of Pindar in 1979, in an unexpected letter sent from Homeric scholar Norman Austin. In his letter, Austin informed Duncan that he should look at Pindar’s fragment in the ancient Greek to find the words *Eidolon of the Aion* (*aionos eidolon*), which Austin defined as “the cerebro-spinal fluid.” This announcement from a forgotten friend struck Duncan with great gravity for the reason that he had then been undergoing excruciating “spinal disease.” Duncan perceived these sciatic spinal pains to be an indication of the shutting down of his body, a closure that was latent in the “coded design of [his] character.” Therefore, Duncan received the Pindaric as a love token which contained an uncanny foreignization of his own most physical pain. Actually, Duncan understood this ancient Greek fragment to be the death-design of his body sent to him in the code of a dead language. As I will show, Duncan invested his fascination with the design-towards-death of his body into the metonymic object of the text—so that his translation became a “compulsion to repeat” his physical trauma through the object of the dead word. This paper will further make use of Duncan’s research notes toward his translation in order to perform a close reading of “The Eidolon of the Aion.” Principally, this reading will demonstrate how the sexual encounters which Duncan had formerly sought through direct exchange were now redirected through erotic attachments to words. Duncan does in fact claim that his translation of Pindar demonstrates such a transference of sexual energy: “Those terms of magical exchange and involvement [which] in my twenties and thirties I could have sought out in sexual fervor are now sought out in fervor of language events and obsessions.” Following this association of words as lovers, my paper will make particular note of one crucial misreading Duncan makes of the Greek original, a misreading he cannot let go, even after correcting it: “Eros blinded me to fall for the wrong verb even as Eros blinds lovers to fall for the ‘wrong’ one.”

Richey, Joseph

Independent scholar

The 1980s: A Dorn Take

PANEL 02E: ED DORN LIVE

This 60-minute presentation of recorded material, followed by discussion and question and answers, draws from two Ed Dorn books that treat the 1980's rather harshly: Dorn's day book of the 1980s, aptly titled *Abhorrences* (Black Sparrow, 1990), and *Ed Dorn Live: Lectures, Interviews, and Outtakes* (University of Michigan, 2007). Featured will be recordings of Ed Dorn reading from *Abhorrences* along with audioclips from lectures and interviews included in *Ed Dorn Live*. For someone as polemic and contrarian as Ed Dorn, the 1980s presented raw material everywhere. Some he poured into *Rolling Stock*, a

magazine published out of the University of Colorado. His own notebooks went into *Abhorrences* (Black Sparrow, 1990). Published when the decade was through, *Abhorrences* includes small essays, Op Eds, "statemental lyrics" and epigrams. In *Ed Dorn Live* he ponders when the United States became a nation of sheep. He reserves special scorn for the 1980s, Reaganomics, liberals, joggers, identity politics, and a myriad of intellectual fetishes of the period. He rakes LANGUAGE poetry over historic coals. He categorically rejects confessional, therapeutic, self-absorbed habits that are often thrown into versifying. He chides practitioners of "genderism" and sycophants for all things French, and deconstructionist. He takes Gertrude Stein off her pedestal. Quicker than you can say Amiri Baraka, Dorn would make you an enemy. His friend and colleague at the University of Colorado Peter Michelson writes in *Sagetrieb*: "Given where we're at, we require, if poetry is to be more than trivialized aesthetic titillation, close attention and alert consciousness. Given where we're at, the function of poetry is not to gratify aesthetic predispositions, but rather to jab the consciousness of the electorate. Whether in terms of history or current events Dorn's posture was often 'outrageous' and 'aggressive,' which is to say heretical to popular sentiments and received wisdom. If offensiveness is your principal implement of assault, the more offense the better" (*Sagetrieb's* special Edward Dorn edition, National Poetry Foundation, University of Maine, Orono, Winter 1997). During this presentation, audio selections of Dorn's take will be heard, interwoven with commentary by the presenter, Joseph Richey, followed by open discussion.

Rizzo, Christopher

University at Albany, SUNY

Sensational Waltzing: The Logographic Poetics of Alice Notley's Waltzing Matilda

PANEL 02C: ALICE NOTLEY

In *The New York Times* book review of Alice Notley's 2007 collection *In the Pines*, Joel Brouwer explains that the "radical freshness of her poems stems not from what they talk about, but how they talk, in a stream-of-consciousness style that both describes and dramatizes the movement of the poet's restless mind, leaping associatively from one idea or sound to the next without any irritable reaching after reason or plot." At first glance, Brouwer's assessment seems plausible, especially if read while drinking one's first cup of morning coffee. Returning to this review, however, Brouwer's smoothly erudite language—he weaves in Keats impeccably, for example—gives me pause. Of course, the article, by dint of venue, attempts to render Notley's work "recognizable" to readers. And while I do not mean to make of Brouwer a straw-man, I do, however, mean to point out that the language he uses is the language of representation, with all its philosophic trimmings and unfortunate trappings. Even Whitman understood that it is not so much what one says, but how one says it that bears relevancy to the writing of poetry, and to reiterate such a heurism does little to elucidate the work of, arguably, one of the most complex innovative writers at work in the twenty-first century. Such a quibble aside, to frame Notley's work in terms of "a stream-of-consciousness style that both describes and dramatizes the movement of the poet's restless mind" is disingenuous at best,

reducing the poetry down to a gestalt aesthetic—an aesthetic that Notley’s innovative forebears railed against, most notably Gertrude Stein, Laura Riding and, arguably, Mina Loy. What is more, such an aesthetic ostensibly “describes” (represents) on the one hand and, on the contradictory hand, “dramatizes” (enacts or presents) a singular self that precedes the writing of the poem, a singular self that all-too-easily slips into the egoistic solipsism of Keats’ “Man of Power.” Brouwer then claims that associative leaps occur “from one idea or sound to the next,” by which I take him to mean that “one idea or sound” is just that, a conventional—Popish, if you will—marriage of sound and sense. In this talk, I propose to discuss Notley’s work in non-representational terms, wherein the poems are not composed of significations, of representational ideas, but rather of sensation, to recall Gilles Deleuze’s formulation. Such writing does not represent a reality separate from itself. Focusing in particular on the title poem, I will return to an earlier collection by Notley, namely *Waltzing Matilda*, which, appearing in 1981, both exemplifies the development of her poetic taken up throughout the 1970s and founds her more contemporary works, such as *In the Pines* and, most recently, *Culture of One*. While I am not interested in establishing a definitive reading of Notley’s text—all reading is experimentation—I am interested in demonstrating the useful ways in which *Waltzing Matilda* takes up the challenges of non-representational poetry on the one hand and, on the other, exploring its relevancy to what one might mean by the term “poetics.”

Roche, John

Rochester Institute of Technology

PANEL 11B: REMEMBERING JOHN C. (JACK) CLARKE: POETRY AS NEGENTROPIC PROJECT

Participants: John Roche (chair and organizer), Alan Casline, Bruce Holsapple, and Kenneth Warren

The late John C. (Jack) Clarke, poet, jazz musician, and scholar of William Blake and Charles Olson, taught at SUNY Buffalo for several decades, but the 1980s were a particularly productive period which saw the publication of his neo-sonnets, *The End of This Side* (1979) and influential essay collection, *From Feathers to Iron: A Concourse of World Poetics* (1987), and many of the poems that would be posthumously published as *In the Analogy* (1997), as well as editorship of *intent: letter of talk, thinking, & document* (1989-1991), and continued co-editorship (with Albert Glover) of the *Curriculum of the Soul* fascicle series. All of these activities represented facets of his role as director of the Institute of Further Studies, expanding on Olson’s epic project. Together, Clarke’s teaching and publishing activities represented an atoll of “Negentropic Islands” that together hoped to restore “Avalon” through what Michael Boughn has called, a “multiplicity” providing “the basis for the restoration of measure, its reformulation or renewal.”

Roderick, Ryan

University of Maine

Theory, Art, and the (Re)Production of Critical Communities in Hejinian's Language of Inquiry

PANEL 11C: POLITICS, LANGUAGE WRITING, AND COMMUNITY

In this essay I focus on the interrelations between theoretical work, artwork, and their construction of community structures. Drawing primarily from Lyn Hejinian's *Language of Inquiry*, I discuss how the artwork of language poetry demonstrates the continuous creation and re-creation of critical communities by prompting agreements or disagreements within the text itself. I argue that *Language of Inquiry* demonstrates a conversation of texts and times by engaging itself in a dialogue about itself as both artwork and theoretical work. Such a conversation creates a unique context in which the artwork theorizes itself, thereby inviting the reader to engage in re-creating a critical community created by playing with the relationships between art and theory that Hejinian's self-theorizing allows. Such a context, I suggest, draws our attention to the continual re-invention of community that artworks allow through the conversations we create about them. As readers and writers creating and re-creating texts (critical or otherwise), we might take from Hejinian a responsibility to consider our work in terms of the kinds of communities it produces or reproduces.

Russo, Jennifer

Hunter College

Hannah Weiner, Jimmie Durham, and the American Indian Movement: Tendency Poetry in the 1980s

PANEL 07A: NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

This paper is an investigation of American tendency poetry after the inception of Language writing. I focus on two poets—Hannah Weiner and Jimmie Durham—who were activists in the American Indian Movement, and examine how they created overtly political poetry that engages both the concerns of Language writing and of their political cause. Both wrote political poetry that resists legibility, throwing into question the very function or purpose of tendency poetry, which seems necessarily premised on effective communication. Weiner directly connects her interest in Language writing to her political engagement, and humorously explains that in the early 1980s “the language group moved in / and so did the Indians.” The formal innovations of Language poetry and the revolutionary politics of AIM are wed in her work of the time. She documents injustices suffered and also elevates the Indian tradition of receiving knowledge through visions and unseen forces, which parallels and legitimizes her own experiences. Weiner wants her poetry to effect real change for the Indians, and is certain that “disjunctive and non-sequential writing can change states of consciousness, awakening the reader to reality, and thus the need for political change.” This altruistic hope for writing resonates with the stated poetics of many Language writers, but this activist impulse was also a product of her political commitment and her profound spiritual kinship with the Indian people.

Durham, Weiner's friend and fellow activist, insists "the purpose of art is to help people interpret their world so that they may be better able to change it in positive ways." But he, too, eschews traditional representational poetry, turning to radical practices to manifest his message in his reader's consciousness. His poetry is a product of his disillusionment with AIM, from which he resigned as director of the Indian Treaty Council and UN representative in 1979, insisting that "AIM/Treaty Council is heavily infiltrated by US government agents, and [...] both organizations serve the interests of the government and the energy corporations instead of serving the interest of Indian people." Durham writes with hostility to poetry and its traditions, which he posits as imitative of oppressive power structures. Durham creates a spare poetics, as rough and jagged as the realities it shares, and as suffused with reminders of injustices suffered as the lives of those depicted. His poems are infiltrated by the voices of authority just as AIM was infiltrated, but he disarms these voices, revealing ignorance and racism, and tells the stories readers need to hear. Likewise, Weiner tells the truth about both herself and those around her who suffer – channeling the voices of other AIM activists – but in such a way that their experience of dislocation and alienation is reflected in her clair-style poetics. Weiner and Durham aggressively confront authorship and representation in their poetry of the 1980s, and offer an effective tendency poetry that rejects lyricism and easy expressivity. Both poets serve as mediums, giving others voice in their poetry, while also posing challenges to the medium of poetry, and in the process generate an innovative, communicative, yet linguistically experimental, tendency poetry.

Russo, Linda

Washington State University

Geographies of Relations: Women's Long Poems

PANEL 05D: FEMINISM IN THE 1980S

In "Dreamy Language Reimagining (Long Poems)," **Linda Russo** will look at the role of "dream time" and dreamy language in the feminist reimagination of the "long poem," touching on the work of several poets, including Bernadette Mayer, Anne Waldman, Lyn Hejinian, and Rosmarie Waldrop. Her presentation explores how a reimagination of the long poem and its "validation" of imagination and dream as a source of knowledge complicates staid notions of female subjectivity. Sidestepping well-worn debates about genre and gender, she will align seemingly disparate practices (the use of dreams as a source for poems and the deployment of dream-logics, practices that may be said to distinguish "New York School" and "Language" poetics) to raise the question: do debates that demonize feminist essentialism really matter when we're in the dream zone?

S

Sandler, Matt

University of Oregon

*Poetry and Masculinity in the 1980s: The Cases of Robert Bly and Haki Madhubuti***PANEL 03B: MASCULINITIES**

This paper will take as its points of departure the publication of Robert Bly's *Iron John: A Book About Men* (1990) and Haki R. Madhubuti's *Black Men: Obsolete, Single, Dangerous?* (1991). These two works attempt to remedy, via self-help prose, the real and perceived ravages suffered by masculinity in the 1980's. Madhubuti wrote prompted by the crack epidemic and the decline of American city life, while Bly's work became an antidote to white corporate culture. Both poets began their careers in macho avant gardes of the 1960s; both lament the effect of 1980s economic uncertainty on the male ego; but they also critique the failures of absentee fathers. Finally both books went on to become the best-selling works of their respective authors' careers. *Black Men* has sold over a million copies, and has likely helped keep Madhubuti's vital Third World Press afloat for the past two decades. Over the same period, Bly's *Iron John* became a bestseller and provided the impetus for what has been called the mytho-poetic men's movement (the most visible result of which was a series of much lampooned "retreats" involving mock-primitive rituals). These works provide self-consciously poetic solutions to the problems faced by men of the 1980s, and reveal the overlap between the prescriptive syntax of 20th century avant gardes and 20th century self-help books. I offer the juxtaposition of Bly's ostensibly universal but practically white audience with Madhubuti's explicitly black public to suggest not only the discrepancy between these groups' experience of the 1980's, but also the striking coincidence of two established heroes of the counterculture taking on the role of popular self-help guru after their historical moment appeared to have passed. I will re-read the academic and cultural conversations these two books created in terms of late twentieth century American poetry, placing them in the context of Bly and Madhubuti's careers and the decline of the poetic movements of which they were a part (Deep Image and Black Arts).

Sawler, Trevor

St. Thomas University, Canada

*Robert Kroetsch's Poetic Technique: Imitating the Modernists***PANEL 09B: RESPONSES TO MODERNIST POETRY IN THE 1980S: CRITICISM, POETRY, AND TRANSLATION**

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Canada's Robert Kroetsch began his poetic career by working primarily with the long poem. Although his verse has been characterized as distinctly Canadian, his poetic technique throughout the 1980s

demonstrates clear parallels to America's modernist tradition, particularly as found in the long poems of Eliot, Pound, and H.D. In *The Seed Catalogue* and *Field Notes*, for example, Kroetsch's poetry depends upon memory, fragmentation, and what can perhaps best be described as a modified version of Pound's Ideogrammic method. In addition, like the American modernists, Kroetsch's work is densely allusive and highly intertextual. This paper explores the influence of modernists such as Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, and H.D. on Kroetsch's poetry, and examines both the similarities—those things that Kroetsch embraces—and, perhaps more interestingly, the differences to be found in both poetic technique and poetic intention.

Schultz, Kathy Lou

University of Pennsylvania

Poetry and Real Things: Erica Hunt's Local History

12 PLENARY PANEL: DISCREPANT ENGAGEMENTS

In 2001, Erica Hunt noted that “Years ago, I was asked whether my poems are about ‘real things.’ . . . That question about poetry and the ‘real’ jostles the horizon for poetry: how does aggressively speculative writing, strategies of intensification, opacity/excavation/illumination have value beyond their practice, to influence the world in which we live?” Hunt's work enacts this heuristic through a series of prose events in *Local History*, her first book published in 1993 by Roof Books, but which is “the product of over a decade of intensive engagement with poetry by a writer published in some of the most innovative anthologies and journals of the time” (Bernstein). The publications to which Charles Bernstein refers, including *In the American Tree* and *The Politics of Poetic Form* would seem to place Hunt's work solidly within the Language Writing community, though her work is rarely discussed within this context. In fact, though Hunt is well-known among many poets, critics rarely discuss her work at all. This paper will examine Hunt's engagement with the local, which can be as intimate as a missing connection between an “I” and a “you”: “She must be someone's missing person, the unread portion” (12) or as broad as a sought connection between the subject and history: “Thanks to the facsimiles provided by the Visitor's Center, the traveler can obtain some idea of what the plaza must have been like” (35). In seeking to understand these connections—or rather these missed connections—I will attempt to elucidate Hunt's conception of the “real” and poetry's incursions into it.

Shaw, Lytle

New York University

The Eigner Sanction: Keeping Time From the American Century

PANEL 06A: TEMPORALITY

Moving from a larger consideration of how the micro-temporalities of the New American poets might be thought of as recoding or contesting administered notions of time and history, this paper will focus on the extreme case of Larry Eigner, who moved from Swampscott, MA to Berkeley in 1978. Eigner's location is crucial, since much of his work focuses on the shifting acoustic and atmospheric developments within his immediate, empirical surrounds. Still, the 1980s were arguably the last decade in which the kinds of micro-temporality explored by Eigner played a central role in experimental poetics. By examining his work from the 1980s, this paper will seek to articulate both how Eigner's practice brings into relief the (never fully articulated or theorized) politics of time pursued more generally by the New American poets, and, at a larger scale, how this temporal project ran aground in the 1980s in the face of new quotidian organizational regimes.

Shockley, Evie

Rutgers University

What Comes After "Nation Time"? Diasporic Configurations of Time in the African-American '80s

08 PLENARY PANEL: OF TIME AND BODIES: NEW BLACK AESTHETICS / NEW BLACK CRITIQUE

I propose, in my paper, to think about the 1980s specifically as the first full decade after the waning of the Black Arts Movement. If the 1970s were "Nation Time," as Amiri Baraka posited in one of his well-known works—that is, time for a powerful assertion of black (cultural) nationalism and a corresponding revolutionary black political movement—what was the status of time in the 1980s, according to African American poets? There is no single answer to this question, of course, just as Baraka's claim did not articulate the full spectrum of African American poetics (or politics) existing in the '70s. But of the major streams of 1980s African-American poetry, I am interested in one that brings together poets whose work both emerges *and* diverges from the concerns (particularly black consciousness and temporality) that motivate Baraka's poem. These poets, including Jayne Cortez, Gayl Jones, Nathaniel Mackey, and Jay Wright, publish books of poetry during the '80s that demonstrate their indebtedness to the deep shifts in conceptualizations of black culture instigated by Baraka and other artists and theorists of the Black Arts Movement. In particular, they build and elaborate upon an understanding, revitalized by the Movement, of the important cultural and political connections between black people in the U.S. and black people elsewhere in the world, particularly in Africa—connections both existing historically and needing to be made in the contemporary era. Although the political is less overtly inscribed on the face of their poetry than on the poetry of the Movement, Cortez, Jones, Mackey, and Wright nonetheless write out of thorough commitments to exploring African culture as manifested on the continent and as it has been adapted to and transformed by various diasporic settings on at least three other continents: North and South America and Europe. One commonality among their explorations has been an interrogation of the nature of time in African cultures. Rather than positing a politically delimited "Nation Time," these poets have analyzed and theorized, through their poetry, the fragmentation and/or non-linearity of time in the histories and cultural practices of various enslaved and

colonized peoples of African descent. The poets work through these aesthetic goals—which must also be understood as politicized—in poetry that engages such oral/aural traditions as storytelling, music, and religion and employs practices of circularity, improvisation, and repetition. Such work does not constitute a repudiation of the written (or “writerly”) text, but rather an effort to uncover textual practices that can document experiences and conceptualizations of time that have been cultivated and sustained by oral cultures. The paper takes its cues and its examples from poetry in Cortez’s *Coagulations: New and Selected Poems* (1984), Jones’s *Song for Anninho* (1981), Mackey’s *Eroding Witness* (1985), and Wright’s *The Double Invention of Komo* (1980).

Skinner, Jonathan

Independent scholar

Scratching the Beat Surface: *Ecopoetics in the 1980s*

PANEL 09D: TRANSMISSION, TRADITION, AND CHANGE

In 1982 Michael McClure published the first book-length study of ecopoetics, *Scratching the Beat Surface*, eight years before Gary Snyder's *The Practice of the Wild* (arguably the most influential title in the development of ecopoetics). Though marketed as a book on "Beat" poetics (the "Beat Surface" section of Part I of McClure's book covers the Six Gallery Reading and poems read there by Ginsberg, Snyder, Whalen and McClure, while Kerouac's "Mexico City Blues" features heavily in the second section) most of the book derives from the Gray "Charles Olson Memorial" Lectures that McClure delivered at SUNY Buffalo in 1980, at the invitation of Robert Creeley. The essays making up that section, then, "Hammering It Out" and "Breakthrough," grapple with the legacy of Black Mountain poetics, with specifically engaged readings of Olson and Creeley, to support McClure's notion of the "action poem," as an enactment of ecosystems as cybernetic information. The second part of the book, Wolf Net, takes up microbiology to elaborate McClure's poetics of "meat" and "mammal" consciousness. The publication of *Scratching the Beat Surface* would coincide with the 1982 International Whaling Commission's moratorium on commercial whaling, a circumstance pointed out by the poem on the slaughter of 100 killer whales that McClure had read at the Six Gallery, reprinted in Part I. Radically diverse in combining figures like Olson, Snyder and Kerouac (not to speak of Blake and Shelley), yet monocultural in the confinement of its attention to white, male poets, McClure's book surely constitutes one of the first attempts to articulate an explicit relation between Olsonian poetics and ecological theory and praxis. At the same time (1982 was also the year of the Falklands War, the consolidation of Thatcherism and rise of Reaganomics), *Scratching the Beat Surface* arrived at a moment when environmental issues arguably turned and dove from the public consciousness, as well as from the attention of writers aligned with the systems-based interest in poetry that Olson had sparked. Meanwhile, the "Beat Surface," as it developed and refined itself into Snyder's *The Practice of the Wild* would remain untroubled by Olson's attempt to remake poetic form under the impact of emerging sciences. What happened? This

paper considers McClure's powerful yet ineffectual case for the convergence of "beat" consciousness and Olsonian field poetics around the new biology, in *Scratching the Beat Surface*, as a site for understanding why "ecology" remained marginal to the innovative poetics of the 1980s. To what extent might the nexus that McClure locates, in 1982, inform the ecopoetics of the twenty-first century? What would it mean to think of Robert Creeley and Charles Olson in the context of ecopoetics? And what is (and who are) missing from this narrative? McClure's book remains a rich surface for working out the yet to be defined nature of ecopoetics.

Smith, Ellen McGrath

University of Pittsburgh

Genre: Women's Prose Poetry in the 1980s

PANEL 01D: GENDER AND GENRE

Holly Iglesias' *Boxing Inside the Box: Women's Prose Poetry* (Quale, 2004) problematizes the dominant narratives and lineages attached to the emergence of the prose poem in the US. The book exposes the ways in which this relatively young literary form's history is generally represented as patrilineal; though the "seminal" figure shifts (Baudelaire or Bertrand, if one traces it to nineteenth-century France; Wilde, if one traces it to "outlaw" anglophone pre-modernism; Michael Benedikt, Russell Edson, or Robert Bly, if one couches the history in the American "prose poem revival" of the 1970s), that seminal figure is predominantly said to be a male writer. Iglesias's book merges both criticism and poetic prose to suggest that critics make the effort to see what is elided by such narratives. Yet the study is weakened by certain essentializing assumptions that woman-authored prose poetry is more embodied, personal, and immediate than that written by men. Extending Iglesias' project while redressing some of its more essentialist formulations, this paper will survey a range of prose poems published by women during the 1980s—from the more mainstream "The Colonel" by Carolyn Forché to work by Maxine Chernoff, Rosmarie Waldrop, Carla Harryman, Kathleen Fraser, and others—in an attempt to enrich and complicate the prevailing accounts of the prose poem's progress. With so many vital poetic movements spilling into the 1980s—post-confessionalism, L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poetry, second-wave feminism, to name but a few—the decade might be seen as a floodplain where streams merge and the waters muddy. Finally, this paper will consider the refusal of the prose poem label among Language-oriented writers as consonant with a greater degree of gender parity in that movement's accounts of its lineage(s) and histories: Does genre neutrality go hand in hand with gender neutrality?

Smith, Margaret Anne

University of New Brunswick at Saint John

*Mary Oliver in the 1980s: (An) American Primitive in an Age of Triumphalism***PANEL 05B: NECESSARY EXPERIENCE**

In a decade of Reaganomics, yuppies, Star Wars and the metafiction of the new postmodernism, Mary Oliver wrote *American Primitive*, winning the Pulitzer Prize in 1984. In an age of triumphant materialism, no-holds-barred industrial and corporate progress, and a willful environmental blindness, Mary Oliver not only continued to emulate those pioneering American primitives Thoreau and Emerson but even refused to follow in their steps, recognizing the significance of walking alone. Published in 1972, her poem “Going to Walden” ponders her refusal: “Going to Walden is not so easy a thing / As a green visit. It is the slow and difficult / Trick of living, and finding it where you are” (*The River Styx, Ohio and Other Poems*. [New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch 1972]).

Refusing to be a poetic tourist and visit Thoreau’s Walden, Oliver recognizes the greater significance in making every moment a Walden. By not following in Thoreau’s literal footsteps, Oliver—like Thoreau—goes her own way. Since then, critics have assessed her as feminist (and often found her wanting), condemned her as a naïve romantic, misunderstood the apparent simplicity of her subject matter, and sometimes celebrated her determination to “keep looking,” her courage to never turn away from the simple, the raw, the ordinary of the natural world in which we see ourselves reflected. More than mind over body or spirit over flesh, in *American Primitive*, Oliver’s second-person persona and an animal often become one, transcending both self and other, human and creature, immersing one within the other so all lines are blurred. Through this, we—the human reader, together with Oliver—transcend difference and return to nature, fully immersed. We transcend transcendence, never leaving human identity behind. Oliver achieves this by continuing to live in the moment, embracing that “slow and difficult/ Trick of living, and finding it where you are,” by cultivating the raw courage of one who looks, sees, faces and celebrates the moment, in the technical (and deceptive) simplicity of her verse and the sometimes startling viciousness of the occasional phrase. Using images and phrases of almost clichéd Americana (John Chapman, vultures, the old whorehouse, bison and skunk cabbage), Oliver practically invites criticism of unsophisticated naïveté. She plays the role of “American primitive,” relishing it, and inviting the reader to join her. Oliver sees the truth of our place within the natural world, acknowledging in “Blossom” that “time chops at us all like an iron hoe” (“Blossom” *American Primitive*. Boston/Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1983). There is nothing naïve about the poet who knowingly sidesteps the manic progress of civilization. Ironically, Oliver was recognized by *The New York Times* in 2007 as America’s best-selling poet; there is a populist appreciation for this poet’s work which surpasses that of the academy’s. By default, Oliver echoes the words of Thoreau, showing us—by showing us what we fail to see—that we, too, are leading lives of quiet desperation. Far from naïve, Mary Oliver assumes the prophetic voice, a voice once cherished in American literature and needed again—now in this new age of triumphalism.

Smith, Laura Trantham

Stevenson University, Stevenson, MD

*Politics and Progressive Formalism: The Formalist Poetics of AIDS***PANEL 02A: MARILYN HACKER**

In the 1980s, on the tail of the feminist and Black Arts movements, traditional or received forms were seen as suspect, as relics of patriarchy, attached to notions of mastery. Poets who adopted traditional or received forms were using the "master's tools." Yet, investigative, progressive formalisms were already beginning to emerge in the 1980s—often in conjunction with politically-motivated writing—gay writing, lesbian writing, intersectional feminist writing, and AIDS writing. This paper examines works by name-brand writers such as Marilyn Hacker, Marilyn Nelson, and Wanda Coleman, but also looks at some of the anthology poetry that came out in the 1980s in volumes such as Michael Klein's *Poets for Life: Seventy-Six Poets Respond to AIDS* and Rachel Hadas' *Unending Dialogue: Voices from an AIDS Poetry Workshop*. Through contextualized readings of poems, I show how experienced and amateur writers alike explored and experimented with fixed forms to investigate the constraints of body, social identity, and nation under the weight of social and biological disease. My readings, first, construct a progressive formalist tradition that positions race, gender, and sexuality as formal concerns and subjects for formal investigation. Further, my readings identify continuities between the projects of traditional formalist poetics and innovative formalism, which are too often seen as having dissimilar goals, values, and methods. Indeed, this paper suggests that in the 1980s, progressive formalisms were formalisms rooted in the investigation of the forms of body, culture, subjectivity, identity, and knowledge.

Snelson, Daniel Scott

University of Pennsylvania

*Relocating Jimmy & Lucy's House of "K"***PANEL 10A: SMALL PRESSES AND MAGAZINES**

When *Jimmy & Lucy's House of "K"* began circulation in 1984, it followed on the conclusion of several periodical platforms for poetics—including *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* (1978-1981), *This* (1971-1982), *Hills* (1973-1983), *Wch Way* (1976-1983), and *Tuumba Press* (1976-1984), to name a few. The Southern Illinois University Press publication of *The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Book* in that same year—1984—may be taken as indicative of the shift in critical perspectives and institutional situations at the onset of the magazine. Edited by Ben Friedlander and Andrew Schelling, *Jimmy & Lucy's House of "K"* (1984-1989) provides a continuation to a series of conversations initiated in the seventies while opening new spaces for poetics in the late

eighties. The sixth issue, released in 1986, for example, offers an extensive survey of Lyn Hejinian's *Tuumba Press*, providing the first comprehensive reflection on the Tuumba project while importing its concerns into new contexts and readerships. At the same time, *Jimmy & Lucy's House of "K"* presents a radical alternative to contemporaneous critical publications like *Poetics Journal*, *Temblor*, and *Sulfur*. Its position is marked differentially in relation to associated publications before, during, and following its circulation. In this way, the character of an emergent critical network is charted through the material conduit of a small xerox magazine and the editorial strategies of Friedlander and Schelling. In terms of display, this presentation coordinates an array of audio-visual data clustered around *Jimmy & Lucy's House of "K"* with special reference to the magazines surrounding its publication, highlighting shared contributors, editorial variations, and distribution patterns. Isolating this single magazine, mapping its contents and connections as an investigation of form, this presentation is an experiment in data visualization and print digitization. Autobiographical notes on scanning the complete run of *Jimmy & Lucy's House of "K"* in 2004 are shared alongside statements on reissuing period magazines in online formats via Eclipse, Jacket2, and UbuWeb. More abstractly, the periodical format of reviews and short critical pieces featured in *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* and *Jimmy & Lucy's House of "K"* is considered in relation to contemporary modes of online poetics dispersed on blogs and digital magazines. Finally, this exploration extends an ongoing contemplation of editorial modes of composition in contemporary writing technologies.

Snyder, Rick

University of Southern California

The Epic 80s: The Reinvention of Genre in the Works of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha and Alice Notley

PANEL 02C: ALICE NOTLEY

This paper will discuss the significance of poetic genre within the works of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha and Alice Notley in the 1980s. Although a wide range of poetic practices flourished in the 80s, the decade can be seen as marked by two dominant approaches, both of which took a reductive view of genre. Within the university-based system of creative writing programs and publishing imprints, a highly refined and restrictive approach to the lyric predominated. This "contemporary lyric" valued the poetic presentation of personal experience and aspired to a mode of reflective transcendence that would recuperate and universalize the otherwise private experiences of the poet. Against this dominant mode, the 80s also witnessed the growth and consolidation of practices associated with Language writing. Buoyed by post-structuralist theory, these experimental practices contested the Cartesian basis of the solitary subject presupposed by the contemporary lyric, questioning the validity of this subject as one who shapes language rather than one who is shaped by it. In their interrogations of subjectivity, moreover, these writers also sought to question the validity of generic distinctions themselves, presenting a hybrid "new sentence" that assiduously avoided both the lyric recuperation of personal experience and the narrative coherence by which larger stories of

individuals or communities might be told. Against the backdrop of these dominant tendencies, the respective works of Cha and Notley stand out. In different and distinctive ways, both writers seek not to subsume generic distinction within “writerly” discourse nor to reduce poetry itself to the transparent presentation of personal experience, but to reinvent traditional conceptions of genre while also interrogating the dynamics and implications of the ways in which language itself is produced. In doing so, moreover, both writers embrace “lyric” qualities of writing, presenting works that don’t shy from pathos, but that also offer larger narratives engaged with historical events, such as the Japanese colonization of Korea and the American war in Vietnam. This paper will contend that an epic impulse can be located within this engagement with large-scale historical events. While these works might not realize the Hegelian notion of epic as a work that represents “the total world of a nation and epoch” (*Aesthetics* 1044), both clearly aspire to present scenarios that resonate with the historical realities of war and imperial dominance. This epic impulse is abundantly apparent in Cha’s *Dictée*, which appeared in 1982, and in Notley’s work in the late 80s, such as “White Phosphorous,” a clear precursor to her fully realized epic, *The Descent of Alette*, which was composed in 1990. In exploring the particular ways in which Cha’s and Notley’s respective works engage notions of genre, in general, and epic, in particular, this paper will seek both to clarify the ways in which these works cut against the grain of the dominant poetic modes of their era and to isolate the reasons for their enduring influence today.

Solomon, Samuel

University of Southern California

1980, or the End of the World: Disaster and Reproduction in the Poetry of Wendy Mulford

PANEL 07A: NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

This paper charts the changing poetry and politics of Wendy Mulford (b. 1941, Wales) between the years 1979 and 1983. Mulford’s work from the late 1970s attempted to create a Marxist-feminist poetics attentive to the specifics of feminist and socialist organizational forms and the demands that they made on the construction and expression of lyric subjectivity. Her writing from this period engaged with debates in socialist-feminist theory and praxis over the status of “reproduction” for thinking cultural production. Mulford’s 1970s poetry exposed the affective and linguistic tangles inherent in reproduction, a term that simultaneously names the reproduction of capitalist relations of production and the more hopeful reproduction of feminist and anti-capitalist social movements. By 1980, however, Mulford’s political interests had shifted toward an emphasis on anti-nuclear proliferation. While most critics have read her poetry from the 1980s through the lens of her engagement with French *écriture féminine*, I argue that the shift in Mulford’s style in fact exhibits a developing fear of total nuclear destruction and a lack of faith in the possibilities for any socialist transformation of the militaristic capitalist state. In the face of impending disaster, “reproduction” becomes for Mulford a dismal go at bare survival. By tracing the movements from her 1979 poem “back-street rhymes” to the poem “How do you live?” completed in 1983, I consider of the challenges facing left

poets at the starts of the 1980s, a decade that, for some, saw the obliteration of hopes for any radical transformation of society. This paper treats Mulford's work as a test case for the effects of such a dampening of hope on the techniques and themes of leftist poetry composed in innovative traditions.

Steen, John

Emory University

Words Returning: Creeley's Memory Gardens and Maternal Mourning

PANEL 01A: BEARING WITNESS

Robert Creeley's poetry of the 1980s refigures his relationship to his own work of the 1960s, to that of his friends and associates (notably Allen Ginsberg), and to poets who would look back to Creeley's precedent. Focusing on the 1986 volume, *Memory Gardens*, this paper suggests that Creeley's mourning for his mother, who died in 1972, is a charged site of these backward and forward-looking temporal assessments inasmuch as it returns him to the site of the seemingly unrelated emotional crises that drove his early poems of erotic ambivalence and aggression. Attending to the history of elegiac and anti-elegiac poetry in 20th century poetics, to relevant letters between Creeley and Ginsberg, and to the strange role that photographs of the mother play in both Creeley's poetry and Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida*, I argue that Creeley tests the ability of poetry—and the ability of his own developing poems conceived as “places stumbled into”—to contain the affects of grief, especially as other technologies and techniques assert competing claims. Poems in the elegiac tradition have long depended on manipulations of time to address the dead as though they were living; I suggest that mid-century technologies of mourning, including a particular reliance on photography, may also return poets to periods in their work that still need to be, in Freud's phrase, “worked through.” In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes discovered an absolute and unmovable past in maternal photography that refuses to transform grief into a non-melancholic mourning. Creeley's own vexed attempts to reanimate himself through the reading and handling of his mother's image in the poem “Mother's Photograph” suggests that his own early poetry relied heavily on an often unrecognized figure of the mother. It also suggests that recent poetry's continuing project of mourning has roots in the 1980s. Creeley's own mourning of the loss of elegiac consolation, even as he struggled with the role of more recent modes of technological intervention as building blocks in a proprioceptive poetics of grief, prefigures the contemporary work of Peter Gizzi's *Threshold Songs* and Susan Howe's *That This*, both of which aim to mourn differently while maintaining a less-mediated contact with the dead than other modes of grieving allow.

Sullivan, Mecca Jamilah

Williams College

“You are an Imperative”: Black Women’s Embodied Poetics of Difference

08 PLENARY PANEL: OF TIME AND BODIES: NEW BLACK AESTHETICS / NEW BLACK CRITIQUE

This paper examines the interplay of embodiment, difference, and multivocal poetics in black women’s mixed-genre texts of the 1980s. Poets and writers such as Ntozake Shange, Jamaica Kincaid, and Audre Lorde have been recognized for their interventions into discussions of black genders and ethnicities in Afrodiaspora, yet the poetic strategies through which they make these interventions in their hybrid-genre works remain underexplored. Focusing on their poetic evocations of black female bodies, I argue that these writers reflect a crucial move within late-twentieth-century black female poetics to emphasize subjective multiplicity through multi-generic and multivocal explorations of black women’s bodies. I consider the poetic functions of embodiment in Shange’s under-theorized play-in-poems *A Daughter’s Geography*, published and produced in various generic configurations between 1981 and 1983; Kincaid’s little-known 1986 prosepoetic novella, *Annie, Gwen, Lilly, Pam and Tulip*; and Lorde’s 1982 black queer hybrid “biomythography,” *Zami*. Written between the “interlocking” identity frameworks of 1970s black feminism and the “intersectional” perspectives introduced in the 1990s, Shange’s, Lorde’s, and Kincaid’s texts offer a departure from models of identity that foreground limited constructions of race, gender, and class or race, gender, and sexuality. Instead, they use the black female body to introduce new spatial and material frameworks for expressing a difference that defies hierarchy and quantification, demanding that readers experience multiplicity as they navigate hybrid generic forms. I argue that these poets and writers develop what I term a *body/language*—a poetic mode in which the expressive technologies of the body shape form and genre, making space for an infinitely-nuanced black female identity written onto black women’s poetics. This poetic reconfiguration of the body allows Shange’s speaker, for example, to stage the physical birth of an anthropomorphic “poetic imperative” for re-articulating black female multiplicity—and subjective multiplicity at large—across generations. I read Shange’s, Kincaid’s and Lorde’s mixed-genre works alongside contemporary theories of poetic voice and embodiment offered by Kara Keeling, Janelle Hobson, M. Nourbese Philip, Susan Stanford Friedman, Judith Butler, and others. Exploring black women writers’ late-century mixed-genre poetics through *body/language* expands contemporary understandings of intersectionality, in which the lexical limits of verbal language thwart efforts to articulate difference beyond configurations of identity difference. By bringing recent models of intersectionality in closer conversation with the formal and ideological imperatives of black feminisms of the 1970s and 1980s, these writers position difference as an unquantifiable, often unnamable presence that foregrounds its expansiveness on the levels of genre and form.

Jewell Megan Swihart

Case Western Reserve University

Between Collaboration and Convention: (HOW)ever’s Influence on Criticism

PANEL 07B: “A SISTERHOOD OF EXPLORATION”: THE FEMINIST PROJECT OF HOW(EVER)

My paper examines the ways in which *HOW(ever)* engaged with conventional narratives of literary history, not only with its exclusive focus on the works of modernist and contemporary innovative women writers, but with its emphasis on collaborative reading and writing practices. Such practices work against what co-founder and editor Kathleen Fraser has identified as a distinct form of masculinist logic underlying conventional forms of academic literary criticism. In interviews, editorial statements, and essays, Fraser has linked the dominant mode of academic argumentation to the male bias within traditional poetry canons when recalling both her early experiences with New York School poets in the late 1960s and 1970s and her entrance into the academy as a teacher of creative writing. This paper primarily examines Fraser’s early experiences in the academy in relation to *HOW(ever)*’s emphasis on the collaboratively-generated process of its own composition. Further, I will discuss how *(How)ever*’s formal engagement with traditional critical discourses influenced the shape of the subsequent body of criticism on innovative modernist and contemporary women poets that was first being produced in the 1980s, flourished throughout the 1990s, and has since become an established field of scholarship. Finally, what might contextualizing the genesis of *(HOW)ever*’s emphasis on collaboration tell us about the reception of academic criticism on women writers as well as ongoing debates within and about that field?

T

Tapson Widenhoefer, Kristen

New York University

*Clark Coolidge and Cybernetics: Performative Epistemology in The Crystal Text***PANEL 01B: CLARK COOLIDGE**

This paper forwards that Clark Coolidge's approach to knowledge in *The Crystal Text* (1986) connects to the overarching method of experimental practice promoted in the field of cybernetics—examining a complex, unknowable system by interacting and interfering with it instead of studying the component parts of the system in isolation—which philosopher of science Andrew Pickering describes in *The Cybernetic Brain: Sketches of Another Future* (2010). Throughout *The Crystal Text*, Coolidge disrupts the flow of the poem by registering disappointment and frustration regarding the failure of knowledge to emerge from his writing and repeatedly alludes to the failure of the crystal to reveal itself or to be a lens through which the poet or reader can know. The significance of knowledge in the poem becomes apparent, but the question of what kind of knowledge remains. *The Crystal Text* does not offer totalizing or epiphanic knowledge but instead promotes and enacts a performative epistemology; knowledge does not “crystallize” in a representational form but instead catalyzes forward motion, manifesting in further performance. Knowledge takes a nonrepresentational form in cybernetician Gordon Pask's chemical computer, for example, manifesting only as the contingent performance of threads derived from iron sulfate responding to electrical impulses and managing the operation of a factory. Coolidge's improvisational writing, unfolding in time as he searches for an interrogative, interfering language with which to probe the complex system of reference surrounding the crystal, has the impermanence of these iron threads as well as their function, translating information into action without an intermediate of represented knowledge. The crystal and its features are part of the critical vocabularies of Imagism and Cubism and consequently part of the critical vocabulary of Modernism in general. The terms of the crystal—hardness, clarity, intensity, self-similarity, and synthesis—become clichés in twentieth century poetics and criticism, burdening the crystal with an accretion of symbolic meanings. Further, the orderly, repeating, solvable crystalline structure is a model of poetic production aligned with New Critical and structuralist ideals of poetry. *The Crystal Text* both extends and transforms the metaphorical and clichéd usages of the crystal, treating these usages as a complex system of meaning that the poet can prod and challenge in real time. Unlike Coolidge's poetry in the 1960s, characterized by his use of purposefully contained referential systems and specialized vocabularies, *The Crystal Text* interacts with an explicitly open system—the textual web of the crystal's usage in poetry, art, mysticism, technology, and science. In summary, this paper characterizes *The Crystal Text* as an event that brings together the *practice* of cybernetics and poetry through the cultivation of a contingent, performative, temporal, and interactive experimental field of inquiry that also intervenes in twentieth-century poetics using one of its central metaphors.

Tremblay-McGaw, Robin

Santa Clara University

12 PLENARY PANEL: DISCREPANT ENGAGEMENTS: LONG FORMS AND HYBRID GENRES IN THE WRITING OF NATHANIEL MACKEY, ERICA HUNT, BEVERLY DAHLEN, ANNE WALDMAN AND ROBERT GLÜCK

Participants: Robin Tremblay-McGaw (chair and organizer), Kaplan Harris, Erica Kaufman, and Kathy Lou Schultz

[**Discrepant Engagement is Nathaniel Mackey’s term for “opening presumably closed orders of identity and signification, accent[ing] fissure, fracture, incongruity, the rickety, imperfect fit between word and world”(19).

Against the backdrop of a decade characterized by the rise of neo-liberalism, a number of writers in the Bay Area, New York, Philadelphia, and elsewhere found themselves asking urgent questions about poetry and politics, experimentation and identity, narrative and the paratactic fragment, the problematic and the performed “I,” “theory” and “praxis,” poetry and prose. “French theory” in the form of writings by Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Georges Bataille, Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous, Louis Althusser, and others opened up writing as a site of de-centered pleasure, transgression, ideological constraint and productive critique; “language-centered” writing challenged the poetic field, proclaiming its newness and group ethos; gay and lesbian, feminist, and writers of color contested both mainstream and avant-garde writing and publishing practices and ideologies. Our roundtable contends that the 1980s witnessed a dispersed and emergent, strategic shift from verse-based poetics to various experiments in prose, often hybrid and performative. In his introductory essay, “Language, Realism, Poetry” from *In the American Tree*, Ron Silliman points out that “another transformation of poetry was taking place—into prose” (XIX). The turn from verse forms to various modes of prose-based writing occurs among numerous writers who are not part of this anthology, including Robert Glück, Bruce Boone, Kevin Killian, Eileen Myles, Aaron Shurin, Beverly Dahlen, Anne Waldman, Kathleen Fraser, Alice Notley, and many more. Proposing a collaborative investigation and enactment of “discrepant engagement,” our roundtable will explore the reasons for and implications of this shift. Roundtable participants will present brief introductory remarks of about 8-9 minutes each to inaugurate a lively discussion (which we hope will involve the audience as well) about the following series of questions: Does a prose-based poetics function not merely as a structure for formal experiment, but also enact critical and utopian re-readings of gendered and racialized histories, communities, and futures? How does one’s position in various social margins/movements overdetermined by heteronormative prerogatives manifest at the level of genre in the work of already marginalized experimental writers? How do publishing practices extend and critique the masculinist tradition of the long poem in ways that are undertheorized by formalist schools of criticism? Does prose have an edge on activating “history” and “identity” as explicit concerns? Or is there something specific about the move to prose and long hybrid forms in the 1980s that argues for these things? What potential does the hybrid form hold in terms of educating/education? The epic, not

unlike the realist novel or long poem, can become a sort of history book linking the individual to larger forms of social organization. Is there something about the 1980s that makes this form particularly resonant in terms of recording time?

Tremblay-McGaw, Robin

Santa Clara University

Fugitivity and the Archive in Nathaniel Mackey's Bedouin Hornbook

12 PLENARY PANEL: DISCREPANT ENGAGEMENTS

In the 1980s Nathaniel Mackey published both poetry and prose. His book of poetry *Eroding Witness* (1985) contains two epistolary poems addressed to the “Angel of Dust.” The addressee and epistolary form migrate into and produce the structure of *Bedouin Hornbook* (1986), part of an ongoing serial work, *From a Broken Bottle Traces of Perfume Still Emanate*. Mackey has described this project as “work that wavers with regard to genre, by turns an alternate, fictional voice pursued by criticism and an alternate, critical voice pursued by fiction” (*Paracritical* 15). My paper proposes that staging a purportedly private correspondence in public, the epistolary prose of *Bedouin Hornbook* enables a critical and communal interrogation of history and race by way of the mutually constitutive formal and thematic foci of fugitivity and the archive. *Bedouin Hornbook* articulates a diasporic imaginary predicated on dialogic and participatory productions of music, interpretation, community, histories, and archives that seek to avoid social and aesthetic arrest by not coming to “rest” in any one location or easily identifiable genre.

Tryphonopoulos, Demetres P.

University of New Brunswick

PANEL 09B: RESPONSES TO MODERNIST POETRY IN THE 1980S: CRITICISM, POETRY, AND TRANSLATION

Participants: Demetres P. Tryphonopoulos, (chair and organizer), Raymond Tyler Babbie, Sara Dunton, Svetlana Nedeljkov, and Trevor Sawler

Tuma, Keith

Miami University, Ohio

On Stephen Rodefer's Four Lectures

PANEL 10D: ARTIFICE OF OTHERNESS

I hope to present remarks about Stephen Rodefer's *Four Lectures* (The Figures, 1982) and some of its contexts of production and reception. These contexts include the writing of several language poets working in modes Ron Silliman once defined as "the new sentence." They include the economic recession of 1981. Moving nearer to the present and speaking exclusively of the book's reception, they include an enthusiastic critical response to the work among English poets associated with several generations of the Cambridge school. John Wilkinson, for example, has described *Four Lectures* as the definitive American book of the period. Such claims require unpacking and deserve response, and this paper will begin to offer a little of both. The hope is that an interview with Stephen Rodefer will be a significant part of the paper. If time allows, clips from Rodefer's reading of *Four Lectures* in Oxford, Ohio in 2007 will be screened.

V

Vickery, Ann

Deakin University, Australia

*Taking Poetry to the Beach: Ken Bolton and the Coalcliff Years in Australian Poetry***PANEL 09E: EUPHEMISMS FOR AN EMPIRE**

Between mid-1979 and mid-1982, a cluster of poets and artists that included Laurie Duggan, Pam Brown, Alan Jefferies, Denis Gallagher, Miky Allan, Erica Callan, Kurt Brereton, Barbara Brooks, and Steve Kelen would spend extended time at the house of Ken Bolton and Sal Brereton in Coalcliff. This period was a transformative one, resulting as Bolton notes, in “emotional and aesthetic consolidation or regrouping.” He suggests that the Coalcliff group were distanced from the views of the two principals of “New Australian poetry,” John Tranter and Robert Adamson. While the critical recovery of Melbourne’s poetry formation in the 70s and 80s is now beginning, I would argue that the Coalcliff’s ‘escape-hatch’ from Sydney should not be underestimated for generating key developments in Australian poetry. In considering the significance of such loose communities, forms of innovative cultural production that often fail to be anthologised (such as intra- and cross disciplinary collaborations and performances) come to the forefront. While there were changes in the oeuvre of Duggan and Brown, I want to concentrate on Bolton as emblematic of a rethinking of the Australian poet through local, transnational, and artistic influences.

Vitale, Anna

University of Wisconsin-Madison

*Revisiting What Makes Language Poetry Political: Representations of Force in Barrett Watten’s Progress***PANEL 11C: POLITICS, LANGUAGE WRITING, AND COMMUNITY**

In the preface to the 2005 Green Integer edition of Barrett Watten’s poem *Progress*, Watten asserts that the poem is “not simply a matter of the foregrounding of signification . . . [and] also not to be understood as primarily about the construction of the subject . . . [and] it is not simply a thematic response to a period of social and political retrenchment” (7). An outline of what the poem is not easily leads to questions regarding what the 1985 poem is. Viewing the poem as a forcefully closed or contained text, this paper takes the position that *Progress* allows for very little freedom, interpretively, formally, and thematically. In contrast to both Lyn Hejinian’s definition of an open text and Watten’s assertion that *Progress* offers an open-ended (negatively articulated) future, the poem repeatedly expresses, by both formal and thematic means, the impossibility of producing independently formulated speech or argument. Describing it as a “closed text,” however, does not foreclose the

poem's political possibilities. Joining Watten in his efforts to resituate *Progress*, this paper establishes that the significance of the poem exists outside of its successful performance of Language poetry's main tenets. More important, however, is this paper's positive claim regarding what makes *Progress* politically radical: it is, precisely, the representation of the experience of force, without recourse to sentimentality, recuperation, or even hope, that conveys the poem's radical politics. A famously contentious line from *Progress*, "Stalin is a linguist," serves as a starting point for reviewing the poem's formal constraint, a constraint that's received too little attention. The relationship between the political figure and the first-person "I" is central to understanding how *Progress* does not suggest unknowable future political opportunities, but also how it stages, again and again, militarism and linguistic coercion. This staging, then, seems to be the poem's political work, and possibly one of the mainstays of Language poetry more broadly—its fearless figuring of an unredemptive subjection to power. Ultimately, this paper suggests that the means by which Language writing claims a radical politics, historically and contemporarily, can be expanded and perhaps, then, made more convincing. By revisiting an important, yet largely overlooked moment in the well-known 1988 manifesto, "Aesthetic Tendency and the Politics of Poetry," this paper draws on Language writers' critique of the overwhelming representation of "a certain kind of experience" in American poetry. Refusing to romanticize physical labor and emotional suffering (the kind of experience critiqued), Language poets often represented unapologetically stark experiences. Though the notion of experience is admittedly vague, this paper asks how thinking about *Progress*' representation of total, unrelenting force, as a kind of experience, helps to shift the possibilities for the political in Language writing.

W

Wagner, Catherine

Miami University, Ohio

*Identificatory Stances and Identificatory Trances: Denise Riley and the Legacy of Her Lyric Argument***PANEL 05D: FEMINISM IN THE 1980S**

Catherine Wagner will discuss the work of English poet and philosopher Denise Riley. Riley published two important books of feminist philosophy, *War in the Nursery: Theories of the Child and Mother* and *Am I That Name?: Feminism and the Category of "Women in History"*, during the 1980s; much of her best poetry (so far) was written during the 1980s and published in the influential collection *Mop Mop Georgette: New and Selected Poems 1986-1993*. Riley's precise, humorous, ironical writing, both poetry and prose, conduct a searching investigation of subjectivity in language. Wagner will discuss connections between Riley's poetry and her philosophical writing and analyze her vital role as intellectual feminist provocateur in the British avant-garde poetry scene.

Warren, Kenneth

Independent scholar

*Archetypal Configurations in Clayton Eshleman's Underworld Poetics***PANEL 10B: LIQUID PRECURSORS**

Throughout the Eighties the relationship between poetry and archetypal psychology achieves a distinctive register in Clayton's Eshleman's underworld poetics, a body of interdisciplinary work grounded in his travels to Cro-Magnon caves in Dordogne, as well as in his editorship of *Sulfur: A Literary Tri-Quarterly of the Whole Art*. Launched in 1981, *Sulfur* included in its first issue James Hillman's essay "Alchemical Blue and the Unio Mentalis," amplifying blue works of imagination, communal existence, and the link between Dionysos and Hades. That same year, the initiatory effects of cave art upon Eshleman's life and work were registered convincingly in *Hades in Manganese*, a book of poems published by Black Sparrow Press. In the preface to *Hades in Manganese*, Eshleman discloses that Hillman's writings on dreams, eventually published in *The Dream and the Underworld* (1979), spurred him to imagine that the caves, too, were "an autonomous realm, an archetypal place that corresponds with a distinctive mythic geography—in short, an underworld that is not merely a reflection, i.e., a diminution, of an empirical sense world" (10). The deep psychic texture that Hillman proposed in *The Dream and the Underworld* (1979) supplied a crucial context for understanding how Eshleman's underworld poetics further developed the archaic grain proposed by Charles Olson in "The New Sciences of Man" lectures, which had been published in the Fall 1978 issue of *Olson* 10. Like

Olson, Eshleman demands to be read psycho-poetically. That is to say, Eshleman demands to be read through the structure and dynamic of the psyche, which purposefully enfold the mental, emotional and spiritual contents of the self and collective unconscious into the visionary poem of one's whole being. Just as John Clarke, another poet steeped to a considerable degree in the soul psychology of Jung, Hillman, and Corbin emerged decisively in the Eighties as Olson's true successor in the upward thrust of imagination into the celestial realm of Sirius, so too did Eshleman become in the Eighties Olson's true successor in the downward thrust of imagination into the archaic realm of blood and rock. In such poems as "Notes on a Visit to Le Tuc d'Audoubert," "Visions of the Fathers of Lascaux," and "Our Lady of the Three-pronged Devil," Eshleman generated an artistically complex and emotionally charged advance in American poetry. By approaching the imagination through Cro-Magnon caves and Hillman's extension of Jung's ideas of the collective unconscious, moreover, Eshleman extended the mythopoetic tradition of Olson and Duncan into an archetypal reflection of the poetic mind historically situated in the Eighties. At a time when Language writing was emerging as a kind of Titanic shadow of linguistic intricacy and theorization to a Dionysian psychic body in the caves, Eshleman contained this creative tension in *Sulfur*, publishing in addition to Hillman other archetypal psychologists such as Wolfgang Giegerich and Robert Avens, along with such poets as Charles Bernstein, Lyn Hejinian, and Ron Silliman. Drawing from currents of poetry and psychology, this discussion of archetypal configurations in Eshleman's underworld poetics will examine his interdisciplinary work as editor, poet, and thinker through tensions between the Titanic and Dionysian states of poetic mind that came to a head during the Eighties.

Warren, Kenneth

Independent scholar

Dead Beats: Jack Clarke, "Regulation" and the Homeric Chain

PANEL 11B: REMEMBERING JOHN C. (JACK) CLARKE: POETRY AS NEGENTROPIC PROJECT

As Jack Clarke's project emerged substantially during the Eighties with *From Feathers to Iron* (1987), the line between the living and the dead formed a crucial threshold, one that compounds epic poetry with depth psychology and physics. In considering this threshold, where the line between the living and the dead might be understood energetically through the terms negentropy and entropy, I will explore key psychological concepts, scientific analogies, and poetic deviations that inform Clarke's project. I will examine how he adapts ideas from depth psychology to differentiate between "psychic labor" and "poetic labor." I will address Clarke's propositions concerning (1) "order;" (2) "regulation;" and (3) "the unconscious." I will consider the relationship between Clarke's project and the Homeric chain—an irrational field of consciousness connected to the dead. In "The Disappearance of Ordering Intervention," Clarke's first lecture, the question "Where do the dead go" (25) is joined to an inquiry into entropy and negentropy. At the outset, Clarke provides his line on negentropy, along with his source—*Number and Time: Reflections Leading Toward a Unification of Depth Psychology and Physics* (1974) by Marie-

Louise Von Franz. By stressing Von Franz and the French cyberneticist Oliver Costa de Beauregard, cited in *Number and Time* at beginning of his first lecture, Clarke highlights the role that C.G. Jung's depth psychology might serve to orient the reader to an art of poetry not reducible to a psychological proposition, but rather related through "regulation" (35) to the unconscious—that locus of psychological activity and archetypal processes. "Poetry leads through image to the experience of 'regulation' that gave rise to recognition in the first place" (35), as Clarke explains. Insofar as Clarke sees that "Zeus' 'Perfective Action' has fallen to an 'unconscious' as a reservoir of regulatory power" (25), his proposition becomes more distinctly intelligible when scaled from Jung's depth psychology, with attention, as Von Franz notes in *Number and Time*, to "the manifestation of an archetype in synchronistic phenomena ... as an 'act of creation in time' and as the 'eternal presence of this single act'" (254). Zeus' "Perfective Action," says Clarke, is "the regulation of time" (33). Equally, Clarke's "regulation of time" belongs to the dead in an archetypal mythologem that Von Franz presents in *Number and Time*. The dead possess regulatory powers in "a natural order beyond the realm of the wishes and desires haunting our ego and its temporal earthy existence" (299), suggests Von Franz. Clarke's art of poetry feeds from this negentropic zone. From *A Curriculum of the Soul*, with Gerrit Lansing's *Analytical Psychology* published in 1983, to *From Feathers to Iron*, with James Hillman's generous blurb, Clarke's engagement with depth psychology is registered in the Eighties. In addition to Von Franz, Karl Kerényi, another colleague of Jung, who laid a foundation in mythology that informs Clarke's thinking, will emerge in my review of key figures and concepts from depth psychology that sustain a negentropic order that feeds a living system.

Wellman, Donald

Daniel Webster College

Editing Coherence in 1981: Desire in the Shadow of First-generation Language-centered Poetry.

PANEL 10A: SMALL PRESSES AND MAGAZINES

Coherence was the first number of O.ARS, a self-described "gathering of experiments in writing: toward a new poetics." Two precursor roots are embedded in the subtitle, honorific ancestor projects: "gathering" was meant in homage to the anthologizing projects of Jerome Rothenberg and George Quasha (among other associates of Rothenberg at the time); the other, "The New American Poetics." And yet I also saw myself as an anthologist in the dada vein, unworried by contradictions, embracing the new with revolutionary fervor and finding glimmers of spiritual transcendence under rubrics like "process," "perception," "method." So I wrote sentences like this: "Allowed to run at seeming random, the imagination returns to us the most convincing coherences." That was my summation of David Antin's "Radical Coherency," a talk given over the radio at my invitation and now the title of his recent book from the University of Chicago Press. Of Ron Silliman's projects, specifically *Rhizome* (also included in *Coherence*), at the time described as a series of combinations generated from a single set of 169 sentences, the pleasure being in locating sentences that "Chomsky would see as not possible," I wrote that I had

found, meanings that don't require explanation." Then I continued: "A puzzle allows both surprise and understanding. A riddle penetrates the inevitability of suffering. I think I have now sufficiently unburdened myself of my medievalist and transcendentalist roots. Riddles of penetration, something Freudian there too. It seems to me what distinguished O.ARS from similar projects at the time was a desire to identify some form of coherence at work in the production of poetry, a transcendence not necessarily existing outside or beyond the poem but nonetheless satisfying in its apprehension. A similar but not identical goal had already been expressed in Charles Olson's statement borrowed from Robert Creeley: 'form is only an extension of content.' " You might in the case of Creeley's phrase, read "form" as the coefficient of an immanent transcendence. From henceforth coherence would reside in method, but in 1980 such coherence was also expected to produce some glimmer of an uplifting change of consciousness. Our mentors as well as many of us had experimented with the mushroom. In the years after Vietnam, I lived in the forests of Oregon. Addressing the material of language with as much analytical scrutiny as I could muster, still I sought the visionary moment, almost as the promise that hard work necessarily would yield. I will also point out that *Coherence* was not well received here in Orono until Bruce Holsapple convinced Burt Hatlen of its value. I like to think that its outsider creds still have value. I'd like now to examine different ways that *Coherence* and other volumes of O.ARS were indicative of a changing poetic landscape of the 1980s.

Winkler, Chris

Temple University

James Merrill's Late Style

PANEL 05B: NECESSARY EXPERIENCE

James Merrill's three-part epic *The Changing Light at Sandover* was published in 1982. Shortly thereafter he was diagnosed with AIDS to whose complications he would succumb a little more than a decade later in 1995. Nevertheless, between the completion of his epic and his premature death, Merrill would publish three volumes of poetry – *Late Settings* (1985), *The Inner Room* (1988), and the posthumously issued *A Scattering of Salts* (1995) – as well as a collection of essays *Recitative* (1986) and a memoir *A Different Person* (1993). More than twenty-five years later, Merrill's late poetry still has been relatively neglected by critics, aside from, most notably, Timothy Materer and Langdon Hammer's respective attempts at articulating its basic outline and predominant strains. While Materer and Hammer each attend to the difficult circumstances in which these poems and prose were produced, their scholarship does not adequately capture the full gravity of Merrill's situation post-epic. Significantly, Merrill's completion of his most ambitious poem, the wide-ranging, Ouija board inspired epic was more or less coterminous with a forced confrontation of mortality. If this human *and* artistic point of crisis naturally influenced the remainder of his oeuvre, the poet's initial confrontation deserves our particular attention. For rarely has a poet, no less a major one, met such a circumstance in which the inevitable, and the intellectually and emotionally fraught, question

of artistic direction that is consequent upon the completion of an epic poem coincides with a virtual death sentence. This paper will consider then Merrill's work during the 1980s and argue that the artistic decisions that are manifested in these published volumes comprise a distinctive response to his extraordinary circumstances. Part willful maneuvering and part exigency of circumstance, the distinctive, and noteworthy, response may be finally conceived of as Merrill's late style.
