

Our Recommended Books & Mags

Contributed by Andrei Codrescu

NOIR: A HISTORY OF MY BOOK REVIEWS: All around me, screaming silently Å la E. M. Å¼nch, the towers of unread books turned and turned toward me, a tiny man of flesh with no time on his hands or anywhere else on his body. (read the rest of this story at bottom of reviews)

NEW REVIEWS:(to read older reviews, click here)

Andrei Oisteanu, *Inventing the Jew, Antisemitic Stereotypes in Romanian and Other Central-East European Cultures* by Andrei Oisteanu

Foreword by Moshe Idel, Translated by Mirela Adascalitei

University of Nebraska Press, 2009,

<http://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu/product/Inventing-the-Jew,674083.aspx> Å Å

Exquisite Corpse is proud to see this major work by one of our most cherished contributors, translated into English. We have published Andrei Oisteanu's groundbreaking essays on hallucinogens and the Romanian avantgarde. Every book by Oisteanu is an event, but the English translation of Å this book, containing decades of research, is worthy of serious and attentive focus by every Å one of our readers. "Inventing the Jew" is a phenomenon. Andrei Oisteanu is a researcher at the Institute for the History of Religions in Bucharest, and associate professor at the Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Bucharest. He is the author of several books, including *The Image of the Jew in Romanian Culture, Order and Chaos: Myth and Magic in Romanian Traditional Culture*, and *Religion, Politics, and Myth: Texts about Mircea Eliade* and Ioan Petru Culianu.

Inventing the Jew follows the evolution of stereotypes of Jews from the level of traditional Romanian and other Central-East European cultures (their legends, fairy tales, ballads, carols, anecdotes, superstitions, and iconographic representations) to that of "high" cultures (including literature, essays, journalism, and sociopolitical writings), showing how motifs specific to "folkloric antisemitism" migrated to "intellectual antisemitism." This comparative perspective also highlights how the images of Jews have differed from that of other "strangers" such as Hungarians, Germans, Roma, Turks, Armenians, and Greeks. The gap between the conception of the "imaginary Jew" and the "real Jew" is a cultural distance that differs over time and place, here seen through the lens of cultural anthropology.

Stereotypes of the "generic Jew" were not exclusively negative, and are described in five chapters depicting physical, occupational, moral and intellectual, mythical and magical, and religious portraits of "the Jew."

Some Praise:

Å "This scrupulously researched study is a profound revelation of Å€the other' in western culture. The Å€imaginary Jew,' in its specifically Romanian and central-east-European incarnation, reverberates through all of Europe's hellish myth-making, beginning in the first Christian century. The layering of stories and images has the effect of a masterful horror-film. Andrei Oisteanu's book is an unflinching look at Europe's darkest secret. It is therefore an indispensable text."—Andrei Codrescu, MacCurdy Distinguished Professor at Louisiana State University

"This book is erudite, richly documented and intelligently written. Though both a comprehensive and explicit analysis of so many themes concerning the images of the Jews, it is at the same time an implicit critique of an important component of Romanian culture. However, Andrei Oisteanu's book is above all a very courageous one."—Moshe Idel, Max Cooper Professor of Jewish Thought at Hebrew University in Jerusalem

"A profound and illuminating anthropological study, with many cultural, historical, social-political, and religious layers about an old-new topic. The image of the stranger says a lot about the stranger's own history and psychology but perhaps even more so about his neighbor-observer. Between the fictionalized Jew and the real one rests an entire history of thousands of years. The author of this fascinating book offers a thorough, subtle, and lucid description and analysis of a certain location, but its meaning goes well beyond it."--Norman Manea, Professor of European Literature and writer-in-residence at Bard College.

Andrei Codrescu & Ruxandra Cesereanu, *The Forgiven Submarine*, in Andrei Codrescu's translation has just been published by Black Widow Press (2009, www.blackwidowpress.com) we humbly announce, while I (Codrescu) am here to tell you that translating Ruxandra's intricate imagery was almost possible, while translating myself from Romanian into English was an odd kind of mind-knotting fandango that took the breath out of me. Å Now I'm breathing. An essay remains to be written on our American tour of the *Forgiven Submarine* in New York (Romanian Cultural Center, St. Marks' Church), New Orleans (The Gold Mine Saloon), and Baton Rouge (LSU). Our Romanian tour reached for the limits of my glottal and sublingual resources, the American for my cool. I recommend bilingvism now as Theory, Hardship, Praxis, and Therapy. Through all of it Ruxandra was most gracious and charmed the bejeezus out of everyone. *The Forgiven Submarine* was written originally in Romanian by e-mail; it is an epic collaborative poem written by Ruxandra Cesereanu

and myself over a long, feverish month. This is how I noted it when it was published in Romania:

Submarinul Iertat, Bucharest: Editura Brumar, www.brumar.ro. Another bibliophilic coup! A collaboration with "delirionist" Ruxandra Cesereanu, who made me delirious with poetry. This particular de-luxe edition comes signed inside a blood-maroon silk pillow, and was presented to me during the trip to Romania in 2007. Ruxandra and I read at a Poetry Marathon in my birth town of Sibiu, a breathless event that left me feeling a little like a statue, except that I was wide-awake and exhausted simultaneously. No statue I. We also read the collaboration in its entirety at the University of Cluj where Ruxandra teaches, and were interviewed by all the major media in the wake of our most amusing performance. (In Romania, poets are Brangelinas!) We took Submarinul Iertat to the Frankfurt Book Fair where it was displayed among millions of other books, so I slowly regained my sense of perspective. I shrank from statue to a mildly pleasant pidgeon. We read from it in Romanian to a fair-sized audience, and listened to ourselves in German translation by Ina Pfitzner. Ruxandra got chased by a mad duck on the bank of the Mein. I believe that the mad duck was the reincarnation of a furious 19th century German Romantic poet who died unpublished. Then we had a lot of German beer and I transacted restaurant business in primitive Deutsch all by myself.

NEW REVIEWS:

Andrei Oisteanu: Inventing the Jew

Pettet, Simon: Hearth

Andrei Codrescu & Ruxandra Cesereanu: Forgiven Submarine [Click on Author's Name to Read Review](#)

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Uncensored Songs: A Sam Abrams Tribute, festschrift gathered by John Roche in honor of great rad friend/poet Sam Abrams. Contributors include Amiri Baraka, Tony Weinberger, and many others. We bow before Sam with delight & love.

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Adriane Albertowicz, Salty and Haiku, Hawaii: from the author, somehow. One thing the Corpse is very good at, as the techne mega-gorilla keeps marching on, is paying attention to the handwritten, the smudged, the eccentrically set text. Around the mid-90s, manuscripts and books arriving in our offices, started looking mind-numbingly perfect. A nicotine-stained handwritten letter with a prison return-address got our attention a lot quicker than your pristinely spaced mss. produced by computer. The payoff was great: not only were the nonconformist mailings more reassuring (there are still humans in the world!), but the contents were better, too. It's as if the perfect machines also produced perfectly boring texts, and, by extension, turned writers into the perfectly boring people they were always meant to be (by their parents and schools). This process was rapid and we are now in an age when anyone can make a good-looking book and publish it, or, even better, just send her URL around the world. All this is by way of introduction to two peachy fresh books of poetry written by a poet in her twenties who typed her poems, bound them in cheap cardboard, sewed them by hand, and sent them to me still smelling of salty ocean from Hawaii. Adriane Albertowicz has an impeccable poetry pedigree, beginning in a chance encounter with the poetry of Jeffrey Miller, and being the daughter of a poet, but she has incorporated her lyric roots and is her own woman. Salty has a crudely drawn seagull on the cover and Haiku has an acrylic hand-splashed crow on it, but beyond the lovely retro-look, her garage band performs like a master. From Haiku: "Everyday": When I walk home/ I count the crushed/ Green frogs/ Along the way. And from Salty: I dreamed//love meant/catching what goes free/The thought broke,//it frightened me awake. You can say that the verse is as raw as the production, but then you'd have to say the same about the ancient Chinese poets and many great observant Americans. There are love poems here that throb with the sentiments of nature, and one can smell the big waves.

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Elisa Albo, Passage to America, march street press, greensboro, 2006, marchstreetpress.com. Cuban-born, American-raised, big heart beating (or fluttering?) over the water between Florida and the Island, this poet makes vivid her bivalval yearnings with precision and delicacy. "if I can't/ go home again to what I have never known/ with my flesh, how can I return to a place that/ lives in the liquid center of my imagination?" (Cuba: a Geobiography).

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William Allegrezza, *Otoliths*. 8 Kennedy St, Rockhampton, QLD 4700, Australia. <http://the-otolith.blogspot.com> . Even if this poet didn't use one of my lines to kick off his "otoliths," I'd find his work as interesting as a jagged mountain range. These "otoliths" are forms with gaps, like sonnets with holes made in them by "the trickle of voices from across a field." The word-expedition Allegrezza leads into this landscape of silences and questions is marine as well as alpine ("when tides cease/ when hands ask for life"), which is how one goes about the job these days when ifrits with bags full of commas stalk the poet through "a tracing of maps on a steel drum." It's good to see the page used well and to public utility.

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Kostas Anagnopoulos, *Various Sex Acts*, printed in Brooklyn 2008, in an edition of 500 by the author, twenty-six copies lettered A-Z and signed (we don't have one of those). Representative of micro-press product, this is a cogent discourse by a poet who'd like to speak Greek, or maybe does or maybe "changing languages mid-sentence/ Without translation or remedy. " (he does not)

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Radu Andriescu, *The Catalan Within*, translated from Romanian by Adam J. Sorkin and Radu Andriescu. Fayetteville: Longleaf Press. Andriescu is a poet and carpenter: "I think about happiness/ as if it were a piece of lumber." We used to think of it as a warm gun, but those days are gone.

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j. reuben appelman, *make loneliness*, Otis Books/ seismicity editions, The Graduate Writing Program, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, 2008 (seismicity@otis.edu). This mysterious little book sits in its plain black covers like an accordion packed tight with oedipal explosives. A series of prose texts structured as letters and brief passages named culled (some actually "culled" from the longer letters) add up to a powerful engine of language with a sound both familiar and unfamiliar to these ears. Here is a letter, in its entirety: "At the kitchen table are corpses, and we hear the piccolos playing. A piccolo is now in fashion and you get one free when you buy a flute. There are people who can play with their lips. I have played a keyboard before and it was like playing fangs. I have tried to tell my children this but they were hanging from the trees. They are urinating. It's day and night with them. Soon I will build my boy a house in the onion patch, and he will forgive me for my dense-starred flag. O my daughter, child of the universe, I command you to awaken from this half-burned barn, this shadow over the limitless and awesome." I don't know what they put in the water at Otis, but all their publications are first-rate work,; the names of the writers are oddly unknown to us, but they impress us as full-grown oracles and inspired language-users.

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Gabeba Baderoon, *The Dream in the Next Body*, and *A Hundred Silences*, Cape Town, South Africa: Kwela Books. www.gabeba.com. This South African poet's books are winners of the Daimler-Chrysler Award for South African Poetry, which reminds the editor that he too is the winner of the GE Younger Poets Award, and leads us all to wonder something-something. Rolex also puts out a lot of dough for poets. Good. Gabeba is a sensual poet who uses blackbirds, salt, and sea waves.

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Tetra Balestri, *Cheap Imitations*, New York: Green Zone, 66 George Street, Brooklyn, NY 11206. These are cheap imitations of many poets, including Jim Brodey, Anselm Hollo, and Anne Porter.

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Gordon Ball, *Scenes from East Hill Farm*, *Seasons with Allen Ginsberg*, Coventry, England: Nr. 13 in *The Beat Scene*, www.beatscene.com. Gordon Ball, a good friend of Allen and eminent photographer of Allen's circle, spent time in the poet's putative paradise at East Hill Farm, and writes about it with warmth and humor. "by midsummer we were surrounded by a burgeoning animal population â€" African geese, Muscovy ducks, Polish hens and other chickens, a jersey cow, a fast horse, milk goats, two dogs, morning doves, cats." He was also there when Allen received the tragic call telling him that Jack Kerouac had died. *Dark Music*, Cityful Press, Longmont, 2006. These prose-poem like flashbacks and meditations are Gordon Ball's language photographs. They are quick, gripping, true, earnest.

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Eric Basso, *Decompositions*, *Essays on Art & Literature*, 1973-1989, and *Revagations: A Book of Dreams*, Volume I, 1966-1974, Raleigh: Asylum Arts, PO Box 90473, Raleigh, NC 27675. The prolific author we have happily published in

past Exquisite Corpses, is what the French call an homme-de-lettres, a man of letters, a speciae of rara avis these days when writers specialise strenuously (and tediously). Among Eric Basso's meditations in "Decompositions," a title reminiscent of E.M. Cioran's "Un precis de decomposition," are considerations of Alfred Jarry, Flaubert, and Kafka. "Revagations" is a book of surreal-real dreams collected over time like water in barrels in the Sonora desert.

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Ruth Behar, *An Island Called Home, Returning to Jewish Cuba*, photographs by Humberto Mayol. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. This is a lovely memoir of a search for lost roots in a country that seems at first to have erased that part of its history. Not so. Ruth Behar finds people and places that have stubbornly refused to fade away.

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Bill Berkson, *Fugue State*, poems, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Zoland Books. *Our Friends Will Pass Among You Silently*, poems, Woodacre, California: Owl Press, www.theowlpress.com. *Sudden Address*, Selected Lectures 1981-2006, SPD, Cuneiform Press, www.cuneiformpress.com. *What's Your Idea of a Good Time?* (with Bernadette Meyer), SPD, Tuumba Press, www.spdbooks.org. This cornucopia of Bill Berkson books came to us thanks to an appearance by the poet himself in New Orleans, thanks to Dave Brinks. Berkson gave a spectacular reading at the Gold Mine Saloon, that demonstrated a number of things: 1. the Gold Mine has created a sophisticated audience that can hear with the best of them at St. Marks' Poetry Project or at Intersection, 2. so well can this audience hear, the usually reticent poet bounced forth for an encore, like other astonished greats this year, Ron Padgett, for example, 3. there is a new way to read Berkson after hearing him. I have been a long-time reader and appreciator of the intelligence, music, care, and humor of Bill Berkson's poetry, but this reading gave me new access to his verse. There was always something of a mythical aura about Berkson, the collaborator of Frank O'Hara and one of the chiefs of the New York School whose friends included painters as well as poets. The cover of *Fugue State* is by Yvonne Jacquette, that of *Sudden Address* by Philip Guston. *Sudden Address*, a selection of essays on poetry and painting is a manual for hearing and seeing the works of Philip Guston, Alex Katz, Yvonne Jacquette, Frank O'Hara, John Ashbery, and Kenneth Koch, among many others. Berkson's constellation of friendships led to profound and useful reflections on their work and constitute, in this book and elsewhere in his work, a solid bridge between the two arts and an enlightening guide to the New York School and, in effect, to the modern proposals of these arts in the last half of the 20th century. The delightful *What's Your Idea of a Good Time?* is a spacious and joyful collaboration with Bernadette Meyer on the title question. In his dedication to me, Bill asks, "Dear Andr  , What's the worst thing you've ever done? (see p 51) Love, Bill." On p. 51, we find a number of the worst things Bill Berkson has ever done, including: "I was incredibly mean to Frank O'Hara one time: I shouted at him for liking the sound of his own voice too much." Now, anyone who's ever been told that by a dear one, has permission to smile, and that smile will get wider as the implications begin to dawn: Frank O'Hara, the poet who was all about voice is being told by his friend to pipe down. How alive is that? And how much more alive does that make Frank O'Hara, dead now four plus decades? It's not the worst thing Bill has ever done (this bit is No.2 of the worst things), but it's one with cosmic reverb. Berkson's own poetry is subtle and demonstratively abstract in the manner of, let's say, DeKooning: it has an imagistic hardness and lushness that sweeps aside whatever you might have been thinking before you got to: "as if pins were/ to be pushed dimly/ inches downward from/ a manila star." And speaking of pins, the name is Andrei, Bill, not Andr  , it's Romanian not French. That's rude, but not the worst thing I've ever done. Berkson is one of our greatest contemporaries, and shouting at him over a lost letter and a misplaced accent makes me feel great. The new way of reading Berkson's poetry that hearing him granted me, was to regain an intimacy with the work. When distance intervenes, years or miles, one tends to lose one's ear. Hearing him was a joy, and the grace of reconnecting to the page a real jolt & gift. In the mail now, *The Sweet Singer of Modernism & Other Art Writings 1985-2003*, qua books, 2003, www.quabooks.com. Berkson wrote art criticism most of his adult life, and he is among that select circle of poet-critics, along with Frank O'Hara, Edwin Denby, John Ashbery, and Carter Ratcliff, who have made contemporary American art both a cause and an occasion. As a cause, it was a tough sell, as the art world developed its own critical languages and the art market kept close watch over them; as an occasion, it was a much better deal, giving poets license to make language-art of their own. In the interesting preface-defense of art-critical writing, Berkson quotes Carter Ratcliff saying, "language in the vicinity of what it's talking about," and this makes reading his essays a matter of reading pleasure. As for the art, the critic ranges widely and freely, quite joyfully at first, when the pieces are about Hans Hoffman, Franz Kline, De Kooning Wayne Thiebaud, Alex Katz, or Ed Ruscha, artists accessible to the eye and generally familiar even to the occasional museum-goer; things get a bit rougher with the conceptualists and minimalists of the Eighties and Nineties, like for instance, David Ireland, to whom Berkson brings a whole philosophical arsenal in order to give him a coherence the artist neither pursues nor recognizes. These occasional pieces are quite brilliant and they shine best when the poet is on the familiar ground of his own artistic and cultural modernist education.

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Florin Bican, *Cantice Marlanesti, Humanitas Educational, 2007*. If one read these poems in Romanian, the language they were intended to be read in, one might think them untranslatable; they rhyme, they are full of local reality and slang, and they are funny-tragic. The poet is, however, a consummate writer of English, as evidenced by his *Ballad of Arabella*, that we published in both languages. We hope he writes a book in American English, as musical and potent as these "uncouth songs."

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Debra Di Blasi, *The Jiri Chronicles and Other Fictions*, FC2, University of Alabama Press. This is a multi-faceted collection of totally fun and sexy stories and art from a fertile and wild imagination. From choruses to collages, the story of Jiri resonates like a new Good Soldier Sveik.

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Gunnar Björkling, *Du Gar de Årld*, translated from Swedish by Fredrik Hertzberg, Action Books, www.actionbooks.com. This Finland-Swedish modernist is a musical poet whose words look great in the original on the left-hand page, and work well with the English on the right. The term *finlandsvensk* is a politically charged description of the language and movement of Modernist Finns who wrote in Swedish after the first World War.

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Roberto Bolano, *Night in Chile, Amulet, Nazi Literature in the Americas, The Savage Detectives, Last Evenings on Earth*, New York: New Directions. www.ndpublishing.com. This great Chilean novelist wrote six amazing novels before dying young. He has taken us past the lovely seduction of magical-realism into a new writerly freedom that mixes the breezy elegance of the New York School of poetry with the poetry-steeped souls of Chile and Mexico City. Buy the stuff, it gets you high.

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Marlena Braester, *oublier en avant/ uitarea dinainte*, Bucharest: Editura Vinea, edituravinea@yahoo.com. This is a bilingual (French & Romanian) book of an Israeli-French-Romanian poet whose specialty is listening to silence and discerning its nuances and depths. "În inima pietrii/ cea mai densă obscuritate/ au coeur de la pierre/ la plus dense obscurité." (At the heart of stone/ the thickest darkness.) Vinea is Romania's foremost publisher of avantgarde and contemporary poetry. The editor, Nicolae Tzone, is himself a poet, and he takes extraordinary care with his books, which are always a visual treat.

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Joe Brainard,
 • *The Nancy Book* by Joe Brainard, Los Angeles, Siglio Press, 2008
 • *If...* by Joe Brainard, Los Angeles, Siglio Press, 2008
www.sigliopress.com

Joe Brainard was both a great artist and a great writer, a *rara avis*, in the best of times. His epic *I Remember*, is one of the literary accomplishments of the late 20th century, a long poem in which every line begins with the words "I remember," and then goes on to recall everything that Joe Brainard's memory was able to recall, from his earliest childhood to the moment of writing. The swift and witty practice of memory in *I Remember* is an exercise in truth and accuracy, a manual of American culture, pop and not, and a psychoanalytical tour-de-force directed not just at specific and personal neuroses, but at the incurable and painfully amusing maladies of a whole society. Joe Brainard, like his New York School friends and contemporaries, Kenward Elmslie, John Ashbery, Bill Berkson, Ron Padgett, and Ted Berrigan among them, managed to ride with verve the zeitgeist of an age rich in creative stimulation and ready-made for revolution. Joe was a Pop artist, in the sense that his art, like his writing, blew out the frames of genre and the conventions of the medium, and partook with pleasure and energy from the demotic. "The Nancy Book" chronicles the adventures of the comic-book character Nancy in Joe's own world, in collaboration with Bill Berkson, Ted Berrigan, Robert Creeley, Frank Lima, Frank O'Hara, Ron Padgett and James Schuyler. This beautifully produced edition comes also with essays by Ann Lauterbach and Ron Padgett. "If..." is a series of postcards presenting Nancy in a variety of "if" situations (see below). The reprinting of these extremely rare works by Joe Brainard is an event for at least two reasons: 1. "The Nancy Book" is a masterwork of collaboration from the age of collaboration between artists and writers, a practice of instantly communicable delight that occurred only twice in the 20th century: the dada-surrealist age, 1915-1935, and the New York School, 1957-1973, and 2. while comix have become "acceptable" for both "high" art and commercial translation (into movies), they have never attained the freshness and impertinence of being recast for the first time with such vigorous insouciance. Joe Brainard was a genius who had the good luck of living at the right time and having genius friends. Snap up these books, people, you never know when another epoch of public misery and artistic glory will sweep us away. When it does, you'll have guides.

Detail from *IF...* by Joe Brainard, 1974, (c) Estate of Joe Brainard [Click to Return to Review List](#)

C

Iulian Călinău, *O istorie documentară a SUA*, Bucharest: Editura-Agatha, www.biz. It's weird, but there are a lot of great founding texts of the U.S. that I never read until I found them in this primer for Romanian students by Professor

What I learned: natives take for granted "the making of the Americans," as Getrude Stein put it. Don't, natives! Use another language if you must, but read The Mayflower Compact, the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of the Confederacy, George Washington's Farewell, and a few major Supreme Court decisions today! Actually, this is a bilingual book, so you can read them in the original, too.

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Magda Carneci, Dan Hayon, O colectie de mirosuri/ A Collection of Smells, Bucharest: Romanian Cultural Institute. Here is an old dream of mine realized by poet Magda Carneci, with evocative photographs by Dan Hayon. In 1989 I returned to Romania after nearly three decades in the U.S., to "cover" the "revolution" for radio and TV, but secretly hoping to smell my way back into childhood, a secret proustian project that I've had to pursue under the cover of "journalism," and in almost as much secrecy (scent is a solitary and perverse affair: you cannot sniff in company, and the very act of inhaling must be conducted with absolute concentration.) Here now is the poetic project of a keen nose. Above the entry "In summer, Bucharest Smells Oriental," is this "A world almost begotten, almost born, yet still imprecise, hesitating, just not ready. Over which, surreptitious but all-pervading, the spicy, mouth-watering flavor of mititei hovers, garlicky and meaty." Voila, the meat of the matter smoking through the shimmer of a still-tentative city and society. Poets have not always kept their eyes or their minds open, but the best among them always kept an open nose. Our first sense, close to the forest floor, the sense most refractory to language, finds here a connoisseur.

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Magda Carneci, Art et Pouvoir en Roumanie, 1945-1989, Paris: L'Harmattan, www.librairieharmattan.com. A masterful dissection of the recent corpse of communism by one of our contributors, a major Romanian poet.

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Mircea Cartarescu, Orbitor, aripa dreapta, Bucharest: Editura Humanitas, www.librariilehumanitas.ro. This is the "sequel" of an immensely imaginative poetic novel that completes Cartarescu's vision of childhood and a Bucharest that is no more. Translated, awarded, and praised in Europe and Latin America, Cartarescu has only one book in English, Nostalgia, translated by Julian Semilian, and published by New Directions, www.ndpublishing.com, in 2006. There should be more, this is a world-class writer.

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Mark DeCarteret, (If This Is the) New World, Greensboro, NC: www.marchstreetpress.com. The poet says "I was reading a book about fingerprints," and one of those prints is in the Exquisite Corpse.

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Norene Cashen, The Reverse is also True, Detroit: Doorjamb Press, www.doorjambpress.org. See her poetry in this issue. Or, as blurbled by editor: "Norene Cashen's poems are sad and beautiful, they remind me of why I'm sometimes afraid of poetry."

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Nina Cassian, Avangarda nu moare si nu se predă, poeme si desene (antologie 1947-2007). Bucharest: Editura Vinea, with an essay by Serban Foarta, edituravinea@yahoo.com. This is the great nonagenarian Romanian poet's own selection of her work and drawings. The title alone, "the avantgarde doesn't die and it doesn't surrender," should tell you something about the fierce spirit of this much-loved poet who strode sexily and without false humility through almost the entire 20th century.

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Ruxandra Cesereanu, coma. Bucharest: Editura Vinea, 2008. I heard Ruxandra read poems from this collection in the basement of the Carturesti bookstore in Bucharest in early June 2008, and I was surprised. I don't say this lightly: there is something new about every one of her poetry books, some kind of intention of creating a whole object. In coma, she writes rough-edged love lyrics that are anything but nice, but end up both musically and visually compelling. For instance, from the suite of poems entitled suita porceasca (porcine suite), here in an approximate rendering: there is also the chunk of meat filled with dark force/ this is the hulking girl with horse-giraffe hips/ she only talks with the big sex of the devil-man/ talks/ mumbles/ gurgles/ glues herself/ blinks..., you get (some of) the picture. There are some carnally tender moments in this porcine suite, too, and it was all made triply surreal by her soft but forceful reading in the vaulted basement where she arrived late from Rio de Janeiro via Paris. Later, we had dinner with Ioana Avadani and Laura at a Romanian restaurant called "Carul cu Tei," and then she took a late-night train to Cluj. Poet on the move, look out!

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Ruxandra Cesereanu, *Crusader-Woman*, poems translated by Adam J. Sorkin with the poet, containing "Letter to American Poets," written directly in English. Introduction by Andrei Codrescu, Afterword by Calin-Andrei-Mihailescu. Boston: Black Widow Press. www.blackwidowpress.com. The first major collection in English by this formidable Romanian poet. To quote from my introduction: "Ruxandra Cesereanu begins her journey at the ur-ground of poetry, the beginning of the begots: 'You are there, and I here.' This is from her Letter to American Poets, written directly in English. 'You are there, and I here' is the first and last human utterance and the first and last line of poetry ever written. The Chinese poets applaud. Ruxandra's Here is Cluj, Romania, a medieval city where frozen stone knights stand and lie with Gothic stoicism in cathedrals, watching history coagulate, disintegrate, evanesce, and start again. Among them is a Woman Crusader whose story the poet has elicited from dream and chronicle in a conversation that traverses the entirety of her flesh and blood."

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Ruxandra Cesereanu, *Venetia cu vene violete*, Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia. Romania's foremost "delirionist" (a movement she invented in homage to psychedelics) writes hallucinatory love letters from her favorite city. Venice has already appeared and will continue to make appearances in her poetry and stories, and in here it's a particularly violent Venice: "Capul ti l-as taia cind ai muri/ ca dar pentru dragostea mea naluca." (I'd cut off your head when you die/ as a gift for my crazed love.) That is quite believable and I, editor of Exquisite Corpse, know wherefore I speak: I wrote "Submarinul Iertat" (The Forgiven Submarin), an epic-lyric poem in collaboration with Ruxandra, and many were the times when my head was near-rolling. Luckily, we conducted our collaboration by e-mail. After its limited edition by Editura Brumar (www.brumar.ro) in Bucharest in 2008, it will be published by Black Widow Press in the U.S. in my translation in 2009. Head-spinningly frigging incestuous.

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Ruxandra Cesereanu, *Nasterea Dorintelor Lichide*, Bucharest: Editura Cartea Romaneasca, www.cartearomaneasca.ro. This is a book about desire and the body, written for the purposes of both arousing and chastising, a kind of S&M manual by a masterful but perverse poet who uses words as if they were actual skin cells or sperms. The last section of the book classifies types of men, as a kind of feminist response to her contemporary, poet Mircea Cartarescu, who wrote a hugely successful book called, "Why We Love Women." Cesereanu's men are drawn rather broadly (haha!), but they do resemble, uncomfortably, some real local dudes who are gunning for her in the newspapers.

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Dumitru Chioaru, *clipe fosforescente*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Limes. This Transylvanian poet from Sibiu is the editor of "Euphorion," a literary monthly, and an infinitely patient man: "I never hurried destiny - woe is me! but at my back someone is collecting traces like sudden mushrooms." We also know who that is, which is why we don't turn around.

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Petru Cimpoesu, *Noua proze vechi. Fictiuni Ilicite*, Bucharest: Editura Polirom, 2008. If you were wondering where all the intelligent and funny story-tellers went after Milan Kundera gave up the job, look no farther than this brilliant collection by a master fictioneer who understands profoundly the three pillars of greatness: 1. the people's language (in this case Romanian), 2. the people (who are not the author), and 3. the complexities of fiction. The common folk who move through these stories have seen their share of history, and have come through it all with all their silliness intact, and even some distilled wisdom, be it only in the form of the most profound curse common to the region, "du-te-n pizda ma-ti," which means, loosely translated, "why doncha get back to your mother's cunt," meaning, "You're so stupid, why don't you get born again?." This piece of ontological advice that works in all lands at all times, receives here a meditation worthy of Montaigne. English-language publishers, take note.

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Andrei Codrescu, *Jealous Witness*, with maelstrom: songs of storm & exile, a CD by the New Orleans Klezmer AllStars based on the poetry cycle by the same name; Jonathan Freilich, guitars; Glenn Hartman, piano; Nobu Ozaki, bass; David Rebeck, violin, viola, mandola, accordion; Robert Wagner, clarinet, saxophone, piano; singers: Coco Robicheaux, Valentina Osinski, John Kendall Bailey, Harry Shearer, Ivan Neville, John Boutte, New Orleans Happy Man's Choir; Chayito Champion. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 2008. coffeepress.org. Reviewing yourself is awkward if not downright gross, even if Whitman did it, akin to "eating like masturbating," to paraphrase Gombrowicz, but in this case I am not reviewing myself. I am only making whooping sounds of delight at the phenomenal music that Jonathan Freilich and Glenn Hartman and all the other listed artists, made from the flimsy pretext of my poem. This CD is an opera-cabaret of very high quality that will be released separately from the book at some point, but here is an opportunity to get it together with the book, and own the first pressing before it wins a Grammy.

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Andrei Codrescu, *Femeia Neagră a unui culcus de hoti*, Bucharest: Editura Vinea, www.edituravinea@yahoo.com. A bibliophile's dream, this book has a story Borges would have enjoyed. The last poems I wrote in Romanian were inside a volume by an Italian poetess in 1965-1970. I not only wrote, but I drew over the originals, defaced, and played with languages. And then I promptly lost it in New York in 1970. In 2005, the rare-book librarian at (M)Emory University e-mailed to ask if this odd book that had been donated to Emory was mine. It was. He made me a fast copy and I mailed it to my poet friend Ruxandra Cesereanu, who showed to Nicolae Tzone at Vinea Press, who went to work and produced one of the most beautiful books I've ever seen, certainly my most beautiful book, an edition that has both the poems set in type like any poetry book and a facsimile edition of the original Italian book by Renata Pescanti Botti. There are also foldout photographs and other book-art wonders. The actual production took place in a very short time over the internet, with the urgent help of David Faulds and white nights spent making up the eight hour difference between Bucharest and Baton Rouge. The reason for the rush was that Nicolae Tzone wanted to greet me with the finished book when I went to Romania in the Fall of 2007. So much drama and so much symmetry surrounds this book, I almost need to write another book around it. I'm sure I talked at least one book's worth in various places with various people: where is my Boswell?

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Andrei Codrescu & Ruxandra Cesereanu, *Submarinul Iertat*, Bucharest: Editura Brumar, www.brumar.ro. Another bibliophilic coup! At the same time as the story of the book above was unfolding, I was losing my mind collaborating with "delirionist" Ruxandra Cesereanu, who made me delirious with poetry. This particular de-luxe edition comes signed inside a blood-maroon silk pillow, and was also presented to me during the same trip to Romania in 2007. I read at a Poetry Marathon in my birth town of Sibiu, a breathless event that left me feeling a little like a statue, except that I was wide-awake and exhausted simultaneously. No statue I. We took both books to the Frankfurt Book Fair where they were displayed among millions of other books, so I slowly regained my sense of perspective. I shrank from statue to a mildly pleasant pidgeon. Ruxandra got chased by a mad duck on the bank of the Mein. I believe that the mad duck was the reincarnation of a furious 19th century German Romantic poet who died unpublished. The *Forgiven Submarine*, in Andrei Codrescu's translation has just been published by Black Widow Press (2009, www.blackwidowpress.com) we humbly announce, while I (Codrescu) am here to tell you that translating Ruxandra's intricate imagery was almost possible, while translating myself from Romanian into English was an odd kind of mind-knotting fandango that took the breath out of me. Now I'm breathing. An essay remains to be written on our American tour of the *Forgiven Submarine* in New York (Romanian Cultural Center, St. Marks' Church), New Orleans (The Gold Mine Saloon), and Baton Rouge (LSU). Our Romanian tour reached for the limits of my glottal and sublingual resources, the American for my cool. I recommend bilingvism now as Theory, Hardship, Praxis, and Therapy. Through all of it Ruxandra was most gracious and charmed the bejeezus out of everyone.

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William Corbett, *Opening Day*, Brooklyn: Hanging Loose Press, hangingloosepress.com. It is fascinating to watch the good New York school-connected poets age, mainly because they tell you exactly what it's like, and because they do, you can also find out how their friends are doing, what poets from their youth they are still reading, and how they feel about the body politic (along with the body decrepit). In a true sense, the poets of the closely observed true and weird thing, make you feel less lonely, a service they will provide for readers long after they and I will be dead. William Corbett is a learned man, a famed art appreciator, and was friends with Joe Brainard, James Schuyler, Ted Berrigan, Edwin Denby, Rudy Burkhardt, and Robert Creeley among the illustrious dead, and what that means is that he read them. His poetry reports the comings and goings of those people in memory and books, as well as his own. "Well, you/ didn't ask but here's the answer./ Ruby's in Providence, Thayer Street/ is where I last drank a Dr. Brown's/ Cel-Ray tonic. Delicious, color/ and fizz of that stormy lake night."

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Nicholas Courage, *triangulating happiness, forty-two ontological affirmations, exploding iterations, etc.* Brooklyn: a mutual respect book, 2007, www.thomocray.com. Bitter-sweet proses of truth that concentrate life in boho Brooklyn in the early 21st century. I particularly enjoyed the fearless use of "facts" in their soup of feelings, a fresh sort of daring in the overstrained broth of contemp am po. Nicholas Courage, aka Nicholas Richardson, is also the author, under the latter name, of *mr. feathers flies again* a 2006 mutual respect book, containing more true & life-brimming works in which "someone is misquoting Derrida/ in the hallway" What a place, Brooklyn! We misquote Derrida everywhere.

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Dan Dănilă, *Calendar Poetic*, Editura Brumar, Bucharest. www.brumar.ro. A remarkable Romanian poet who considers "singurataea mersului pe sirma" (the loneliness of tightrope walking). The Corpse will note many books in other languages, especially Romanian, in the hope that our readers who do not speak that (or other) languages, will attempt to become multi-lingual. A language, according to Dr. Sachs, can be learned in two weeks. So what are you waiting for? (Reminder: we need a program to place diacriticals in the right places, or else written Romanian will devolve into bad English!)

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Albert Flynn DeSilver, *Letters to Early Street*, Albuquerque: La Alameda Press. This is one of our poets and we stand behind him (or to his side) in any fight, physical or literary, he might be involved in. Except maybe in the situation he describes thus: "A stuffed mouse has just capsized in my bed."

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Jenny Erpenbeck, translated by Susan Bernofsky, New York: New Directions. This is a contemporary German novel, a field we haven't kept up with since Gunther Grass. We trust New Directions, however, so go Erpenbeck!

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Dominique Fabrice, *The Waitress Was New*, translated from French by Jordan Stump, Brooklyn, NY: archipelago books, www.archipelagobooks.org. We love this press. They make beautiful books. This is a charming little novel about the marginalised working people of Paris, a light intersection of Queneau and Zola.

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Félix Fénéon, *Novels in Three Lines*, translated from French and with an introduction by Luc Sante. OK, we notice that the author kept his aigues, but the great Sante (we are big fans!) dropped his. What up? Otherwise, we love the three-line novels of this clerk who discovered Seurat and attended Mallarmé's salon. *New York Review of Books*. We also love these re-issues by the NYRB. More!

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Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *Coney Island of the Mind*, Fiftieth Anniversary Edition with CD of the poet reading. New York: New Directions, www.newdirections.com. Has it really been fifty years? This major American poem sold millions of copies and was, along with Allen Ginsberg's "Howl," the companion of a whole restless generation. Dog-eared copies passed from rebel high-schoolers into hitch-hikers' backpacks into decades of parka pockets and second-hand jackets, and then into the 21st century and the suited academies. For all that handling, the chaplinesque burlesque and the magritine and duffy-goofesque freshness of the verses keeps us doing summersaults. This edition's destination? ebay, of course (after downloading the cd)

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Carmen Firan, *Puterea Cuvintelor (The Power of Words)*, Craiova: Editura Scrisul Romanesc. www.scrisulromanesc.ro. This essay by the prodigious poet, fictioneer, anthologist, and ambassador for Romanian poetry, is a good insight into the understanding (nearly lost in the over-mediated West) of the power of words.

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Peter Freund, *A Passion for Discovery*, New Jersey: World Scientific, enquiries@stallionpress.com. A wonderful series of anecdotes about great physicists, by Corpse contributor, string-theorist and distinguished theoretical physicist Peter Freund.

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Marjorie Garber, " (Quotation Marks), New York: Routledge, www.routledge-ny.com. Let it be inscribed here that the Corpse adores Marjorie Garber and that this book is a delight. We also adore Marjorie Perloff, the only other serious poetry critic on our theory diet. We get all the needed critical protein from our two Marjories.

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Radu Pavel Gheo, *Numele Mierlei*, Bucharest: Polirom, 2008. Blessed be the story-tellers because they shall inherit the ears of the future! Ripped raw from a reality still teeming with unresolved tensions between an undigested adoration of western fashions by the young and the tenuously achieved equilibrium of the old, these stories manage to make this world live, with a sure ear and hand. In one of the finest stories in this collection, waiting in line at the Post Office (La Posta) reveals a universe of misunderstandings and a near-riot ensues. R.P. Gheo sketches swiftly a rich tragicomic world that could easily spill out of control. Young Romanian writers are beginning to create the literature of a unique time and place, and this is one of its best products to date.

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Alan Gerson, *Things We Cannot Know*, MBF Press, Montgomery 2007, www.mbfpress.com. Alan Gerson is a painter and, like other American painters who wrote poetry, Marsden Hartley, Alex Katz, Joe Brainard, his poems are full of pictures: "Pale sky/ white cat," "black bird on branch," "the monkey in the mirror," but despite all these posing animals, he insists also on "the big picture/ of open geometrics." I'm not sure what that means, but I certainly can't see it; it must be a

"baroque volute," to quote another line.
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John Godfrey, *City Of Corners*, (Limited Hardcover Subscription), Wave Books, 2008. www.wavepoetry.com. The limited hardcover books issued by Wave with the help of subscriptions, are plain and simple, looking retro inside stiff boards. Personally, I have no idea why any publisher still puts out hardcover books: they are ungainly, hard to handle, and they weigh a ton; there is doubtlessly some rarefied market for them, but when is the last time you actually saw someone read a hardback in a plane? Is there life for the hardback after the french flap or Kindle? I doubt it. Anyway, his has nothing to do with John Godfrey's dense, urban lyric poetry, which is a pleasure to read, especially since he publishes little and his work is always worth waiting for. Here is the first stanza of the title poem: "My first trial is hung/ The soul battery charge/ and the predictive/ folded arms/ I hear nothing/ That's what they say." In the shimmery mystery of his poems (like a New York City sidewalk at night after a rain) we get hints of his work (Godfrey is, since 1994, a Registered Nurse) and occasional nods in the direction of the core New York School poets where he began his work, in the late 1960s.

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Loren Goodman, *Suppository Writing*, Southampton, MA: The Chuckwagon, www.valleyarts.blogspot.com This is an excellent manual for poetry teachers.

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Johannes GÅŕansson, *A New Quarantine Will Take my Place*, Apostrophe Books, www.apostrophebooks.org . This is a surrealist with meat on his bones, a Swedish naturalist who has taken language and culture as subjects of map-making. "That theater is now a dog facility./ I have a cuckoo in my truerspiel.../ Send in the horselessness we sang about." The musical physicality of this work reminds of the poetry of the late great Jim Gustafson, a very American Detroit Swede, who wrote fearlessly in similarly muscled sentences. If it's a gene, Am Po can use it. Aase Berg, *Selected Poems*, translated from Swedish by Johannes GÅŕansson, Action Books, www.actionbooks.org . A terrific young Swedish poet brought into the vivid English of Goranson. "Estonia: the Fat's Stone's Transparent Catatonia" is the sound of music the translator smuggles in.

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Rodica Grigore, *Lecturi in Labirint*, Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cartii de Stiinta, www.casacartii.ro. Labyrinths, mirrors, and masks are this young critic's passion, and she pursues them in essays about the works of Eliseo Diego, Yasunari Kawabata, Alvaro Mutis, Oran Pamuk, Italo Calvino, Michael Ondaatje, Juan Rulfo, and many others. From this author comes also *Evolutia formelor romanesti: Intre modernism si postmodernism*. Note de curs, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Cartii de Stiinta, 2008. This manual on the evolution of the modern and postmodern novel would make a splendid teaching aid in English. Rodica Grigore knows her authors well, many of whom she has translated (including this reviewer) and her acuity and critical judgment are right on target. It might be unseemly to praise her much, given that she writes so beautifully about my own work, but I would be recommending her even without self-interest. Also: *Literatura Universala si comparata, puncte de reper in evolutia romanului universal*, note de curs. Cluj-Napoca, 2008: Editura Casa Cartii de Stiinta. One of our favorite Romanian critics' lectures on the postmodern novel and its myriad strategies.

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Pete Hautman, *Sweet Blood*, a young adult novel, New York: Simon Pulse. www.SimonSays.com . You wouldn't think the Corpse would let a teen vampire book this good go unnoticed, did you? Especially since we find this internet exchange herein, after being informed by one of the characters that "Transylvania started off as an offshoot of a local Goth Web site," and then get the following, from the site: "Sblood: anybody know where Draco's from? 2Tooth: N. Sblood: eve meet him F2F? 2Tooth: I think he's from New Orleans. He knows Anne Rice. Roxxie: Not New Orleans. I know all the Big Easy vamps. Vlad714: What r you guys talking? Sblood: Draco. Where he's from. 2Tooth: Why not ask him? Sblood: He's not here, unless he's lurking." Guess what?

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Jack Hirschman, *All That's Left*, San Francisco Poet Laureate, Series No.4, San Francisco: City Lights, www.citylights.com. We suspect that City Lights Poet Laureate Series is a new idea (were there really four California laureates?), but what happens when Laureate No.6 turns out to be a horrible poet, the girlfriend of a state legislator? Anyway, no such problem yet. Au contraire. Jack Hirschman, laureate, sounds just a bit funny to anyone familiar with this radical communist populist poet's later work, and his impeccable street cred. The later Hirschman, as opposed to the early cabbalist, professorial Hirschman, was a North Beach Artaud out to excoriate the petty-bourgeois poet substratum. He'd walk into Vesuvio's and we'd instantly start a semi-good-natured argument about Stalin. "Murderer," I'd understate. "Great man," quoth Hirschman. All of that is, of course, only marginally relevant to the impressive poesy corpus of this energetic and inspired man. In this collection, muscular and raw political outrage is interspersed with homage to poet-friends now gone, Bob Kaufman and Jack Kerouac.

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Eugen Jebeleanu, *Selected Late Poems*, translated from Romanian by Matthew Zapruder and Radu Ioanid. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, www.coffeehousepress.org. Jebeleanu (1911-1991) was an epic poet, much beloved by the communists, like Yannis Ritsos and Nazim Hikmet, but he became a critic of Romania's dictator in his last decade and wrote biting political verse.

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Mary Kite, *The Bamboo Librarian*, Santa Cruz: Blue X Press, www.bluepress.com: "(now is the time for drink)." We agree.

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Rauan Klassnik, *Holy Land*. Boston: Black Ocean. www.blackocean.com This poet is a Mexican resident who reports "a tiny cactus flowering on the window sill."

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Caroline Knox, *Quaker Guns*, Seattle: Wave Books. www.wavepoetry.com. We love Wave Books and are big fans of Caroline Knox' poetry. We are awarding this book "The Exquisite Corpse Funniest Title of the Year Award." About another of her books I said, "Time doesn't pass in New England, the library just gets bigger. Reading Caroline Knox one is grateful for her idiosyncratic guidance through the selva of text exfoliated (sometimes) and juxtaposed collagistically at other times. The desire that moves the concentrate sol of these word engines is one more powerful in our world now than it was when the world was smaller, namely "I have to have a book to really read." I really read this one, and felt no time passing."

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Nicholas Kostarides & Mary Richardson, *New Orleans Bicycles*, New York: Mark Batty Publisher, www.markbattypublisher.com. This is a charming collection of photographs of the bicycles of New Orleans, those lovely art works of the Vieux Carre on which fly the new bohos, trailing glitter and wonder. I immediately know where I am on this big, cold orb when I cross Esplanade and see my first bicycle boho. Yo, we here, this is the place!

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Gyula Krudy, *Sunflower*, translated from Hungarian by John Batki, introduction by John Lukacs, New York: The New York Review of Books, www.nyrb.com. This is a sparky English translation of a master of baroque prose and irony who plied his trade in Budapest in the early 20th century, and was one of a constellation of brilliant and ill-fated writers such as Robert Walser, Bruno Schultz, Joseph Roth, and Kafka.

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Joanne Kyger, *About Now: Collected Poems*, Orono, Maine: National Poetry Foundation, www.ume.maine.edu. One of the great complete works that should be in every library. With the addition of this lasting collection of the great California-Zen-Radical-Ecologist-Goddess-of-Light Kyger, we now have in print many collected works of the last half of the 20th century's greatest poets. To mention only a few of the books published recently: Ted Berrigan, *Collected Poems*, University of California Press, edited by Alice Notley with Anselm and Edmund Berrigan, *Ed Dorn's Way More West: New and Selected Poems*, Penguin Books, Alice Notley's *Grave of Light: New and Selected Poems, 1970-2005*, Wesleyan, Anselm Hollo's *Attractions of Existence: New and Selected Poems 1965-2000*, Coffee House Press, Anne Waldman's *In the Room of Never Grieve : New and Selected Poems 1985-2003*, Book & CD edition, Coffee House Press, Ron Padgett's *New and Selected Poems*, Godine, and Kenneth Koch's *Selected Poems*, edited by Ron Padgett, Penguin.

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Thomas Laird, *Into Tibet: the CIA's First Atomic Spy and His Secret Expedition to Lhasa*, New York: Grove Press. This is an amazing true story by the man who brought you the first intimate look at the Dalai Lama in *The Story of Tibet: Conversations with the Dalai Lama*, New York: Grove Press. We spent a fascinating hour in the man's company, in New Orleans, the only place in the U.S. you could safely settle in after decades of living in Nepal. Six years after publication of *Into Tibet...* CIA has finally admitted that I got the story correct....Â See 6th para of CIA Director remarks:Â "In fact, the very first CIA officer to die in the line of duty had been gathering data on the Soviet nuclear program. Douglas Mackiernan served in the desolate reaches of western China, one of those brave operatives who worked our top intelligence target along the periphery of the Soviet Union. "Mack," as he was called, was an MIT physics major conversant in Russian and Chinese, a highly resourceful and perceptive officer who had to work with some pretty basic equipment given the remoteness of his post. His primary tasks were to investigate Moscow's access to local uranium deposits and report any sign of nuclear testing in Soviet Central Asia. Mackiernan's mission was cut short by the rapid western advance of the Chinese Communists after their revolution in 1949. He escaped by setting out on an epic seven-month trek across deserts and mountains. He managed to make all the way to the frontier of Tibet, where he should

have found sanctuary. Tragically, he was shot by Tibetan guards who had not yet received word that an American was coming and that he should be granted safe passage. Douglas Mackiernan's story speaks to the dedication and courage our officers have brought to our mission for six decades. CIA has targeted the WMD threat in all its forms, from the massive arsenals of rival nations to the deadly aspirations of terrorists. To say that we're focused on 21st century challenges doesn't mean for a second that we've forgotten those of the 20th-or that we aren't looking for the emerging threats of tomorrow. We closely analyze, as we should and as we must, the WMD and missile programs of countries throughout the world. But as attentive as we are in tracking existing weapons programs, the greater challenge lies in detecting those developing in secrecy. CIA is always watching for signs that states and subnational groups might be taking steps to acquire nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons." Note that CIA still spins the story to say that Mack was just 'escaping' to Tibet-- They still do not want to admit that CIA sent him to Tibet, even after China knew he was a blown CIA agent.... Nor do they admit that he set up receivers for the Long Range Detection of Atomic Explosions project... but for the first time they admit he was a CIA officer, who was doing atomic intelligence in Singkiang, before he traveled to Tibet... And that's a first! <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/speeches-testimony/directors-remarks-at-lawac.html>.

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Philip Lamantia, *Tau*, and John Hoffman, *Journey to the End*, San Francisco: City Lights, The Pocket Poets Series, No. 59, www.citylights.com. These are the early poems of Philip Lamantia that he was supposed to read at the famous Six Gallery reading in 1955, when Allen Ginsberg read "Howl." Philip had misgivings about these poems, because he didn't think that they were worthy of his newly-found or re-found Catholic faith. From 2008 it's hard to see the problem: "On a smiling crevice of street,/He cuts, for death, the diamond of her eye:/ Star plumed hands put it/Burning on his brow." Sounds pretty Fra Angelico to us. John Hoffman (1928-1952) was Philip's friend who died young and wrote luminous Zen-inspired works. "Therefore unattained is/ The sudden attainment."

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Dorothea Lasky, *Wave*, Seattle: Wave Books, www.wavepoetry.com. A poet who with gentle irony punctures the quotidian, but not without certain demands: "Kiss me on the lips and hold my breasts." OK.

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Andrew J. Lawson, *Cave Art*, England, 1991, Shire Publications. We received this from William Honrath in view of our known love for caves. Thank you, Bill.

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Alex Lemon, *Hallelujah Blackout*, Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, www.milkweed.org. What will happen the day when we like all poets? Will that be the day when we won't be able to open our White Goddess (i.e. the refrigerator, as per T. Berrigan) because it will be so covered by poems taped there, the door will not be evident. We do like Alex Lemon, published on acid-free recycled paper in a handsome volume by this respectable publisher, and we are bewildered by how much fine poesy zings across the bows of our overextended nerves. And I'm not talking about the nerves of the Corpse, but all the nerves of all the poetry readers in English. Let's not make Alex Lemon a scapegoat, though: he's splendid: "I wish I might be different but I am/ That I am and all I have are my legs."

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Joseph Lease, *Broken World*, Coffee House Press. A poet who cannot contain either glee nor humor as genuine thinking occurs.

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Francis Levy, *Erotomania*, Two Dollar Radio, 2008. www.TwoDollarRadio.com. Like Henry Miller, whom Daphne Merkin cites in an approving blurb, Francis Levy is on a spiritual quest: substitute the word "God" for "fuck," and there you have it, the silence filled with joy. "Erotomania" is a great book, written with flawless verve by a tremendous fictioneer and thinker, and it deserves glory. It is published by a small press that may yet become great if it manages to set "Erotomania" as the high-bar of its offerings. In any case, have it on my word, a reader, run and buy this book, it's a classic.

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GHERASIM LUCA, *The Passive Vampire*, with an introduction on the objectively offered object. Twisted Spoon Press, 2008, translated from the French by Krzysztof Fijalkowski. www.twistedspoon.com. There is a vogue/vague for this great Romanian-French surrealist poet just now, and we advise our readers to get on it. Luca lived in poverty in Paris since the 1950s and committed suicide by jumping into the Seine at the same spot as Paul Celan, but not before revolutionizing poetry in Romanian, giving surrealism and Andre Breton new hope for relevance, and becoming an important element in

the philosophical machine constructed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in "Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia." I met Luca in New York in the mid 1980s when he was already in his seventies, and we stayed up all night after his reading, ending up in an animated discussion between four and six a.m. at the Plaza entrance of Central Park. At one point, at 5:20 AM he leapt up on a sculpture and I saw him as a bull-demon as his shaved head with the pointed devil-ears appeared in the muscular dawn above a bronze grotesque. This year (2009) Black Widow Press will publish another book of poetry by Luca, translated by Julian and Laura Semilian, with an introduction by yours truly. "The Passive Vampire" is a poetic memoir that is also a surrealist living guide and a very sophisticated essay on the connections between objects and human feelings.

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M

Ryk McIntyre, *Love Is a Flashlight, Sacred Fools Poetry*, melissaguillet@yahoo.com. This guy is great: he wrote "Yo, Hamlet," and I've seen him perform it. It's a hoot.

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Nathaniel Mackey, *Bass Cathedral*, with a preface by Wilson Harris, New York: New Directions. This epistolary novel is more poetry than story, but it dazzles with supple and sudden language. We forgive its winning the National Book Award: sometimes those guys get it right.

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Joyce Mansour, *Essential Poems and Writings*, translated with an introduction by Serge Gavronsky. Boston: Black Widow Press, 2008. Joyce Mansour (1928-1986) was born in England, raised in Cairo, moved to France and became one of the few women to join the Surrealist pantheon with the full imprimatur of Andre Breton. We could care less about Breton's imprimatur, but we do admire Mansour's sinuous perversity and frankly sexual threats: "There is/ A solitary solid rock under my lacy girdle/ A chick with oblique eyes/ Nibbling on the earth of my eyelids inflamed/. That "chick" is literally "poulet" in French, in case you're wondering. Black Widow Press continues its marvelous project of Surrealist and avantgarde resurrection with this hefty collection by the woman once called "the Surrealist Mata Hari."

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Morton Marcus, *Striking Through the Masks*. Santa Cruz: Capitola Books. The gripping memoir of a marvelous California poet. Included in the series of vignettes of his friends, enemies, and frenemies is the founder of the Corpse, a sympathetic portrait with photo.

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Douglas A. Martin, *In a Time of Assignments*, Soft Skull Press, www.softskull.com. It's been a while since a good old gay book of verse showed up in our offices, but here it is, at last. "The absent roommate's towel not quite red, or pink." That's pretty gay.

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Vladimir Mayakovsky, *Night Wraps the Sky*, writings by and about Vladimir Mayakovsky, edited by Michael Almereyda. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux. Finally, a definitive spelling in English of the Russian giant poet's name: it's MAYAKOVSKY. Forget that Majakovsky, Majakovski, and Maiakofsky. Volodya's last name was the reason why this poet was more talked than written about, becoming one of the great "I can say it but I can't spell it" names of 20th century poetry, like many others, Milosz, Akhmatova, and Szymborskaya. Film-maker and litterateur Michael Almereyda has given us back the written Mayakovsky in this muscular collection of well-translated verse and well-chosen writings about the poet of the Russian revolution who influenced Frank O'Hara and Allen Ginsberg among others. Majakovsky committed suicide when the utopia he believed in turned into Lenin's gruesome tyranny. His timing was good. Had he lived on, he'd have been murdered by Stalin. There was just too much life, passion, and rock star charisma to the (literally) giant man who liked to shoot his guns, have his vodka, love women, and declaim before the masses. The poets of glassnost in the 1960s, Yevgheni Yevtushenko and Andrei Voznesenski, modelled their poet-rock-star acts on the great V. It is easy to see why the film-maker Almereyda ("Nadja," "Hamlet") would be interested in the Russian futurist: the man was epic, but also brief, intense, and densely surrounded by a cast of dramatic characters.

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Jim McCrary, *All That*, the collected chapbooks, ManyPenny Press, Moscow, Idaho, 2008, 1111 E. Fifth St, MOscow, Idaho 83843. Jim McCrary finally gave in to a perfectly bound collection, after years of publishing his work with determination in ephemeral chapbooks that gained him, nonetheless, a respectful reading from many poets. McCrary doesn't have a good attitude, as evidenced by the following, entitled "Fuck Tolerance": "I fucking hate/ intolerant people.", or, "Fuck You": "This should need no/ explanation." It doesn't, but he wrote it down and we read it. That's something.

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Sharon Mesmer, *Annoying Diabetic Bitch*, Cumberland, RI: Combo Books, combobooks@comboarts.org. This title is right up there with "Quaker Guns," so we'll produce another Title Award. We are mighty partisans of Ms. Mesmer, the great-granddaughter of Dr. Mesmer, the Magnet Man. Sharon Mesmer, *The Virgin Formica*, New York: Hanging Loose Press. Allen Ginsberg called Mesmer "vivaciously modern," which we misread as "viciously modern." She is, totally. For instance: "Okay, I was loose/foundering even,/a drifting archipelago of estrogen and cigarettes/in the glow of the southern erotic gardens." If we had only known her then!

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Jane Miller, *Midnights*, drawings by Beverly Pepper, introduction by C.D. Wright, Lebanon, NH: Saturnalia Books, www.saturnaliabooks.com. We like the black triangle on the cover of this book very much because we think we saw it at midnight last night. The texts here were all written at midnight, and the last line is: "Thank goodness no one can see me looting the dark pouch for the dead mice." Indeed.

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Anca Mizumschi, *poze cu zimti*, Timisoara: Editura Brumar, 2008. I think the poet handed me this book herself at Bookfest in Bucharest in June 2008, but I don't recall, and now that I've read the poems I wish I had. This is a fresh book of raging youth graffiti about "me" and "you," that perenial pronoun couple, but there is something swift and surprising in-between. In translation: I'd like to write some funny haikus/ some tiny-tiny bodies/ printed directly on stamps/ by God.

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Ioan T. Morar, *Cartea de la Capãitul Lumii*, Noua Caledonie: Ia un pas de Paradis, Bucharest: Editura Polirom, www.polirom.ro. This is a beautiful novel about an odd utopia by a distinguished journalist, who is also one of Romania's most prolific writers. The Devil puts in an appearance.

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Eileen Myles, *Sorry, Tree*, Seattle: Wave Books, www.wavebooks.com. We voted Eileen Myles for President in 1992 and would still vote for her. Here is a poem that concerns all of us, it's called "Jacaranda": What's/the feminine/of feet/I didn't/know I/could/have/a lavender/tree." If the Corpse has Bill Lavender, you can have a lavender tree, Eileen!

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Pat Nolan, *Random Rocks*: haikai no renga, bamboo leaf studio, box 798, monte rio, ca 95462. This exquisite hand-made book is essential Pat Nolan; his California Zen sensibility and acutely developed (over decades of practice) attention to each word, is complemented by the handmade paper, the handsewn cover, unique for each copy. This book, like a few others in the growing Nolan oeuvre, is an art object, well worth owning for both contents and form. "Unaware she bares her forearm/ bruises - her new fierce love//pinpoints of fine rain/ pock the pea gravel path//rattle of bamboo rake." Also: *Carbon Data*, poems by Pat Nolan, Last Cookie Press, 2008, box 798, monte rio, ca 95462. In its entirety, "After Descartes": "Thinking is highly overrated/ the blank page in front of me proves that!/ I'll never doubt myself again.// why then I do// dick around// an apt expression//when applied//to most men// (press gently)// it's not that I mind/being stupid/ it's the reminders I mind." Also by Pat Nolan, poetry for sale, another hand-made beautiful book of Haikai No Renga collaborations with Keith Kumasen Abbott. The title refers to Pat's new business, making books on handmade paper, bound in a traditional Japanese way, and the new middle name of his collaborator, the well-known fiction writer Keith Abbott, must be some newly conferred Zen title, Keith's long-time practice.

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N. Nosirah, *God is an Atheist: A Novella for Those Who Have Run Out of Time*. Boulder: Sentient Publication, www.sentientpublications.com. In this book, God explains why he's an atheist.

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 O Andrei Oisteanu, *Inventing the Jew, Antisemitic Stereotypes in Romanian and Other Central-East European Cultures* by Andrei Oisteanu
 Foreword by Moshe Idel, Translated by Mirela Adascalitei
 University of Nebraska Press, 2009,
<http://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu/product/Inventing-the-Jew,674083.aspx> Â Â

Exquisite Corpse is proud to see this major work by one of our most cherished contributors, translated into English. We have published Andrei Oisteanu's groundbreaking essays on hallucinogens and the Romanian avantgarde. Every book by Oisteanu is an event, but the English translation of this book, containing decades of research, is worthy of serious and attentive focus by every one of our readers. "Inventing the Jew" is a phenomenon. Andrei Oisteanu is a researcher at the Institute for the History of Religions in Bucharest, and associate professor at the Center for Jewish Studies at the

University of Bucharest. He is the author of several books, including *The Image of the Jew in Romanian Culture, Order and Chaos: Myth and Magic in Romanian Traditional Culture*, and *Religion, Politics, and Myth: Texts about Mircea Eliade and Ioan Petru Culianu*.

Inventing the Jew follows the evolution of stereotypes of Jews from the level of traditional Romanian and other Central-East European cultures (their legends, fairy tales, ballads, carols, anecdotes, superstitions, and iconographic representations) to that of "high" cultures (including literature, essays, journalism, and sociopolitical writings), showing how motifs specific to "folkloric antisemitism" migrated to "intellectual antisemitism." This comparative perspective also highlights how the images of Jews have differed from that of other "strangers" such as Hungarians, Germans, Roma, Turks, Armenians, and Greeks. The gap between the conception of the "imaginary Jew" and the "real Jew" is a cultural distance that differs over time and place, here seen through the lens of cultural anthropology.

Stereotypes of the "generic Jew" were not exclusively negative, and are described in five chapters depicting physical, occupational, moral and intellectual, mythical and magical, and religious portraits of "the Jew."

Some Praise:

“This scrupulously researched study is a profound revelation of ‘the other’ in western culture. The ‘imaginary Jew,’ in its specifically Romanian and central-east-European incarnation, reverberates through all of Europe’s hellish myth-making, beginning in the first Christian century. The layering of stories and images has the effect of a masterful horror-film. Andrei Oisteanu’s book is an unflinching look at Europe’s darkest secret. It is therefore an indispensable text.”—Andrei Codrescu, MacCurdy Distinguished Professor at Louisiana State University

"This book is erudite, richly documented and intelligently written. Though both a comprehensive and explicit analysis of so many themes concerning the images of the Jews, it is at the same time an implicit critique of an important component of Romanian culture. However, Andrei Oisteanu's book is above all a very courageous one."—Moshe Idel, Max Cooper Professor of Jewish Thought at Hebrew University in Jerusalem

"A profound and illuminating anthropological study, with many cultural, historical, social-political, and religious layers about an old-new topic. The image of the stranger says a lot about the stranger's own history and psychology but perhaps even more so about his neighbor-observer. Between the fictionalized Jew and the real one rests an entire history of thousands of years. The author of this fascinating book offers a thorough, subtle, and lucid description and analysis of a certain location, but its meaning goes well beyond it."—Norman Manea, Professor of European Literature and writer-in-residence at Bard College.

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John Olson, *Backscatter: New and Selected Poems*, Boston: Black Widow Press, www.blackwidowpress.com. The Black Widow Press project began with the re-issue of unavailable Surrealist work by Andr  Breton, Tristan Tzara, Paul Eluard, Gherasim Luca, and others, and has grown to include some of the most monstrous poets working that vein today, including Clayton Eshleman, Ruxandra Cesereanu, and John Olson. We enter Olson's world with some trepidation, and for good reason: he's fabulous and sticky, "music teeming with intimation," as he puts it.

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Ron Padgett, *How To Be Perfect*, new poems, Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, www.coffeehousepress.org. You can't be a more perfect poet than Ron Padgett. Here is his answer to an interview question: Q: How did you decide on the title *How to Be Perfect*? A: As you know, there's a poem of the same name in the book. I've always liked titles that begin with "How to." They promise so much. Years ago I wrote two small books that subvert that promissory tone: *How to Be a Woodpecker* and *How to Be Modern Art*. The title poem of this book came from someone who was wistfully drunk and who said to me, "Tell me how to be perfect." The ludicrousness of such a project intrigued me, just as the ludicrousness of this title pleased me. And it has a certain ring to it.

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Eddie Kerouac-Parker, *My Life with Jack Kerouac*, edited by Timothy Moran and Bill Morgan, San Francisco: City Lights Books, www.citylights.com. Edie Parker was eighteen years-old when she met Jack Kerouac at Columbia in 1940. This is a wonderful memoir of a girl in love. When she wrote it, Edie Frankie Parker was no longer a girl, and her love, Jack Kerouac, was long gone. But Edie, or Frankie as her intimates called her, remembered everything about her brief marriage to Jack, as if a bubble of resilient sunshine had encapsulated those few years during World War 2, and kept intact every detail. She remembers what they ate, what they wore, what movies they saw. Her Jack Kerouac was young, handsome, a lover of fun, and a would-be writer. He stayed so in her memory and though she alludes occasionally to the alcoholic monster that emerged in later years, that creature doesn't live here. In these pages we meet the young genius of just before "On the Road," adored by all and loved by her most of all. The flavor of the war years with all their privations and mad hopes wafts from these pages freshly, like an Atlantic breeze, and makes one wonder, finally, what might have happened if Jack had settled down with Frankie, instead of following the turbulent destiny that changed

America.

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Simon Pettet, *Hearth*, New Jersey: Talisman Publishers, 2008, PO Box 3157, Jersey City, New Jersey 07303. Intense, lyrical, funny, dark, the poet Simon Pettet, whose work we've admired for many years, transcends all those adjectives, it transforms them into verbs: intensify, lirify, goofilate, darken. Simon's lyrics are active, that is to say that they exalt the spirit of love and the feminine, while actively courting it. This is what troubadours did and in trouble they got for it! Simon's poetry feels both luminous and imminently in trouble. For instance: "First of May, everything/ conjugates the verb 'to love' (amo)/ Here are the roses/ I am not in the middle of speaking/ of anything else." In public performance, Simon Pettet reads his short lyrics twice, and it is easy to see from the foregoing example why this is necessity, not affectation. The Maypole twirling maiden whose attention absorbs the poet (we mean the traditional English Maypole not the stripper pole that comes to the American mind) demands that attention in full. She gets it, with the melancholy emphasis that he's not "speaking/ of anything else." In other words, the evildoers are pounding at the gates, but fuck'em, we are pledging to our maiden, we are her maypole, can't be bothered now. This purposefully directed whole-poet-attention to love, or even possible love, constitutes Simon Pettet's whole poetic enterprise. You can say that he's a Love Poet, and mean that without a shade of doubt. Homer was a War Poet. Simon is a Love Poet. Even when alone in his solitude like a Chinese poetmonk he wears his lady's colors. The lucky targets of his lyrics must suffer the inevitable ambiguity: the poem that praises them is also a surfing lure. Poetry was used this way for centuries until the moderns made it impossible to memorize and recite anything without footnotes. Pettet's work takes the lyric back to Her ear and silences the footnote: it's there but it isn't pronounced, like the final "e" in French words. Here is another moment: "more difficult than Japanese arithmetic/ more expensive than the most expensive pullover/ in Bloomingdals or SaksÂ this loveÂ Â is./"

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J.J. Phillips, *Nigga in the Woodpile*, Serendipity Books, 2008. The mysterious J.J. Phillips is one of my literary heroes, and one of Exquisite Corpse's consecrated writers. We have used our best critical acumen for the small task of decribing briefly what she does, but as for coming close, brighter minds are working at being born. Suffice it to say, that every one of her works is a finely machined word-machine, precise both visually and functionally. This text, subtitled, "a rant," is that. One of the stanzas reads: "Mitochondria./Yo mama./Native bearer/of the genetic load." Besides being a JJ Phillips'-certified inquiry into negritude, this "rant" required a layout, as in "a laying of hands," and here we must praise the publisher, Peter Howard, and Alastair Johnston at Poltroon Press for making an elegant book-objet that is of a piece with the "rant." The holes in the "o"s in the word "Woodpile" on the black cover are there to follow the reader, and they do. You open the book, you read "Mean cut-you-with-a-razor gene," you close the book, there are those eyes. The "rant" is followed by an interesting history of the poem's publication, including an egregious mis-setting that the author argues, rightly, was a web-publishing crime, and reveals, in addition, something of the mystery of how J.J. Phillips composes, but not enough of it to keep you from wondering. I wonder. There are many surprises in the book, including the facsimile of a letter in jive by "Crow Jane," one of JJ's "characters" (?).

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Catherine Pierce, *Famous Last Words*, Lebanon, NH: Saturnalia Press. www.saturnaliabooks.com This publisher issues handsome poetry books. This collection was selected by John Yau for one of the many poetry prizes (Saturnalia Book Prize in this case) that dot the American litscape frightening and tempting verse-makers. Who knew there was money in poetry? About glory we knew, but it appears lately that heirs to great fortunes die leaving huge money for poetry prizes. The Ruth-Lilly drug empire heiress grew giddy with happiness at having a poem accepted by Poetry Magazine after years of rejection, so she left Poetry sufficient cash to cure drug addiction in the U.S. At this rate of benevolence, Exquisite Corpse, is overdue for several fortunes from our rejectees. Should we become the sudden recipients of largesse, we would immediately pay between \$10 to \$50 dollars for every poem either not written or not submitted to Exquisite Corpse. If we had enough money to restrain poets the way the government restrains agriculturists, we would breathe a hell of a lot easier (and be able to see a lot farther). We do like C. Pierce's poesy, forgive the rant. She says: "Remember Moab, Utah." We do.

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Dumitru Radu Popa, *Din partea cealaltĂ*, Craiova: Scrisul RomĂnesc. These are essays by a Romanian exile in New York speaking to/from two worlds with charm and rapier wit.

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Nicolae Prelipceanu, *un teatru de altĂ natura*, (with enclosed CD of poet reading his work). Bucharest: Cartea Romaneasca. www.cartearomaneasca.ro. One of Transylvania's finest: "am fost azvirlit in zona urletelor fara sfirsit" (I was jettisoned in the endless howl zone). We, too.

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Diane di Prima, *Revolutionary Letters*, Fifth expanded edition, 2007. Last Gasp Press, 777 Florida Street, San Francisco, CA 94110. Talk about timing! When the first edition of the *Revolutionary Letters* appeared in 1971, the U.S. was making its first world-wide bid for a merger between a collapsing economy and the Apocalypse. The war in Southeast Asia was spreading, half the young men in America were dying in the jungle, while the other half was ready to abandon the "american way of life" for good. And on top of all that, the old people who sent their kids to war or banished them from the house, couldn't sell enough vacuum cleaners to justify their existence or generate enough taxes for the war. Those of us who navigated the cosmos without a map, looked with exceedingly critical eyes at all the proffered maps, and there were plenty of them. The *Revolutionary Letters* couldn't have arrived at a more opportune time: in poem-form they were a guide for how to live, steeped in the anger and emotion we all felt. "not western civilisation, but civilization itself/ is the disease which is eating us" (no. 32) followed by "turn off the power, turn on/ stars at night, put metal/ back in the earth, or at least not take it out/ anymore" (no. 34) and "take vitamin B along with amphetamines, try/ powdered guarana root.../it is an up/ used by Peruvian mountainfolk." All that must seem so new to the freshly panicked, was spelled out with passion in these poem-manifesto-wisdom works: the energy crisis, the need to renew the polis on love for human beings, the murderous greed of capital, the urgency of returning to sacred roots, and a whole new outlook on nature. The revised and new letters in this edition, continue filling in the radical philosophy the poet developed over a lifetime, a philosophy that was a guidebook in 1971 and it's a still better one in 2008. There is an increasing feeling for the cosmos, the result of magical and buddhist practice, but there is never a slackening of practical detail, or a loosening of the poet's grip on the gritty and very real world we are in. The *Revolutionary Letters* is one of the masterworks of late 20th century poetry that proves its mettle every time the world goes to hell, which it is doing now (again).

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Adrian SĂngeorzan, *Over the Lifeline*, New York: Spuyten Duyvil Press, www.spuytenduyvil.com. This New York obstetrician and gynecologist writes fiction, memoir and poetry with equal ease in Romanian and English. New and noted from Sangeorzan, a thriller set in the heart of Russian Mafia Queens: Vitali, Bucharest: Curtea Veche, www.curteaveche.com.

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Valentina Saracini, *Dreaming Escape*, translated from the Albanian by Erica Weitzman with Flora Ismaili and Radini Jasini, Ugly Duckling Presse (uglyducklingpresse.org). This is number 19 in UDP's Eastern European Poets Series, and my first Albanian poet in English. (My prose first, and last come to think of it, is Ismail Kadare). Valentina Saracini was born in Skopje, Macedonia and lives in Prishtina, Kosovo, so those bare facts alone speak volumes, as do her translators: Erica Weitzman worked for an NGO in Kosovo, Flora Ismaili work for the U.N. in Albania, and Rudina Jasini worked for the U.N. Criminal Tribunal at the Hague. Therefore, there is nothing provincial about either Saracini, whose poetry is displayed elegantly in facing texts in Albanian and English, and looks spare, modern, and awake to every word. The poems dwell in a familiar near-abstract region of a just-below-the-surface sensibility outraged by time and circumstance, without naming anything or anybody as culpable; we know who the culprits are, or at least we think we know: they are Ares, Psyche, Chronos, and, probably, the Serbs. I say "probably" because there is no mention of Serbs: there is only room for winter, summer, fog, rain, being born, dying, and love. Now, I don't mean to sound in the least bit snide about my first Albanian poet, but she sounds like a contemporary French poet or, dare I say it, a E.U. poet, which may be entirely the work of the translators. I don't know what kind of resonance "Not to depend on dreams/ When the seasons get tangled" has in Albanian, but in English it sounds just like any middle-aged poet's lament at the loss of youthful idealism. The poetry is pleasant to english-processing ears, tended by the melancholy we require of poets, but I am wondering (and this has nothing to do with the praiseworthy efforts of her traducers to bring macedonian Albanian verse to the anglophone light) whether "tangled seasons" in the native lingo doesn't refer to some unknown fairy tale of import to people who lived in the shadow of Enver Hoxha, Tito, and dragons, until the U.N. galloped to the rescue (in English).

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Satana, *Liturgia Infernale*, Rome: Societa Editrice Il Ponte Vecchio. This is Satan's own text for the use of the prose-impaired.

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Michael Scarf, *For Kid Rock / Total Freedom*, Spectacular Books. A political meditation on power and freedom in verse and in acronyms.

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Aaron Simon, *Periodical Days*, New York: Green Zone, 66 George Street, Brooklyn, NY 11206. We suspect that Green Zone is a poetry sweatshop run without proper fire insurance by Larry Fagin.

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Dan Sociu, *Urbancolia*. Bucharest: Editura Polirom, 2008. Just after we declared ourselves fans of Sociu's poetry, here comes this young Romanian writer's novel. We barely finished reading it when we declared ourselves fans also of his prose (in an e-mail to Romanian literary critic Cosmin Ciotlos), and just as we so declared, there arrived an e-mail from Sociu with an attached chapter in English translation (miraculously, a very good translation!) requesting an opinion geared to possible American publication, so we wrote: "After communism fell, or was pushed, or dissolved, American publishers quit promoting novels from the prolapsed red empire. Milan Kundera, whose books were both funny and sexy, were also instructive about the true nature of communism, which had become absurd and funny in its last gasp, as well as mentally crippling and scary. His characters took different paths that, somehow, ended up being equally depressing: they escaped to the west where they radiated the bored inhabitants with unleashed sexual freedom, or they stayed in their dreary countries to make subversive art while experiencing sexual suffocation. Readers of Kundera's novels recognised in their smart protagonists a lot more than late Cold War politics: they connected his concerns with those of other comic Czech geniuses like Hasek and Kafka, and they followed closely his arguments about life, sex, culture, and mores east and west. In other words, he did what great writers always did: he pulled up the curtain on the human comedy. After the prolapse of the kafkaesque dictatorships in the east, the human comedy unfolding there became even funnier, sexier, and more complex. Writers coming of age in the post-communist era were the children of Kundera's characters, their parents were their history, while they were very much like their contemporaries everywhere, steeped in American pop culture, globe-circling music, movies, and the internet. A live, young generation of writers, among whom Dan Sociu is one of the most brilliant, took up the challenge of complexity and started writing breath-takingly fresh literature about the new people of the newest "capitalist" countries, people who were not just deeply human and hilariously flawed in the classic manner, but were very much like their own hilariously flawed contemporaries in the west. Dan Sociu's writing is "hip," so to speak, in the same way that Dave Eggers' is, not only because they share a certain hard-bitten irony, but because, as writers, they understand something profound about story-telling, namely that it is both useless and transcendent, tonic and ridiculous. Sociu is a captivating story teller: you can't wait to hear what he says next, and because his characters are fresh, he can afford to let them have a past, the exact one we were reading so eagerly about only a few minutes (18 years?) ago, which makes his perspective the natural sequel to all those Kundera novels we were sorry to see end." All of it true.

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Dan Sociu, *c ntecce excesive*, (with enclosed CD of poet reading his poems). Bucharest: Cartea Rom neasca. www.cartearomaneasca.ro. We love Sociu's (b. 1978) visceral verse. "Un fel de vierme intestinal/ne  mparte formulare." (A kind of tapeworm/ is distributing forms to fill). We know that tapeworm: it's the State.

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Dan Sociu, *Fratele P duche*, Bucharest: Editura Vinea, www.edituravinea@yahoo.com, is another handsome book from this publisher, and establishes Dan Sociu as the foremost spokesperson for things like worms, fleas, and bed bugs. We don't have poets like this in English: our tongue stopped somewhere around Ted Hughes' bestiary. Stopped dead, I mean. We have good cat poets, such as Anselm Hollo, and, if I'm not mistaken, William Pitt Root has written well about his dogs, but that's it, critter-wise.

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Mark Spitzer, *Riding the Unit: Selected Nonfiction 1994-2004*. Pittsburgh: Six Gallery Press. editors@sixgallerypress.com. The feisty, nay savage, former Corpse Assistant Editor, is in top form here. The huge brou-ha-ha about Ed Dorn that first appeared in *Exquisite Corpse* is included in here, as well as a lovely memoir of days spent in Paris working, sleeping (a little), and loving at Shakespeare & Company in Paris in the 90s.

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Sarah Katherine Stengle, *Coffee Rings, Instructions Included*, Stengle 2008. Designed, written, and printed by the author in a limited edition, this is a chronological record of one woman's quest for the perfect coffee cup ring. The instructions help the student in search of this goal. "do not get discouraged if your initial results are somewhat unexceptional, mastery takes time."

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Mike Topp, *Shorts Are Wrong*. Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2008. Mike Topp is one of ours: if we hadn't invented him he'da had to do it himself. We started publishing Topp in the old paper *Exquisite Corpse* because his poems fit exactly into those widowed spaces that were the despair of layout in the olden days. Soon thereafter, a Topp cult arose. Today he's blurbed by everyone, including myself. I called him the "Andy Warhol and Ralph Nader of literature." This book has every kind of poem in it, including a Zen parable that begins: "A handsome young Zen monk came to Bankei and complained: "Master, I have an uncontrollable boner. How can I master it?"

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Tristan Tzara, *Chansons Dada, Selected Poems*, translated by Lee Harwood, Boston: Black Widow Press, www.blackwidowpress.com. Our man! Long live Dada! Long out of print, this translation reappears at a critical junction in history: leninism is dead except for one or two places, but the Dada spirit flourishes as never before. Now it's time for someone with great chops to take on the rest of Tzara's fabulous poetry and boat it over. Tzara's Dada fame eclipsed the genius of his poetry. Even the French don't know what they've got, since the *Oeuvres Complètes* is mostly unavailable in France.

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Dumitru Tsepeneag, *Art of the Fugue*, translation from Romanian by Patrick Camiller, Champaign, IL, Dalkey Archive, www.dalkeyarchive.com. Interlocking mysterious tales by the Romanian-French fictioneer whose work is well-known in Europe. This is his first American publication.

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Nicolae Tzone, *capodopera maxima*, Bucharest: Editura Vinea, edituravinea@yahoo.com. Another gorgeously produced book that is visually and textually a sensual feast. The poet is also the publisher of Vinea books, and as this work shows, quality of writing, visual acuity, and splendid craft, can all bloom in one guy.

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César Vallejo, *The Complete Works*, a bilingual edition, edited and translated by Clayton Eshleman, with a foreword by Maria Vargas Llosa. Berkeley: www.ucpress.edu. University of California Press. This is the crowning work of decades for Clayton Eshleman, distinguished poet, editor of two of the last half century's best magazines, *Caterpillar* and *Sulfur*, and translator also of Aimée Césaire, among others. The UC Press did a grand job of publishing the magnum opus of the great South American poet.

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Megan A. Volpert, *the desense of nonfense*, poems by Megan A. Volpert, Buffalo, New York: BlazeVox, 2009. blazevox.org. The bold typos in the title prefigure the double and triple-takes this dynamic and sophisticated poet will oblige you to do throughout. One cannot "defend" "nonsense," but one might, just might, "desense" a "nonfense," whatever that is. In other words, what philosophers find impossible, this poet solves with the flick of a typo. You can hear her laughing along with Alexander (the Great) who cut the gordian knot, a similar solution. This collection is playfully rich, stylistically accommodating, and full of unexpected traps and other surprises. "nine kinds of life" opens on a carnivalesque note with the poet "chased in by a band of wild idiots/ carrying one dull sickle between them," only to turn around and take the sickle away from them, and turn them into "adjective men." At the end of the poem, a revelation: "Captain Ricky," who possibly "worked at the Pentagon forever" has no idea that "robert mcnamara was left handed." That's like working in a warehouse and not knowing what a "madam" is. Swift. Volpert makes word-collages, even geyser-word-collages, but they are never without strategic purpose(s), the exact aim of the strategies often being discovered in the process of being strategized. Once a famed spoken-word diseuse, Megan Volpert now uses the page like a field of rye grass, and her sickle is never dull.

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W

Robert Walser, *The Assistant*, translated from German by Susan Bernofsky, New York: New Directions, www.ndpublishing.com. This is the first novel of the amazing schizophrenic genius praised by Kafka, Musil, and Walter Benjamin. Musil wasn't yet diagnosed when he wrote this lovely coming-of-age tale on a dare from his brother. In the mental asylum where he spent most of his life, Walser wrote hundreds of dense pages of prose in a style of tiny script he called "microwriting." Not all have been deciphered to date, but those that have been, are stupendous.

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Terri Witek, *The Shipwreck Dress*, Orchises Press, PO Box 320533, Alexandria, Virginia 2230. An origami-like book of verse based on a kimono. Sample: Summer Kimono (Floating Warp Pattern Gauze): ... note how the horizon/ you've often taunted/ ripples here from its front stoop/ to cool your feet, turquoise green/ skin by skin by skin./ and next to the last line on the left hand of the page, the words no Chemise. The light formal play of breeze-blown folded kimonos does not hide the real body of the poet within.

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ANTHOLOGIES & MAGAZINES

American Book Review, January/February 2008, University of Houston-Victoria, americanbookreview@uhv.edu. Special focus on contemporary Romanian poetry, edited by the editor of the Corpse, who managed to offend many of his friends

and incur the enmity of many others he hadn't read.

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Born in Utopia, An Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Romanian Poetry, edited by Carmen Firan with Paul Doru Mugur and Edward Foster. New Jersey: Talisman Books, www.talismanbooks.org. This is a major anthology by numerous translators of what's becoming the hippest style around the high-powered world of verse. See American Book Review Romanian focus issue notice in Magazines list.

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Callaloo, American Tragedy: New Orleans Under Water, a special issue, Vol. 29, No.4, edited by Charles Henry Rowell. The Johns Hopkins University Press. This is an extraordinary collection of original writings, documents and photographs of the 2005 Katrina tragedy. The vast range of interviews, writing and art work make this an indispensable and historic anthology.

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Cartea cu Bunici, editor Marius Chivu, Bucharest: Editura Humanitas. www.librariilehumanitas.ro. This is a collection of reminiscences and considerations on the subject of grandfathers and grandmothers by many fine Romanian writers. I was mightily amused and moved (because I speak Romanian), but someone should follow suit with an anthology about grandfathers in English.

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Casandra Ioan, Patricia Goodrich, Elizabeth Ray, Bone/ Flesh & Fur// Oase/ Carne & Blana. www.patriciagoodrich.com. Romanians translated.

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Constance Nr. 2: Delicate Burdens. One of the most visually stimulating print magazines we've seen. Art and text are linked beautifully in an homage to New Orleans, with poetry by Dave Brinks, Susan Gisleson, Andy Young, Megan Burns, stories by Michael Patrick Welch, C.W. Cannon, art by Tim Best, Skylar Fein, Faub.org, Musa Alves, and many others. www.wereconstance.org Noon, 2008, editor: Diane Williams, 1324 Lexington Avenue PMB 298, New York, NY 10128. This is possibly the most elegant literary journal published in the U.S. today: current issue features a fabulous zebra cover. (And we don't say "fabulous zebra" frivolously). The contents aren't shabby either: among contributors are Lydia Davis and Monica Manolescu-Oancea, a Romanian essayist unknown to us whose presence we signal as part of our ongoing effort to grease the Carpathian-American axis.

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Detroit: Stories, edited by Lynn Crawford, Peter Markus, and Michelle Perron. A publication of the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD). lcrawford@mocadetroit.org. This healthy volume of Detroit's major modern artists contains a superb section of work by Jim Gustafson, edited by Michelle Perron. Gustafson was a great poet who created a prodigious body of work between 1975-1996, when he died young of a brain aneurysm. An oversized personality with immense charm, Jim was simultaneously "a riot among friends" (as Jeffrey Miller, whose work Jim edited post-mortem said, describing his own michigander self), and a very serious writer who probed the language for secrets that yielded music. Gustafson published only a few slim volumes in his lifetime, a scarcity that can be attributed to his integrity and justified sense of self-worth. His poetry is just now beginning its ascent, and its astonished beauties are becoming visible to a new generation; there are new collections in the offing. His letters alone are anthologizable. Detroit, the city where Jim was born and where he died, after many peregrinations and sojourns in the bohemia of San Francisco and New York, was a source for both his toughness and his tenderness. "Detroit just sits there/ like the head of a dog on a serving platter.../ Detroit means lovers buying matching guns..." ("The Idea of Detroit"). Jim was also my friend and our adventures together would make a terrific book of stories, a claim that many of his friends might rightly make. He had a gift for friendship, and a generous and profligate nature that marks us all deeply.

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Dilemateca, a monthly journal of writing, authors and readings (Scrieri, Autori, Lecturi), edited by Mircea Vasilescu. Bucharest, Romania, dilemateca@satiricon.ro. Imagine a Newsweek dedicated entirely to writers, writing, and culture. You cannot imagine it because it doesn't exist in our overspecialised, abundant, and decentralized continent. Dilemateca (a word-play on "dilema," the source-weekly Dilema Veche, and "discoteca," or discotheque) treats literature like any ongoing societal urgency, such as politics or urban policy. There a book reviews aplenty, considerations of work in translation (there is a translation orgy in Romania now), columns by writers on whatever gets their attention, features on certain writers and, in general, considerate attention to the cultural climate of Romania, Europe and, occasionally, the U.S. Much was made recently of the remark by some northern European that the U.S. has become too provincial now to produce Nobel-worthy writers. It's a stinging remark that carries a certain truth, even if it's in essence pretty stupid. The stinging part has to do with the apparent indifference of Americans to European literature, and our tendency to insularity. The stupid part is that the author of the remark couldn't have possibly known the wealth of writing and profound work being done in the U.S. now, an ignorance excusable only by the fact that we do not have such comprehensive general culture magazines as Dilemateca. This monthly is able to take in at a (monthly) glance a great deal of what is being published and talked about. The source journal from which Dilemateca springs, is a lively weekly, Dilema Veche

(www.dilemaveche.ro), founded by the philosopher Andrei Plesu, a feisty cultural and political forum of ideas organized around a theme (tabloids; is there a European identity?; compassion and philanthropy, etc). Written by columnist-writers, with contributions by other intellectuals, this newspaper is in the long tradition of the journals that have made of Romania's culture a major force and player in the country's fate and development. This tradition, evidenced brilliantly before WW2 by *Bilet de Papagal*, a fiercely polemical journal edited by the great poet Tudor Arghezi, ceased entirely during the communist era (1947-1989). After 1989, the cultural-political journal was reborn with a vengeance, and *Dilema Veche* is a stellar example.

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House Organ, edited by Kenneth Warren, Lakewood, Ohio, is the best print poetry monthly in the U.S. You wouldn't know it by looking at it, but its retro look (no website) belies its rich cr me-de-la-cr me contents. Among the contributors: Jack Hirschman, Harrison Fisher, Vincent Ferrini (goodbye, great old man of poesy!) and many, many others.

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Island of my Hunger: Cuban Poetry Today, edited and with an introduction by Francisco Mor n. San Francisco: City Lights Books. www.citylights.com These are the Cuban poets of today, at a critical junction in Cuba's history. Here is Omar Perez (b. 1964) writing in English: "I understand, I understand/ But I don't explain, I don't explain." We know, we don't explain either, but then we don't feel so much.

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kadar koli, Nr. 1, editor David Hadbawnik, www.habenichtpress.com, publishes Sarah Peters, Hoa Nguyen, and Dale Smith, among others. That's good enough for us, so you have a bunch, nein?

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Lettre Internationale, Spring 2008, Romanian edition, published by ICR (the Romanian Cultural Institute), New York, www.icr.ro. Sixty-five weighty issues later, this publication keeps track in Romanian of world literature. In this issue, one finds essays, fiction and poetry by Ryszard Kapuscinski, Juan Goytisolo, Slavenka Draculic, Lao Wei, Marius Chivu, and a host of others. *Lettre Internationale*, a journal with European relatives elsewhere, is a good index of what is being considered, at any given moment, the high peaks on the lit horizon.

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live mag Nr.4, edited by Jeffrey Wright, publishes Sheila Lanham, Hugh Seidman, Kimiko Hahn, Sparrow, Marc Nasdor, Amiri Baraka. PO Box 1215, Cooper Station, NY, NY 10276

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Mineshaft Nr. 21, Spring 2008. Contains R. Crumb, Bill Griffith, Harvey Pekar, Bruce Simon, Diane diPrima cartoonized by M. Fleener for the upcoming *History of the Beats* in cartoon form. What more of the best of the still-pulsing "refuse-to-be-burned-out" Sixties do you want? www.mineshaftmagazine.com

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The MIT Press 2008 Catalogue, this edition marks a special occasion: the 30-year tenure of Roger Conover as editor. During his amazing run, Conover has published over 800 books on avantgarde and modern art, architecture, and cultural studies. There is hardly a point in listing all the groundbreaking and/or physically gorgeous volumes issued under his care, since they constitute a complete library of certain arts viewed in a particular way (Conover's), a library that would suffice to educate anyone about what artists have been up to in the 20th century. On the cover of the catalogue, there is a photograph of Roger Conover handing out a copy of *THE EXILES* of Marcel Duchamp with one hand, and a pound of hamburger with the other; he's wearing a blue apron and looks for all the world like a 19th century peddler displaying his wares from a pushcart. The inside of the back cover features Conover again, in a photo by Horst Hamann, dressed in black, standing with his arm raised over the tower of books he has published. These two pics frame an extraordinary project, without precedent in my opinion. In addition to realizing this visionary publishing epic, Conover is also the editor and (re)discoverer of Mina Loy, whose presence has been steadily changing the landscape of poetry in English. Add to all of it the fact that Roger Conover is a poet, and something mighty strange is beginning to emerge, namely, a new type of multi-dimensional artist whose work is vast and singular, but completely of our time: Roger Conover is a 21st century William Blake. He is not a man wearing different hats, as unimaginative copy-writers like to say about people who do more things than they are capable of understanding, he is all there, working in different media on the same vision. Conover's publishing, his Loy venture, his poetry, and his real-life person are expressions of one great impulse for which there is no convenient name yet, but which is prototypical for artists of the future. The Corpse takes its hat off (yes, this is a hat!) to Roger Conover.

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noua literatura, Nr. 15, II, mai 2008. noualiteratura.wordpress.com. Edited by young Romanian critic Luminita Marcu, this is the battle-field, coffee-house, and customs house of the young cats who are swarming Romanian literature right now, ready to pick its bones clean. Two things you'll notice right away: the writers in here are young but very well-read, and secondly, they are hungry and know the ropes. The web-inspired graphics are instantly accessible, as is the brevity of the reviews and the literary pieces; the layout makes it clear that these are writers with websites who travel physically

and virtually, and have no provincial complex. There is compelling freshness and honesty here, and I found the deliberately conversational vulgate delightful; the journal is writing slang and making it look good in print. It's a lively scene that will shake up the literary derangements of the house of scribblers, and it's the healthiest sign yet that Romanians are to be reckoned with on the field of letters.

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or, a semi-annual literary newspaper, edited by Paul Vangelisti, published by the Graduate Writing Program at Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles. or@otis.edu. This awkwardly long address is the source of some of the freshest, most interesting fiction and essays being made in the U.S. now. This first issue of the journal means, I think, to complement the offerings of the press; it presents an excellent overview of some Italian poets in translation, as well as terrific autochthons. We feel serious kinship with the intents and voices herein, and the Corpse salutes and welcomes Or as a family member.

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The Poetry Project Newsletter, edited by John Coletti, St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery, New York. www.poetryproject.com. American poetry may be the only excuse for murdering trees, and not most of it. Reviewing the Poetry Project Newsletter is a little like reviewing your sister: you knew her all your life and she still turns you on. Intended originally to publicize the poetry readings taking place without interruption since the mid-60s at St. Marks' Church-in-the Bowery on New York's Lower East Side, the Newsletter evolved over time into a literary publication of poetry reviews, essays, and letters. Over the years, the Poetry Project was the originating site of numerous esthetics, poetics, and cultural phenoms, a diversity held together by an undying *je ne sais quoi*, composed in the *je sais parts* by an incredible faith in the power of poetry to affect all that it intersects: politics, culture, cultural politics, space, and time. This *je ne sais quoi's* secret recipe contains, among other things, the city of New York, an incessant rebellion against the shifting status quo (especially when the Project itself might be threatened by it), youth (the quality, not the chronology), and disdain and intolerance for most kinds of boredom (with exceptions too complex to go into here). Among the venerated Ancestors of the Poetry Project, some living, some dead, one counts Allen Ginsberg, Anne Waldman, Ted Berrigan, Maureen Owen, Bernadette Mayer, Paul Blackburn, Joel Oppenheimer. I myself, a mere nub of mongrel composition, found shelter at the Church in the mid-60s, and have had a continuously satisfying relationship with it. The Newsletter, throughout the tenure of many brilliant editors, has been an ongoing source of family news and a source of inspiration. The issue I am looking at (not the latest), contains a powerful appreciation of Lorenzo Thomas by Dale Smith, a poem by Tim Dlugos, and remembrances of Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008) and Jonathan Williams (1929-2008). The memorial texture of this issue is by no means typical, but when so many great poets died in such close temporal proximity, there is no choice. When they were living, those poets also read at the Church and were reviewed in the Newsletter. And this may be another solid feature of the St. Marks' magic: its loyalty to the poets who have stormed through the building and through American life over the incredible span of nearly half a century. So, like I said, you want to know what's new, hip, and fresh, check out my sistah!

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Poets Bookshelf II, edited by Peter Davis and Peter Koontz, Seattle: Barnwood Press, www.barnwoodpress.org. This is a book about what poets influenced the poets in the book in case somebody wants to be a poet like one of the poets in the book and read all the books that influenced that poet — that's known in the trade as a Circle Jerk. I'm in this book saying something to the effect that too many people influenced me to sort them out now, plus I've influenced a lot of the people that were in both. Vol I and II, but they are too pretentious to know it, so they pretend that they were influenced only by people like Guy Debord and Edmond Jabès, which sounds really impressive, esp. since I am reasonably sure that they haven't read more than one page of these resonant names' works. Most poets are not only liars, but have an inflatable organ that swells them to ten times their real size as soon as you ask them a question like, Who Influenced You?, which makes them the size of squirrel poop (inflated).

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Semnalul, a monthly journal published by the B'nai Brith, Lodge Dr. W. Fielderman, Toronto, Canada. semnalul@hotmail.com. Every month this brave little Jewish magazine in Romanian, makes its way to our post office box in Louisiana. Opinionated (to the right of Attila the Hun), hawkish pro-Israeli, sentimentally Romanian, well-written, amusing, sometimes grave, sometimes solemn, at times goofy, this publication is a reminder of just how much affection Romanian-born Jews feel for the language, the culture, the food, and the people of Romania. If a sobering essay on the Holocaust wasn't there occasionally to remind the reader just how brutal the beloved Romanians could be, one would think that they were reading a zealously patriotic traditionalist review. Unhappily, the good news and affection are leavened by the truth, and the reader enters that strange (not unpleasurable) zone where melancholy haunts memory. Semnalul is by no means a literary publication, but its brief portraits of great Romanian writers of Jewish origin, birthdays and anniversary reminders and such, point out just how much Jews have enriched Romanian culture and vice-versa, in an intertwined and real way.

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Seeing Los Angeles, A Different Look at a Different City, edited by Guy Bennett & Batrice Mousli, Los Angeles: Otis Books/Seismicity Editions, www.gw.otis.edu. Los Angeles is an evolving world of three million people sitting on a powder keg, and this collection of essays by thoughtful writers, reveals this amazing city under many lights. We knew something,

but honestly, we didn't know just what a complex beast L.A. is. I'd like to go back soon. The publishers of this anthology are also hosts to the new review of literature, nrl@otis.edu, one of the best mags going these days. Whatever they've got at the Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles (except cash) they should put in the water. It works.
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State of the Union, 50 political poems, edited by Joshua Beckman and Matthew Zapruder, Wave Books, www.wavepoetry.com. A refreshing collection of poetic disappointment and confusion at the dawn of the Obama age. The poets here, among them, John Ashbery, Dave Brinks, Lucille Clifton, Eileen Myles, are too smart, too tough, and too good to be trapped into the rhetoric suggested by "political poems," so they do their damning hard but they don't forget the flowers, the eucalyptus, the minaret, or the name of the street they live on. The "political poem" doesn't really exist anywhere now, since a) all poems are political just by being poems (i.e. less of a commodity than paper hats or land mines), and b) no poet in his right verse would be found dead hanging out in the cliché-worn neighborhood of the op-ed page. The "political poem" thus monickered may have never in truth existed anywhere, except in places like Russia where Majakovski killed himself for writing too many of them, and Ossip Mandelstam was killed for writing one. A "political poem" one isn't executed for is not really "political," but why quibble with a subtitle?
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Stop Smiling Nr. 34, The Jazz Issue, featuring ORNETTE! and a Tribute to Eric Dolphy. One of our favorite mag titles, and one of the Corpse's kin. www.stopsmilingonline.com
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Vatra, a monthly literary journal published in Targu Mures, Romania. vatra@rdslink.ro. Edited by Virgil Podoaba. In the best literary traditions of this excessively and, sometimes, enervatingly erudite country, this magazine probes, critiques, and presents contemporary Romanian essay, verse, and fiction, with a passion long gone from the U.S. Our literary magazines are mostly house-organs for writing programs or, like The Paris Review, insecure attempts at promoting an elite in a nonelitist country, in a nonelitist sort of way. In the U.S. we have very few literary monthlies, our literature being produced (in overwhelming quantities) in quarterlies. Vatra has its own agenda, having to do with its own area, but there is breath-takingly transcendent writing in it, like the essays of Al. Vlad, a world-class writer.
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Voices of the City, edited by Rosamond S. King, Charles Russell, Marie Carter, and Robert Hershon, Brooklyn: Hanging Loose Press, 2008, hangingloosepress.com. Ever fresh and weary, gritty and despairing springs the city, and in this new anthology from the venerable and still street-wise Hanging Loose Press, the city is mostly The City, New York, which includes (and always has) Brooklyn. Bob Hershon and Donna Brook have a recognisable editorial style: they like it real, spare, tough, and with heart; if these editors were painters they'd be Marsden Hartley. Selected here are some magnificent works that continue the work left for us by the firm of Whitman, O'Hara, Oppenheimer, Blackburn, and Berrigan. Notable to this reviewer, "Headlights" by Nora Lawrence, The lights from the FDR Drive streak by/ outside the windows tonight, Elinor Nauen, Sunlight for Brooklyn, Brenda Coultas' catalogue of garbage on the sidewalk around 9/11, 2001 (without mentioning it), Paul Violi's "On an Acura Integra," Sharon Mesmer's the love-making the L train the blue hour, Hettie Jones' stunning poems, "Hare Krishna Haute Couture," and "Say Goodbye to the Little Yellow Building" (both of which I heard her read in Baton Rouge in 2007, what a delightful reader/person!), Robert Hershon's "Brooklyn Bridge the Other Way" I bought this bridge a long time ago/ and now I'm almost home, Sherman Alexie's very funny (but not ha-ha funny) "Things for an Indian) to Do in New York (City)," a loving take on Ted Berrigan's "Things to do in New York," Vicki Hudspeth's thorny "Incisors at Dawn," and the very great Maggie Nelson poem, "Subway in March, 5:45 PM" I take the long way home, knowing/ I am free to choose happiness. The only other grandly sung city in here is Detroit, the part that leads into New York, and this connection is given absolute grace by Ken Mikolowski's magnificent "January in Detroit or Search for Tomorrow Starring Ken and Ann," a glorious poem of poetry, money, culture, and life that made me tear up. I could praise everything in this spare book, I know most of these poets' work, but let me just say: the editors give us The City here, a special poets' city, one that I once lived in and feel little nostalgia for, but what little I feel this book feeds.
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Xavier Review, Volume 26, Nr. 1-2, edited by Richard Collins, www.xula.edu/review, a Katrina issue that gives the Catastrophe its rightful gravitas with works by David Brinks and many others.

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NOIR: A HISTORY OF MY BOOK REVIEWS

First, on a frigid April night in 2007, knowing now for certain that the Corpse was going to rise this moonless night or the next, I thought that I'd just read. All around me, screaming silently — la E. M. — the towers of unread books turned and turned toward me, a tiny man of flesh with no time on his hands or anywhere else on his body. I should have read everything ages ago, but no matter, I would just start. And so I did, and then began to comment. The Corpse rose and fell for many moonless nights, and still I read. And still I commented. Finally, on the 33d day, I decided to upload thoughts of what I'd read. But how upload when some books were thick and others thin, some written by famous authors, others barely written, or not written at all, but simply spewed? How could I upload the thick with the thin, the famed with

the wisps? Chronologically? But following what chronology? When I'd read and commented them, or by when they were written? Should I upload the famous first and the less famous last? Or should I upload by my own esteem, the most esteemed first, the least esteemed last? Or should I poll the critics and upload by their esteem? But there was a rub, ah yes. The books I'd read and was reading and am reading as I type, were in several languages, mostly English and Romanian. Should I upload segregated quarters or should I like the Bible be universal? At long last, I uploaded at random, by thickness: the thickest first, the thinnest last. English, Romanian, Urdu, it didn't matter: thick first, thin last. That was back then, on a moonless night. Many moons later now I hold what has to be my head in my hands. Well, I did, now I'm typing, but as I type I realize the genius of our Language: ye Gods! The alphabet! And so it is that neither chronology, nor fame, nor rain, nor size matters. Henceforth, all books will go quietly under the first letter of their author's last name, indifferent of provenance, pedigree, or lingo. My column will go on and continue to grow, as old and young, sturdy and flimsy, newly read books will line up under the alphabet like e-poplars along the T-river road. AC

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