

POETRY & POETICS OF THE 1990s

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PAPER ABSTRACTS

Allen, Brendan (University of Maine)

All of Ed's Friends: Emergent Poetics of Inclusion in Talisman

PANEL 2A: MAGAZINES AND SMALL PRESSES

Editor Ed Foster launched the first issue of *Talisman: A Journal of Contemporary Poetry and Poetics* in Fall 1988, following a biannual publishing schedule through the 1990s and beyond. *Talisman* took, officially, a neutral editorial stance in navigating the postmodern trends that characterized late New York School communities. However, Foster and critics such as Terence Diggory have noted the particular social relationships that resulted in the magazine's initial generation—primarily the friendship between Foster and poet Ted Berrigan, who briefly served as Foster's colleague and provided influential encouragement as, Diggory notes, "magazine editing [was] one of the activities that Berrigan thought might properly occupy a poet when he was not writing poems." Each issue of *Talisman* centers around a particular poet with, occasionally, additional themed sections, such as Issue #12's situation of Theodore Enslin with "Chinese Poetry Today," or #16's focus on Robin Blaser and poets from Boston and the U.K. In turn, the poetics of each particular issue's contents can shift considerably from issue to issue, with the featured poets creating particular conditions of inclusion for other contributors. Initially, Foster and *Talisman's* associate editors solicited contributors themselves, but as *Talisman* gained visibility, so did its rate of unsolicited submissions. Due to *Talisman's* flexibility from issue to issue, these submissions occasioned complicated editorial decisions, as the underlying poetics of *Talisman* were, by design, difficult to pin down. This presentation maintains four intentions: 1.) To trace what poetics remain consistent across *Talisman's* run in the 90s, 2.) To mark individual poetic shifts and responses *between* issues/central poets, 3.) To discuss the editorial decisions necessary once *Talisman* began to receive unsolicited submissions of work, and 4.) To argue that the uniquely *emergent* properties of *Talisman's* poetics, synthesized from a wide network of poetic social formations, are indicative of the journal's success as an indicator of poetic community in the 1990s.

Ardam, Jacquelyn (Colby College)

Alphabetizing Terror

PANEL 4B: POETRY AND BIG POLITICS

In her book *The Transformation*, Juliana Spahr remarks that "the collapsing buildings [of 9/11] did provoke an unusual number of poetry readings and gatherings. At the poetry readings, poets suddenly only had two choices: to read poems about the buildings collapsing or to not read poems about the building collapsing. Most of the poets who read in the time that followed the buildings collapsing read poems about the buildings collapsing." This paper will address a particular subset of those poems about the buildings collapsing by a group of poets not usually discussed in tandem—Juliana Spahr, Billy Collins, Matthea Harvey, and Anna Rabinowitz—on the basis of a shared device: the abecedarian. While it may be most familiar to us as a didactic device to instruct children, the alphabetic sequence has also structured a number of radical works of writing and art in the 20th century. The alphabetic sequence is a culturally-meaningful trope with great symbolic import; we are initiated into written discourse by learning our ABCs, and the sequence signifies logic, sense, and an encyclopedic and linear way of thinking about and representing the world. But the string of twenty-six arbitrary signifiers also represents rationality's complete opposite; the alphabet is just as potent a symbol and technology of nonsense, arbitrariness, and (children's) play. This paper will consider the paradoxes of the abecedarian form in poems by Spahr, Collins, Harvey, and Rabinowitz, and pay particular attention to the ways in which notions of sense and nonsense, order and chaos buttress one another in these poems that respond to the buildings collapsing. The paper will argue that the poems indulge in the aleatory possibilities of an arbitrary form while also staking a claim to the political power that collapsed along with the buildings on 9/11. It will conclude by suggesting that the teleological form of the abecedarian is an apt vehicle for poetic attempts to comprehend, identify, and most importantly, *contain* a political era.

Azcuy, Mary Kate (Monmouth University)

Louise Glück's 1990's Political Voice: Constraints of the Garden, Ecopoetics and Nature

PANEL 6A: POETIC LIVES, POLITICAL VOICES

Poet Louise Glück's complex and multi-layered oeuvre from the 1990's includes her 1993 Pulitzer Award winning book *The Wild Iris* (1992). Her poems from the 1990's encompass early successes that initiated and continued her use of nature, myth, and the perils for women, via her wry and complex voicing of the oppressed looking at ancient stories in which to reflect corrupt and oppressive systems. My paper will provide an overview of representative poems that map—via the mythic, spatial, and uncanny—Glück's ecopoetics and the quotidian—absurd, existential, postmodern, necromantic perspectives of

deathly peril for nature and women that ironically continues as the focus of philosophy and fictions that Glück's work engages in the twenty-first century. The use of nature and landscape draws conversations of Glück's early work in *The Wild Iris* that often connected her to American pastoral poetry, including the sweeping tradition of the lyricism of Walt Whitman, yet Glück's poetry is the new-lyrical voice, the post-pastoral, necropastoral where the world and humans are in jeopardy. Glück's 1990's personas draw us to the personal, where, as J.D. McClatchy states, landscape acts as "a map of memories..." (*White Paper* 32). In representative Glück poems, women and the earth are in still in danger in the same places and spaces where they search for and oftentimes find solace—in the comfort of intellect and place/space, home/earth (oikos)—or in isolation, oftentimes in death. From feminist studies and postcolonial theory, the threats occur, ensue, and continue because of the creation of classifications of humans, Foucauldian power hierarchies. Glück's poetry implies such political alliances to women and nature, which are being menaced by systems that celebrate, take over, and control them via mythic laws, and then uses those powers to denigrate the *othered*. This critical study of representative Glück poems from the 1990s looks at the patterns in her poetry that tie to critical conversations regarding ecocriticism, feminism and gender, as well as the mythic tradition she implies and uses as mimetics in selected poems: "The Garden" from *The Wild Iris* (1992); "Anniversary" and "Meadowlands 1" from *Meadowlands* (1996); "New World," "Paradise," and "Mirror Image" from *Ararat* (1990); "Eurydice" from *Vita Nova* (1999).

B

Bartlett, Jennifer (Independent Scholar)

A Shift in Place: Larry Eigner Writing in the 1990s

PANEL 8B: HISTORICIZING THE 1990s (A)

In 1978, Larry Eigner moved from his parent's home in Swampscott MA, where he lived for the first 51 years of his life. The move was instigated by his father's death and his mother's inability to care for him on her own as he has severe cerebral palsy and needed full-time care. Eigner's move to Berkeley in the San Francisco Bay Area corresponded with the new Independent Living and Disability Rights Movements. For the first time, Eigner was freed from the watchful eyes of his parents to enjoy a bit of independence, helped along though the support of his brother Richard and sister-in-law Beverly who lived nearby. Throughout the 1980's Eigner lived with and was cared for by the poet Robert Grenier and his partner, Kathleen Frumkin. In the 1990's this arrangement changed, and while Eigner stayed in his home, he was cared for by a number of attendants. My paper traces the poems Eigner wrote in the last six years of his life. It explored how the work changed as his body aged and how, through the help of the poet Jack Foley and others, he became more involved in the Bay Area "poetry scene" and he influenced other poets emerging at that time.

Beer, John (Portland State University)

"The Blues Comes/Like a Sentinel/Of the World": History, Music, Life in Baraka's Wise/Why's/Y's.

PANEL 5A: THE LONG POEM IN THE 1990s: BARAKA, JARNOT, MOURÉ

In the introductory note to the book that collects the forty sections of *Wise/Why's/Y's*, Amiri Baraka traces out a lineage for his long poem: "It is also like Tolson's *Liberia*, WCW's *Paterson*, Hughes' *Ask Yr Mama*, Olson's *Maximus* in that it tries to tell the history/life like an ongoing-offcoming tale." This talk seeks to tease out the ramifications of that provocative conjuncture "history/life," and in so doing, indicate how *Wise/Why's/Y's* both joins and deviates from the modernist tradition of the "poem containing history." Music, it turns out, forms the pivot linking history to life, both as animacy and as the everyday: this long poem, like Baraka's work as a whole, can be understood (following pathways earlier traced by Nathaniel Mackey and Kathy Lou Schultz) as simultaneously a history of black music and a music of black history. The life of the poem that emerges out of that dialectic interplay might best be described, in terms deriving from Fred Moten, as a lingering, in which the relations of figure and ground, theme and elaboration, history and present life are tested and transfigured.

Bolotin, Annie (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor)

Historicizing the Historian: Anne Carson as a Nineties Poet

PANEL 3B: ANNE CARSON

Given the popularity of Anne Carson's volumes from the 1990s, it seems peculiar that her work has been given such a minor role in scholarly accounts of that decade. How can we place Anne Carson more firmly in her literary historical moment? And how does that placement affect how we read the innovations of nineties poetry and the poetry that follows? While Stephen Burt has claimed her short lyrics of this decade as elliptical, her central works of this time are her long volumes—particularly

Glass, Irony & God (1995) and *Autobiography of Red* (1998). What innovation is present in these volumes that the discourse of ellipticism (or similar contemporary discourses of hybridity) fails to capture? I argue that this innovation takes the form of the book-length poem of serious interdisciplinary intellectual ambition. While other poets also turned to book-length poems in this decade, Carson is unique for the scale and sophistication of her interdisciplinary ambition. Language poets had been saying since the 1980s that one of the weaknesses of contemporary poetry was its isolation from other forms of discourse, but their work largely relies on fashionable Western Marxist theories of deconstruction. Carson, by contrast, assembles a larger and more idiosyncratic archive: nineteenth century novels, biblical stories, and (of course) Ancient Greek poetry and philosophy. Distinct from the anti-lyricism of Language poetics, Carson's wayward deconstruction posits a role for the humanities in an era of posthumanism. Focusing on *Glass, Irony & God* in this paper, I read her opening poem "The Glass Essay" in terms of the feminist critique she develops in her closing essay "The Gender of Sound" in order to consider how Carson opens the lyric "I" to a realm beyond the self. In conclusion, I turn to contemporary theories of the hybrid to consider how Carson's exclusion limits our understanding of contemporary cross-genre writing in a manner that leads scholars to poorly account for the intellectual ambition of these forms innovated in the last two and a half decades.

Brophy, James (Boston University)

"The Printer's Error": Play, the Political, and Piety in the American 1990s

PANEL 6B: FREEDOM, DEVOTION, NEW SPIRITUALITY

This paper will offer an appreciation and a critical reading of Aaron Fogel's "The Printer's Error" (1995), with broader reference to poems gathered in the collection of the same name (2001). In the poem, Fogel offers an anatomy of typographical errors which include, "in order of ascending importance":

errors by chance,
errors by workers' protest
and errors by
God's touch

I read these as corresponding to three fundamental modern modes: play, political action, and piety; each challenged by the conditions of contemporary life, each reckoned as perhaps recuperable in the realm of the poetic. "Of the overlooked poets of our time," writes David Lehman, "Aaron Fogel may be the most brilliant and the most imaginatively complex"; high praise in a decade whose literature should perhaps be *defined by* that which is overlooked by processes of canon-making. Fogel's work is not without visibility, anthologized by the unlikely company of Richard Howard, Harold Bloom, Billy Collins, and most recently by David Lehman in the *Oxford Anthology of Modern American Poetry* (2006). Still Fogel's work evades the critical attention to which it lends itself so fruitfully; it is the work of a modern poet-critic, dizzily erudite and allusive, uncomfortably institutionalized, inspired by the deep ironies and anxieties of late twentieth-century academia. Finally, I nod toward the influence in Fogel of Crane and Stevens, with whom he shares a playful (necessarily political) piety in the "literal" material of language. I suggest how reading Stevens and Crane retroactively in terms of Fogel, rather than in terms of, e.g., the influence of the Romantics or Rimbaud, highlights features in American poetic modernism which go under-emphasized by the influential critical narratives of, e.g., Bloom or Perloff.

Brown, Erika Jo (University of Houston)

"I laugh at the limerick I am": Muscular Wordplay in Harryette Mullen's Trimmings

PANEL 1B: POETRY, RACE, GENDER, AND CULTURE: READING THE WORK OF HARRYETTE MULLEN

In her 1996 essay "Poetry and Identity," Harryette Mullen encourages the plurality of black aesthetics and contests the perceived range of topics available in experimentalist poetics. She relates how the label "'avant-garde poets of color' threatens the cohesiveness of narratives" and how her own poetry attempts to cross this "aesthetic apartheid." In the early 1990s, Mullen released a triumvirate of chapbooks—*Trimmings*, (Tender Buttons 1991), *S*PeRM**K*T* (Singing Horse Press 1992) and *Muse and Drudge* (Singing Horse Press 1995). During this pivotal moment in the lyric/LANGUAGE debate, Mullen melded a hybrid sensibility that offers a means of resistance to dominant ideologies about subjectivity, gender, race, and formal technique. My paper explores Mullen's innovative approach in *Trimmings*, her second book and first major experimental endeavor, in which wordplay enacts the representational slippages of inhabiting a black female body. Mullen thematizes the body and its readability through depictions of clothing and costume. She reveals how surface layers conceal, reveal, and problematize the political realities of identity. Characterized by homonymous puns, text-based prevarications, and playful

allusions from Josephine Baker to *The Sound of Music*, Mullen emphasizes the multiplicative dimensions of wordplay. She deploys several experimental structural techniques, such as sentence fragments and seriality, combined with a radical floating subjectivity that also returns to the racially-marked individual in society. Her strategy illustrates language's relationality and speaks to the reader's own position vis-à-vis race, gender, education, and other potential markers of American vernaculars. In his 2014 book *Freedom Time*, Anthony Reed retraces how literary catalogers of both avant-garde and black genealogies neglect the work of experimental poets of color. Contemporary critics Dorothy Wang, Timothy Yu, and Fred Moten, among others, have also written about the marginalization and erasure born of this aesthetic/racial binary framework. Reed commends "the ways black experimentalist poetics set their own agenda, articulate conflicts and politics of the present, posit alternative modes of futurity and community, and require new modes of thinking." I argue that *Trimmings* disallows the kind of racialized reading that essentializes the black experience and scrubs the avant-garde of subjectivity. What emerges from *Trimmings* is a moving, playful account of how we might interrogate present conditions, in poetry and other media, through a generative relationship between body and text.

C

Cadeau, Charmaine (High Point University)

Expansive Poetry: Abridged

PANEL 3B: ANNE CARSON

An offshoot of New Formalism, Expansive Poetry seemed a viable movement in the 1980s. Reacting against the 'formlessness' and brevity of lyric, 'obscurity' of the avant-garde, and shrinking readership outside of the academy, Expansive Poetry sought to revitalize narrative and traditional poetic forms to reach popular audiences. By the 1990s, even with the growing popularity of forms like novels in verse, Expansive Poetry as a movement fell to the wayside, but its propositions did not entirely fail. This paper explores Anne Carson's expansive, not Expansive, works in the 1990s, including "The Glass Essay" (1995) from *Glass, Irony, and God*. Her long works, like *The Autobiography of Red*, are formal, experimental, and genre-bending, much like what Wade Newman and others were calling for and predicting when coining Expansive Poetry--yet her work is discrete from the movement. Carson's *Eros the Bittersweet* (1986) is a curious example of the decade; reissued and rebranded in the '90s as a literary work, it appealed to classical philosophers as much as literary readers. Carson's work seems to lay a foundation for future writers like Maggie Nelson, whose long forms are similarly populist and straddle across specialized readerships; but instead of amplifying Expansive Poetry, her work was received as something distinct from that movement, closer instead to modernist epics. This paper will examine the failure(s) of Expansive poetry, but also the impetus to expand.

Careless, Eleanor (University of Sussex, UK)

Assembling Absences: Anna Mendelssohn, Jennifer Moxley and the Transnational Feminist Avant-garde

PANEL 2B TRANSNATIONAL AND PROJECTIVIST FEMINISMS

A series of pamphlets published in Cambridge through the 1990s establish Anna Mendelssohn as one of the most important British poets of her time. Working at the margins of the "Cambridge School" and socialist-feminist poetics, Mendelssohn's development of the modernist lyric stands as an important counterpart to more documented contemporary writing. My paper will bring Mendelssohn's poetry belatedly into contact with what I am terming the transnational feminist avant-garde. In 1996, Wendy Mulford's Reality Street Press published *Out of Everywhere*, a collection of thirty women writers including poems by Anna Mendelssohn (writing under the name Grace Lake). In that same year, Romana Huk held the Boston conference "Assembling Alternatives: Reading Postmodern Poetries Transnationally" and in so doing brought together significant numbers of innovative female poets. Letters from Mendelssohn's recently opened, extensive archive show that after initially accepting an invitation to speak at the conference, Mendelssohn declined to attend, for reasons related to her own experience of persecution and imprisonment. To reassemble Mendelssohn's absence in Boston is to address the deficit of critical attention to her work. This paper will trace lost connections between two 1996 pamphlets published by Mendelssohn and Jennifer Moxley (who did attend "Assembling Alternatives"). There are multiple intersections between Mendelssohn and Moxley's work in the 1990s: both are preoccupied with questions of incarceration, the failure of art, and the gendered fallout of involvement in resistance movements. More than this, their approaches to the lyric are contiguous. Moxley has written of her experiments in poetic line and form, and Mendelssohn spent some years working on what she called "the open sentence." Written in response to the Gulf War (Moxley) and the still-emerging legacy of the Holocaust (Mendelssohn), these pamphlets are powerful lyrical experiments in countering the carceral structures of modernity via the freeing space of the page.

Case, Kristen (University of Maine at Farmington)

Freedom and Devotion in the Work of Susan Howe

PANEL 6B: FREEDOM, DEVOTION, NEW SPIRITUALITY

This paper, which emerges out of a longer consideration of the work of Susan Howe, will explore her archive-based work of the 1990s—*The Birth-Mark*, *Pierce-Arrow*, and *The Non-Conformist's Memorial*—with a focus on the recurrent emphasis on antinomianism, wildness, and freedom in these works. In an interview reproduced in *The Birth-Mark* Howe encourages us to think of such freedom dialectically: “I think a lot of my work is about breaking free: starting free and being captured and breaking free again and being captured again.” In the work of the 90s, Howe develops a collage-based archival poetics, placing side-by-side on the page words, images, and manuscript fragments, aimed at the productive disruption of grammatical structures and certainties. What we might call the antinomian freedom of this work stands in a complex relation to the work from 2003’s *The Midnight*, in which the task of establishing relations, carried over from the earlier work, takes on an increasingly devotional tone and seems aimed at establishing contemporaneity with forbears, parents and other absent beloveds. This paper will consider the relation between freedom and devotion in Howe’s work of the 1990s and 2000s, and consider this dialectic alongside contemporary conversations about the limits of critique, secularism, and epistemology.

Conners, Carrie (CUNY-LaGuardia)

Work Is Work: American Working-Class Poetics in the 1990s

PANEL 6A: POETIC LIVES, POLITICAL VOICES

For most of the 1990s, the television sitcom *Roseanne* was near the top of the ratings. The show was notable for its portrayal of a working-class family, and especially for its focus on a working mother who holds a job at a plastics factory, then, after she quits, works stints as a telemarketer, fast-food cashier, beauty shop cleaner, bartender, and waitress, among other jobs. In the same decade, many influential volumes of poetry were written that explored working-class lives, including Philip Levine’s National Book Award winning *What Work Is* (1991), Sandra Cisneros’s *Loose Woman: Poems* (1995), Jim Daniels’s *Punching Out* (1990), *M-80* (1993), and *Blessing the House* (1997), Jeanne Bryner’s *Blind Horse* (1999), Jan Beatty’s *Mad River* (1996) and *Boneshaker* (2002)¹, and Wanda Coleman’s *Bathwater Wine* (1998) and *Mercurochrome: New Poems* (2001)². In this paper, I will explore how working-class lives are represented in the poetry of a diverse sampling of American poets publishing in the 1990s. To highlight this poetry’s richness and variety, I will analyze the work of poets from different geographical, ethnic, and racial backgrounds, and emphasize poetry written by women and about working women since it has not received the critical attention that it merits. In this writing, commonalities emerge, including use of humor and a sense of solidarity with other workers. I will discuss how the poets’ working-class backgrounds affect their poetics and their perceptions of their poetic craft. Through this analysis, I will offer hypotheses about why the 1990s saw such robust representation of American working-class poetry, touching on increased access to higher education, presses and literary journals dedicated to publishing poetry of work, and economic shifts that affected the working class—including deindustrialization, the rise of the service economy, and the weakening of unions—and augmented cultural awareness of working-class issues.

Connolly, Sally (University of Houston)

Object Lessons in 90s AIDS poems

PANEL 7A: OBJECT LESSONS: THE DISCOURSE ON AIDS

This paper will explore the refusal to objectify the dead of the AIDS epidemic in the poetry of the 1990s, and focus upon various “objects” in the poetry of Thom Gunn and Mark Doty that function both as a means of communicating with and commemorating the dead. Traditionally poems occasioned by death seek to distance the mourning subject from the grieved object by distancing and eventually objectifying the dead through the enactment of elegiac form. One major aspect of elegiac consolation has been the continued existence of the dead in their ‘blood’: their offspring. However, the idea of blood in these poems suggests a very different kind connection to the dead. The traditional roles of the subjective mourner and the objectified dead merge and intermingle. I shall explore this blurring of the boundary in Gunn and Doty and examine their refusal to make their dead ‘other’ and abject in the manner that many of these individuals were treated while alive. It is my contention that this desire for continued connection frequently appears in AIDS poetry in the form of various communicatory and liminal objects and that the nature and function of these liminal objects changes over the course of the decade. I shall consider the mediating television screens that appear in Gunn’s “Death’s Door” (1992) and Doty’s “Fog” (1998) and before turning to the Ouija board of Doty’s “Fog” and the glass panel that features in Gunn’s “In the Post Office” (2000). Finally, I shall examine the poems that address themselves to the AIDS memorial quilt (Doty’s “The Wings” (1990) and Gunn’s “Epitaph” (2000).

Cope, Stephen (Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Canada)

Worlding as Unwording: Gustaf Sobin and the Dialectical Lyric

PANEL 6C: SPIRIT, SOUND, SYLLABLE: GUSTAF SOBIN IN THE 1990s

Gustaf Sobin's writing is uniquely situated between an American Objectivist tradition grounded in what Louis Zukofsky claimed was an "anti-epistemological" empiricism, and a European post-war tradition informed by the more skeptical tendencies of phenomenology and post-structuralism. Here, I am interested in exploring the relationship between these two trajectories in dialectical terms, using Sobin's poetry (and poetics) as a touchstone for a more speculative exploration of the "dialectical lyric" as such. I am particularly interested in the ways in which ostensibly diametrical oppositions (object/subject, matter/spirit) become dialectical in lyrical practices such as Sobin's, and how this transformation might problematize the often reductive categories (again: objective/subjective, materialist/spiritualist) into which post-war poetics are sometimes catalogued. This has everything to do with the productive entanglements between word and world—poetic word, say, and Heideggerian world, or the occlusion of one by the other—for which the dialectical lyric, in Sobin's case and others, is especially well equipped.

Cotton, Jessica (University College of London, UK)

"The stock that engenders itself": John Ashbery's Visions of Girlhood

PANEL 9B: MEMORY, LOCALE, LOSS, SATIRE

Throughout his long career, Ashbery's poetry has returned insistently to images of girlhood. Much of his so-called 'difficult' poetry circles back to images of the young girl who is also, frequently, the speaker or subject of his poems. His archive is replete with marginalia of girl's fashion which colour the way in which we think about the seriousness and difficulty of his work. Though it is frequently assumed that Ashbery's work eludes thematization, the images of girlhood that are woven throughout his body of work suggest that it has a particularly intimate relation with his poetics, with forms of cultural production, with the negotiation of the poem in relation to work and leisure, to a zany kind of productivity and to the position of the speaker in the poem. In his work, girls are coincident with a camp cuteness and they also invoke the elusively of the poet's position. In an early poem, 'Thoughts of a Young Girl', girlhood is revealed as both a form of impersonation and coincident with poetic artifice itself. The figure of the girl is seen as analogous to the mysterious identity of that nameless weaver of gold and of children, Rumpelstiltskin, the narrator of the poem, who embodies the 'secret' (or, one might say, the commodity) of the poem's mysterious production. The relationship between girlhood, poetry and commodity aesthetics constellates at various stages in Ashbery's career but it is undoubtedly most insistently revealed in his turn-of-the-millennia collection, *Girls on the Run* (1999), a 'surrealist adventure story for juvenile adults' that draws together the threads of his earlier thinking about the role of post-war American girlhood into an explosive, confounding account of the contemporary and, in particular, of the position of 'the precariat'. At once highly visible and empty signifiers, these morphing, gender-neutral 'nervous predicates' are mutations of the sexualized Vivien girls in Henry Darger's visual epic. In this paper, I consider the ways in which Ashbery, by putting his femininity to work, reveals the poet to be an ideally flexible creative worker in the New Economy. By aligning the poet's production with such characters as Shuffle and Pliable, he reveals the importance of infinite adaptability to surviving the precariousness of the contemporary labour, and poetry, market.

Crew, Caroline (Georgia State University)

The Poetics List: New Technological Space for Poetic Discourse

PANEL 1A: EDITING THE 1990s

With the 1990s still working within the stagnating "Raw vs Cooked" debate and MFA culture rapidly expanding, other forums for poetic discourse became the space in which contemporary questions were hashed out. In particular, the Poetics List, a listserv founded by Charles Bernstein in late 1993 that continued until January 2014 as a project of SUNY-Buffalo's Electronic Poetry Center / Poetics Program, developed into a vital and challenging medium. This unmoderated space is both more immediate and more exploratory than traditional academic publishing platforms, and one that deserves critical attention. This paper would trace the major strands of debate occurring throughout the 90s on the Poetics List, particularly paying attention to the growing question of identity politics and MFA culture, as well as the major shifts in the listserv's usage throughout the 90s.

D

Delbos, Stephan (Charles University, Czech Republic)

Remake it New: How the 1990s Established The New American Poetry

as a Model for Post-war Poetic Innovation

PANEL 3A: ANTHOLOGIES OF THE 1990s

In 1999, the University of California Press published a new edition of Donald Allen's poetry anthology *The New American Poetry 1945–1960*, the first since the book had gone out of print in 1982. A year earlier, Marjorie Perloff had written to Allen, relating how “the New Americans” had become a category of poetry, “all because of your book.” This presentation argues that the critical consensus that emerged during the 1990s about Allen’s anthology as the central document of innovative post-war American poetry needs to be revised in several respects. The book’s republication and reintroduction as a teaching tool was preceded by several important anthologies that mentioned *The New American Poetry* as a key predecessor, including Eliot Weinberger’s *American Poetry since 1950: Innovators & Outsiders* (1993), Douglas Messerli’s *From the Other Side of the Century: A New American Poetry 1960-1990* (1994) and Paul Hoover’s *Postmodern American Poetry* (1994). The 1990s were a weigh station for the legacy of Allen’s anthology, which is still prevalent today and only beginning to be challenged from at least three points of view: that it suggests innovation in post-war anglophone poetry was limited to the United States; it deepens a binary between innovation and tradition in anglophone poetry; and it presents the poetic avant-garde as dominated by white men. *The New American Poetry* has not only framed American poetry as a concept, it has also provided the lens through which we read many of our most beloved anglophone poets and do not read others. Allen’s anthology would not have the same status today without publications and critical trends in the 1990s that promoted *The New American Poetry* to a new generation.

Donahue, Joseph (Duke University)

Sobin’s Devotions

PANEL 6C: SPIRIT, SOUND, SYLLABLE: GUSTAF SOBIN IN THE 1990s

This paper examines the epic narrative at the heart of every Sobin poem, the fate of the syllable that is sounded and sent forth. Sobin melds linguistics and theology in his incessant argument with the limits of the sensible world. He imagines and then fashions an ascensional poetics, one that purifies and transforms the speakers of his poems just as it does the words in his poems. Sobin writes a devotional verse which perpetually prepares for the impossible event, that the words be heard at the threshold of some transcendent realm that draws all toward it. The nineties saw the full flourishing of this deeply felt and long considered aesthetic. Sobin’s works of the 90s, with their turn to archeology on one hand, and to discourses of the unknowable on the other, represent, the paper argues, a major recasting of the visionary tradition and critique of the New American and Objectivist traditions. I place Sobin as a central figure in a turn to the transcendent evidenced in the work of Notley, Taggart, Roberson, Joron, Yau, and others who can be seen as what historian of religion Jeffrey Kripal would call authors of the impossible, writers who explore the fate of the sacred in a secular age, who develop strategies of writing that are versions of the fantastic where for the long moment of reading the impossible can be felt as plausible.

E

Eaton, Paul (University of Maine)

Redrawing the Map: 1990s Poetry Anthologies Twenty Years Later

PANEL 3A: ANTHOLOGIES OF THE 1990s

Anthologies articulate boundaries—between “mainstream” and “alternative,” and between different streams of alternative practice. They also reinforce and circulate the field’s conceptual vocabulary. The appearance of three prominent poetry anthologies—Paul Hoover’s *Postmodern American Poetry* (1994), Douglas Messerli’s *From the Other Side of the Century* (1994), and Eliot Weinberger’s *American Poetry Since 1950* (1993)—in the mid- ‘90s reflected three differing, yet overlapping, views of post-war American poetry. The publication of a 2nd edition of Hoover’s anthology in 2013, paired especially with Cole Swenson and David St. John’s *American Hybrid* (an anthology Hoover has spoken of as one he created his 2nd edition to counter), provides another opportunity to survey the current boundaries and contested sites of the poetic field, and, by so doing, can perhaps clarify the terrain of the 1990s as well. This presentation will investigate the rosters of different anthologies as markers of poetic value and affinity, and the editorial commentary and organizational principles of these anthologies as powerful rhetorical choices that frame our understanding of the field. More specifically, I will explore how the borders surrounding different poetic categories and stylistic impulses have rearranged since the 1990s. For example, has Hoover’s presentation of the postmodern as an avant-garde aesthetic changed? To what extent are disagreements over the status of Language Poetry and the Late Lyric representative of larger concerns? Have the terms of the debate (between mainstream and alternative, academic and non- or anti-academic) shifted? Although I will focus on the changes between the 1st and 2nd

editions of Hoover's anthology and discuss other anthologies as well, so as to understand them as points in a continuum of dynamic movement and fluctuation.

Foster, Ed (Independent scholar)

Weaving Traditions: Talisman in the Nineties

PANEL 1A: EDITING IN THE 1990s

During the 1990s, competing poetics struggled for ownership of postmodernism. If postmodernism seems now as passé as the Cold War, it was a battleground in the 1990s. Language writing still dominated, but various older poetics from surrealism to objectivism continued to be heard. *Talisman* took a middle ground, publishing poets from William Bronk to Rosmarie Waldrop to Gustaf Sobin to Leslie Scalapino in an effort to represent the eclectic range of poetics struggling to be heard. This paper outlines the editorial impulses behind the various anthologies, books, and journals that *Talisman* published at this time and suggests reasons why its efforts could not, in the end, succeed.

Foster, Ed (Independent scholar)

Visionary Poetics and Gustaf Sobin

PANEL 6C: SPIRIT, SOUND, SYLLABLE: GUSTAF SOBIN IN THE 1990s

Gustaf Sobin's poetics in the 1990s are deeply visionary, although not in a manner that would privilege the merely imaginative. Sobin's poetry is grounded in the sensually apprehended and commonly acknowledged world of physical fact. Pursuing his poetics, Sobin aligned himself with a pragmatic tradition of linguistic necessity that includes the works of Emily Dickinson, Robert Creeley, and William Bronk, among predecessors whom he admired. Sobin's poems generally begin with sensually apprehended fact (perhaps a vase of flowers on his desk, perfumes, the wind), implied or stated, then speculate a linguistic trajectory that permits an emotional catharsis or cleansing through which mere fact can now be understood. Simplistic notions of materiality, so popular at the time, are blown apart to reveal dazzling visionary and linguistic possibilities. This approach can be likened to Sobin's historic and archeological investigations. For example, he would point out to visitors that farmers near his home in Provence would occasionally find Roman coins in their fields. The area was known to have been a Roman cemetery, and over the centuries, coins that had been used to close the eyes of the dead had worked their way up through the soil to reach sunlight and an area of new growth. So, too, Sobin would begin his poem with simple fact, itself inert and dormant until language forced it to germinate new life. Words, as much as Roman coins, are artifacts of the past. For Sobin, new life, whether in the objectively measurable world or in poems, allowed an act of discovery, or recovery, that should not be attributed to invention. Thus in "Vacant Architectures," words themselves reveal the point "where the syllables, at / last, had settled that the / un-// bidden, in / ex-/ foliation, might glow." This paper investigates Sobin's poetics in part by comparing them, briefly, with those of Mary Fabilli, a poet of some consequence, too often overlooked, who for several years lived with, and worked beside, Robert Duncan. Her poetics, particularly in her later years, depended largely on her religious practice as a member of the Roman Catholic third order affiliated with the Dominican Order. That is, her poetry is conditioned by doctrine whereas Sobin's, one can argue, is conditioned largely by his personal sensibility, responding to language and the material world it seeks to name. Sobin and Fabilli thus jointly define a continuum along which we can measure visionary poetic practices in the 1990s. Sobin and Fabilli both corresponded frequently with, and visited with, the author of this paper in the 1990s. The paper draws heavily on their correspondence and friendship.

G

Gallagher, Maureen (Duquesne University)

Ethics and Innovative Poetry in the Turn-of-the-Twenty First Century: Fanny Howe's Forged

PANEL 2B: TRANSNATIONAL AND PROJECTIVIST FEMINISMS

By the turn-of-the-twentieth century, prolific American poet Fanny Howe had been writing poetry and prose for decades. Criticism on Howe increasingly focused on Howe as a poet who blurred the "two camps" dichotomy of "Language" or "lyric" poetry. In 2000, *Spectacular Diseases* published a special issue, *Folio for Fanny Howe*; several of the critical articles discuss the ways in which Howe sustains poetic subjectivity and interiority through the use of the lyric "I," while also registering the "I" as a construction of language, dynamic rather than stable, and decentered rather than centered. I would like to extend these critical considerations by emphasizing Howe's turn-of-the-twentieth-century poetry through the lens of emerging critical discourses on ethics and innovative American poetry by women. My inquiry focuses on the 1999 chapbook, *Forged*, which

includes a serial/spiral poem alongside two critical discourses as they were circulating in 1999: 1) The 1999 special issue of *PMLA*, "Ethics and Literary Study," which features the then-emergent discourse of "literary-ethical inquiry," as shaped by critics who took up a shift towards ethics in the work of key poststructuralist thinkers, particularly Levinas and Derrida; and 2) The April 1999 conference, "Where Lyric Meets Language: Innovation in Contemporary American Poetry by Women." I argue that a focus on Howe's use of the serial or "spiral" form in *Forged*, in terms of both literary-ethical inquiry and lyrical "innovation" can demonstrate Howe's ethical poetics, or what Joan Retallack calls *poethics* in her 2003 book, *The Poethical Wager*. Furthermore, I suggest that Howe's writings ultimately influence, prefigure, and participate in the poetic discourses of the contested concept of "hybridity" that has circulated in discussions of the twenty-first century in contemporary innovative poetry by American women.

H

Harris, Kaplan (St. Bonaventure University)

The Gentrification of the Long Poem: CLMP and the Small Press in the 1990s

PANEL 5A: THE LONG POEM IN THE 1990s: BARAKA, JARNOT, MOURÉ

In his magisterial study of contemporary publishing John B. Thompson suggests that small presses operate according to an "economy of favors." That might sound like free favors—a gift economy, a labor of love—and that would be nice if it were true. In practice, the presses that survive long enough to become recognized follow a highly marketable set of rules and strategies. These rules and practices have captured my attention recently because they shape the kinds of poetry that we read. For my talk, I'll make the case that the ideal small press product of the 1990s was the long poem, and that's why we saw so many of them. The more than sixty monographs published by the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses (CLMP) since the 1990s are like an industry journal for the small press publisher. They have titles like *Making 'Friends': Creating an Individual Donor Campaign*, *Textbook Adoptions: A Promising Market for Literary Presses*, and *Maximizing your Relationship with Barnes and Noble*. For those of us interested in poetry, the monographs provide an institutional lens through which to survey the long poems published by Roof, Sun & Moon, Granary, Coach House, and many other small presses in the 1990s. Whereas their journals generally exist for coterie communities, their books of long poems are an ideal investment for the marketing strategies promoted by the CLMP. From the perspective of the press, they are an investment supremely suited for classroom adoption, the creative economy (e.g. city-based long poems), book review culture, grant support, and most of important for sales, the commodification of literary pleasure, authenticity, images, lyricism, words, dialogue, etc. My talk ultimately frames such long poems as a middle moment between the mimeo revolution magazines and the digital publishing of the present.

Hathaway, Tessa (University of Maine)

Poems as a Part of You but Not Part of History: The Ahistoricity of Poetry Out Loud

PANEL 3A: ANTHOLOGIES OF THE 1990s

Poetry Out Loud is a poetry recitation competition performed by high school students from across the country. High schools can opt into the program and teachers instruct, guide, and facilitate students to memorize and subsequently read poetry from an online anthology which is subject to change on an annual basis. Students who go on to regionals, states, and nationals must meet a set of requirements for the three poems they read: one which is pre-20th century, one which is 25 lines or fewer, and one of their own choosing. Thus, the anthology is organized according to these standards, as well as by "Poetic Forms and Terms". In her opening statement at the 2017 Maine State Finals for *Poetry Out Loud*, Emcee Jennifer Rooks addressed the students saying that the memorization of the poems allows them to "become a part of you." The introduction to the *Poetry Out Loud* website and program includes the following: "*Poetry Out Loud* encourages students to learn about great poetry through memorization and recitation. This program helps students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about literary history and contemporary life." Taken into account with Rooks' sentiment, the aim of the program appears to be inviting students to become educated and familiar with a range of poetry that has personal value to them. However, there is a large dehistoricization of poetry found throughout the anthology with an emphasis placed instead on competition. In my paper, I first work my way through the Poet Laureates of the 1990s and try to match their work to what is in the 2017 *Poetry Out Loud* anthology, and then analyze and make note of the poets of color found in the anthology. Throughout my research on the ways in which the anthology does or does not live up to its previously stated proclamation, I discovered two major things: first, that the lack of inclusion of 90s Poet Laureates somewhat confirms my assumptions of ahistoricity; and second, despite that, there is a large presence of minority poets from the 1990s that gives some merit to the stilted numbers of poetry from that decade. All of this work was done to the ends of wondering, what is this doing for high school students? Exposure to poetry

means exposure to history and parts of yourself, but without a fully historically inclusive anthology, students may be missing out.

Heuving, Jeanne (University of Washington at Bothell)

Language, Subjectivities, and Projectivist Poetics

PANEL 2B: TRANSNATIONAL AND PROJECTIVIST FEMINISMS

In the 1990's the turn to language whether addressed by poststructuralist theory or alternative poetics brought with it a crisis of subjectivity. It initiated debates which instantiated binaries: selves and non-selves, authors and the death of the author, positionality and construction. This crisis had a particular impact on poets for whom the revisioning of gender, ethnicity, and race in the culture at large were both personal and political. For some poets in the 1990's these non-tenable either ors were answered by projectivist poetics, albeit not-named as such. As I have developed elsewhere, projectivist techniques, although sometimes associated exclusively with Charles Olson, begin early in the twentieth century and are still being pioneered in the 1980's and 1990's (*Transmutation of Love and Avant-Garde Poetics*, University of Alabama, 2016). Although I take from Charles Olson's ideas in order to define these poetics, especially his insistence on voiding "the lyrical interference of the individual as ego" and how "ONE PERCEPTION MUST . . . DIRECTLY LEAD TO A FURTHER PERCEPTION," I also claim that perception is inevitably entangled with language and that projection necessitates introjection. In this paper, I explore how these poetics provided an important answer to those who questioned the existence or desirableness of an identifiable or egoistic self yet also found themselves marginalized by dominant depictions of gender, race, and ethnicity. This is clearly brought out in Kathleen Fraser's 1996 essay "Translating the unspeakable: Visual poetics, as projected through Olson's 'field' into current female writing practice" in which she claims that multiple women poets engage a writing in which the poem is "a graphically energetic site in which to manifest one's *physical* alignment with the arrival of language in the mind." It is also evident in the importance of Olson and projective poetics for Nathaniel Mackey as articulated in his 1993 *Discrepant Engagement: Dissonance, Cross-Culturality, and Experimental Writing*. In this paper, I focus on the importance of these poetics in the 1990's by exploring how projectivist poetics are engaged by three important books defining for this epoch and for the individual poets in question: Lee Ann Brown's *Polyverse*, Laynie Brown's *Rebecca Letters*, and Harryette Mullen's *Muse and Drudge*. Moreover, I stress that the production in each of these works of respectively gendered, ethnic and racial subjectivities (but not identities) manifest how these poetics enable changing and changed subjectivities through broaching the division between positionality and construction, epistemology and ontology, and enunciation and the enounced. Projectivist poetics allow for a poetry writing that is libidinally connected to the poet while simultaneously moving beyond poetic forms that are dependent on a stabilized psychological subject or set of references. Projective poetics enable poets to engage—without professing—received ideas, forms and representations through a writing whose value resides in the movements and transformation of the writing itself. I conclude my paper by speculating on how these poetics enable a radical expansion in the number of experimental poets and poetry communities in the 1990's and into the twenty-first century, drawing in women and non-white poets.

Higgins, Scarlett (University of New Mexico)

Harryette Mullen and the Matter of Femininity

PANEL 3C: MATERIAL/IMMATERIAL POETICS OF THE 1990s

"It must be white, a picture of health, the spongy napkin made to blot blood." – *S*PeRM**K*T*

Few other poets have devoted the serious attention to the material objects associated with female-ness in US culture that Harryette Mullen has. *Trimnings* and *S*PeRM**K*T*, her two early 90s books associated with her initial shift in style from *Tree Tall Woman's* poetry of race- and class- based lyricism to experimental, Stein-inspired prose poems, both explicitly consider the "things" that accompany—and that may, in fact, be said to constitute—the exteriority of female-ness for those Americans identifying as female. That is to say, many poets (particularly since the 1960s) have written about the interiority of what it *feels* like to be female. Mullen's poetry of the 1990s rather focuses on the exteriority of stereotypical femininity—the prom and wedding dresses, pierced earrings, garter belts, and purses—that are the signs of "typical" female experience. In this talk, I intend to analyze a series of sections from her prose poetry books of the early 90s as poetic and cultural objects, responding to both previous texts (Stein's *Tender Buttons*, for example) and the cultural milieu of their moment. In these poetic series, interspersed throughout *Trimnings* and *S*PeRM**K*T*, Mullen's facility with language and particularly with word play is on display as she interrogates the construction of the "white and pink" femininity so prevalent in cultural texts to the detriment of all women (who are trapped into a relationship with it, whether they like it or not) but particularly women of color who are, by its very terms, excluded from this version of femininity.

Hinton, Laura (City College of New York)

The “Nonautonomous Being” in Lyn Hejinian’s *My Life in the Nineties*

PANEL 5B: RADICAL U.S. POETICS IN THE 1990s

“It’s through language, after all, that we discover our nonautonomous being.” —Lyn Hejinian, “Language and ‘Paradise’”

As a so-called “Language” poet, Hejinian is generally regarded as a writer who focuses upon language and phenomenology; hers are rich philosophical texts that investigate the nature of experience from multiple subject positions, and that emphasize issues of mind, memory, and the role of perception – deeply probing the way a subject might construct any so-called “inner reality” through linguistic phenomena creating what we know to be human “consciousness.” Her best-known work, of course, is the small-press bestseller, *My Life* * (published in multiple variations from 1983 to 1987). This book-length poetry autobiography probes a woman’s mid- to later 20th century experience through threads of memory created by and within language, and unfolding through the apparition of linguistic-based images. Yet Hejinian’s less well-known sequel, *My Life in the ‘90’s*, also interrogates memory and perception if through a somewhat different, perhaps wizened and maturing lens. This paper argues that *My Life in the Nineties* builds its strength upon not only Hejinian’s use of memory through language elements but through her concept of the “nonautonomous being” inflected by history as well as language, and the forms of “consciousness” these may brew in a given time and place for the social “being.” Published after the new millennium, *My Life in the Nineties* is nevertheless about the drift of a *socialized* consciousness as recorded and observed throughout the 1990’s. It is an experimental text that, like *My Life* (based on a life back-dropped and “recorded” in the 1980s), weaves in and out of observed phenomena through memory in the form of lyric and paratactic poet’s prose. But it does so based on the phenomena of words as produced by society – through, gendered values and experience, feminist observations, or observations about social violence. I hope to demonstrate that a subtle political engagement – call it an adjustment – takes place within *My Life in the Nineties* as a text, offering an amendment of sorts to her earlier *My Life* and also greater commentary on the role language plays in resistance to political authoritarianism and other rigid social structures. These actually are often embedded in so many Language texts, particularly those coming out of the West Coast. Through its analysis of *My Life in the Nineties*, this paper studies a particular set of Language School concepts: that there is no separation between the political world and the language used to experience it (framing it mentally/linguistically); and that since vision and perception intersect within and through language, true political change both must 1) recognize those intersections and 2) create “revolution” through the destabilization within language as an internally moving “writing” (in a Derridean sense). Both the work of post-structuralism and Hejinian’s own essay “Language and ‘Paradise’” will provide theoretical frames to help examine the way the poetics evades that internal-external distinction upon which lyric and politics has traditionally been based, or kept at a (false) distance.

Hofer, Matthew (University of New Mexico)

Sentences and Lines: Evolving Poetic Collaboration in the 1990s

PANEL 1A: EDITING THE 1990s

Charles O. Hartman and Hugh Kenner’s book *Sentences* (1995) focuses on the evolution of poetic collaboration in the 1990s as well as the rise of computer-based writing prior to the rapid public awareness of the Internet in the later 1990s. In this paper, I will explore technologies of both communication and distribution, as well as issues concerning sparseness in American poetry. I intend to demonstrate how technologies of poetic collaboration work and why they matter, with specific reference to the practice of “composing” experimental poetry via computer code, by extending and supplementing the twenty-first century critical apparatuses developed by 1) Charles Green, to assess recent collaboration in the visual arts, and 2) Michael P. Farrell, to evaluate the forces that inform collaboration from a sociological perspective. Following key innovations in collaborative composition during the 1960s and 1970s --which might be said to have culminated in the five-way collaboration that produced the exemplary language-centered LEGEND (1980)---the 1980s appears to be a decade of refinement with respect to theories of multi-authored literature. However, in the 1990s, Hartman and Kenner developed a poetic application for then-new (and newly ubiquitous) technologies to produce an unfamiliar yet revelatory poetic text with an unprecedented relationship to what was still being called, after Michel Foucault, the “author function.” As many know, computer generated poetry was not technically new in the 1990s: it dates to 1959, with the stochastic texts of German mathematician Theo Lutz, and extends at least through Christian Bök’s celebrated *Xenotext*. Yet Hartman and Kenner’s effort to revitalize collaborative poetics in the golden age of Windows holds a special place within this history. By taking seriously and anew precepts relevant to William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin’s “cut-up method” in *The Third Mind* (1967), their *Sentences* suggests a “new optic” that “allows literature to catch up with” the visual arts even as it drives theories of collaboration through the end of the twentieth century. The process that generates *Sentences*--which unequivocally agrees with Burroughs’s contention that the declarative sentence is

“one of the great errors of Western thought” -- means to realize what Gertrude Stein (“uncontested master of the corrosion of syntax”) had attempted through her own “use of permutations, without... carrying her idea to its logical conclusion.” By the 1990s, advances in information technology revealed that this logical conclusion lies not in the cut-up but the code. That is, by way of the new deterministic code (called TRAVESTY) developed by Kenner and employed by Hartman, the computer provides, “with minimal human interference,” something very close to Burroughs and Gysin’s desired “fusion in a praxis of two subjectivities... that metamorphose into a third,” from which collusion “a new author emerges, an absent third person, invisible and beyond grasp, decoding the silence.” I will, of course, adduce insights from the emerging field of media archaeology to historicize this innovation properly and precisely and develop the significance of this experiment as decisive for the 1990s and beyond.

Holsapple, Bruce (independent scholar)

“A Continuous Fabric (Nerve Movie?)”: Scalapino and Whalen

PANEL 4A: NERVE ENDINGS: CONSCIOUSNESS/PERCEPTION

Leslie Scalapino’s sparse, resistant narratives would seem distant in approach from Philip Whalen’s emotionally rich lyrics, yet Scalapino repeatedly championed Whalen, and the two, beyond friendship, had distinct affinities. Most obviously, they were students of Asian culture, especially Japan, which they visited, and both were involved with Buddhism, especially Eihei Dogen’s teachings. Both understood their work as investigating subjectivity—were intensely concerned with mind, reflective consciousness, or more narrowly, with exploring the intricate interplay between reflection, intention and perception. Both proposed to dismantle conventional ways of seeing—to strip perception of its obvious overlays—a project that entailed not only transforming their own consciousness, but changing the reader’s as well, evident in Scalapino’s adoption of a singular phrase from Whalen, namely, that the poetry be designed to “wreck your mind.” At a less than obvious level, both innovated on the lyric subject and narrator, the site and also *manner* by which they’d accomplish that derailment. For their self-reflexive meditations on the role of self in perception—the inherent perspective of self—is designed to open both author and reader to states of mind which confound conventional perception. An important route, then, into Scalapino’s work is through the speaking subject, in her use of “voice,” and I would bring Scalapino’s insights into Whalen’s self-reflexive use of voice to a reading of her own poetry.

Howard, W. Scott (University of Denver)

“colliding phenomena”: Susan Howe’s Factual Telepathy as Editorial Poetics & Praxis

PANEL 1A: EDITING THE 1990s

During the 1990s, Susan Howe’s works of poetry and prose were numerous and yet radically characteristically singular. There were at least eight books between *Singularities* (Wesleyan, 1990) and *Pierce-Arrow* (New Directions, 1999), and each of those volumes gathered smaller books, discrete sequences, individual texts, and ephemera. Although Howe’s earlier volumes, such as *Secret History of the Dividing Line* (Telephone, 1978) and *Defenestration of Prague* (Kulchur, 1983), underscore a similar poetics of “colliding phenomena” (“Sorting Facts” 341), her books published during the 1990s navigated two significant transitions in her prolific career, both of which proved to be generative: a difficult shift from analogue to digital compositional practices; and an equally challenging migration from small press publishing (with presses such as North Atlantic, Awede, Paradigm, Sun and Moon) to working with Wesleyan and New Directions. This dynamic context amplified and complicated Howe’s agency as a documentary and visionary poet, engendering one of her most significant tropes for her editorial poetics and praxis: factual telepathy. Given the radical linguistic and phenomenological synergies at work in Howe’s immersive contexts, each editorial remediation of her individual volumes during the 1990s risks forgetting some of the particulars of her craft, such as facing-page sequences and paratextual materials (including book cover images, drawings, letters, transcriptions, and other remediated artifacts) all of which animate the specificity of Howe’s historical and materialist praxis. And yet, such colliding phenomena paradoxically inform the possibility of Howe’s factual telepathy.

Hughes, Jill (University of Maine)

Tracing Benjamin Friedlander’s “Insomnia” in the 1990s

PANEL 8B: HISTORICIZING THE 1990s (A)

This paper focuses on poet Benjamin Friedlander's career in the 1990s through the frame of "Insomnia," a poem that appears in a number of diverse locations around the decade, serving as a useful way to frame an inquiry into his career as poet and scholar. My work investigates the poem's persistence in Friedlander's career on three levels: First, Friedlander's early, handwritten versions of the poem are intact and allow for insight into Friedlander's composition practices. Second, the draft and published forms of "Insomnia" link Friedlander's developing poetics to historical influences, such as Dickinson, Celan, Levinas, and Poe, as well as to the influence of Friedlander's contemporary, frequently publishing-oriented relationships, such as his connection with Jeff Gburek of the Oakland journal *AQL*. Finally, Friedlander chose to include "Insomnia" within a self-reflexive section of his book *Simulcast*, itself a series of creative, often parodic scholarly essays that ground Friedlander's own work within the wider poetry community of the 1990s. I will trace the levels of interconnection *between* these three levels in Friedlander's work, a complexity also referenced by Bob Perelman in his description of *Simulcast*: "One of the harshest portraits [within *Simulcast*] is of 'Benjamin Friedlander,' where Poe-channeled-through-Friedlander accuses the poet Friedlander of being overly influenced by Dickinson and Celan." My presentation will also include visual and auditory materials collected from personal interviews with Friedlander and archival work, collected over the past year.

J

Joyce, Elisabeth (Edinboro University)

When Words Become Sound and Light: Sound and Concrete Poetries of the 1990s

PANEL 3C: MATERIAL/IMMATERIAL POETICS OF THE 1990s

A simple approach to the question of materiality and poetry might link it to the notion of Michael Fried's "objecthood" where objects are distinguished from art in their tangibility. Poetry, in that case, would be even further from objecthood, if we are to perceive them as simply bags of words opened up at moments of access. Theorists since Fried have argued, rather, that the material is less about the object itself and more about action, that the material is shaping and demarking time, it is a matter of bundles or entanglements, and as Karen Barad argues, it is the "dynamic articulation [or] reconfiguration of the world." These instances of action occur in the space of time and are, therefore, instantiations of the now and of the context of the moment. In this paper I propose to examine the early works by Christian Bök and Kenneth Goldsmith as they were poised to launch into what would appear to be the immaterial sectors of poetry, those based on sound and image, poems in the act of becoming material. In particular, when Bök inserts a transparent overlay into *Crystallography* (1994), the shifting of its page transforms the visual approach to the poems on either side of it and releases the poem as object or a carrier of textual meaning. In a similar manner, though through sound, in Goldsmith's No. 111.2.7.93-10.20.96 (1993-1996), the endlessly evolving sounds, one to the next, develop the flickering instance of materiality, shifted and broken in the passage across sound fluctuations.

K

Kaminski, Megan (University of Kansas)

Lisa Jarnot's Sea Lyrics: Indeterminacy, the Untethered "I", and the Non-human

PANEL 5A: THE LONG POEM IN THE 1990s: BARAKA, JARNOT, MOURÉ

The shifty lyric "I" of Lisa Jarnot's *Sea Lyrics* extends sentience and agency beyond persons, to animals, to plants, and to other living and non-organic beings, challenging our understanding of what it is to be a subject. Historically, the lyric self has been predicated on identity, but Jarnot's long poem explodes traditional conceptions of the lyric to examine an identity-fluid, indeterminate subject that makes possible a new understanding of the world and our place in it. It's subjecthood made permeable—a poetics in which the self capable of, and perhaps defined by, a porousness insists upon the co-presence of the other, of the outside, of the self as other. This talk will explore how the self refocuses and reconstitutes its relation to the world through the processes of disturbance, relocation, and surrounding change. Moreover, I'm interested in: how we might see these shifts as a model for possibility through indeterminacy, how the lyric, perhaps the most embodied of poetic forms, works to untether the "I" from its formal bodily constraints, and how the form of the long/serial poem is particularly well-suited for creating these possibilities. Jarnot pushes us to reconsider our conception of the human body formally from our static understanding (of its "determinate" form) to an active understanding that foregrounds transformation. This indeterminacy expands our concept of human life and the individual subject, demonstrating how we are created and transformed by encounter.

Kell, Charles (University of Rhode Island)

“The screen goes blank”:* Mark Levine’s *Debt and the Disaster Elegy

PANEL 9B: MEMORY, LOCALE, LOSS, SATIRE

Mark Levine’s polyvocal debut collection, *Debt* (1993), displays fractured identities adrift in an unstable world. Haunted by the specter of the first Gulf War, the speakers and landscapes are constantly searching for places of refuge while balancing pain, loss, and the search for meaning in ever-shifting, detritus-filled landscapes. Levine is what Stephen Burt deems an “Elliptical Poet,” those who “seek the authority of the rebellious; they want to challenge their readers, violate decorum, surprise and explode assumptions about what belongs in a poem or what matters in life, and to do so while meeting traditional lyric goals” (346).¹ *Debt* not only accomplishes these aims but takes them further by ushering in the “disaster elegy,” which, I argue, is characterized by a playful yet horrifying look at extreme situations. The individuals who populate these worlds are in constant states of terror, but continually attempt to grasp at meaning through repetition, banter, and playful juxtapositions. In “Seconds” the speaker laments, “Surely it cannot go on much longer, the desert carnival. / ‘Surely’ — did I say that? I can’t remember what I said, / whether I said it, whether all along without my knowing / I have been speaking someone else’s lines. / Someone small. Someone perfectly dangerous” (91).² Levine’s *Debt* is a paradigmatic poetic text of the 1990s, characterized by equal parts ennui and rage, meticulously documenting moments and movements through a burnt-out world, ushering in the “disaster elegy,” which is a prescient practice for the current milieu.

Kennedy, Rachel (University of Sydney, Australia)

“To decorate time”:* The Material Temporality of Embodiment in Lisa Robertson’s *Aging Body of Poetry

PANEL 9A: “IN THE FOLDS”: AMERICAN BAROQUE, EMBODIED TEXTUAL TIME, LIBERATORY TIME

Amy Moorman Robbins argues that situating hybrid poetics in the wake of Language writing and defining it by its apparent “newness” “altogether ignor[es] the history, context, and political implications of the work itself” (1). Lisa Robertson, who emerged as a poet in this wake, and whose involvement in the Kootenay School of Writing overlapped with several organized meetings with the American Language writers during the late twentieth century, has always insisted upon maintaining a connection to history, at times in spite of the work of the avant-garde. In an interview that took place during the 1994 KSW “Canadian Emergency” tour of the states, academic Peter Gizzi said of the collective that their work “renovates archaic forms”. Robertson picked up on the term during the interview, and twenty years later reiterates its significance: “I’m not interested in pushing... subjectivity nor historicity out of the field that I’m working in and I believe that our relationship to subjectivity and historicity needs to continuously be transformed and translated and renewed...” This paper considers the forms of innovation practiced in her work. What happens when experiment is not “new”? In her most recent publication, *3 Summers*, Robertson describes “pure experiment” as procuring and wearing rose-tinted lenses: “What happens if I do this for three weeks – let’s see!” In this work, historicity takes the form of “the material temporality of embodiment”; its chapters “circle around different ways of thinking about the body and temporality”. “4:16 in the afternoon in the summer of my 52nd year” (10), she writes in its opening piece; “Now it’s time to return to the sex of my thinking. / How long do I get?” (10). Can the aging body be a site of potential experiment?

Kimmelman, Burt (New Jersey Institute of Technology)

The End of Language and the Beginning of Conceptualism in the Nineties: Art, Poetry, and the Materiality of Writing

PANEL 3C: MATERIAL/IMMATERIAL POETICS OF THE 1990s

The poetry of the North American avant-garde is unparalleled in its relationship with art—poets involved with art and artists with intimacy and complexity, living and working with artists with astonishing intensity—and the common element in this avant-garde has been a penchant for material language, a consequence of the art-poetry interrelationship whose roots are manifest in contemporary practices like Flarf, Conceptual Writing, and Digital Writing. What this avant-garde has shared, starting with the later Modernists, has been a penchant for and foregrounding of the material. This paper would consider the 1990s as the transitional period in which the material becomes, finally, completely dominant, by looking at the avant-garde’s trajectory through the work of Charles Bernstein and Susan Bee respectively, and then that of Tan Lin, Rob Fitterman, and Kenneth Goldsmith. The paper would wish to argue that the role of art has been underappreciated within this transformation. The paper would lastly consider Craig Dworkin’s recent critical studies *Reading the Illegible* and *No Medium* as forces of remediation in our present comprehension not only of the work of these people but also of North American poetic and artistic experimentation in the nineties.

Lamm, Kimberly (Duke University)

Harryette Mullen's *Trimmings* (1990): An Intersectional Reading of Race, Clothing, and Fashion

PANEL 1B: POETRY, RACE, GENDER, AND CULTURE: READING THE WORK OF HARRYETTE MULLEN

This paper situates Harryette Mullen's *Trimmings* (1990) through intersectionality—the most well-known theoretical concept to take hold in feminist theory in the 1990s. Bringing Kimberle Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality to bear on Mullen's collection will further complicate the assumption that *Trimmings* only exhibits the poet's engagement with “experimental” poetic practices—and the whiteness to which those practices are attached—which allows her book *Muse & Drudge* (1995) to be easily identified as a work of African-American literature. Crenshaw's theorization of the ways in which black women are marginalized by both race and gender in the law and the cultural practices that mirror it works as a compelling frame for seeing how *Trimmings* offers a black feminist analysis that cannot be subsumed by the category experimental poetry (and its implicit whiteness). After demonstrating that *Trimmings* can be read as a poetic meditation on intersectionality, this paper will take up a central dimension of Mullen's book that is mentioned by those who write on it, but is not often pursued in detail: her black feminist critique of clothing and fashion. I read *Trimmings* as a subtle poetic argument for the black feminist value of paying attention to the roles clothing and fashion have played in the lives and histories of African-American women. More specifically, this paper will reveal how Mullen's dense prose poems render how punitive concepts of racial difference, and particularly the assumption that blackness impedes black women from femininity, have shaped black women's relationship to the femininity associated with women's clothing. I do this by tracing the complicated figure of clothing in *Trimmings*, but also by placing Mullen's work in conversation with contemporary scholarship on black women, clothing, and fashion. I will argue that *Trimmings* does more than critique the “pink and white femininity” that subtends representations of women's clothing. It opens spaces for seeing the ways in which clothing has figured in the lives of African-American women.

Lederer, Katy (Independent scholar)

***Explosive Magazine* and Spectacular Books**

PANEL 2A: MAGAZINES AND SMALL PRESSES

Explosive Magazine was a mimeo journal I published between 1997 and 2007. *Spectacular Books*, a chapbook press that eventually published eight titles, was a related venture I started in 1998. The magazine and press were inceptioned specifically to bring the disparate and sometimes aesthetically warring poetry communities of San Francisco, Iowa City, and New York City together into a conversation. Taking its cue from journals published by idols, mentors, and peers, including *Mirage Period(ical)*, *Mike and Dale's Younger Poets*, *Prosodia*, *Superflux*, *Skanky Possum*, *Tinfish*, and *Faucheuse*, the publishing context was explicitly social and ephemeral. (Little web magazines like *The Transcendental Friend* and *The East Village Poetry Web* were also extant at the time.) In September, I will be bringing out an anthology—*The Collected Explosive Magazine*—gathering all ten issues of the journal into a perfect bound format. Lyn Hejinian has written a preface to the anthology that provides robust historical and intellectual context for both *Explosive* and the thriving small press ecosystem of which it was a part. In my presentation, I will read part of Hejinian's preface and share my reflections on the politics of editing and the gender politics in the 1990s.

Lombart, Kandace (Canisius College)

Ripple Effect: The Bibliographical Record of Ruth Stone's Most Prolific Decade

PANEL 6A: POETIC LIVES, POLITICAL VOICES

Ruth Stone's (June 8, 1915 – Nov. 19, 2011) bibliographical record testifies how prolific she was in publications, readings, and recordings, especially during the 1990's. To date, the archival resources are yet to be fully documented on Stone's breadth of activity. However, based on my work beside the poet, and their relationship from 1988 into the 1990's, I am able to validate her prolific poetic corpus. This presentation will cull from the full range of not only public resources available on Ruth Stone, but will also include unpublished biographical data from this scholar's personal notebooks and unpublished taped interviews with Ruth Stone. During the 1990's Stone published poems in over forty periodicals (compared to eighteen publications during the 1980's and fourteen in the 1970's). She was included in twenty poetry anthologies. She published one chapbook (*Nursery Rhymes from Mother Stone*, no copyright date) and three volumes of poetry (*Who Is the Widow's Muse*, 1991; *Simplicity*, 1995; *Ordinary Words*, 1999). Literary awards, such as the National Book Critics Circle Award, catapulted her fame into the next decade. The first volume of collected essays dedicated to her work, *The House Is Made of Poetry* (edited by Sandra Gilbert) was published in 1991. While teaching full-time at SUNY Binghamton, Stone averaged approximately twenty

readings a year during this decade. Most noticeably, substantial biographical entries on the poet began to appear (for example, 4-5 lines in a 1970's Contemporary Poets to one-page in The Oxford Companion to Women's Writing in the United States, 1995). The full range of Ruth Stone's bibliographical record is yet to be published, but I will share biographical data from my 1990's personal notebooks while traveling with Ruth. Simultaneously, Ruth and I recorded over twenty tapes of our conversations which we had hoped to co-edit in a collection of essays. Some of the questions to be addressed in this visual and aural presentation: What was the poet's personal philosophy of her poetry? What is the story behind Who Is the Widow's Muse? What was the evolution between the poet and her respective publishers during the 1990's? Most urgently, what has become of the poet's personal archives that were documented in three grant applications meant to continue the protection and preservation of those archives? To address the latter question, I cite Robert Creeley's recommendation for a Radcliffe Fellowship. He attests: "Kandace Lombart has in the past years established a unique working relationship with Ruth Stone, secured by their friendship and by Kandace Lombart's thorough preparation to do what she outlines here. She has also the support of a lifelong friend of Ruth Stone's, the scholar Leslie Fiedler. In that the health of both Stone and Fiedler argue one undertake this project as soon as possible, I especially ask the committee to take that fact into consideration. Here one has the chance to fund an exceptionally qualified person's securing of an altogether singular poet's archive – with the clear understanding that time is of the essence."

M

Menke, Brandon (Yale University)

Sensuous Reading: Elaine Equi, Joe Brainard, and Friendship With Things

PANEL 7A: OBJECT LESSONS: THE DISCOURSE ON AIDS

Appearing after the excessive materialism of the 1980s and the disposable kitsch of the early 1990s, Elaine Equi's unassuming chapbook *Friendship With Things* (The Figures, 1998) resists the imperatives of throwaway culture. Drawing on the phenomenological poetics of Baudrillard, Merleau-Ponty, Bachelard, and Ponge (whose *Le parti pris de choses* Equi's title evokes), the poet wishes to abide with things and thereby devise a manner of reparative reading by which one can "look to see // if the author / is inside the words / your eyes caress" I argue that Equi is particularly concerned with how the subject is manifested by those objects it has come to shape and be shaped by, such that even when the life activating the autobiographical or lyrical mode has been extinguished, these objects can be wielded to resurrect the departed subject. In this regard, it is essential to note that the book is dedicated to Joe Brainard, whose witty line drawings adorn the front and back covers, its frontispiece, and the pages sandwiching its epigraphs by Merleau-Ponty and Baudrillard. Consequently, Equi's poems literally follow in the wake of her friend's "things" – left behind after his death from AIDS. In making her selections from the Estate of Joe Brainard – drawings of two pansies, a tin of Bayer aspirin, a porcelain doll denuded and laid out as though awaiting autopsy – and allowing the poetic eye to inhabit them, Equi offers a method for processing the dissolutive affects facing survivors of the AIDS epidemic and their friends. By becoming a sensuous reader, "surrounded by the right things" (as Equi notes in "The Objects in Japanese Novels") and remaining open to their seduction, the poet provides a way of viewing words – or pictures – as something more than the mere outlines of a life.

Mulvania, Andrew (Westminster College)

"The Price of Gleaming": Mark Doty's AIDS-Related Poetry of the 1990s

PANEL 7A: OBJECT LESSONS: THE DISCOURSE ON AIDS

According to the CDC, since the first cases of AIDS in the United States were reported in June of 1981, the number of AIDS cases among men who have sex with men rose rapidly throughout the 1980s, peaking around 1993, with the total number of deaths from AIDS reaching its highest number around 1995 and then beginning to decline with the development of antiretroviral therapy. Tragically, those treatments would come too late for the partner of poet Mark Doty, Wally Roberts, who died of complications due to AIDS in 1994. Beginning with the poems "Tiara" and "Bill's Story" published in the anthology *Poets for Life: Seventy-Six Poets Respond to AIDS* (1989) on the eve of the 1990's, the decade of the 1990's witnessed an explosion of AIDS-related verse from Doty that found expression in his collections *My Alexandria* (1993), *Atlantis* (1995), and *Sweet Machine* (1998). Spanning the decade and the peak years of AIDS-related deaths among gay men, Doty's poetry of this period (along with his prose memoir *Heaven's Coast* in 1996) represents one of the fullest poetic responses to the AIDS epidemic next to Thom Gunn. In this presentation, I will examine a number of Doty's AIDS-related poems from his three collections of the 1990's, looking at the way these lyrics shape the narrative of poetic responses to AIDS. I will also examine the way in which Doty pushes the boundaries of the lyric poem through narrative as he attempts to contain the scale of the loss he sees around

him, often redeeming that loss through sustained moments of beauty arising out of “close attention to the fragile, contingent things of the world” (Shepherd).

N

Need, David (Duke University)

Thinking Spirit Differently: Douglas Oliver’s Poetry in the Early 90s as an Example of a Non-Dual Notion of Immediacy

PANEL 6B: FREEDOM, DEVOTION, NEW SPIRITUALITY

In the early 1990’s, Douglas Oliver, separately and in collaboration with Alice Notley, published several volumes of poetry, prose and hybrid composition. There he takes up what he calls an “unfashionable question:” “what does it mean to talk of spirituality in poetry when no religious belief lies behind the inquiry.”¹ I take this to be an argument for exploring the possible terms and modes of reading necessary to a theory of language that admits something like “spirit,” albeit against the grain of thinking spirit as either transcendent or invisible. The paper has two parts: 1) a discussion of religious and performance studies methods that allow us to think of the literal and figural spaces of the poem as similar to the “spaces” opened up by ritual, and 2) a reading of two of Oliver’s texts — “An Island That Is All The World” (from *three variations on the theme of harm*, Paladin, 1990) and “Nava Sutra” (from *The Scarlet Cabinet*, Scarlet Editions, 1992) — as examples of texts that require us to think of the *immediacy* characteristic of spirit in non-dual terms. In the latter section, I show the ways Oliver thinks against the grain of treating the immediate and/or spirit as a unity *in relation* to other modes of time language, and being, or to take any series of immediacies as a single *topos*. Hence, non-dual not in the sense of some direct unity, but because the difference between any two terms is not thought according to a binary logic — that is, non-dual in the sense Blake seems to figure in both *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and in the by-play between experience and innocence in *Songs*. As in other work I’ve done, this paper reflects my ongoing desire to suggest modes of reading/writing that on the one hand resist tendencies towards materialisms, erasure and undoing in contemporary poetics and on the other make a case for the ongoing value of the imagination under whatever world-view we choose to think it. I hope too that this might work in a small way toward a study of the collaborative dimensions of Alice Notley work and thought in the 1990s.

Nichols, Miriam (University of the Fraser Valley, Canada)

Re:Publics of Poetry: Revisiting “The Recovery of the Public World” Conference, 1995

PANEL 9C: HISTORICIZING THE 1990s (B)

In 1995, the Emily Carr College of Art and Design (now Emily Carr University) hosted a conference on the poetry and poetics of Robin Blaser, titled “The Recovery of the Public World.” The name of the conference was meant to refer to Blaser’s essay so titled and, back of that, to Hannah Arendt’s concept of politics as public space. The conference attracted a wide range of scholars and the proceedings were published by Talonbooks in a collection called — what else? — *The Recovery of the Public World*. Some participants engaged with the premise of the title, arguing that perhaps there never had been a public world to be recovered. In this talk, I would like to return to three essays in this collection: Robert Hullot-Kentor’s “Past Tense: Ethics, Aesthetics and the Recovery of the Public World,” Steve McCaffery’s “Blaser’s Deleuzean Folds,” and Charles Altieri’s “Some Problems About Agency in the Theories of Radical Poetry.” Blaser himself had adapted Arendt’s concept of public space to poetic practice because he saw some possibility of *performing* a public discourse there as opposed to enacting it in the political sphere which he thought had closed. The above named essays show an unintended convergence of different theoretical positions against this possibility of public space in the arts. Remembering that poetry and theory in the 1990s often emphasized difference over common ground, I would like to return to these arguments from a contemporary perspective. The point is to look at a few of the pre-texts of what we have now, namely multiple non-communicating communities not only in the arts but at nearly every social and political level, including that of news media currently denounced as “fake.” The question the paper will ask is whether, in the 1990s, there were alternative paths forward that might be usefully considered now.

P

Poe, Janelle (City College of New York)

Man We Ain't Playing Anymore: The Oppositional Poetics of Arcade

PANEL 5B: RADICAL U.S. POETICS IN THE 1990s

Erica Hunt's highly sophisticated, subversive poetics in *Arcade* are the embodied principles formulated in her influential essay, "Notes on An Oppositional Poetics", released just five years prior. From the hybrid nature of the book's experimental collaboration with artist Allison Saar, to the expansive identities and language throughout, this work provides space for resistance without alienation, critique without condemnation, insight without and beyond identity politics. *Arcade* dismantles oppressive sociopolitical, geographic and ideological structures through carefully crafted lines, metaphors and references requiring the reader to self-reflect, empathize, and interpret the equally powerful and particular choices made in Saar's woodcut images. "Reflexively inseparable," the text and visuals disrupt conventional narratives and expectations. This paper examines both the *Arcade* literary text and corresponding artwork, identifying the depth of subversion and refusal of marginalization, silencing or binary codification present in each. Focusing on "First Words, Coronary Artist (1), and "the voice of no," as well as adjacent images, the development of theories in Hunt's essay become apparent, presenting a dynamic feminism that is engaged in multiple issues concerning not only gender but violence, subjugation in economic forms, as well as gender subjugation as global phenomenon. Hunt's refusal to privilege the mythology of gender, technology, esotericism, maternalism, emotional honesty or innovations in language over one another indicate her subversive poetics and personal artistic integrity. An explicit indictment of global capitalism, local repercussions and complicity, this work is as relevant now as it was radically critical in the '90s. The power of Hunt's work speaks louder than critical discomfort or disdain, above the prejudice plaguing academies and awarding foundations alike. Her books and essays were, and remain, instrumental tools of resistance to assist in dismantling oppressive mental and physical structures, the insidious states imprisoning humanity, a timeless struggle that continues today.

Pound, Scott (Lakehead University, Canada)

Uncompleted Saying: Charles Bernstein in Buffalo

PANEL 8B: HISTORICIZING THE 1990s (A)

This paper examines Charles Bernstein's work of the 1990s as a sustained inquiry into the mediality of poetic speech, the results of which are specific and lasting changes in the critical understanding of literary textuality. Many of Bernstein's most recognizable features as a poet and critic—his championing of performance; his engagement with errancy, awkwardness, unfinishedness, clashing verbal registers, and abrupt shifts in tone; his vigorous advocacy for poetry as a social form—can, and I argue should, be understood as part of an attempt to refashion the critical understanding of text to accommodate spoken language. I focus on two main concerns: What changed in Bernstein's poetics and why. I describe the change as a transition from the early Language Writing principles based in poststructuralist notions of the materiality of the signifier to an emergent approach focused on the mediality of alphabetic literacy. The why, I suggest, has to do with Bernstein's transition from commercial freelance writing in the healthcare field to full time university teaching and research at the University at Buffalo. Bernstein's arrival at Buffalo greatly intensified an existing dialogue between radical poetics and the methods of institutionalized literary studies, a set of tensions Bernstein very much embraced as an opportunity for productive dialogue. Speaking directly to an academic audience called for a special kind of discourse that could perform critical acts in the service of poetry but which did not capitulate to disciplinary norms about the literary text. Bernstein's method for advancing this discourse was the poetics essay, an inherited form which he adapted and expanded to function as "an invasion of the poetic into other realms" and as "a way to extend ideas about closure—the rejection of closure—into the discussion of essays and critical writing" ("Optimism and Critical Excess (Process)"). In Bernstein's hands, the poetics essay has functioned as a critical staging ground for encounters between poetry and literary studies. Its main influence has been to shift the critical conversation about poetry toward medium-specific and media-historical contexts. In advancing the idea of "a poem understood as a performative event and not merely as a textual entity" (*Close Listening* 9), Bernstein singles out the medium-specificity of poetry as a new disciplinary object and refocuses the critical understanding of poetry as an "art of immemorability."

R

Raine, Adra (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

"in the folds": Joint Work in Nate Mackey's and Ed Roberson's Liberatory Poetics

PANEL 9A: "IN THE FOLDS": AMERICAN BAROQUE, EMBODIED TEXTUAL TIME, LIBERATORY TIME

In this paper, I discuss how what Nate Mackey has called Ed Roberson's "double-jointed syntax" in his poetry and what I call Mackey's double-jointed diction in his prose, are grammatical responses to ideological struggle in post-1968 American literary practice. Putting pressure at the joints of language cracks open the history of forces that joins word to meaning, grammar to sense, as well as joins language practices aimed at liberation and domination alike, troubling the project of liberatory poetics that I argue each author's work is engaged in. Through close readings of Roberson's *The Aerialist Narratives* (1995) and Mackey's *Djbot Baghostus's Run* (1993), I chart how each author's "centrifugal work" in these books--that is, work that is concerned with moving or tending to move away from centers of dominant ideology--develops a poetics invested in drawing out multiplicities of meaning. But as a development of "open field" and other "open" form poetics of the generation that precedes them, I argue that for Roberson and Mackey's generation, the open field is haunted by the apparent failures of the revolutionary programs of the 1960s, while the stakes of this poetics in the late 20th century U.S. becomes more explicitly located at the level of the word, and what words do in the world.

in the folds in the lattice
of meanings that a wing stirs
the overlay fixes
one of a combinant of likenesses wch each
manifoldly persist beyond
its analogous moment miscreant chimerical

Image, word, phrase "stirs" meanings and histories of meanings in the language that must be accounted for, in order to take account of where we are at, where we are trying to get to, and what's holding us back from destination: out.

Romano, Joseph (Brooklyn College)

A Rejection of "The Rejection of Closure": Lyn Hejinian, Leslie Scalapino, and the Post-Language Poetics of Occurrence and Collaboration

PANEL 4A: NERVE ENDINGS: CONSCIOUSNESS/PERCEPTION

Language fails, and thus difference. This is the axiom of Lyn Hejinian's "The Rejection of Closure," a bold affirmation of the "open text" poetics which characterize the milieu of US poetry post-deconstruction. For Hejinian, that language cannot represent or "match the world" makes it possible to keep a system, text or poem "open." The structure of any system is $n+1$, i.e. there always exists at least one more difference (of interpretation) which resists closure. However, by describing or representing language's representational failure in her poetry, Hejinian produces, ironically, the closure an "open text" seeks to resist. Thus, this paper (re)opens the question of the very possibility of an "open text." In an essay on Hejinian's *A Border Comedy* Leslie Scalapino responds to this question by drawing attention to how, in its self-referentiality, Hejinian's poetry "states what our experience is in reading rather than rendering sensation or impression," thus foreclosing the possibilities the text may elicit in and as *experience* (*How Phenomena Appear to Unfold* 233). By contrast, Scalapino's poetry bodies forth "language which is the thought-sensory process, in its abstraction of 'motion' as syntax/sound (rather than representation, as the writing describing its ideas" (225). Thus, through a reading of her book-length serial poem *New Time* (1999) and the recording of its collaborative performance with dancer June Watanabe (video available on Penn Sound) this paper shows how Scalapino (literally) moves through the impasse of Language poetry, showing how there is no division between language and phenomena because language is *as a phenomenon in the world*. Yet, the collaborative moving performance of *New Time* does not lend the text itself a phenomenal aspect which it lacks. Rather, the performance intensifies the phenomenality already there in *New Time* by indicating through bodily movement the motion of the text: its sound and syntax, specifically its repetition, rhythm and use of the dash to establish both continuity and discontinuity. Thus, *New Time* presents itself "as itself occurrence," crossing the abyss between word and thing by giving to and for experience what Giorgio Agamben calls the "thing of language": the "apparent paradox, that the thing itself, while in some way transcending language [i.e. impossible], is nevertheless possible only in language and by virtue of language."

S

Schmidt, Jeremy (University of California, Los Angeles)

John Ashcroft's Labor Theory of Poetry

PANEL 4B: POETRY AND BIG POLITICS

We're living through a moment when the only truly dated aspect of a film centering on a poet—and taking in \$8 million at the box office—is that its protagonist drives a municipal bus rather than an Uber. It's a moment, too, when the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting are under more threat than at any time since their founding in 1965. In this context, the controversy surrounding the awarding of \$500 of NEA funds to the Armenian-American writer Aram Saroyan for his one-“word” poem “lighght” takes on particular force. The broad strokes of that controversy are familiar, but I hope to revisit this accident of reception—which took place in 1970 but was repeated and elaborated in 1996—less to repair it than to highlight how accurately the amateur critics engaged in such accident addressed themselves to the object of their inquiry from the floor of the U.S. Senate in the 1990s. Positioning Saroyan's minimalist aesthetic alongside the extensive commentary available in the Congressional Record—from John Ashcroft, Barbara Boxer, Tom Harkin, and others—reveals an idea of poetry concerned less with formal innovation than with systems of support. Specifically, the populist interpretive gestures clarify how Saroyan's literary minimalism can be understood as part of a trend of disentangling literary value from labor and each of its constituent parts, skill and effort, as well as what such slack, and its particular relevance in the '90s, intimates about the connections between public funding, institutions of support, and writing practice.

Susan Schultz (University of Hawai'i)

Albert Saijo's Anti-Imperial Rants in Outspeaks: A Rhapsody and Woodrat Flat

PANEL 5B: RADICAL U.S. POETICS IN THE 1990s

Albert Saijo (1926-2011) was a Beat poet, neglected by literary critics and readers largely because he was Asian American. As a teenager, he was interned at Heart Mountain; he fought in Italy in the 442nd, then spent time in San Francisco, where he collaborated with Lew Welch and Jack Kerouac, grew marijuana in northern California, where he was harassed by law enforcement. He lived out his life in Volcano, Hawai'i. Many of his published poems were rants against the first Gulf War and other American military, economic and cultural imperialism. They are also, in some ways paradoxically, deeply engaged in the tradition of American Transcendentalism and the work of John Muir. This talk will engage Saijo's poetics (what one might call the prose rant) with the content of his work, which is radically anti-empire and white supremacy. Saijo, who lived in a cottage he built in Volcano, Hawai'i, and often fasted for extended periods of time, critiqued the ravages of American and global capitalism within a frame he'd learned from studying Chinese and Japanese poetry and the tradition of Zen Buddhism. While he published a book of poems in the 90s, through Bamboo Ridge Press in Honolulu, his primary work was that of the journal; his notebooks filled with visual/verbal pieces that only arbitrarily became poems in retrospect. As such, he wrote a kind of anti-poetry that provides a good model of opposition to the increasingly capitalistic poetry world of the 90s and beyond. I will argue for Saijo's significance as an outsider poet at the turn of the century, one whose work should be much better disseminated and known.

Scroggins, Mark (New York University)

The Executor's Legacy: Paul Zukofsky and Louis Zukofsky's Texts in the Nineties and Beyond

PANEL 9C: HISTORICIZING THE 1990s (B)

A number of poets deeply influenced by Objectivist poetry came into triumphant middle age in the 1990s, but the actual poetry of the Objectivists, especially their groundbreaking work of the 1930s, was only beginning to be widely read. Except for Carl Rakosi, all of the Objectivists were dead by 1993, when the NPF mounted its “Poetry of the 1930s” conference; but that conference, which included some *forty* papers on their work, provided a bold index of the increased attention Objectivist poetry was receiving from literary scholars and from younger generations of poets. Most notable, perhaps, were *sixteen* papers on the work of Louis Zukofsky—more, I believe, than on any other single poet discussed there. Paradoxically, perhaps, it was already becoming widely known that Zukofsky's literary executor, his son the violinist Paul Zukofsky, was, if not actively inimical to scholarship on his father's work, at the very least inclined to manage, hamper, and outright squelch such scholarship through his control of his father's copyrights. Rather than dwelling on Paul Zukofsky's influence on Zukofsky scholarship—which I see as wholly baleful—I want to consider a rather more ambiguous aspect of the thirty-seven years during which he managed his father's legacy: his curation of his father's *texts*. My contention is that Paul Zukofsky did on the whole a rather admirable job of keeping his father's work in print and in returning out-of-print works to availability. However, Paul Zukofsky's lack of interest in and patience with purely *textual* issues is reflected in a sadly heterogeneous

collection of Louis Zukofsky publications issued between Celia Zukofsky's death in 1980 (at which time an enlarged edition of *Prepositions* was in preparation) to 2011, when New Directions reissued "A" and the *Complete Short Poetry*. Most disappointing by far was the Wesleyan Centenary Edition of Zukofsky's collected critical writings in five volumes, a collection undeniably useful and laudable in intention, but deeply flawed in execution, volume by volume—a painful missed opportunity. Paul Zukofsky's active involvement in reissuing his father's work grew more and more intense over the nineties and the first decade of the new century, as evidenced in the influence of his own minimalistic visual aesthetic on the cover designs of the Wesleyan and New Directions volumes. But his general indifference to textual issues—and perhaps his impatience to see things into print as quickly as possible—resulted in many cases in texts which, in comparison to the splendid editions available of Lorine Niedecker, Charles Reznikoff, and George Oppen, leave much to be desired.

Sharp, Travis (University at Buffalo)

Biopoetics and Ecopolitics: The Auto-Destruction and Ephemerality of Eduardo Kac and Cecilia Vicuña

PANEL 8A: SOMATIC EPISTEMOLOGY, BIOPOETICS, NEW MEDIALITIES

In an essay in *The Force of What's Possible*, Amaranth Borsuk draws from Gustav Metzger's auto-destructive art to articulate what she calls "auto-destructive poetics," or a creative praxis of active consideration of art's inevitable annihilation. Borsuk is particularly interested in digital ephemerality and the intentional refusal to consider the potential future for access of, say, an iPhone app poem or a recording on PennSound, which is to say that Borsuk is interested in a disinterest in the preservation of art: "If we forget about posterity, what comes next?" I propose that we consider biopoetics as an auto-destructive poetics in that, through its intentional failure (its own degradation, decomposition, or death) and its continual falling forward (its own destruction necessitating continual ephemeral creation), auto-destructive biopoetics articulates an ephemerality that can function as an ecopolitical mode of resistance. We can frame ephemeral biopoetics as poetry which is interested not in its own manifestation but in its upcoming manifestation ("what comes next?"), as reflecting a *poiesis* always on the move. Ephemerality and auto-destruction, manifested in biopoetics, function as productive ruptures of not only what Peter Burger calls the bourgeois autonomy of art but also of stilted and uneven topographies of power within poetic praxis (between poet and audience, writer and reader, human and earth, etc.). As dual points of departure, we can consider Eduardo Kac's *A-Positive* and *Genesis Project* and Cecilia Vicuña's *precarious* and poetry performances in order to articulate the through-lines of digitalbioart, auto-destruction, and ephemerality. This reflection necessitates a consideration of ephemerality and auto-destruction as they manifest as constitutive elements in biopoetics. Further, through a consideration of the ephemeral and auto-destructive biopoetics of Kac and Vicuña, we can begin to trace a potential for ecopolitical resistance within biopoetic praxis.

Skinner, Jonathan (University of Warwick, UK)

"Pause Button" on the 1990s: Locating the Media in Peter Culley's Hammertown

PANEL 8A: SOMATIC EPISTEMOLOGY, BIOPOETICS, NEW MEDIALITIES

"i found a delivery/ in my flaw," writes Peter Culley (citing baseball pitcher and poet Dan Quisenberry) in "Snake Eyes," his late-90s addition to the *Hammertown* trilogy. In "Pause Button" (from the trilogy's last volume, *Parkway*), Culley recounts editing tape in the 80s, "played back/ slow// in a mist/ of fast edits," as a kind of *ars poetica* of the submarine pitch. DJ analogies abound, in readings of Culley's work: citation and use of stepped prosody are the methods of his sedimentary tracks, to "screw down" rapidfire, allusive mashups of music, film, art, literature, history natural and cultural as well as political—taking after the "chopped and screwed" methods of Houston "DJ Screw," Robert Earl Davis, Jr. Culley's 1995 volume *The Climax Forest* does not grow out of, but steps into, the Internet, with an ear already cued to its emerging hyperlinks and unbounded connectivity. Yet it is an ear that listens intently for the "dust and abrasions" of vinyl media, "pre-echo . . . analog tape hiss, studio bloom or [the] digital nothing" that is there, against the "pulpy sulphur rain" falling on the Northwest's discarded mill towns. Culley articulates a site-specific poetics at human scale, with a walking measure, staggering contemporary materials with antiquated meters, attuned to what Lisa Robertson calls the "temporal breach" audible at the margins, in places of "lapsed economy." The self-consciously decadent, fin de siècle register of *Hammertown* (drawn to yet indicting an era's melancholy "luminist seashore . . . a mix without edge or limit," in "Paris 1919," Culley's elegy for Kurt Cobain) invites us to historicize the succession of media. What are some of the "flaws," for a generation come of age just before the Internet, that allow a poet to "deliver" in unexpected ways, at the emerging juncture of mediascape and landscape, from beyond the centers of cultural production? In this short paper, I will attempt to locate some meanings of the changing information economy for poetry of the 1990s, through the singular work of one of its most attuned (and much missed) practitioners.

Smith, Dale (Ryerson University, Canada)

Skanky Possum Ethos

PANEL 2A: MAGAZINES AND SMALL PRESSES

Poetry in the 1990s circulated frequently in the form of small Xeroxed and handmade zines and newsletters. The formation of poetic communities, the establishment of literary affinities, and the critical acknowledgment of divisions in those communities required inexpensive print platforms where literary debate could be extended to new audiences. Drawing on the archives of *Skanky Possum*, a small poetic journal of the 1990s and early 2000s, edited by Hoa Nguyen and myself from 1998-2005, I will discuss some of the editorial decisions and critical debates that circulated in the zine's early issues. I will also address the journal's ongoing efforts to build conversations between diverse communities of writers, both of older, established literary figures and newer, less well-known artists. Issues often featured the works of poets like Joanne Kyger, Gerrit Lansing, Kenneth Irby, Bill Berkson, Eileen Myles, Alice Notley, Diane di Prima, Amiri Baraka, and others while encouraging new writing by younger writers like Anselm Berrigan, Linh Dinh, Betsy Fagin, Rachel Levitsky, Ange Mlinko, Kristin Prevallet, and more. This paper explores the connections between the community of writers published in *Skanky Possum*, and considers the oppositional stance it asserted through editorial commentary and correspondence. In particular, the paper looks at how poetry developed in the context of the academic ascendancy of Language Poetry on one side, and the renewal of poetic possibilities derived from Beat, Black Mountain, San Francisco Renaissance, Black Arts, New York School, and other movements as these were received and refashioned in a changing social and political context influenced by the neoliberal policies of the Clinton era.

Smith, Laura (Stevenson University)

Somatic Epistemology as Recovery Work

PANEL 8A: SOMATIC EPISTEMOLOGY, BIPOETICS, NEW MEDIALITIES

In a 2011 essay in *Jacket 2*, Thom Donovan offers some beginning thoughts ("part essay, part proposition, part thinking in motion") on somatic poetics, examining works published between 2002 and 2010. Somatics certainly has currency now, but I want to build upon Donovan's thinking while building somatic writing back a bit historically to consider the ways poets and performance artists—particularly African American artists—have been centering the body as subject and practice for some decades. I'm particularly interested in the ways writers such as Sonia Sanchez in *Does Your House Have Lions* and Akilah Oliver in both her writing and in her performance work with the Sacred Naked Nature Girls are using embodying approaches to do epistemological recovery work. In these cases, the body functions as a memory site and contact zone for historical affect and experience—often in the face of gaps in knowledge and memory that are the result of the slave trade. Theories of body-based, transhistorical memory are, in fact, not at all new in African American studies and this paper will partly serve to bring some of the trove of black embodiment theory by scholars such as Katherine Fishburn, Saidiya Hartman, and Daphne Brooks to the emerging field of somatic poetics. The recent clustering of thinking around Afrofuturism and epigenetics, both of which center the body and bodily memory in transhistorical context, are also relevant here. I want, therefore, to articulate some ways that poets in the 1990s were deeply engaged with somatic practices and were thinking about the body as a site for historical memory and its reparation.

Spaulding, Clinton (University of Maine)

**Keith Waldrop's The Locality Principle and C.S. Giscombe's Giscombe Road:
Mapping Disparate Memories in the Burgeoning Digital Age**

PANEL 9B: MEMORY, LOCALE, LOSS, SATIRE

Keith Waldrop's *The Locality Principle*, published in 1995, presents a complicated look at the challenge of recognizing and mapping a new place in poetry and in one's consciousness. In the book Waldrop captures his attempt to establish an understanding and create memories of a new environment. This book is a particularly interesting project titled with a gesture towards one of the cornerstones of computer science. Locality of reference is a fundamental principle born from efforts to make virtual memory systems work well. In *Giscombe's Road*, C.S. Giscombe works with an already established collection of memories as he retraces an ancestor's exploration into Northern Canada incorporating maps, historical documents, and dreams to create a palimpsest of memory, layering the poet's memory over the historical memory of his relative. By presenting a base understanding of a few aspects of the locality principle and memory theories while examining these two books through the lens of some debated semiotic approaches this paper will celebrate the addition of Waldrop's and Giscombe's addition to the poetic and critical landscape of American poetry in the burgeoning internet age.

Stark, Jessica (Duke University)

“That’s (Not) all, Folks!”: The Ghost of Porky Pig in Harryette Mullen’s S*PeRM**K*T

PANEL 1B: POETRY, RACE, GENDER, AND CULTURE: READING THE WORK OF HARRYETTE MULLEN

Harryette Mullen’s *S*PeRM**K*T* (1992), a long book-length poem central to her work in the 1990s, evokes various American cultural references from the blues to the cartoon, and typifies the ways in which she creates a poetics that include multiple media and their histories. This paper will consider the specter of the cartoon figure Porky Pig within *S*PeRM**K*T* and will examine pertinent trajectories within the history of the animated *Looney Tunes* series to demonstrate the ways in which Mullen uses the resistant forms at play in the American cartoon medium. Originally produced from 1930 to 1969 during the Golden Age of Animation, the animated *Looney Tunes* series experienced a resurgence of circulation throughout the 1990s after the development of re-releases and new designs of *Looney Tunes* theatrical animated shorts that began again in 1987. Using re-combinations of old, edited animated footage with new animation and narratives, this updated yet hybridized form of *Looney Tunes* reflects the precariousness of resurrecting an American cartoon canon—perpetually marked with overtly racist undertones—and the serial forms that Mullen brings into her work. I argue that by using the *Looney Tunes* cartoon Porky Pig in *S*PeRM**K*T*, Mullen privileges the space of cultural marginalia and “low” aesthetic forms to reflect on perceptions of black culture and place pressure on the ways in which race and racism haunt American popular culture’s serial forms.

Stefans, Brian Kim (University of California-at Los Angeles)

What Was Poetics, And Where Did It Turn Right?

PANEL 4B: POETRY AND BIG POLITICS

In this paper, I’d like to reassess what was understood by the terms “poetics” in “avant-garde” (a term I eschew) or experimental poetry circles in the 1990s. I will ask why the poetics idea — as I’m calling it — became unattractive to writers after 9/11 and describe how another, perhaps non-literary, form of poetics has recently taken root in the neo-reactionary Right. In some sense, this is a reflection on the poetics of Language writing, but a number of loose, free-standing poetics statements only found expression in single-author volumes in the mid- to late 90s with the publication of major collections by Steve McCaffery, Bruce Andrews, Lyn Hejinian, Charles Bernstein (the most regular contributor to the poetics idea) and Nathaniel Mackey. The 90s seem like the period when, roughly, one could see the maturation of what I am calling a “will to system” — Olson would be the great predecessor — as well as the emergence of a large number of younger poets who were re-conceiving the poetics idea in subtly refashioned form. The outline of the talk is as follows: 1) a brief overview of the concept of *Literaturwissenschaft*, or the science of literature, in German Idealist philosophy where I will describe the seduction of “system,” 2) the suggestion that we could discern what constitutes a “poetics” (versus a merely poetic or aesthetic essay) by targeting two points — the “will to system” and “the cleave” (a desire to create splits, to turn the 1 into two 1s, which Alex Galloway identifies with Maoist theory), 3) a brief overview of how such an analysis could apply to McCaffery, Andrews, Hejinian and the little-known poet/sociologist Ronald Tanaka, and 4) reflections on *A Poetics of Criticism*, which I see as the continuation of poetics by other means (namely, the aesthetic essay) and @Poetics, a collection of writings from the days of the Buffalo Poetics list, which suggested a movement toward normative, if informal, poetic discourse. The talk will end with a discussion of the emergence of something now called the “Dark Enlightenment,” a concept created by the philosopher Nick Land to buttress the aspirations of neo-reactionary Silicon Valley Libertarianism which is important for poetics since Land’s work in the 90s primarily derived from Deleuze and Guattari, once universally associated with Left-wing aspirations. In fact, one could argue that *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* were works of poetics rather than philosophy — certainly countless network and new media artists and activists thought so — that have made more of a “real” impact on current social and political thinking and activity than the Language poets and related writers.

V

Vanderborg, Susan (University of South Carolina)

***“Radiant Inverse of the Visible”:* Viral Communications in Andrew Joron’s Science Fiction**

PANEL 4A: NERVE ENDINGS: CONSCIOUSNESS/PERCEPTION

In light of the recent surge in science fiction poetry, this paper reexamines Andrew Joron's 1992 *Science Fiction*, one of the groundbreaking texts that argued such poetry's speculative themes demanded significant formal and linguistic innovation. Science fiction poetry, in this text, becomes a key successor to Language poetry in its syntactic attempts to make "visible" the "industrialization of desire" and viral marketing schemes (3). "To thematize the loss of subjectivity as an act of awakening," Joron argues, "is the moment of resistance in the speculative poem," which "simultaneously subsumes and frees itself from its commodity status" (3). The volume develops a poetics of contamination where advertising is presented as viral epidemic—or rather, both microbial and radioactive transfers—since the poems fuse sci-fi's most popular outbreak and fallout narratives into one "rigid unalterable text" (15) that is ultimately unreadable, its own excessive visibility transformed into an apocalyptic "glare of darkness" (15), "the *Logos-swallower*" that "outrance[s]" even the text of "[its] own scream" (54). If marketing language consumes its readers and "effaces history" (3), sci-fi poetics may not simply give us possible futures, as Joron posits, but may also resist the erasures, "blind spot[s]" (55), and "memory-lesions" (18) of capitalist "acceleration" (3). Several of the poems carefully date their context, whether on "Smart Bomb" Gulf warfare (54) or a Harvard symposium on "Living with Nuclear Weapons" (60). Many others coalesce around pockets of verbal time travel. Poems open with seemingly linear story synopses that digress into archaic diction and imagery, like the address "O dolorous river!" in atom-blasted landscapes (14) or Borgia-style dagger murders in "Mercury, A.D 3405" (31). Joron explores a past that won't stay tidily elegized but whose multiple media and mediations permeate every aspect of the future's deconstructions. "Awakening the Android" ends with its "old body...buried" beneath the specter of a golden robot, itself an uneasy *Metropolis* throwback image (47), but, as a chorus of "simulacra" argue, today "everyone walks with the herky-jerky gait of silent-movie ancestors" (5). Here is no triumphant singularity; what stands out in Joron's poetic remediations is the vulnerability of public and private bodies. The earth is "soft tissue" that "cannot fight off" radioactive invasions (14), "exoskeleton[s]" fail to protect "crippled" bodies, and androids are still susceptible to the gender-based domestic violence literalized in Frank Herbert's "White Plague" (47). Even futuristic microbes imitate our desire for simpler constructions of subjectivity: "I, *Laocoön of bacilli / Possessing consciousness*" (14), though Joron underscores that there was never any facile definition of subjectivity to fall back on. What we will have left, Joron suggests, "After the age of extinctions," is only our most partial, fallible definitions and devices, "faithful machines" that "busy themselves in begetting the organic" (6) that was always "simulac[ral]" (6). Joron's speakers persist with their own investigations of sense-making (11), looking at where slippages, "uncorrected," in "the skin of sound" might create, if not a trajectory of human progress, at least some record of occasional "music" "attached," in our wake, "to the underside of space" (64).

Vickery, Ann (Deakin University, Australia)

"Who 'rose up?': The Her Sensorium of Erin Mouré

PANEL 5A: THE LONG POEM IN THE 90S: BARAKA, JARNOT, MOURÉ

"Calor" is a Latin term for ardour but also for heat. Erin Mouré's "Calor" (1999) starts with an epigraph by Jean-Francois Lyotard from *Libidinal Economy*: "Must our fear of sign systems, and therefore, our investment in them, be still so immense that we search for these pure positions?" As the first of two long poems that constitute "The Her Sensorium" in *A Frame of the Book*, "Calor" explores the process of diagnosis and the dynamic between language and affect in registering love. Mouré explores the relationship between bodily temperature and other signs through which intimacy and rejection are experienced and understood. This is five years before Sara Ahmed theorised how emotions are lived and experienced through bodies and an important poetic extension of Lyotard's work on intensities and agency.

Vrana, Laura (Rutgers University)

Being the Exceptional Exception: Rita Dove as Poet Laureate

PANEL 6A: POETIC LIVES, POLITICAL VOICES

Rita Dove's appointment to the office of United States Poet Laureate in 1993 produced a wide range of literary and mainstream press responses; many of these centered on her being the youngest person to date to hold the title, the first African American to occupy the position since its name had changed in 1985, and only the third African American poet overall to occupy it across its different twentieth-century iterations. This discourse often framed Dove as exceptional or anomalous, representing a stark difference from what had come before in terms of race, gender, age, and accomplishments and reflecting the increasing so-called "diversity" of American literature and society in the 1990s. The language also mirrored that used to discuss her winning the Pulitzer Prize in Poetry several years earlier, when she was—again—following in the footsteps of Gwendolyn Brooks, her predecessor in receiving both honors. This paper examines discourse around Dove upon her appointment to the Poet Laureateship and throughout her two-year term, including that surrounding the publication of her *Selected Poems* (1993) by Pantheon/Vintage and *Mother Love* (1995) by W.W. Norton. By analyzing the praise that Dove's work

received in mainstream and academic reviews alongside the formal and thematic concerns of these texts, I highlight how her oeuvre was problematically framed throughout the mid-1990s as largely unprecedented and emerging *ex nihilo*. This view of Dove during the most publicly visible years of her career has gone on to enable her to secure relative stability and security as a prominent black female poet, certainly no small attainment. However, I elucidate the fraught, unhelpful dimensions of this narrative about her artistic and scholarly achievements, arguing that many critics in the period—and even today—mistakenly framed Dove as rejecting the lineage of the Black Arts Movement and embracing something wholly new. While that interpretation was partly understandable, it served throughout the 1990s to confine Dove within a tidy box of pseudo-deracination, perpetuating longstanding reading practices for poets of color that praise(d) perceived white forms and black content without explicitly articulating that supposed dichotomy. In bringing together analysis of the discourse around her work and close attention to several poems, I ultimately illustrate the necessity of re-reading Dove’s mid-career texts to reframe contemporary conversations in American poetry studies that often quietly continue to view her as an exceptional exception.

W

Wallace, Mark (California State University, San Marcos)
Telling It Slant and the Anti-Aggressive Poetics of the 1990s
PANEL 9C: HISTORICIZING THE 1990s (B)

Historically, poetics as practiced by poets, especially but not exclusively in the context of avant garde or “experimental” poetics, is frequently marked by aggressive oppositional stances meant in part to define what constitutes a successful or failed poetic approach to cultural, political, or even spiritual conditions. Based in the history of Modernist literary and art movements, and beginning with phenomena like Futurism and Cubism, oppositional poetics usually work to define and police the boundaries of artistic groups, often described as “schools,” that can be recognized by the poetic practices and ideologies they include or reject. The goal, stated or unstated, is often the canonization of specific writers and practices, and the tossing of other writers and practices into a reject pile (“the dust bin of history”). In contrast, many poets in the 1990s, including some whose essays were collected in the essay anthology *Telling It Slant*, which I co-edited along with Steven Marks, sought to undermine some of the most common divisions of the poetics of that time. These poets looked for commonalities across recognizable poetic groups and worked to expose the limitations of some of the more divisive terms. Some divisions that the poetics of the 90s questioned included the boundaries between poetic groups such as Language Writing and the New York School. Frequently questioned also were large scale, often oversimplified boundaries such as that between lyric and non- or anti-lyric poetry, the creative and the critical, and “experimental” and “traditional” and “identity-based” poetics. Unsurprisingly, the moment of such approaches was brief. Poetics has gone on to new kinds of assertive oppositions, political and cultural and sometimes aesthetic. Assertions, it seems, are often still what makes poetry careers. Nonetheless, anti-aggressive approaches in the 1990s played a role in ending the so-called Poetry Wars, an essential aspect of the history of U.S. Modernism. The value of an anti-aggressive, non-assertive poetics continues to be important as a way of finding commonalities across practices. It continues to call into question the cultural dynamic that comes along with overdetermined division-making, a dynamic that includes canonization, resource- hoarding, literary bullying, and institutional and group gate-keeping. Also, while it is important to acknowledge differences across poetic practices, various anti-aggressive poetics of the 90s make the important case that distinction and difference do not have to be the same as disagreement, nor do they have to lead to the ultimate aggression of war, whether that war is intellectual, institutional, or involves more physically direct confrontation.

Wellman, Don (independent scholar)
An American Baroque: Jay Wright and Lisa Robertson
PANEL 9A: "IN THE FOLDS": AMERICAN BAROQUE, EMBODIED TEXTUAL TIME, LIBERATORY TIME

A study of the Latin American *neobarroco* suggests some criteria for a contemporary American Baroque. This project is transnational. The concept of an American Baroque originates with Lezama Lima and underlies the major Latin American anthology associated with this style, *Medusario: muestra de poesía latino Americana* [Medusario: a collection of Latin American poetry] (1996), edited by Roberto Echavarrén, José Kozler, and Jacobo Sefamí. The third edition of this landmark volume was just this month printed in Chile. A similar project was inscribed in Charles Bernstein and Eduardo Espina’s remarkable but short lived journal, *S/N: New World Poetics*. I offer a short list of stylistic indicators for an American Baroque:

- a proliferation of paradoxical concepts (the defining characteristic of the Spanish Baroque of the “Golden Age”
- a multiple folding of trajectories such as those described by Giles Deleuze in *The Fold*.

- a ludic scattering of emblematic fragments, some ironic, some empty signifiers
- a cybernetic use of recursive elements
- an allusive style that is transnational with respect to source texts
- trans-linguistic language surfaces

The presentation will examine Baroque elements in the work of Jay Wright and Lisa Robertson. In Wright's case, a volume like *Boleros* (Princeton 1988) opens with images of the play of light that are explicitly Baroque in Leibniz's sense of the calculation, "to record the love that turns / a flat white room into an aurora australis / or the cotton shawl / of welcoming light." The premise is that the word "obscures" desire. The term "boleros" itself is both trans-linguistic and transnational. Wright's sources are African, Latin American, North American. Recent work like *Music's Mask and Measure* (Flood 2007) builds its associative and allusive chains from phrases like "evasive coherence" or "expressive deceit" (23). Employing a similar baroque diction, Robertson in *XEclogue*, writes in "Liberty," "I am howling through the thick accretions of liberty, not harmonious, but patterned, but inconceivably voluptuous as thick rope." Syntax and the imagery are baroque. One could argue that liberty itself is a late baroque construct and identify it with Robertson's favorite author Jean Jacques Rousseau. In his review of her *Rousseau's Boat* Steven Evans, writes that the boat, drifting randomly, is a figure for "the practice of what Pauline Oliveros calls 'deep listening,' a disciplined attention to inescapable, and intricately differentiated, sonic plenitude." ("Solitary and Free." *Jacket 2*, v. 27, 2005). In plenitude and fullness, the baroque inscribes its vectors. In a recent issue of *Numéro Cinq* (2014), Natalie Helberg writes, "While much of Robertson's work—*The Apothecary* (1991), *Debbie: An Epic* (1997), *XEclogue* (1993), *Occasional Work and Seven Walks from the Office for Soft Architecture* (2003), *Nilling* (2012), and many, many other collections—embrace a lush, amped-up take on the sentence (the baroque), *Cinema of the Present* proceeds comparatively economically. It is close to Robertson's 2010 work, *R's Boat*, which in many ways anticipates it." In an omnibus essay-commentary on recent, highly expressivist poetry, "Nearly Baroque," Stephen Burt begins by sounding this note, "Some poets have pursued a nearly Baroque aesthetic for almost the whole of their careers." He then identifies numerous emerging poets ... among them Nada Gordon, Lucie Brock-Broido, Ange Mlinko, Kiki Petrosino, and Geoffrey Nutter." (*Boston Review*, April 11, 2014). The range of the baroque aesthetic under discussion is increasingly extensive. It is the subject of my monograph under development *Expressivity in Modern Poetry*.

Wheeler, Lesley Ann (University of Kansas)

Understanding Self Through Refraction in Form and Content:

Anne Carson's "The Glass Essay" as Postmodern Thirdspace Spirograph

PANEL 3B: ANNE CARSON

1990s postmodernism brought with it an unapologetic foray into complexities and fragmentations of self. However, there is a lack of deep inquiry to the way that form and content generate simultaneously in Anne Carson's "The Glass Essay." By gathering all the ways she can perceive herself—her mother, Emily Bronte, her lover, nature, and her meditations among them—Carson creates a mechanism similar to a Spirograph, where the motion of moving through these modes of self-understanding result in the poem's structure on the page. In my paper I will look deeply at the connection between the micro (line level) and macro (stanza/thematic) structure, and bring it into conversation with Edward Soja's 1996 theory of *Thirdspace*, and Tara Chittenden's "Body-mapping and the Human Spirograph: Performance drawing in Thirdspace," an article from the *Journal of Dance & Somatic Practices*. How does "The Glass Essay" generate? Tracing, re-tracing. Trying, trying again. The poem's form incorporates pieces of different traditional genres and forms to create the form this poem wanted— and follows it. Carson tries on interaction with her mother, with her unconscious in the form of the Nudes, with her walks on the moor, and with the study of Emily Bronte's life. And this is where the form seems to slip seamlessly into content, with considerations of the dual meaning of essay (as a form of writing and meaning to try) and of glass as a multi-formed potential. I argue that by existing in many fields simultaneously, Carson's poem enters Soja's concept of Thirdspace, defined by Soja as "a distinct mode of critical spatial awareness that is appropriate to the new scope and significance being brought about in the rebalanced trialectics of spatiality–historicality–sociality," and bears resemblance to performance drawing in its use of concurrent thematic trajectories. In conclusion, this project, by closely examining "The Glass Essay," sheds light on a new way of viewing poetic form as a physical map.

Xu, Qinghong (University of Anhui, China)

Cultural Poetics in Adrienne Rich's An Atlas of the Difficult World

PANEL 9B: MEMORY, LOCALE, LOSS, SATIRE

Rich's *An Atlas of the Difficult World: 1988-1991*(1991), a milestone in her work and in contemporary American poetry, maps out new territory, charting the landscapes of modern American lives and cultural history amid the beauties and anguishes of a difficult world: a world of love -- particularly between women, the heroism of the marginalized, and the magic of poetry on the one hand, and a world of isolation, impotence, marginality, and the violence of humanity against itself on the other. This paper, in the light of cultural poetics, analyzes "the historicity of texts" and "the textuality of history" in this collection. For the former, Rich is engaged with and documentation of historical and/or societal concerns such as wars, the establishment of identities, and difficult subjects such as abuse, murder, and anti-Semitism. For the latter, the living contemporary American history is constructed in powerfully and gracefully written poems with Rich's artistic imagination, symbols of speech and action, imagery of war, anaphoric Whitmanism and the formal strategies of witnessing aesthetic practice. These two aspects together are embodiments of Rich's unflinching political-cultural consciousness and her adherence to aestheticism of poetry.