



Lightning'd Press | Issue Six

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"If we posit the existence of a darkness, then no light in addition to it would come about from the Light of Lights, for otherwise the aspects of the Light of Lights would have to be multiple, as were explained before. Yet, it is obvious that there are many self-conscious incorporeal lights and accidental lights. Were a darkness to be generated from the Light of Lights, it would be alone and nothing else would exist, whether lights or darkneses. Existence itself testifies to the falsity of this."

- Suhrawardi from *The Philosophy of Illumination*

When the light walks, clockwise, counterclockwise,  
atoms memorize the firefly's wing  
silhouette 20 foot elm leaf  
(worm's-eye view through three crisscross timothy stalks).  
A blue hinged green at edge, the twilight  
sinks as if half swimmer  
-- ankles in wrinkle through wood turtle  
swallowing scarlet strawberry,  
waist deep the warp then roof of star split clover, one pale  
eye spool rayed Orien  
thistle silk through soil particle --  
to Euridice. Head deep  
in neither  
*aether*, nether:

- Ronald Johnson from *ARK*

# Table of Contents

Short Piece		4
Note on the Text		7
Poems		8
Correspondence		28
Interview		29
Acknowledgements		31
Biographies/Credits		32

# Short Piece

From Joel Bettridge

## A Manifesto of the Work of Redemption

Confess that dictation, collage, sincerity and objectification, interruption, chance, the concept, typography and constraints are a poem's Being, then the poem becomes our thinking, read into Being.

Confess that in this life of the poem we listen, study the mystery of the poems that preceded us, then translate their singularity into our own poems, our own world, the poems and the worlds to come.

Confess that as we write into the seconds just before us, we put our hearts on the inevitability of metaphor, the lingusituality of perception, the boundedness of thought . . . the beauty of error, where our words' persistent shifts are absolutely trustworthy, relentless meaningful—sacraments.

Confession is then redemption; it is words spoken, written, read, heard, as words, their correspondences, their creations, their bodies, converting us, one another, their difficulties made difficult again, an incarnation of the cosmos, burning our selves away, making them new, as in a desert, exploding with light.

Thus, against the depravity of representation, its failure to show us Creation, our inability to come to life every moment of it, we who confess, confess, acknowledge,

1. words as such; all the energized past possessing us so it becomes our possession, rushing, poem from poem, made, not begotten, of one being with the world, but not pointing to the world; through the language all meaning is made, every principle of composition compressed in one line.
2. rather than craft, the discipline found in open forms; rather than the genre *experimental poetry*, blindness to ourselves, the visceral registers of experience and judgment, and the productive, irrational force of our imaginations and our poems.

3. our need to cast off the teleology and crushing rationalism of liberal humanism, that orthodox secularism, ideology of the ideology minder, its commodification of thought and history, its evisceration of poetics and philosophy and invention.
4. redemption and belief are not metaphysical; they are the truest form of materialism: the work of making a poem and the Work of Redemption are the same. In the poem is the sacred; it draws us into the impossibilities and complexities of the word, and our nearness to others who also live in words, on the world.
5. that as for politics, our mothers and fathers were overrun; we must stop filling our lungs with revolution and carbon monoxide. Why demand narcissistic self-murder? To keep on talking to mirrored rooms? Love the world instead: compound our irrelevance, worthlessness, give particular men and women our time and attention, our money. They will always be with us—we betray them right now sitting there. Don't care for a better social order. Seek out impossibility & maladjustment; make a poem with the mind's identity; it may exceed our good intentions; there we might find ourselves by finding every atom belonging to us as good belongs to you; no progress but perfectionism.
6. redemption is not salvation, but repetition with a difference, with a little less enthusiasm, more belief, in the midst of perpetual war. If we would but redeem the avant-garde, the avant-garde will redeem the poem, and the poem will redeem us.
7. our work remains happily minor, aside, read mostly by our friends. Skimmed, or endured, for five minutes or six.
8. in a present marked by banal violence and anti-archaic, anti-biological knowledge, childishness, utter predictability, a flood of social networks, our fantastic act of revolt is ecstasy in the avant-garde in its age as a gnostic nominalism, keeping what matters alive, in us, unheroic, unprofessional, useless, ignored, but always talking, acting, thinking, scribbling, at work, troubled, radical in study, care, and assembly.
9. the Divine, manifest in the single catastrophe of history, but who beyond it awakens us to it, gives us poems as assembles, made from the rubble; the poem is thus a work of apocalypse, which has already occurred, in which we dwell.

It comes to this: the work of redemption makes the familiarity of a poem wandering in the avant-garde strange and productive once more, for a great strangeness, for us who live after the twilight of the idols has turned to night, is found in redemption and belief, the strange discovery that the gods persist, despite our sermonizing, simply taking on new names, mutating, stubbornly conserving.

In the work of redemption, the poem is constant; it is perpetually merciful and faithful towards us, carrying us safely through all the changes of the world from generation to generation. Here there is, for me, joy and matter, and you. Bodies coursing with energy and thought. New poems. For the aesthetics we cherish—matter and joy. Bodies coursing with energy and thought. New Poems. Arks.

# Note on the Text

At the recent poetics conference at the University of Washington's Bothell campus, I was exposed to my first irradiated moments of academia, sterilized by the light of it.

I left empty and purely clean.

I wish I could say it was a cleanliness that brought freshness and vibrancy to my poetic approach. Instead, I think of Henry Darger's back arched over his manic collages, an epic battle between the forces that compose life animating heroic girls alight in a vivid universe where every moment is bursting with importance and significance. A universe we are all seeking and that is constantly retreating from our grasps.

In writing a poem, I use words instead of material pictures to compose a collage. The words can make pictures in a reader's head. So can the sound of the words. So can the placement of one word with another(others). It allows me more freedom, perhaps, than other mediums.

I do not want to be clean. I do not want to be told how to write and what kind of writing will be acceptable. I do not want to write about sex because in writing about sex, as a woman, it will be so fascinating...so liberating...so titillating. I do not want my genius to be buried under my body. I do not want any woman's genius to be buried. Poetry is a tool to revolt, to rebel and to grasp. To train one's eye on the universe within

and grasp.

*lux in tenebris.*

Poetry is not standing behind a pulpit telling everyone about how intelligent you are. It is not about mastering language or displaying your brilliance, your cleverness. It is primitive. It is wild and cannot be tamed. If it can, it is dead on arrival at your feet in a pile of human achievement amounting to nothing. It is barely language, barely speaking, barely anything at all worth talking about.

What could we realize if we let go of what we think we realize?

All of this is said with love.



snake elation  
malled here  
Congregate  
Man  
Equines  
(literally "little man")  
or horse-on-bird  
an artist's lay  
figure  
America  
& its floes  
its neck of lace  
Cali           graphy-  
you and your presence

## The Sea Lion

All the waves went ahead  
And I stayed behind  
The clouds came over  
Rear a roar

Thru my element  
The salt  
Sands the floorboards  
Over comes

My island the cock  
My rural  
Stunned district  
My one

By one

I burned my hair once  
to watch it transform in my hand.  
Everything in this room wants  
to burst into flames even us,  
wicks struggling doused  
in oxygen and timed by time.

Remember asking for life?  
*Me neither.*

Or these phantasmal visions.  
Romantics say people are trapped  
in bodies, but there's something  
else. The mind is not tangible  
nor isolated is what ten  
thousand spontaneous wakings  
have taught me with as  
many dreams and days of thought  
that were never mine.

Flame starts fire but what  
glints a spark for who or why?

And I'm starting to doubt  
decaying wick belongs to such  
heat or if the light does, too.  
Does it taste the wax and look  
through the glass air around it?  
Then drowned in eternity, ruined  
by energetics but saved by  
experience of existence.

Feelings you'll know  
when people burn you.

Extinguished body or  
transformed from things  
more exquisite  
less entropic.

having grown tired,  
we whisper to ourselves and hope that you  
can hear  
(though we are dreaming of fields  
full ripe in mid-day sun),  
and somewhere out beyond us,  
oars are being gathered and  
the water is being depth tested.

if we knew another way  
to change your mind, we would.  
now, we wait for you to come to us  
and talk with obscure lines  
about trails leading through bush  
little known to anyone else.

from *still walk end*

now am i partial motion\_  
here a letter\_ there a mark\_  
owner of all\_ of emptiness\_  
in state i\_ in community i\_  
self concerned for concern  
mostly with motion and knowledge\_  
no explosions\_ or  
movement\_ wind still water  
still\_ light always bright (  
movement yes, but not  
vocalized\_) no losing reason,  
for no standard exist\_ the  
logical system is my own\_ for  
to arrange \_ along the paths  
precreated—beyond me\_  
these dream did i or just follow?

Sore neck. Eyes dry.  
Pollen unbearable.

Allergic means  
'to meet a *strange* enemy'.

From the Greek.

not of sieges,

but eyes

poetry is the  
ache for god  
of  
& hermeneutic  
meanderings  
stoved in the  
fire

until the  
sign of wine  
& the winehouse  
our heads are  
dirt at the  
feet of the  
master of  
the fire temple<sup>1</sup>

the ring  
around

the ring  
around

the tightness  
of the ring around

the breakdown  
forthwith  
the leaping feet  
the tender  
/s  
the listing  
lipping of the  
headsman, the fire  
of his hands

the noose  
the axe  
the scene in green  
of the  
hills behind  
the cheering &  
jeering screams  
the rose  
amongst the stones

---

<sup>1</sup> Traditional Persian Sufi song, translation by Gregory Angus, unpublished



i will transfix  
transubstantiate  
the sign of the mass  
word made flesh  
flesh made holy  
Holy Holy Holy

genuflection in the Sign  
Ya Haqq!  
genuflection in the Sign  
Ya 'Ali!

O Allah  
O Hu

we will call  
by righteous names  
& by the rectification  
of names, do as Adam, Ron

do, now  
the Secret  
/s

The secret wants  
to be told. Why  
doesn't she have the  
secret man in the third  
row tell, he squeals,  
hand up—pick me.  
By all means says L.  
But he just reveals his  
cover, and just to the  
secret listeners.  
They listen politely,  
praying he doesn't  
dominate the evening  
in which their secret  
hearts pound

From *Gates & Fields*

The long tree's bristle

Hermetic cry

Thrash

Can they unify their attentions?

Rain arranging

Can they together this?

She's working her way through  
She's farming  
The fields admonish her labor  
again and again blank

She sees herself upon the yellow grass

*Oh why must there be expanse so beckoningly at my disposal?*

The moon is another field  
or is it the sun reflecting none

She's working her way through the field

*Is that a star in my eye or the sky, is that a you from whom I have known?*

She's sleeping in the field

Chthonic

in the loam of mind  
green-fingered eyes  
muster the scene

state  
less,

Adam

under  
awe  
spired  
eyes

*every*  
*thing*

*has its mouth*  
*to manifestation*

from *Symphony no. 8*  
(13.7 billion years)

-5-

And there is little light  
that penetrates  
her eye's impermeable rind  
where there is neither  
clarity nor resolution  
surrounding the unrequited thought  
the thought which bears  
the intimacy known  
(to the self) as isolation  
and it is here  
she believes  
she sees  
daylight fade  
behind the blast furnace factory's  
    grey fieldstone walls  
where iron chords  
    fuse melting air  
    to dissonance arisen  
    on darkening asphalt streets  
and where incandescent lamplight  
glows through winter doorways  
and into rooms of corridors  
and hollow mirrors  
and rooms where the widow dreams  
of the intimate desert  
of her own haunted isolation

The push back against that volume of space empty of matter,  
its pressure at zero,

you're a mighty thought experiment  
*burning the small dead* components of the universe,  
*a hundred summers* under radioactive decay,

Now bombard me with high energy subatomic particles,  
Make me convert  
into a different element,

modify the operation of our entropic system,

fill the landfills with  
what's in our pockets:

hydrocarbons, sulfur dioxide, and heavy metals, and furnace slag,  
iodine-129-

to seal up  
a state of lowest energy,

hollowness exhausted of air,

and although it is not true, Consider, the sunset  
with more sunset in it, the desert lit more dessert-like,

then push *your mouth* into a smile, *and* smirk,  
*the world* we hope is an *ancient woman*  
*gathering* recyclables from bus stop rubbish bins.



## The Electron Microscope (a half sonnet)

The sudden, overwhelming weirdness that things  
exist—you only make it worse: your acts  
of hermeticism, scions swarming  
beneath every godbless-ed face; extract-  
ing documents of barbarism, hoards  
of specimens, binding our brains, our flesh  
to specters, chewing at the pedosphere. Bohr  
said he made man the hub again, enmeshed  
in measurement. He didn't know that each  
cross-sectioned shred of matter is a mouth  
lecturing

VIII. "Hold me tight, honey, hold me tighter. Then let me go."

Speak of this,

rolled into

hills. Memoried of hills,

Spaced thoughts of hills

sun reflected of

hills,

Past declarations

of hills,

the work

we did

of hills,

far reached into night  
old bones of us,

Ready to begin the task,

understanding not the neural

but the heart

of hills.

## Perpendicular to Everything

To discredit

belies an allowance  
of judgment

The sound of night

distorts an aroma's hue

leaving its nakedness concealed

Hands appear pristine

pristine only because they are empty  
and angled perpendicular to everything

Hesperus is Phosphorus

and the name  
makes the difference

between

I

you

*ya-Jami*: The One

the star the bright of the morning

in finding it  
within

who reconciles  
who composes and arranges  
who connects together

alight

a

light

once the wheel's begun

the blaze

# Correspondence

From Thomas Meyer

An end. Terminal. Or goal. Question mark. The modernist project shies away from finality. That things simply run down. Perhaps. In the blink of an eye everything is gone then replaced by itself. Disclosure. Can narrative action exist without conflict? Don't ask an actor. Can there be a drama of revelation... Antagonist. Protagonist. Antidromous: to be led by the hand all over town.

Ambiguity and digression, how perfect are they? Together they give rise to the liminal. And the liminal gives rise to shape. Shape to form. That gap of uncertainty the binary cannot attain.

# Interview

## With Peter O'Leary

Jamie & Jeff: In your last response, you mentioned that Apocalypticism can be seen as an act of decomposition, "dead matter is devoured and returned to nourish and improve the tilth of the earth". We loved this idea of consumption as a method of rejuvenation or as a part of a cycle that is healthy. Can you expound on that idea of poetry as a method of consumption/creation in relation to the cycles of life and death?

Peter O'Leary: Lately, I've been thinking about mycopoetics, which is my coinage for connecting the lives of mycelia (or fungi) with poetry. Mushrooms are the fruiting bodies of mycelia. A mycelium is comprised of hyphae, which are thread-like tubules with thin walls. These hyphae expand into soils and rotten matter where they absorb food. If that food isn't readily available, as in a healthy tree, the hyphae excrete enzymes to break down surrounding matter. Hyphae function exactly the same way as the cells in your stomach; the difference is that your stomach internally contains the food; fungi acquire their food externally. Hyphae is a strange word outside the realms of mycology. (Hypha is the singular.) But you've seen them before whenever you've turned over a pile of sodden autumn leaves and noticed a gauzy cobwebbing linking the tissues of the rotting leaves together. What you're seeing are hyphae. If you dig in your garden and pull out a handful of soil, especially if your garden is healthy, you could be holding up to eight miles worth of fungal cells. Put simply, there is no conceivable growth in any environment without fungi to break down decaying matter. If all the fungi on Earth were suddenly eradicated, the planet would become inert.

Language shares a great deal in common with mycelium. Paul Stamets, the visionary mycologist, has claimed that mycelium operates at a level of communicative complexity that far outdistances our understanding of its functions. He compares mycelium to the internet, going so far as to show how visualizations of the networking functions of the internet closely resemble mycelial networks. Because a fungus is a relatively simple organism structurally speaking – a hyphal tube has a thin cell wall through which food is absorbed and from which all kinds of information can be transmitted – Stamets believes mycelium acts as a kind of neurological system for the environments it inhabits – absorbing histories of forest fires and footfalls and capable ultimately of being communicated with. Language is the imagination's mycelial system, absorbing nutrition from the information and experience it encounters and transforming those things into knowledge that nourishes the soul.

Poetry is one of the fruiting bodies of language. It emerges in order to propagate language but also to preserve it. (Mushrooms are the sexual organs of mycelium: they shake down spores which allow the mycelium to reproduce.)

This analogy is good, but only to a point. I don't want to make an extensive allegory about mushrooms and poems. But I do think that there's an incredible amount of rotten language and toxic poetry out there in the world, contact with which withers the soul, poisons the imagination, and leaves the reader limp and lifeless. Every poem is headed eventually for the litter heap. In this basic sense, every new poem should be contributing to the soil out from which any new poems will be discovered and grown. This is as true of Whitman as it is of my own poems or those of any other of my contemporaries. In "Poem of Wonder at The Resurrection of The Wheat," Whitman, who, fantasizing about the volume of corpses filling the ground he walks on, asks, "How can the ground not sicken of men?" goes on to claim "Now I am terrified at the earth! it is that calm and patient, / It grows such

sweet things out of such corruptions, / It turns harmless and stainless on its axis, with such endless successions of diseases corpses, / It distils such exquisite winds out of such infused fetor, / It renews with such unwitting looks, its prodigal, annual, sumptuous crops, / It gives such divine materials to men, and accepts such leavings from them at last." (This poem was eventually entitled "This Compost.")

*It gives such divine materials to me, and accepts such leavings from them at last.* It really couldn't be put any more clearly. And my thought is: if you're not imagining this fate for your poems as you write them, then your poems are going to be toxic, filling the environment with poison. Each newly created poem is its apocalyptic ally, its revelatory twin.

(To be continued...)

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The New York Image Archive.

And the blog 50 Watts.

Alhamdulillah.



## Biographies | Credits

(pages 8, 9) JIMMY LO is a poet living in Atlanta, Georgia, where he works for a public library. His chapbook 'A Reduction' is available from LRL Textile Series: <http://www.textileseries.com>. More of his writing can be found on his website <http://www.jimmylorunning.com>.

(page 10) EVAN JONES is a graduate student at Harvard getting his Ph D in chemistry. He has a BA in English (concentration in creative writing) from Franklin & Marshall College (Lancaster, PA).

(pages 11, 12) WILLIAM ALLEGREZZA edits the e-zine *Moria* and teaches at Indiana University Northwest. He has previously published many poetry books, including *In the Weaver's Valley*, *Ladders in July*, *Fragile Replacements*, *Collective Instant*, *Aquinas and the Mississippi* (with Garin Cycholl), *Covering Over*, and *Densities, Apparitions*; two anthologies, *The City Visible: Chicago Poetry for the New Century* and *La Alteración del Silencio: Poesía Norteamericana Reciente*; seven chapbooks, including *Sonoluminescence* (co-written with Simone Muench) and *Filament Sense* (Ypolita Press); and many poetry reviews, articles, and poems. He founded and curated series A, a reading series in Chicago, from 2006-2010. In addition, he occasionally posts his thoughts at P-Ramblings.

(pages 13, 14) STEVEN MANUEL, editor of *from a Compos't*, mailing address: 11 Cedar Ridge Dr / Asheville, NC 28806.

(pages 15, 16) JEFF MILLER is co-editor of Lightning'd Press and has a proper bio written by Jamie Felton on the Lightning'd Press website. He's the author of *All of the Grace Poems* (Earth Books, 1996), *La Vie / The Polemics* (Earth Books, 2001), and a broadside of *The Ardor: Line 11* (Viatorium Press, 2009). Along with Ryan Barker he was the co-editor of the chapbook series *What Would We Do Without Us* (2001-2005). He's currently working on a long poem, *The Ardor*.

(page 17) SARAH ROSENTHAL the author of the cross-genre book *Manhattan* (Spuyten Duyvil, 2009) and several chapbooks, the most recent of which is *The Animal* (Dusie, 2011). Her interview collection *A Community Writing Itself: Conversations with Vanguard Writers of the Bay Area* was published by Dalkey Archive in 2010. Her poetry has appeared in numerous journals including *ecopoetics*, *Bird Dog*, *textsound*, and *Fence*, and is anthologized in *Bay Poetics* (Faux, 2006), *The Other Side of the Postcard* (City Lights, 2004), *hinge* (Crack, 2002), and *Kindergarde: Avant-garde Poems, Plays, and Stories for Children* (a Small Press Traffic project, forthcoming 2013). Her essays and interviews have appeared in journals such as *Jacket*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Rain Taxi*, *Otoliths*, and *New American Writing*. She has received the Leo Litwak Fiction Award and grant-supported residencies at Vermont Studio Center, Soul Mountain, and Ragdale. From 2009-2011 she was an Affiliate Artist at Headlands Center for the Arts. She teaches in the MFA program at the University of San Francisco and writes curricula for the Developmental Studies Center in Oakland.

(pages 18, 19) JENNIFER FIRESTONE is the author of *Flashes* (forthcoming, Shearsman Books), *Holiday* (Shearsman Books, 2008), the co-editor of *Letters to Poets: Conversations about Poetics, Politics, and Community* (Saturnalia Books, 2008), *Waves* (Portable Press at Yo-Yo Labs, 2007), *from Flashes* (Sona Books, 2006) and *snapshot* (Sona Books, 2004). Her poems have appeared in *HOW2*, *Xcp: Cross Cultural Poetics*, *LUNGFULL!*, *Can We Have Our Ball Back*, *Fourteen Hills*, *MIPoesias Magazine*, *Dusie*, *580 Split*, *Saint Elizabeth Street*, *moria*, *Feminist Studies*, *Sidereality*, *Poetry Salzburg Review*, *Phoebe*, *BlazeVOX*, *So to Speak: Feminist Journal of Language and Art*, and others. She is an Assistant Professor of Literary Studies at the New School's Eugene Lang College and lives with her family in Brooklyn.

(pages 20, 21) ROSS HAIR has been published in Shearsman, LVNG, Bright Pink Mosquito. He has recently had a pamphlet published by Longhouse Publishers.

(page 22) RIC CARFAGNA was born and educated in Boston Massachusetts. He is the author of numerous collections of poetry, most recently *Symphonies Nos. 1, 4 & 6* published by Chalk Editions and *Symphony No. 2* published by Argotist Press. His poetry has evolved from the early radical experiments of his first two books, *Confluent Trajectories* and *Porchcat Nadir*, to the unsettling existential mosaics of his multi-book project *Notes On NonExistence*. Ric lives in rural central Massachusetts with his wife, cellist Mary Carfagna and daughters Emilia and Aria.

(pages 23, 24) JOEL BETTRIDGE is the author of two books of poetry, *That Abrupt Here* (The Cultural Society 2007) and *Presocratic Blues* (Chax 2009) as well as the critical study, *Reading as Belief: Language Writing, Poetics, Faith* (Palgrave 2009). He co-edited, with Eric Selinger, *Ronald Johnson: Life and Works* (The National Poetry Foundation 2008). Currently he is an Associate Professor of English at Portland State University.

(page 25) RYAN BARKER is a native West Virginian who has lived and worked all over the world. He is currently hiding out in upstate New York teaching and writing. His poetry has been published in zines and reviews in the United States and the United Kingdom. When not teaching, he enjoys confounding his wife and children with revisionist folk tales, reading, and contemplating his next place of residence.

(page 26) CALVIN PENNIX holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Chapman University and lives with his wife and daughter in Mission Viejo, CA. He is currently an instructor at Everest College, where he teaches Composition, American Literature, Critical Thinking and Algebra. Calvin's first book of poetry, *Grounds*, was published by Argotist Books, his second collection, *Around/About*, was published by Differentia Press and his chapbook, *All Dried Up*, was published by quarter after press. Calvin has been a featured artist at Counterexample Poetics and has had his poetry recently appear in Mad Hatters Review Blog, *On Barcelona*, *Otoliths*, *Certain Circuits*, *experiential-experimental-literature*, *The Altered Scale*, and *Upstairs at Duroc*. He is also the founding editor of quarter after/quarter after press a place for poetry, poetics and art.

(page 27) JAMIE FELTON is the other editor of Lightning'd Press and also has a proper bio written by Jeff Miller on the Lightning'd Press website. Her poems have been published in various places online. They can be viewed from her website: <http://jamiefelton.weebly.com>. She is working on a zine of her earlier work entitled *Blackbird Singing*. You will be able to find it in unexpected places and online.