



Reviews of Poetry and Prose by Jeffrey Side and Jake Berry
2007 -2013

The reviewers were:

Adam Fieled, John M. Bennett, Jake Berry (for *Carrier of the Seed*), Pam Brown, Andrew Duncan, John Couth, Carey Scott Wilkerson and Ami Kaye

Works reviewed were:

Carrier of the Seed
Cyclones in High Northern Latitudes
Outside Voices: An Email Correspondence

Argotist Ebooks

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Review of *Carrier of the Seed* by Adam Fieled in *Stoning the Devil* (December 2007)

Carrier of the Seed is a Blazevox e-book by UK poet Jeffrey Side. Those skeptical about the e-book format would do well to check it out; this poem is proof positive that e-books are, in fact, real books. This is a single long poem; it is 63 pages long, and its formal characteristics are unique: it features a single column composed of spare, terse lines, going straight down the page. This gives the poem a long, lean look. Reading the poem is like riding on a high-velocity train; it doesn't get sluggish, and there are no breaks in the continuity of the sustained, rapid rhythm. There is an obvious connection with some aspects of Lang-Po; specifically, I thought of Barrett Watten's *Progress*, which has a similarly dynamic feel. The primary difference between *Progress* and *Carrier* is that *Carrier* does actually tell a story, albeit elliptically. This is a story of love lost, & the memory associations & forms of consciousness that accrue to this.

What happens is that Side will often break through the sleek, fast-moving, but often opaque surface of language-as-language into something like this:

my love I
need you so
much but more
than else I'm
waiting for you

There is a relationship being posited, and the poem's velocity can be taken as a metaphor for the poet's escape, or attempted escape. It is also important to note that specific scenes do get interspersed in the "deluge" format:

as to how
many erections she
caused in a
crowded room who
can say with
signs and signals
from her hips

The title of the poem implies a kind of address to manhood itself, what constitutes being a man-in-the-world. This address to/of manhood is complicated by the relationship scenario that is enacted in the poem:

all day and
night I fight
for light while
you were with
my mistress it
just makes a
fuck of me
as I go
up to the

south of hills

The relationship is ambiguous, manhood (as presented here) is ambiguous, & it all goes by so fast that the poem demands multiple readings. There is also a song-lyric quality to many of the most memorable bits in the poem:

I can't get
you under I
can't be leaving
you not until
I've done everything
I have to

This sort of thing, where Barrett Watten meets Syd Barrett is exactly what I look for in poetry right now. It's Language poetry, with higher velocity, more drama & intensity, a kind of balls-out sang-froid. Yet, the implied presence of rock does not preclude an engagement with poetry-as-history:

calling all cars
calling all cars
Keats let me
down too much
you left before
we could be
strangers this is
a trying time

Burns and Milton also put in memorable appearances. Bits of rhyme jazz the thing up as well:

life with fetters
cut from water
pearl you never

The following bit, for me, is the heart of the poem:

night and you
had a pocket
to keep you
out of sight
as you tried
to be so
helpful but maybe
we never existed
separately so nothing
can be sacred
and I cannot
love or hate

and I have
no care for
fate and it
will be chaos
in the end

This is a poem that takes what someone like Barrett Watten did and extends its range. It has the kind of heart and soul that Watten does not, yet it maintains the sleek feeling and pungent sharpness of Watten. I immediately thought, also, of Amy King and William Allegrezza, younger poets who are taking the Lang-Po ball and running with it. If this is, in fact, a kind of movement, Side fits squarely into it.

Review of *Carrier of the Seed* by John M. Bennett in *Apocryphaltext* (January 2008)

Jeffrey Side's *Carrier of the Seed* is a long poem: a long sentence arranged in three-word lines in a single column, a single breath. It's a first-person discursive meditation or stream of speaking that switches referentiality every four lines or so. The effect is a text which tries to talk about *it all*. It is a way of searching for a clear explanation or description of the "seed" that lies somewhere in the core of this work, perhaps hidden from the speaker, but glimpsed by the reader in the paradoxical last lines:

remember me when
she returns no
more to be
parted when I'm
with you around.

The poem revolves around the themes of male-female dialectics, generation, fertility, love, and the problem of understanding all that; of *knowing* what it is or what is happening: this is the emotional core of the work. More often than not, these themes are referred to in the context of a specific story, of specific places ("Baltimore" and many others), topics, and persons.

The language is plain English, but I find it extremely exciting when Side shifts into a glossolalia-like speech, which he does frequently in this book:

visits my sad
heart agaiden or
that remore and
memore fory or
time dease pleave

These invented words suggest many others, and make these passages quite resonant and fascinating.

The world of this poetry, in which "... the/material universe is/defined by polarity" is compelling and authentic. Don't miss this one, especially as it's available at a price that absolutely can't be beat!

Review of *Carrier of the Seed* by Jake Berry in *Big Bridge* (February 2008)

In an essay, 'Creative Agnosticism,' Robert Anton Wilson (published in the *Journal of Cognitive Liberties* in 2001, Vol. II, No. 1) writes:

Our mode of consciousness seems historically to have been determined by neurological (unconscious) habits. When we become aware of this, and struggle against the inertia of habit, consciousness continually mutates, becomes less particle-like and "fixed," spreads like a flowing wave.

In his extraordinary new book, Jeffrey Side offers us a poem that is the fluctuating, shimmering, realization of the kind of consciousness Wilson describes. One would hope that it might be a poetry of the future, but it is more likely a poetry outside or beyond time altogether, perpetually new precisely because of its unfixing wave characteristics. Here are the opening lines:

You made Pandora
visit me from
her disruptions across
the sea her
mane was stretched
like Cyprus-flow
and her mind
was as smooth
as causation at
a time I
had reached my
most content you
pointed her up

Pandora was the first woman, wed to Epimetheus, brother of Prometheus. Her curiosity regarding the jar she was given and forbidden to open unleashed all manner of evil. In Side's poem she had been summoned by what we might assume to be the muse of the poem, a "you" that appears throughout the work.

Regardless of the validity of the original myth, in *Carrier of the Seed* Pandora is a manifestation for the behavior of the poem itself. To the degree that any poet chooses his metaphors, Side has chosen Pandora with great care. Her beauty and talents, contributed by all the Olympians, is a perfect vehicle for the disruptions that lie at the heart of the poem. It shifts between layers of time, fields of activity and their mythic interpenetration. It is not content with a single theme or approach, but moves with skilful lyricism through an open form where change is the fuel and the music. In this way Side answers a question that many poets of the last and new century have asked: How does poetry retain its ancient bardic elements in the contemporary world of stock markets and flowcharts, glowing insubstantial screens and titillating trivia?

The poet as singing myth-maker and seer reaches backward, as those bards before him, the past, the habitation of the dead:

made my bed
in charnels and
on coffins robed
with pure snow ...

These lines, classical and symbolist, are rendered contemporary by their context and juxtaposition. Rather than limiting himself to either the personal anecdotal voice or mainstream poetry or the refined academic avant-garde, Side utilizes whatever mode serves the experience. He is not possessed by the muse and driven to song by her, but he is not dismissive of her from an indifferent intellectual distance either. He allows the full mind to embrace the process. And *Carrier* is a process above all else. It is not a static work of literature that might be carefully inspected and unraveled for every shred of meaning. Instead, it demands the responsibility to question. Since reality is in a constant state of motion, and motions within motions, turbulence, chaos is its natural condition, why should the poet impose a structure that adheres to any particular genre or time?

mistaking the
rogue creative principle
through the dark
and profound hypothesis
into evaluation with
the template associated
format-tree broken

Rather than capture a poem he accepts Pandora's curiosity as a gift and allowed the disruptions to take their place in the song. Where modernism reasserted the classics in a new electric light and so-called postmodernism fumbles and fails even to find a name for itself, this poetry, though highly literate and aware of these quasi-movements, prefers a more individualistic, even iconoclastic approach. One must grant it the space of its own liberation in chaos.

as we are
moving towards a
theory of beauty
tremenous natures veiled
butane on jehoaphat
stigmata nationalist condensation
steals redemptive like
cool alabaster twixt
the seasons of
love finding foolish
fair for frankness
and killing the
mind she kept
in kindness

The poem itself is open to the great, infinite, stream. It carries the seed, the germ of poetry through time and from one person to another. The closest we may come to describing it is as a

development of open field poetry, Olson's projective verse. It becomes self-conscious here — 'we are/moving towards a/theory of beauty' — but that tendency is immediately disrupted, we are moving through turbulence where words are probability as much as actual. The altered spellings 'tremenous natures veiled/butane on *jehoaphat*' force us to look at the words again. Tremendous altered to tremenous intensifies the Latin root *teremere* — tremble. This is not the way in which we normally hear the word. Indeed, spelled in this way we feel the word as much as interpret it. Following this the rest of the line and the one following are shaded toward something more interior, as if we are seeing inside the nature of power. Jehoshaphat has become jechoaphat. A king of Judah, a figure of political and spiritual power given its Biblical source, is reconfigured. Is this what the king has become in the wake of tremendous, trembling nature? If so, the lines that follow read like revelatory commentary: 'stigmata nationalist condensation/steals redemptive.'

This kind of disruption occurs again and again throughout the poem. Syntax and expectations are destroyed in order to indicate that behind the words there are forces at work that render language useless unless it is destroyed in the process. Side is not unwriting or self-criticizing however. He appears to be unconcerned with that kind of hesitating reconsideration. Instead, the poem moves confidently forward in its indeterminations. It isn't deconstructing so much as it appears and fluctuates through a process of constant death and rebirth. We don't contain the stream, we are immersed in it. The spirit at work here is closer to Heraclitus than contemporary poetics. Hardly a neo-formalist or classicist, Side is going much further back to the oracular impulse behind poetry and song — 'killing the/mind she kept/in kindness.'

An impulse rarely evident in contemporary poetry of any variety except perhaps in the kind of lyrics one might find in songs since the mid 60s when the distinction between poet and songwriter began to blur again. The result, in the work of Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen, Jim Morrison and the Doors, The Velvet Underground, and so on, made the kind of poetry we read in *Carrier* not only likely, but arguably the most valid approach to the art. *Carrier* is evidence of that shift come full circle. As the artists above were influenced by books of poetry, and in fact wrote books of poetry, then integrated poetry into song, so here is poetry reinvigorated by the energy of music and song. A departure from old literary hegemonies perhaps best indicated in lines like:

I was lying
down in the
rehab on the
way out of
Milton

This is no "patient etherized upon a table," but a poet looking to escape the weight of tradition and get on with the activity of the present even while he utilizes the stories and images of that tradition.

As with all oracular song, there is a call and response that moves broadly throughout *Carrier*. Here it is the conversation of lovers — intellectual, erotic and mythic. Often the poem seems to be a response to the lover's call beyond our hearing in the poem. It is clear however that the poet makes no distinction between individuals or what is call and what is response since the music runs in an unbroken chain from a time before anyone can remember.

maybe
we never existed
separately so nothing
can be sacred
and I cannot
love or hate
and I have
no care for
fate and it
will be chaos
in the end
when the wings
of fluid hold
you tight and
the beggars deep
in plight stumble
without sight somewhere
in the mind

When we read the phrase 'in the mind' we tend to assume interior spaces, invented regions. More often than not that interpretation would be adequate, but not here. Without ever becoming grandiose, a product of some cosmic ego, *Carrier* manages nonetheless to be transcendental and metaphysical *in all directions*. The mind is not always the self and the self is not always singular, whether interior or exterior.

I hear a
voice shell-encased
turtledove similar to
Tripoli where she
met me her
singularity showing itself
in the way
she descended mirrored

Even when the 'she' who is the partner in the call and response is 'shell-encased' and met in 'singularity' she shows herself, becomes known 'in the way she descended mirrored.' She is singular when she is mirrored, and only then her manner of descent. One thinks of the muse entering the poet, the passive receiver, but again those ancient notions are used only to be stripped away by the creative process of the poem.

this is
one of the
voices calling though

...

familiar among the

admired melting into
nature resented constructions

The reason art as a human activity survives is because it is not limited to constructions, even its own constructions. It remains open. Side accepts this as one of the fundamental realities of his work. The result is a poetry that is an aspect of nature rather than an imposition or reflection. It is ecstatic and inexhaustible, a living, evolving creature. *Carrier* may be a new kind of romanticism rooted in the real rather than the ideal. It is full of the joy of the effort of making the music, yet it never closes toward utopian heights. It is more like the joy of zero gravity and deep space where direction is relative to a tentative point of reference.

... I
saw your true
nature when you
were dancing out
there strange love
when there's nowhere
else to climb
yet the lady
of turquoise and
the lady of
sycamore say that
nothing endures and
nothing substantiates through
the combination and
separation and all
will be dissolved
again in the
panic-flight as
the heat fades

Carrier appears to be practicing alchemy as fine art rather than transmutation of base metals. Instead 'nothing endures/nothing substantiates' because whatever embodiment might appear in the moment eventually 'all/will be dissolved' by means of the alchemist's work of combination and separation. Elements of all times and approaches to the work are combined and separated in the long lyrical sentence of the poem. Mythology, Internet vocabulary, classical literature, history, current events, science and technology all combine and separate in the deeply musical ebb and flow. Categories are rendered useless, exposed for the temporary constructs we often stubbornly refuse to admit that they are.

As each of our perceptions day to day materialize out of fluid, phenomenal stimulus and harden into what we call the world and our selves, only to shatter when new stimulus intervenes, Side's poem allows us our interpretations, but refuses to allow those interpretations to become definitive. It borrows from all time and kinds of experience without sacrificing originality — the authentic, natural music of its poet.

Review of *Carrier of the Seed* by Pam Brown in *Jacket* magazine No. 35 (January 2008)

Jeffrey Side's *Carrier of the Seed* is a recent title from BlazeVOX, a publishing house edited by Geoffrey Gatza, that calls itself 'a refuge' for 'post-avant poetries & fiction' and a publisher of 'weird little books'. This e-book, when printed, is a 70-page (6 by 9 inches) poem that can be downloaded at no cost from the internet.

Carrier of the Seed is an incantatory lament for lost love and an inquest into an ambiguous masculine sexuality. The poem is breathlessly written, imbued with distinctive imagining and, perhaps surprisingly, it also maintains a satisfying, dynamic-yet-steady rhythm, reading like a long, measured monologue or song. There is no punctuation and the consistent pace is developed in short lines that connect smoothly.

If you suspend reason and surrender to Side's almost-feverish free association you enter a kind of meditative zone, but one that could well be informed by amphetamines.

... as I
wandered fast and
ran to a
bar where I
was seen last
and sitting in
the corner too
far from my
view was the
hint of a
woman who to
the city was
new where solidity
is a stranger
and reason a
mystery he looked
at words confounded
like they were magnified ...

Side's language folds over itself and tumbles into the abstract in a manner that's sometimes reminiscent of the private-language poetry of Javant Biarujia. But it's never as abstract or as opaque as Biarujia's because Jeffrey Side's personal language resembles English. He intersperses antiquated traces that sometimes suggest classic fairy-tales — robes, kingdoms, forests, parlours, maidens, minstrels, pilgrims, a 'precious chamber' (shades of Angela Carter) — with a contemporary everyday lexicon of cybernetics and with plain speech. The made-up language overtakes the poet intrinsically and emphasises the suffusion of feeling that pulses throughout the poem.

I always remembered
my wife was
with me hanging

her headgear as
in Hades ganging
against the maiden
gonad and hinipog
there at loonis
doth also come
acquittal just like
a gokonil and
my luck has
never been thin

and

the fire that
always keeps on
burning to greet
me as I
am churning glad
progressively more and
kalarna but some
coroni corpal pororva
clapsin otorle boodon
nortal she comes
on a train
at dawn ...

The female lover is idealised and she is surrounded by desirous men. This perplexes the poet who, although also desirous, turns his poem into a kind of demented rave primed with abandonment and regret, yet somehow he remains detached and tender. Thus eschewing stereotype, he is never jealous nor enraged.

to rest my
fate and ragged
soul beside you
how many men
have hungered for
your open palm
and longed to
be succoured but
you lost what
you had discovered
and were elegant
in sapphire daisy
organdie and steel
and I could've
been someone like
you I just

don't know what
happened and with
tresses to your
bosom your full
bloom did reveal
but I'll never
get over the
love you gave
that man if
I'd known how
much I was
going to miss
you ...

This compelling poem is filled with longing. It is both Barthesian in its yearning and sometimes Freudian in imagery, yet it is not actually erotic.

the time you
used to bathe
in silver seas
with a white
horse along with
everything and the
motion ...

and

when I was
deep underground or
widespread and she
couldn't see the
point of closing
next to me
looking like a
crystal stretched in
water she was
a mistress to
all the world
before the end
came when we
could see her
market research as
she stopped the
foaming waves and
as to how
many erections she
caused in a

crowded room who
can say with
signs and signals
from her hips

Four pages from the end, the poem releases into a quiet resolution that is almost defiantly ordinary after the (by now) inuredness and exhausting ingeniousness of the incantation. The poet is finally recuperating.

... [love] ... can
never be torn
away by the
daughters of memory
who formed a
colony of themselves
but I had
a really good
day today when
you remember this
I want you
to know I
had a really
good day ...

The specialist care provided by 'a refuge' for 'post-avant poeties & fiction' is entirely appropriate for the candescent post-Lang-Po poetry of *Carrier of the Seed*.

Review of *Carrier of the Seed* by Andrew Duncan in *Exultations and Difficulties* (April 2008)

In radically autobiographical poetry, the self is the prison of the poem. The voice of the poet gives the text a deep comforting layer of personality, swaddled in layers of trust, familiarity, witness. But the problem of putting everything in the first person is that in our life we don't experience everything as a first person, we are also able to hear other people's voices, intuit their experiences, and even lock into a whole cosmos of non-human processes and sounds. If all my poems mean the same thing, in fact mean Me, then they are much less diverse than the world. In order to reach the state of a camera, with its at least passive capacity to take on infinite diversity, the poem has to go through depersonalisation. This may be the point of a poem like this one:

we might
keep the altitude
in view by
the stream near
Vancouver yet the
exploratory research points
to functional monitored
contingencies and the
upgraded model now
offers responsive logistical
innovation while at
the same time
no place seems
lowest to these
my kindred

The soul of a poem is in its breath pattern, the division of sense coinciding with movements of someone's sensibility. It may be alienating if someone depersonalises the flow of the text. This negates a whole repertoire of well-loved effects and also demands the reader to switch off their routine response and find a new way of reacting to the text. *Carrier*, presented as one long continuous strip, has a straightforward phonetic organisation: every line is three words long. This disconnects the line break from the flow of sense of the text. The telltales which show someone's emotional state, which make it possible to slip into the rhythm of a text and a situation, are effaced. The text thus breaks free from the limits of a soul and could for example be the voices of several different people, standing at different points of a situation. It ceases to be owned by a personality, which we could try to reconstruct in order to identify with it and share what it owns. Take this passage:

I hear a
voice shell-encased
turtledove similar to
Tripoli where she
met me her
singularity showing itself
in the way
she descended mirrored

accordingly to come
hither consistently but
it isn't an
illness there's a
chemical element that
takes place at
a certain point
though nothing's been
proven yet come
off it you
have a stable
mind so hang
on this is
one of the
voices calling through
you were forced
to closely release
faculty with these
who will be
familiar among the
admired melting into
nature resented constructions
against the glutted
apple

The "I hear a voice" probably belongs to the previous tirade, but for all that may belong to this one as well. The passage may end before the end of the quote I have extracted. This passage refers to chemicals and to voices coming through you so is probably about schizophrenia in some way. We might consider this as a theme of the work as a whole. Voices keep coming through a membrane which is very permeable. The central function in the ego which represses other voices has been stood down in *Carrier*. The story may involve a real romantic encounter between the poet (or some character?) and a girl, maybe even in Tripoli in Libya. The turtle dove is a symbol of amorousness. Its enclosure in a shell (possibly also a symbol of Venus, depicted with a shell, a comb and a mirror which also crops up) is poetic and strange. 'Release faculty' could refer to some halfway house where someone stays after a bout of illness, but could also be a definition of art as self-expression. I'm not sure how the singularity relates to mirrored, although it could simply be a mirrored staircase. That combination of virtual images and a shifting point of view offers difficulties to an insecure sense of reality. Resented constructions could be a feeling of someone who feels oppressed by an over-complex social order, as if melting into nature were an option. I think instead of a chilled beer tap: the absence of heat makes water from the air condense on the metal, and so the absence of warmth in a poem makes the invisible appear. Transient and undefined things emerge into plain sight.

It is hard to read *Carrier* without thinking of Tom Raworth and Adrian Clarke. Tom Raworth moved, in the early seventies, into a depersonalised voice. After a great deal of argument, people actually reading the poems detected a personal sensibility re-integrating the finely differentiated data. In some of his great works, the integrating urge was applied to a variety of texts covering

the range of voices you can hear from different niches of our society, and reminded me (at least) of a sculpture by Tony Cragg in which a vast range of found materials — old bottle tops, plastic toys, bicycle parts, a debris-line like the foreshore of the Thames at low tide — are integrated to form a Union Jack. The artist disappears behind the debris and the debris disappears beneath the artist's transforming design. Both Cragg and Raworth are recognised as modern classics. Mechanising the line-break so as to get away from a voice in 2007 is not the same gesture that it was in 1970. I don't think it can have the same revolutionary effect, but all the same it shouldn't be hard to assimilate.

The language which emerges from beneath a known voice and fixed social relations is deeply ambiguous and yet free to roll off in all directions.

safe
from his long
dog from Manatai
aura of civility
complete pattern of
when I was
deep underground or
widespread and she
couldn't see the
point of closing
next to me
looking like a
crystal stretched in
water she was
a mistress to
all the world

It's hard to tell where it's going. While I can locate a breach in the wall through which this language has exited, I cannot give an account of what it did next. Absorption and naturalising of the linguistic material is going to have to follow after an unknown interval. I couldn't figure out what is the carrier of the seed or what the seed is. We all carry seeds of human beings, but the word can be applied to material from other species whose means of mobility is to hitch a ride on a larger organism. The relationship between two tiers suggests, for me, the relationship between form and meaning in a stretch of language. But then, it could mean being a bus for a flu virus to ride on.

Review of *Carrier of the Seed* by John Couth in *Shearsman* (June 2008)

Carrier of the Seed by Jeffrey Side is a new e-book published by BlazeVox, a US publisher of 'post-avant poetics and fictions'. Set up by Geoffrey Gatza as a 'refuge' from mainstream poetry, the bulk of its output is available free and easily accessible at the click of a mouse.

Those who read this poem by Jeffrey Side will quickly become aware that they have embarked on an incredible odyssey through layers of space and time and into the darker recesses of the self. Under the duress of voyage the language of the 'narrative' appears on occasions on the verge of disintegration, recovering, like its protagonist (the lyrical 'I'), to proceed defiant to the poem's termination, which in turns offers no conclusion, only the acceptance of a recurring fate and the eternal nature of its hauntings:

I brought my
love a ring
to wear upon
her manipulate for
a token of
our own true
worship and to
remember me when
she returns no
more to be
parted when I'm
with you around

The 'seed' with which the lyrical 'I' is burdened surpasses the role of physical progenitor to the extent that the 'I' is also the sire of future knowledge and culture; he is the connection between past and future — the junction between generations. His purpose is to roam across geographical, historical, cultural and psychological space empirically alert, seeking out new linguistics to encapsulate his experiences of the flux and vortices of overlapping realities. Further, in order to individualise and avoid the banalities of repetition, a new linguistic is sought to express one of literature's ancient preoccupations and the theme of many texts:

terminology of specifics
or perlue for
you know my
love was kind
and cruel but
the judge sentenced
her anyway so
the entrance down
hope eteld his
find well etso
omnin this or
are kwa dright
all day and

night I fight
for light while
you were with
my mistress ...

The theme 'Carrier ...' predicates, its age-old reality, is that of love and betrayal; this is recounted both in the voice of the poet and in voices of others whose experiences, though different in circumstance, in essence equate, thus are articulate of emotions which replicate through layers of time and space. No matter whose voice is being listened to here, the 'she' that is talked of stubbornly, ironically endures even though '... nothing /ever lasts ...':

... the same like
the image of
love around say
450 BC when
you jilted me
behind the tent ...

The poem opens with:

You made Pandora
visit me from
her disruptions across
the sea her
mane was stretched
like Cyprus-flow
and her mind
was as smooth
as causation at
a time I
had reached my
most content ...

The act of betrayal occurs at this instant of supreme 'content', and in its wake the reason and necessity for the journey — the disruption of order and the quest for understanding. Thus the 'I' becomes nomad seeking, in the wasteland of desertion, ultimate purgation and the reinvention of self. Like an unjustly tagged prisoner, he is condemned to wear the mark of his 'punishment' — the seed (another seed) of betrayal — and a constant reminder of 'her' that will impinge on all thought and experience long after the moment of 'crime', marking the 'I' forever as its 'guilty' victim:

... I love her
in my heart
and this can
never be torn
away by the

daughters of memory
who formed a
colony of themselves ...

So all the way through to the poem's conclusion, with its implied continuation, the reader will have embarked down an extraordinary route of languages, registers and vocabularies, which function to arrest, surprise and disrupt, languages that flow together, collide and cut across each other's current like a plaited waterway. In turn, this flow has been enriched by the assimilation of artefacts from different generations of writers; these deepen the work interlacing it with echoes and experiences from different times and cultures. The integration of so many disparate elements into one cogent construct is the poem's triumph.

**Review of *Cyclones in High Northern Latitudes* by Carey Scott Wilkerson in *Alabama
Writer's Forum* (September 2010)**

In *Cyclones in High Northern Latitudes*, Jeffrey Side and Jake Berry tell strange, beautiful tales. Here are two extraordinary poets collaborating, at once, in mythological structures and closely observed moments of luminous experience. Indeed, *Cyclones in High Northern Latitudes* is a dazzling storm of lyrical imagery, an emergency beacon telling us that language and life are perilously, delightfully interpenetrated in the laboratories of the experimental poetic.

Early in the book, we find a kind of implicit primer to the Side-Berrian aesthetic:

Events rush
toward me
in waves.
I am unable
to discern
if this is purely
subjective
or if reality,
nature,
the world
as we observe it
is actually rising
and receding
in regular intervals ...

Thus are the terms of the given world glimpsed through the complex patterns of Side's and Berry's cyclonic language, a phenomenology that throws light and object across the page with the velocity of comedy and the determinism of solemn ritual, as further on in the same passage, we sense the narrative turning inward, moving reflectively toward a mediation between the stunning music of the Side-Berrian line and the darker imbrications of their stark motifs. Consider this moment:

I learned long ago
to distinguish between
strong memories and
whatever the world is,
and rushing in now again
with a large bird
on the horizon,
or is that some sort
of flying machine?

The horizon of discovery in this remarkable book traces through the book itself, which is not to say it is an exercise simply in self-reflexivity. But it is true that the principal energy of the Side-Berrian line feels bravely summoned from certain natural sources, and I find this deeply held poetic commitment both dangerous and celebratory: our poets are working simultaneously with

primordial pulsation(s) of nature itself but also with the joyous complexity of a technos assembled from the wreckage they discern “in the algorithms,/a feedback loop/intense enough/ to penetrate/the human skull [.]” There is real risk in this elegant book. Lesser poets might have turned away, but it is their collaborative aesthetic of self-imperilment that creates not only an inventive sense of tornadic torsion in the line but also a grim honesty about the world:

Just at the moment
you think you have
discovered its physics
it explodes into
wild distortions —
earthquakes
where no fault line
was previously known,
cyclones
in high northern latitudes.

Cycles, cyclones, curls, and recapitulations of thematic clusters are all in evidence here, and not one gesture is lost to effect or affect. *Cyclones in High Northern Latitudes* is an exemplary book of radical economies in poetic discourse, and I find it both philosophically provocative and vertiginously fun to read, to say nothing of the illustrations — some expository, others perhaps more meditative — that punctuate the text: among them, a pair of eyes peer through the endlessly reduplicative loops of a Möbius strip. I keep coming back to those eyes. They feel somehow emblematic of the entire project, at once knowing and perplexed, now sinister, now sorrowful. Here are the poets’ eyes, pushing through the problem of semantics in a collapsing alphanumerical universe.

Side and Berry deploy knowing resonances of Charles Olson’s “mathematic of feeling” and that admirable Southern dictum that we are part of nature and nature, similarly, part of us. But this fine book is also an investigation into the possibilities of the page and a storm drill to test the strength of the imagination. Perhaps, finally, it is also a shelter for the post-modern self. Withal, Side and Berry have created, in their own elegant turbulence, a warning, a hymn, a serious work of art.

Review of *Outside Voices: An Email Correspondence* by Ami Kaye in *Big Bridge* (June 2013)

It has been a long-standing tradition for publishers to sell books made up entirely of literary correspondences. Often the letters contain passages written in a brilliant conversational style, a wealth of literary history and trivia, and insights regarding human and artistic development. With the advent of email and its lightning fast delivery of written communication, writers have shifted their correspondences to this relatively new platform. Compared with the linguistic virtuosity of a literary correspondence in the pre-internet days, the tone of an email correspondence can be informal, terse, and certainly less poetic.

When approached to write a review for *Outside Voices: An Email Correspondence*, I admit to having felt some qualms. Aside from the rather voyeuristic feeling of reading private letters, one can also become desensitized to the frenetic, social networking chatter and the massive volume of personal information channeled daily over the Internet. However, in this compilation of their email correspondence, co-authors Jake Berry and Jeffrey Side discuss the various implications of contemporary poetry and music, both topics of particular interest to me, and I found myself reading through their letters with a rising interest. The first few emails in *Outside Voices*, introduce the topics that run through the rest of the correspondence, pausing to explore an amusing sidetrack — a conversation discussing various accents. By the sixth email, Berry and Side are firmly back to speaking of poetry and their perception of its state today. Also, Berry mentions a newly released Leonard Cohen DVD that has been reigniting interest in his work, and this thread comes up various times over the course of their conversations.

Jeffrey Side, who edits *The Argotist Online*, verbalizes his recent disenchantment with the poetry scene: “I sometimes wonder why poetry matters anyway, when you have singers like Dylan who do it better and with more beauty than most poets these days.” While many poets would respond to this statement with a knee-jerk denial, Side effectively provides a foil for arguments in favor of poetry, contributing a more balanced flow to the conversation. Berry speaks of the different influences of poetry and music on an audience:

A singer or band can usually find a small audience because people will come for the music. They associate it with entertainment. Poetry is perceived as the domain of specialists. After a century of modernism it's easy to see why the average person would think that, but poets believe it too and revel in it ...

Side's view of the future of poetry based on historical trends is less than optimistic as he tells Berry that he finds “much of academic poetry and the discourse on it pointless.” Side further elaborates:

It is difficult to be taken seriously if you belong to no recognised school of poetry. Also, if a poet is not part of a school, the chances of his/her inclusion in accounts of poetry's history will be slim. Such accounts only mention poets who were allied to movements or schools ... True outsiders like Blake and Keats went to their graves largely unpublished and unknown, yet Wordsworth became famous partly because he was loosely categorized as part of what was known as The Lake School of poetry.

In a later email Side argues in favor of music, stating:

Songs have the ability to create a sustainable mood, which poems can't do, in my view. This is because the music maintains the mood despite what the lyrics indicate. So you have a sort of thematic counterpoint going on. You see this all the time in Dylan whose vocal mood will be in one register while the music will be in another register.

On the popularity of song, Berry writes: "You're right, large audiences will always choose song over poetry ... The great mass of people always prefer what is easiest to access." He mulls over these ideas and responds:

I think that poems in a book can sustain a mood as well as a song, but they demand a little more initial effort. One has to be willing to spend as much time reading and rereading a poem as one does listening to a song over and over.

Berry goes on to speak of his work *Brambu Drezi*:

The ominous, haunting quality you hear in the Brambu material is not entirely unintentional, but it is more an aspect of the blend of elements — the poetry coming from the darker, less explored regions of the psyche combined with bass and drums and guitar that have their origins in Africa and the culture Africans created in the Americas — blues, jazz, vodoun, gospel. And there is the chant as well, which is not what we've come to expect from poetry.

Side agrees and continues, "Ironically, poetry probably started as incantation. Music is incantation as is song." In one of his emails, Side describes the effect of a reading he attended:

I did get to hear John Ashbery reading in Liverpool in 1991. It did, after a while, put one in some sort of semi-trance-like state that I found pleasant—which he may have, perhaps, intended. I think, also, the fact that the reading was held in an art gallery (in a beautiful low-ceilinged room with expressionist paintings on the walls) contributed to the pleasing affect the reading had.

In a couple of their exchanges, Berry and Side speak of what the word "poet" means to them. I could not help smile at the following line from Berry's email:

The word poet slowly becomes a way to compliment someone in any genre, except perhaps poetry. Scorsese is a cinematic poet of urban violence and so on.

Berry and Side continue their discussion about poetry and music through the entire book, trying to articulate their thoughts about the perceptions people have of both arts, and how they are intertwined, especially from the point of their origins. Berry makes a case for why some of these perceptions do not work in favor of poetry:

Critics of high art still try to make distinctions and rate one above the other, but it doesn't play that way. We listen to both. We understand one is more sophisticated, but that really doesn't make any difference. We don't always feel sophisticated. We don't always want to be elevated. Sometimes we want the raw emotion of popular song. It is impossible for poetry to compete. Not many people are willing to sit down and

surrender to the depths of a strong poem in a book or even listen to a great poet read a poem extremely well. Ezra Pound could really make his poems sing, but given the choice most people would rather listen to whatever's on the radio rather than old Ez. I think they're really missing something.

Toward the end of the book, both authors speak of the role of Internet publishing. Jeffrey Side ponders the duality of the Internet, and its role in propagating writers and their work:

Whilst the Internet has allowed anyone to become widely published and read without having to get accepted by the official publishing gate keepers (which is a good thing) it has also minimized the chances of those writers escaping relative obscurity.

Berry, in a fitting conclusion to the book, articulates some of the philosophical reasons for creating art:

A star blasted into oblivion, became a nebula that spawned new stars with new planets and on one of them a species of life evolved that make noises and shapes they call art. Eventually another star will blow itself apart and all of it will be gone. The important thing is to tie into the greater process, to find some way of allowing it to live through your work. That way we serve our little bit of infinity for a tiny increment of eternity ... All we can do is make the best noise we can while we can and make it public as best we can. If that means global distribution in all forms of media, or just a few pages on the Internet we can't let that distract us from the reason we started doing it in the first place — because we loved it, because it gave us a sense of purpose and a connection to something as old as culture, maybe as old as the species, maybe as old as the music of the spheres.

Readers will find themselves drawn into the debate of whether music is more accessible than poetry as they navigate this book and sift through the various stances put forth by Side and Berry who traverse a range of ideas and beliefs about song writing and its relation to poetry, and where each of these arts stands in contemporary culture. In one of his letters, Berry states: "In my opinion we have to start bridging the supposed gap between music and poetry in both directions." At the very least, this book will make readers wonder if they should be saving their more interesting correspondences rather than hitting the delete key.

About the Reviewers

Adam Fieled

Adam Fieled is a poet, novelist, critic and musician based in Philadelphia. His books include *Opera Bufo*, *Beams*, *When You Bit...*, *Chimes*, *Apparition Poems*, *Equations*, *Cheltenham*, and *Cheltenham Elegies/Keats' Odal Cycle*. A magna cum laude graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, he also holds an MFA from New England College and an MA from Temple University, where he held the University Fellowship.

John M. Bennett

John M. Bennett is an American experimental text, sound, and visual poet. As well as steadily producing and distributing his own work, Bennett, through "Luna Bisonte Prods", a small press founded in 1974, has published thousands of limited edition items by writers who compose visual poetry, word art, and other experimental fiction/art/poetry. Bennett's papers, and published works, as well as the results of his own publishing activities (including 30 years of *Lost & Found Times* magazine), are collected in several major institutions, including Washington University in St. Louis, SUNY Buffalo, The Ohio State University and The Museum of Modern Art.

Jake Berry

Jake Berry is a poet, musician and visual artist. The author of *Brambu Drezi*, *Species of Abandoned Light*, *Drafts of the Sorcery*, *Genesis Suicide*, *Phaneagrams* and numerous other books. He has been an active member of the global arts and literary community for more than 30 years. His poems, fiction, essays, reviews and other writings have been published widely in both print and electronic mediums. He has collaborated with Jeffrey Side on two books and one ebook: *Cyclones in High Northern Latitudes*, *Outside Voices: An Email Correspondence* and *Aphorisms of Chance*. He regularly records and performs his compositions solo and with the groups Bare Knuckles, The Ascension Brothers and The Strindbergs. *Mystery Songs*, his tenth solo album, was released in 2016. Ongoing projects include books four and five of *Brambu Drezi*, a new book of collaborative poems with Jeffrey Side, and a wide range of musical projects.

Pam Brown

Pam Brown was, from 1997 to 2002, the poetry editor of *Overland*, and from 2004 to 2011 was the associate editor of *Jacket* magazine. She has been a guest at poetry festivals worldwide, taught at the University for Foreign Languages, Hanoi, and during 2003 had Australia Council writers residency in Rome. In 2013, she held the Distinguished Visitor Award at the University of Auckland, New Zealand.

Andrew Duncan

Andrew Duncan has been publishing poetry since his Cambridge days in the late 1970s, including *Threads of Iron*, *Skeleton Looking at Chinese Pictures*, *Anxiety Before Entering a Room*, *The Imaginary in Geometry*, *Savage Survivals* and *Radio Vortex* (the last a selected poems translated in

to German). He is one of the editors of *Angel Exhaust* and has translated modern German poetry. His books of literary criticism include: *The Failure of Conservatism in Modern British Poetry*, *Centre and Periphery in Modern British Poetry*, *A Poetry Boom 1990–2010* and *The Long 1950s*.

John Couth

John Couth is a freelance writer, whose poetry and reviews have appeared in magazines, anthologies and e-zines throughout the world.

Carey Scott Wilkerson

Carey Scott Wilkerson has published books of poetry, plays, edited an anthology of Georgia poetry and written the libretti for three operas, two of which have been produced. His works for the stage have been produced in New York, Atlanta, Los Angeles and Frankfurt, Germany. He has won the Columbus State University Creative Endeavors Prize, received two writing fellowships from the Lillian E. Smith Center for the Arts and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize,

Ami Kaye

Ami Kaye is the publisher of Glass Lyre Press, and has also been running and managing *Pirene's Fountain*, a poetry journal, for several years. She edited and published the anthology *Sunrise from Blue Thunder* in response to the Japan 2011 disasters, and more recently co-edited *First Water: Best of Pirene's Fountain*. Her poems, reviews and articles have appeared in various journals and anthologies including *Tiferet*, *East on Central*, *Tears in the Fence*, *Cartier Street Review*, *Wild Goose Poetry Review*, *Peony Moon*, *Scottish Poetry Review*, *Diode Poetry Journal*, *Dance of the Peacock*, *Enchanting Verses* and *Suvarnarehka* among others. Her work was nominated for the James B. Baker award, and received an honourable mention in the 2013 Tiferet writing contest. She is the author of *What Hands Can Hold*.