

Roots and Routes

Poetics at New College of California

Edited by

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Series in Creative Writing Studies



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The Graduate Poetics Program at the New College of California[']...intent was not to replicate other writing programs, but to study the lineage and process of the poetic traditions informing us. It was to concentrate on the roots and routes of making poems.

—David Meltzer, *Two-Way Mirror* (City Lights, 2015)

For the poems

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Introduction: Source. Structure. Line. Rime.

Neither a variation on ordinary graduate studies in literature, lacking students' and faculty's primary commitment to the vocation itself...[nor] a glorified creative writing program, lacking a thorough, sound acquaintance with the values and knowledge of the tradition of poetry...., our program undertakes to address what we see to be the character and intentions of [that] tradition...—a tradition we know to be real and which we endeavor to observe.... We see [poetry] as a singular spiritual discipline whose primary embodiment is in its own art of language, and whose motives and consequences lead out to a knowledge equal in magnitude and completeness to any other.

—Duncan McNaughton, 1980-1981 Poetics Program Catalog

For most of its nearly thirty-year existence the Poetics Program at New College of California was concerned far less with tutoring future teachers, fine-tuning individual poems, or honing the voices of young poets, than with helping students find their way to sources that might feed their own intellectual and artistic practices throughout their lives, and with helping them find their place in some meaningful poetic lineage. The emphasis was on a sense of history—literary and otherwise—akin to the Greek *'istorin*, or “finding out for oneself,” as one of the program founders’ key poetical and pedagogical forebearers, Charles Olson, put it, as well as on a sense of knowledge as *gnosis*, a distinctly personal cognition. “Book learning” took on a whole new meaning for the participants in the Poetics Program, as erudition and technical analysis went hand in hand with visionary interpretation and personal exegesis.

The extremely rigorous and detailed attention to the components and structures of the poem exceeded any close reading ever performed by even the most fastidious of the New Critics, as Poetics students employed all manner of analytical tools to dissect and seek to understand individual poems—from contemporary linguistic theory to the Oxford English Dictionary to the International Phonetic Alphabet—but their dissections left no butchered toads behind, coldly lying on workshop tables. Rather, Poetics students used these dissections to carve out portals to the imaginary gardens whence poems’ very real toads come. Whereas the New Critical lens was turned inward on the poem as if it were an entirely isolated and hence limited object, the New Collegiate lens was turned simultaneously on the words of the poem and on the worlds in which the poem was written and in which it was being read, each of these words and worlds informing the others. Who was reading a poem was understood to

determine how it was read, and who had written it, how it was written. The type of critical writing the faculty modeled and encouraged feigned neither distance nor detachment, but proudly claimed and displayed its personal investment and poetical engagement. Such writing often concerned itself with academically peculiar subjects (or peculiar aspects of academically common ones), and often took idiosyncratic form, but remained nonetheless rigorously analytical in nature.

To quote further from the first Poetics Program catalog, from which the epigraph to this introduction comes:

Our subject is poetics, which is to say..., that which treats of the science and art of poetry in all its dimensions and questions, all of what may be said to be proper to poetry. The endeavor is immense, and we do not propose ourselves competent to address more than a small portion of what poetics may actually and legitimately include.¹

The faculty is comprised of persons who cannot be said to be in any easy or specious agreement on the terms of their vocation..., a faculty which is responsible to the subject as poets and teachers..., working artists who, while their procedural bases vary greatly, as do their respective dispositions to the tradition, nonetheless share a common commitment to open scholarship and to mature investigation of the subject.... The subject does not ask agreement. We expect division and contest to exist within this faculty, and we believe our differences can yield formal benefits for all of us.²

To this end, the program endeavored to remain open to all manner of personal, poetical, and political incursions from outside, at least engaging and at best incorporating diverse and often contestatory ideas from the wider artistic, political, and intellectual community of the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond. Such study was deemed far more useful, in both the short term and the long run, for the young student-poets, as it gave them a ground from which to work, rather than merely a context, i.e. the workshop, within which to work. As critical evaluations of the Creative Writing MFA industry continue to build on the work of writers like D. G. Myers (*The Elephants Teach*), Mark McGurl (*The Program Era*), Eric Bennett (*Workshops of Empire*), and others, we intend for this collection to illuminate certain alternative, indeed fundamentally different, ways and means of teaching the methods and materials of what we call Poetry to young practitioners of the art. This volume also may be useful to a wide range of students, instructors, and independent scholars interested particularly in USAmerican poetry of the late 20th and early 21st Century, more broadly in the literary history of the United States throughout the 19th and 20th Centuries, and more broadly still in fundamental ideas of poetics across temporal, spacial, and linguistic borders. It also offers a glimpse of the formative years and ideas of a number of poets who have gone on from their experience in the Poetics Program

to become key contributors to the national poetry community, as writers, editors, publishers, teachers, and even directors of writing programs at various institutions, extending the lineages they came to recognize through their studies at New College.

By and large the poets who were drawn to the program tended to locate their immediate poetic forebearers among the poets represented in Donald Allen's anthology *The New American Poetry: 1945-1960*—most provisionally grouped under the umbrellas of Black Mountain, San Francisco Renaissance, Beat Generation, and New York School. Indeed, a number of poets included in that seminal (though hardly all-inclusive) anthology would teach in the program, providing an important contemporary point of reference for a curricular trajectory that traced the New American Poetry, writ large, back to Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, H.D., and Gertrude Stein, whose works were in turn referred back to Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson, and to the English Romantics, who in turn were referred back to precursors in the English Renaissance, and to poets writing outside the English language, who were integral to the development of the poetic tradition in that language, including Dante, the Troubadours, Hafez, Rumi, the ancient Greeks, and the poets of the Old Testament and other mythic literatures. As McNaughton wrote, in the first program catalog, this was far from a “National” literature, but part of a tradition springing from pre-classical sources largely centered in “the ancient East Mediterranean and Near East” and continuing to “the immediate present” despite “the advent, history and presence today of the reasoning mind as the dominant assumption of human knowledge during the past two and one-half millennia.”³

Some Basic History

New College of California was founded in 1971, just across the Golden Gate from San Francisco in Sausalito, offering classes to an undergraduate student body numbering fewer than twenty that first year in a small rented bungalow that served also as its administrative offices. The following year, the college moved to a larger suite of rooms on Sausalito's waterfront to accommodate a student body that had tripled in size. Over the next few years, the student body, faculty, and administration continued to grow, while the undergraduate college pursued accreditation and even added a law school—the first public-interest law school in the country. In 1977, the full-grown and fully accredited New College moved south into the city, pitching its tent at 777 Valencia Street, in the Mission District, with the law school taking up residence a mile and a half up the road at 50 Fell, just around the corner from City Hall. Coincident with this move, Louis Patler and Duncan McNaughton created an emphasis in North American Poetry and Poetics under the general Bachelor of Arts in the Humanities degree offered by the college. This was a formalization and intensification of activities in which they'd

both been engaged since McNaughton arrived in the spring of 1974 to teach poetry and inspired Patler, who had joined the faculty in the fall of 1972 to teach social sciences, to turn his own attention and teaching in the same direction. They began to bring in a great many visiting poets to read, talk, and teach—including Amiri Baraka, Bill Berkson, Tom Clark, John Clarke, Diane di Prima, Edward Dorn, Robert Grenier, Bobbie Louise Hawkins, Joanne Kyger, Michael McClure, Michael Palmer, Leslie Scalapino, and many more. The success and excitement of the undergraduate emphasis led to a desire to advance their activities another step by adding a graduate program in Poetics, which officially welcomed its first students in the fall of 1980.

To join them in forming the original core faculty of the graduate Poetics Program, McNaughton and Patler recruited poets Robert Duncan, Diane di Prima, and David Meltzer. All three were well-established and widely-respected among counter-cultural and anti-academic circles of poets in the Bay Area, and increasingly across the country, with Duncan's work beginning to be studied seriously at various universities, as well, but it is worth noting that while McNaughton and Patler each held a PhD (from SUNY Buffalo and Wayne State, respectively) neither Duncan, nor di Prima, nor Meltzer had graduated from college. As Patler put it, "We wanted the absolute best minds we could [get] regardless whether they had degrees or not.... We always had in mind that it should be poets teaching poetics, not academics. If a poet of substance also happened to have a degree, fine, it wasn't something we'd hold against somebody but it wasn't a criteria."⁴ Indeed, the program was designed in express opposition both to traditional studies in Literature and increasingly popular studies in Creative Writing. There would be no writing workshops; faculty would teach subjects, but these subjects would be decidedly non-traditional as far as academia was concerned. In large part arising out of the faculty's own dual intellectual and artistic investments, they tended to focus on the occult, hermetic, mystical, magical, and visionary properties of the art, and were approached via a radical pedagogy very much alive and responding to events as they occurred.

Meltzer taught year-long courses on the Kabbalah and single-term classes on connected topics like prophecy and translation, along with single-term classes on jazz and on humor (the latter with McNaughton as co-counsel). McNaughton also taught classes on Sufism and on Ancient Greek myth, along with a two-year course on William Blake and a five-year ongoing course on William Shakespeare, while di Prima taught semester- and year-long classes on what she called Hidden Religions in the Poetry of Europe, tracing unorthodox strains of thought throughout the Common Era and considering how "this body of experience has served as source for much of the poetry and art of the world, and produces its own resonances in us even when we are unaware of the reason,"⁵ as she put it in her original course description. She also taught classes focused more narrowly on Grail myth, Alchemical texts, and the poets of the Romantic movement. Even Patler, whose training was more traditionally academic, and not literary, but sociological, would

teach classes on Dogon and other African cosmologies and poetics in addition to the more standard studies of canonical and contemporary European and USAmerican poetry. Robert Duncan, however, was the guiding spirit of the program, and his offerings were wide-ranging and free-flowing, with many of his concerns overlapping the other faculty's, but following radically disparate tangents. His signature course in what he dubbed the Basic Elements ranged over all aspects of form, from the smallest to the largest structures of language and the poem. This interfaced with his courses on Ideas of Meaning and on the Nature of Persons in Poetry, as well as his courses on the trio of Baudelaire, Whitman, and Dickinson, on the pair of Dante and Shakespeare, on H.D., on Linguistics, and on Field Theory, a year-long course taught in tandem with Michael Palmer.

Palmer had stood in for Duncan when the latter assumed a visiting appointment at Bard for a year and became a sixth core-faculty member half-way through that initial core's seven-year run, but he'd begun as one of several adjuncts and visiting poets whose supplementary teaching was a key component of the curriculum throughout this initial incarnation of the Poetics Program. In addition to Palmer, several other poets taught full classes for a semester or more, including Robert Grenier, Anselm Hollo, Anne Waldman, and Bill Berkson, and the continued visiting poets series brought three guests each term to present a public reading and three public lectures a piece, with Helen Adam, Leslie Scalapino, Joanne Kyger, and Ron Silliman among the first guests. Then from 1983-1987, guest lectures were organized around a common topic, with the likes of Robert Creeley, Beverly Dahlen, and Susan Howe speaking about Emily Dickinson; Kenneth Irby, Bernadette Mayer, and Nathaniel Mackey speaking about Walt Whitman; and Judy Grahn, Lyn Hejinian, and Philip Whalen speaking about Gertrude Stein, to name just three such constellations. Collective inquiry and collaborative work were central, and in 1984, Robert Duncan's Basic Elements class was recast as a joint faculty effort, with each of the now six core members presenting a set of talks on various interrelated topics, all interspersed with connected seminar sessions and individual student presentations to the gathered members of the entire Poetics Program.

The student body was impressive in its own right, with the first cohort including the likes of Bobbie Louise Hawkins and John Thorpe, who had both taught at New College before enrolling as students, along with Aaron Shurin, David Levi Strauss, Susan Thackrey, Sarah Menefee, and Robert Kocik, and subsequent classes including Norma Cole, Julia Connor, Judith Roche, Mary Margaret Sloan, Todd Baron, and many more. The conjunction of students and faculty made for an intense educational and community experience. Beyond the official coursework, outside the classroom, these and other enrolled students as well as auditors and unofficial members of the New College Poetics community constituted intense independent study groups, hosted reading, performance, and lecture series, and ran small presses and magazines, most notably perhaps the official, if short-lived New College Poetics publication, *Convivio* (ed. John Thorpe), and the longer-lived,

if unofficial house organ, *ACTS* (ed. David Levi Strauss, with Benjamin Hollander). Other little magazines produced by students in the early years of the program included *Asphaleios* (ed. Michael Lazar), *Notice* (eds. William Scharf and Kerry Tepperman), *Flit* (ed. Dawn Kolokithas), *Issue* (ed. Todd Baron), and *Plunk* (ed. Helen Hampton Nace).

Few students formally graduated in the early years of the program. Aaron Shurin was the first to take his degree, in 1982 writing an inspired thesis witnessing Charles Olson's Projectivist Poetics in Whitman's expansive line, and Carl Grundberg took his in 1984 covering Troubadour Bernart de Ventadorn, followed by Dawn Kolokithas in 1986 whose thesis, a series of letters addressed to Jack Spicer accompanied by original collages, was the first to fully embrace the attempt at capturing the creative-yet-critical response to poetry the program sought to develop.⁶ Many students during these years were unconcerned with the degree, having enrolled simply to study with Robert Duncan and the other faculty. Others who had been working toward a degree but had been unable to complete their theses before the spring 1987 collapse would finish after the fall 1987 reconstruction, often with the continued advising of former faculty members.

By the end of the sixth year of the program, Robert Duncan had become too ill to continue teaching, and coincidentally, Duncan McNaughton resigned, fed up with an administration that seemed at its best incompetent, at its worst corrupt, and at all times poorly disposed towards the Poetics Program. Lyn Hejinian joined the faculty to cover some of his teaching responsibilities, but the problems that led to McNaughton's departure had not departed with him, and without the soon-to-be-deceased Duncan's vital light around which to rally, there seemed little reason to continue at New College. The extant participants in the program actively sought affiliation with another institution, faculty and students alike resigning en masse effective at the end of the seventh year. Yet when a planned relocation of the program to San Francisco's Antioch College fell through, many of the students returned to New College to continue their studies.

The program's offices and classes, along with most other college operations, were shifted at this time from buildings on Valencia Street (777 and the recently acquired 766) over to the law school's 50 Fell Street campus. Adam Cornford was enlisted by the college to oversee the reconstruction, and he hired poets Tom Clark, Gloria Frym, and Juan Felipe Herrera to form a new core faculty, with himself at the head, enlisting Philip Lamantia as a visiting faculty member and welcoming David Meltzer back as visiting faculty as well. Initially, the New Poetics Program under Cornford continued to be exclusively an MA program, with Meltzer again offering his précis on the Kabbalah, Herrera offering "instruction in community ethnography techniques in order to chart the literary history of the S.F. Bay Area during the last thirty years," and Cornford offering historical considerations of "the longstanding tension between poetry as a special, set-apart discourse and poetry as an extension of common speech"⁷ in its first year. However, the program also

incorporated student writing more fully into the curriculum, with Frym offering a hybrid workshop/seminar investigating “the prose poem, or the poem in prose...as an anarchic, anti-lyrical technique, unstable and contradictory..., a method of subverting genre,” and Clark offering the first Poetry Writing Workshop, which was based in “group critique of individual [student] poems,” as any standard MFA workshop anywhere, but which was also particularly concerned with the “esthetic and philosophical issues [the poems might] raise.”⁸ Such workshops and hybrid courses along with individual directed writing and manuscript advising would continue to be central to the student experience after the reconstitution.

After the first year, Herrera left the program and Cornford reinstated Meltzer to the core faculty, and when the majority of Poetics Program activities returned to Valencia Street in fall 1989, the balance of the curriculum would undergo a major reorganization, in response to the demand by a large part of the student body for more attention to the traditional English and US American canon to supplement the more contemporary and idiosyncratic course offerings, which also continued as electives. The new core curriculum, “rather than attempting to cover history as a continuum..., [was] built around four moments of rupture and rapid transformation” initially dubbed *The Birth of the Modern, 1580-1660* (Shakespeare, Jonson, Donne, Herbert, Marvell, Herrick, and Milton); *The Romantic Revolution, 1780-1830* (Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, and the Shelleys); *American Vistas* (later changed to *Making It New*), 1820-1870 (Dickinson, Whitman, Emerson, Melville, and Poe); and *The Great Divide* (later changed to *Shocks & Breaks*), 1900-1950 (Crane, H.D., Hughes, Moore, Olson, Pound, Stein, Stevens, and Williams). Coursework was “designed to teach not only history but two different axes in reading and textual analysis..., the *technical-interpretive*: reading for poetic craft and denotative content,...[and] the *historical-analytic*: reading for ideological assumptions, for structure, for relation to genre, to the vernacular and other discourses of the period,”⁹ with each semester offering twinned classes: a historical-analytic “survey” (i.e. context) course and a technical-interpretive “major authors” course. This basic structure would endure over the remaining years of the program, with some variation, the workshops largely taught by Clark and Frym, the context courses largely taught by Meltzer, and the major author courses variously taught by Clark, Cornford, Frym, and Lyn Hejinian, who rejoined the core faculty in the early 1990s.

Back in the mid-1970s, before the Poetics Program proper began, undergraduates, under the direction of Louis Patler, had published 13 issues of *Cayati*, the cover of the final issue adorned with a tarot card, the 13th of the Major Arcana: Death, and when the Poetics Program was reanimated in 1987, Poetics graduate students resurrected the magazine, publishing a 14th issue in the spring of 1988, with a 15th issue following in the spring of 1989, before a new magazine, *Prosodia*, took its place as the house organ in the spring of 1990. No issue appeared the following year, but *Prosodia* would be a far more regular, enduring, and integral part of the Poetics Program throughout the 1990s than *Convivio* or any other

magazine had been in the 1980s, with issues appearing annually from 1992 through 2001, edited and produced by an ever-changing cast of Poetics students with a series of faculty advisers, most notably Gloria Frym, for issues 3 through 6, and George Mattingly, for the final four issues (7 through 10). Whereas prior to the 1987 reconstitution of the Poetics Program, even the officially sanctioned and funded publications had been produced more or less independently, *Prosodia* would be the subject and object of an annual, year-long course, much as most organs produced by MFA programs across the country today, though far less concerned with national visibility and respectability. Also in 1988, a course of study in the Book Arts was established within the Poetics Program by the now-renowned printer Peter Koch, who was succeeded in the New College print studio by Mary Laird of Quelquefois Press in 1990, with Eileen Callahan of the Turtle Island Foundation running the press in the early 2000s. Students in Book Arts classes produced a number of books and many broadsides of the faculty, student, and visiting poets' work, sometimes as coursework and sometimes as extracurricular activity.

When the Poetics Program shifted the majority of its activities to 50 Fell Street, Intersection for the Arts took up residence in New College's 766 Valencia Street building, and continued to host many Poetics events, though the organization had no official connection to the College, as such. In the middle 1990s Small Press Traffic, the literary organization founded in 1974 and long housed just a few blocks away at 24th and Guerrero, occupied the space with a more explicit affiliation with New College, with director Dodie Bellamy for a time attending orientation day to welcome new students to the Poetics Program alongside faculty. There were, of course, numerous other arts organizations, bookstores, galleries, performance spaces, and other venues in the vicinity where Poetics students read their work, performed plays and music, exhibited their art, and otherwise engaged with the Mission district arts scene throughout the program's existence. The Poetics Program would not have been what it was had it not been located where it was.

As we gathered materials for our project and reflected upon writing this thumbnail history of the Program, we came to a general agreement that there were three distinct periods of development: 1) the initial incarnation of the program in the early and middle 1980s, 2) the reincarnation in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and 3) the final phase of its existence, which can be dated to the middle 1990s, when the Program underwent another major structural change. Under Cornford's direction, responding in no small part to demands by the student body and college administration and motivated by anxieties about the long-term viability of the Program, i.e. both its marketability to prospective students as well as the marketability of Program graduates to potential employers, the Program began increasing its attention to what might best be termed the "professional development" of its students. In retrospect it seems inevitable that the program would begin to offer, in addition to its sui generis MA in Poetics, an MFA as well. In its final period, applications were welcome for

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FROM THIS FREE SAMPLE

Contributor Biographical Notes

Stephanie Baker is a 1998 graduate of NCOC's MFA in Poetics program. With Marina Lazzara, she co-taught an introduction to poetry class to NCOC Humanities undergraduates. She edited the NCOC Poetics journal *Prosodia* (Nos. 6 and 7, 1997 and 1998). She has published poetry and prose in a variety of literary journals. Recent chapbooks include *Book of Mud* (Two-Way Mirror Books) and linked verse *Sticky Rice* (conedometriangle books). *Mud Pony, a primer* is forthcoming from conedometriangle books in 2020.

Micah Ballard was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He is the author of four full-length books of poetry: *Waifs and Strays* (City Lights Books), *Afterlives* (Bootstrap Press), *The Michaux Notebook* (FMSBW), and *Parish Krewes* (Bootstrap Press). Other books include: *Evangeline Downs* (Ugly Duckling Presse), *Daily Vigs* (Bird & Beckett), *Vesper Chimes* (Gas Meter) and *Selected Prose (2008-2019)* (Blue Press). From 2000-2007 he directed the Humanities Program at New College of California; since then he's worked at the USE. With Sunnylyn Thibodeaux, he has printed over 30 books by various artists and poets under the imprints Auguste Press and Lew Gallery Editions. They live in San Francisco with their daughter Lorca.

Todd Baron earned his Masters Degree in Poetics in 1989. Among his books are *AS YET* (Chax Books, 2012), *TV EYE* (Chax Books, 2003), *Outside* (Avenue B Books, 1995), and *Return of the World* (O Books, 1988). He was co-editor and founder of Littoral Books, Los Angeles, and co-editor of ReMap magazine with Carolyn Kemp, and of Issue Magazine with Tosh Berman. He has taught Language Arts, American Studies, American Literature, and Creative Writing, and has been the recipient of various awards including a Reynolds Foundation Fellowship for the study of the Civil War, and an NEH award for the study of the Whaling Industry and enslavement. As a child, he was a professional TV, film, stage and voice actor.

Dawn-Michelle Baude is an international writer, educator and Senior Fulbright Scholar. The author of seven volumes of poetry, two volumes of translations, three art catalogues, three communications books, and one children's book, Baude has written for Condé Nast, the *Los Angeles Times* and *Huffington Post*. Her art and literary reviews have appeared in *Newsweek International*, *artcritical.com*, *Art + Auction*, and *American Book Review*. She has taught at Bard College, American University of Beirut, Alexandria University (Egypt), John Cabot University (Rome), and American University of Paris. She currently makes her home in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Noam Birnbaum completed his academic work at The New College of California and then turned his energies to building a San Francisco technology consulting firm. He lives and plays in Oakland with his wife and kids.

Noel Black is a poet, journalist, and audio producer. He's the author of 3 full-length books—*The Natural Football League* (The New Heave-Ho, 2016); *La Goon* (Furniture Presse Books, 2014), and *Uselysyes* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2011)—and many chapbooks including the most recent, *High Noon* (Blue Press 2018). *Lost Highways*, his podcast for Colorado State Historical Society, recently won a grant from National Endowment for the Humanities. He splits his time between Denver and Manitou Springs, CO.

Steve Carll (b. 1967 in Olean, NY) attended the Poetics Program at New College of California from 1990-1993. "Being of the Poem of Being: Heidegger, Cummings, and Language" was his master's thesis. He currently lives in Honolulu with his family. His publications include *Tao Drops, I Change* (in collaboration with Bill Marsh; Subpress, 2004) and *Tracheal Centrifuge* (Factory School, 2006). From 1988-1998, he edited the literary journal *Antenym*.

Tom Clark (March 1, 1941-August 18, 2018) served as *Paris Review* poetry editor from 1963-1973, and was a member of the New College Poetics Faculty from 1987 until 2008. Among his many books of biography, fiction, literary criticism and poetry is *Junkets on a Sad Planet: Scenes from the Life of John Keats*. "Anyone who loves Keats' poetry (and letters) will be stunned by Clark's 'negative capability' to capture the essence of the poet's style and spirit in a minimum of elegant and haunting words," wrote Georgia Jones-Davis, book review editor of the *Los Angeles Times*. Ron Padgett, in the *New York Times* obituary for Tom Clark, was quoted as saying, "His poetry was music to the ear...You always came away elevated."

John (Jack) Clarke (1933-1993) was born in Winesburg, Ohio. A Blake scholar, he taught at SUNY Buffalo for nearly 30 years. He published several books of poetry including *The End of this Side*, *Gloucester Translations*, *Blake—A Masque*, and *In the Analogy*, as well as a seminal work on poetics, *From Feathers to Iron*. He was co-editor with Albert Glover of the serial epic, *A Curriculum of the Soul*.

Norma Cole is a poet, visual artist and translator. Her most recent book of poetry, *FATE NEWS*, appeared in October 2018. Other books of poetry include *Win These Posters and Other Unrelated Prizes Inside*, *Where Shadows Will: Selected Poems 1988—2008*, *Spinoza in Her Youth* and, *Actualities*, her collaboration with painter Marina Adams. *TO BE AT MUSIC: Essays & Talks* appeared in 2010. Her translations from the French include Danielle Collobert's *It Then*, and Jean Daive's *White Decimal*. Her visual work has been shown at the Miami University

Art Museum, 2nd floor projects in San Francisco and in “Way Bay,” an exhibition at the Berkeley Art Museum.

Jeff Conant is a writer, poet, social and ecological justice advocate, father, gardener, bee-keeper & tender of life in all her fine forms. Currently director of the international forests program with Friends of the Earth, Jeff has worked on issues of international development and environmental human rights for two decades. His publications include *A Community Guide to Environmental Health*, a grassroots educational manual published in over a dozen languages; *A Poetics of Resistance: The Revolutionary Public Relations of the Zapatista Insurgency*, and a translation from Spanish, *Wind in the Blood: Mayan Healing and Chinese Medicine*. Website: <https://jeffconant.com/>

Adam Cornford immigrated to the United States from England in 1979. Since then he has lived mostly in California. Adam led the Poetics Program at New College of California from 1987 until the college closed in 2008. Today he works as a freelance writer and editor. His poetry has appeared widely in print and on the web, including four full-length poetry collections—*Shooting Scripts* (1978), *Animations* (1988), *Decision Forest* (1998), and *Lalia* (2020)—and several chapbooks. A lineal descendant of Charles Darwin, Adam focuses strongly on science, notably biology, quantum physics, and cosmology, in his poetry and thought. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam_Cornford

Patrick James Dunagan lives in San Francisco and works at Gleeson Library for the University of San Francisco. He received his MA/MFA in Poetics from New College in 2001. In addition to many of the contributors to this anthology, the following individuals deeply impacted his Poetics education as well, many thanks to them all: Jeff Butler, Neeli Cherkovski, Ben Churchill, Derek Fenner, Josh Filan, Owen Hill, Kevin Killian, Ava Koohbor, Don Melander, Jason Morris, Kevin Opstedal, Michael Price, Julien Poirier, Sunnylyn Thibodeaux, Melissa Weinstein, and Eric Whittington.

Robert Duncan (1919-1988) was born in Oakland and spent most of his life in California. One of the major figures in the San Francisco Renaissance, Duncan, often identified with Donald Allen's landmark anthology *The New American Poetry* and the Black Mountain poets, was a generative force among American poets, and his poetry and poetics establish him as a major figure in mid-and late-20th-century American letters.

Allen Ensign b.1954, Richmond, CA. Graduated, Bella Vista HS 1972, lettered in Varsity Baseball. 1972-1981, attended UC Berkeley, Sacramento State, University of MN and New College of California (BA, Humanities, emphasis Poetics, MA, Poetics 1994). Allen taught “William Blake & Alchemy” (based on his dissertation) at the UofW, as well as composition for the University of Phoenix. Although

largely unknown and under-published, he is the author of many books of poems, a novel about Poe, and various articles, journals and writings on poetics. His career has included an abiding relationship to music and he has been in numerous bands and has written and released more than a dozen albums, some critically, acclaimed, and most largely, ignored. Although married twice, Allen lives alone, in his car these days, and is homeless.

Christina Fisher earned her MFA from NCOC in 2002, and now lives in her hometown on the southern Gulf Coast of Florida. This essay appeared in another version as 'Measures & Insistencies: Days with Lawrence Fixel' in *The Collected Poetry and Prose of Lawrence Fixel* (Sixteen Rivers Press, 2020). Her work has appeared on *Red Ant Press*, *Auguste Press*, *Bird & Beckett*, and in some awesome journals. *Honor of Thieves* is forthcoming.

Fitz Fitzgerald lives in Baltimore where he works as the writer and editor of educational materials. He received his MA in Poetics from New College in 1999. His work is excerpted from his longer thesis on Maurice Blanchot located on the internet. His poetry, stories and reviews have appeared in *Dispatches from the Poetry Wars*, *Real Pants*, *Wu-Wei Fashion Mag* and elsewhere.

Gloria Frym is a poet and prose writer. Her most recent book is *The True Patriot*, a collection of proeses, from Spuyten Duyvil. She is the author of the short story collections—*Distance No Object* (City Lights Books), and *How I Learned* (Coffee House Press)—as well as many volumes of poetry. Her book *Homeless at Home* received an American Book Award. BlazeVox will publish her forthcoming collection of essays, *How Proust Ruined My Life*, in 2020. Frym was core faculty in the New College of California Graduate Poetics Program from 1987 to 2002. She is now professor in the Graduate Writing and BA Writing & Literature Programs at California College of the Arts. She lives in Berkeley.

M.C. Fujiwara photo-bombed the NCOC Poetics Program from 1998-2000, and finished his MFA from Kyoto, Japan in 2003. After completing a post-grad Penal Studies program at Cal State San Quentin, M.C. has worked at a civil rights legal services / grassroots organizing non-profit in Oakland, CA. Our goal: tear down the prisons and release all the incarcerated poetry back into our communities. In 2019, M.C. earned his Permaculture Design Certificate, launching his love of sustainable and regenerative urban farming methods and eco-village development. His heart still soars when the Spicer Spirit stops by to pass poems on through.

Christopher Gaynor b.1949. Member Poetics faculty via Robert Duncan... composer, performer, author...IRCAM, Centre Pompidou, Paris....Univ. of London.....numerous commissions/collaborations including with Michael McClure, Michael Palmer, Ray Manzarek...compositions: orchestral, chamber,

Asian instruments... ensembles: Sensitive Chaos, Wind Eyes, Elegant Baffoons, Pasir Batang, Ensemble Momo...publications including: Ear Songs, Code of Signals, Making Soundings Upon the Ground of Imagination, Invisible Garden, Moving Letters, Frank.

Tinker Greene "I enrolled in the Poetics Program as soon as I heard about it and was in the first Duncan classes; having just moved to San Francisco from Vermont it seemed destiny. Not academic but a manifestation of a literary community and most everyone in it came to the early seminars, registered or not. Standout participants for me in addition to Duncan include McNaughton, Di Prima, Grenier, Kyger, Hollo, Waldman, Berkson, as well as Aaron Shurin, David Levi Strauss, Kerry Tepperman, Bill Scharf, Sarah Menefee, Norma Cole, Susan Thackrey, Shao Thorpe...most became lifelong friends. Before Bay Area lived in Burlington, Vermont and Lower East Side New York; now (sadly) exiled to Chicago. I write poetry."

Carl Grundberg grew up in Pennsylvania and Delaware. He received his B.A. from Goddard College in 1974, writing his senior study on William Carlos Williams's *Kora in Hell*. He studied with a number of poets at Naropa Institute in summer of 1976, after which he moved to San Francisco. When the Poetics Program at New College of California began in 1980, he joined the first group of students, launching an intensive period of study. In 1984 he received his M.A. in Poetics. He is the author or co-author of several books of poetry, including three forthcoming books: *0=2*, *Les barricades mystérieuses*, and *Storm Coming*.

Dave Hayman: Born in Parkersburg, WVa in 1953; raised mostly in the Midwest. Taught English in Japan from 1982-5. Moved to San Francisco, earned Masters in Poetics from New College in 1991. That was a wonderful experience, but since then, mostly long dull years of office work. I'm now ready to retire, and I'm counting on this book to make me rich & famous.

Anselm Hollo, well known poet and translator, was born in Finland in 1934. Having moved to the USA from London in 1967, he came to the Bay Area to lead a Poetics Program seminar and stayed on a few years before his final phase as professor at the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at Naropa. In addition to his widely influential poetry (a major collection is *notes on the possibilities and attractions of existence*) he was a diligent translator, rendering poetry and belles-lettres from Finnish, German, Swedish, French and even Russian (which he did not speak) into English. He was one of the early translators of Allen Ginsberg into German and Finnish. He died in 2013.

Carrie Hunter received her MA/MFA in the Poetics program at New College of California, was on the editorial board of Black Radish Books, and edited the chapbook press, ypolita press, for 11 years. She has two books out with Black

Radish Books, *The Impossible* and *Orphan Machines*, and has published around 15 chapbooks. Her third full length book, *Vibratory Milieu*, is forthcoming from Nightboat books in fall of 2020. She lives in San Francisco and teaches ESL.

Joanne Kyger (November 9, 1934 – March 22, 2017) was an American poet. The author of over 30 books of poetry and prose as well as a trove of literary ephemera, Kyger was associated with Zen Buddhism and the poets of Black Mountain, the San Francisco Renaissance, the Beat Generation, the New York School, and eco-poetics. Phenomenology was a consistent theme in Kyger's work, emerging from her studies of philosophy and Zen Buddhism. This subject matter and content continued from book to book, like installments in an autobiography. From early on her poems were influenced by Charles Olson's concept of "projective verse" and poetics of the "open field," and this influence continued to shape her mature work. She rejected the poetic tradition of starting each line on the left-hand margin; instead she placed her lines across the page with precise indentation and spacing. She conceived of each line as a single breath unit and the entire poem as a score for the voice.

Marina Lazzara received an MA/MFA in Poetics from New College of California and has published in various literary magazines and with Two Way Mirror Books. She is a vocalist and guitarist for the San Francisco band, The Rabblies. Teaching Creative Writing and Health Education to seniors by day, she can otherwise be found hosting salons at her home where for over three decades she has supported the literary and music underground of the Bay Area. She would like to thank her family, J. Lee and Maizie Lazzara Lee, for their support throughout the making of this book.

Jean-Vi Lenthe is an author, performer, publisher, and playwright who facilitates "Slow Theater" (aka Systemic Family Constellations) to help others heal traumatic injuries to the "family soul." Writing "The Poetics of Voudoun" (1990) opened the door to this work as she tracked the diaspora of ancestral and nature spirits—from West Africa to Haiti to America—via ritual dance and song. (Contact Jean-Vi at taosconstellations.com. See samples of *The ODASea*, her 6-CD recasting of Homer's "Odyssey" as a women's epic sea journey, and *Flying into Yesterday*, her historical memoir about the female aero-engineers of WWII, at wildharepress.com.)

Charles S. Maden "Since my wonderful times at new college I've been working at a large publishing company opened a successful restaurant for 8 years divorced worked with development disabled people and in the grocery business for 8 years now with the usps the post office for 6 years. I've been playing music and writing all the while and I will never stop ever."

Michael McClure has been one of the most prominent poets in the United States since his debut reading in 1955 at San Francisco's Six Gallery, the same occasion on which Allen Ginsberg debuted "Howl." Associated with Beat Generation, McClure is an Obie-award-winning playwright and has also written novels and literary nonfiction. He has also collaborated with musicians like Ray Manzarek and Terry Riley, and artists like Bruce Conner and Wallace Berman. He taught for many years at California College of Art.

Duncan McNaughton (NCOC 74-86) & Louis Patler (pre-74-87) started the poetics program in 1980, mainly by way of Patler's initiative, organizational skill, and his having, 76-80, brought certain poets to NCOC for brief teaching gigs (e.g., Joanne Kyger, Jim Carroll, both then living in Bolinas along with Patler & McNaughton). McNaughton lives now in San Francisco. ("schooled" UNC, NYU – BA Classics, Princeton, SUNYAB – MA, PhD English; Damascus, Nicosia). 20 books of poetry 72-19. Translated to Italian, French, Spanish, Arabic, Bosnian. Principal lifetime instructors R. Creeley, J. Kyger, C. Olson, E. Sanders, J. Wieners.

David Meltzer began his career in 1960's North Beach, SF, as a poet, singer-songwriter and musician. He taught at New College of CA for 30 years. He released two CDs of poetry, recorded 1957 and 2015, and was the author or editor of many volumes of poetry, fiction, essays, anthologies, and interviews. His book, *When I Was A Poet*, was # 60 in City Lights' Pocket Poet's Series (2011). David Meltzer was given the Bay Area Guardian's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2011 and was nominated for the Northern California Book Award in Poetry.

Sarah Menefee is a San Francisco poet and homeless movement activist. She is a founding member of such organizations as the League of Revolutionaries for a New America, Homes Not Jails and 'First they came for the homeless', and is on the editorial board of the People's Tribune. Her published books include *I'm Not Thousandfurs*, *The Blood About the Heart*, *Human Star*, *In Your Fish Helmet*, and *CEMENT*. She was an undergraduate humanities and Poetics Program student at New College from 1979 to about 1982

Hoa Nguyen's books include *Red Juice: Poems 1998-2008*, *Violet Energy Ingots*, and *A Thousand Times You Lose Your Treasure*. Hoa teaches poetics for Miami University's low residency MFA program, the Milton Avery School for Fine Arts at Bard College, and in a popular, long-running poetics workshop she leads from cyberspace and Toronto. Born in the Mekong Delta and raised and educated in the United States, Hoa has lived in Canada since 2011.

Ron Padgett's *How Long* was a Pulitzer Prize finalist in poetry and his *Collected Poems* won the LA Times Prize for the best poetry book of 2014 and the William Carlos Williams Award from the Poetry Society of America. In 2017 the Poetry

Society awarded him its Frost Medal. His translations include *Zone: Selected Poems of Guillaume Apollinaire* and Blaise Cendrars' *Complete Poems*. Padgett has collaborated with artists Joe Brainard, Jim Dine, Alex Katz, George Schneeman, and Trevor Winkfield. His poems were used in Jim Jarmusch's film, *Paterson*. His recent books are *Big Cabin* and *Encore with Philosophy and Rectangle*.

Louis Patler is President of The B.I.T. Group, a strategic business consulting, trend analysis and training company. He serves on the Advisory Boards of the Council on Global Innovation and Entrepreneurship of The Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation (Dearborn, MI); and the Alumni Board of the Semester at Sea program. Alongside Duncan McNaughton he started the Poetics program at New College of California. His books of poetry are *Eloisa* (Great Works, Oxford, UK) and *An American Ensemble* (Poltroon Press, Berkeley, CA).

Eugenia Hepworth Petty lives in the Pacific Northwest with her poet husband and a clowder of cats. She is the author of two poetry chapbooks (*Memory Village; Instructions for the Apocalypse*) and two micro-chapbooks (*People Live Here; On a Planet Called Earth*). In addition to writing, she shoots film and makes postcards. She is co-editor of the online journal *Squatters' Press*.

Judith Roche's publications include four books of poetry, most recently *All Fire, All Water*, as well as individual works in numerous literary journals. Her poetry can also be seen as part of public art installations in the Seattle, Washington area. For many years, she was Literary Coordinator for the Bumbershoot Arts Festival, and taught writing through organizations such as Seattle Arts & Lectures, Hugo House, and Pacific Lutheran University.

Michael Rothenberg is co-founder of 100 Thousand Poets for Change and co-founder of Poets In Need, a non-profit 501(c)3, assisting poets in crisis. His most recent books of poetry include *Drawing the Shade* (Dos Madres Press), *Wake Up and Dream* (MadHat Press) and *Indefinite Detention: A Dog Story* (Ekstasis Editions, Canada). An Arabic edition of *Indefinite Detention: A Dog Story*, translated by El Habib Louai, was published in Cairo, Egypt by Arwiqa Publishers in 2020. Rothenberg lives in Tallahassee, Florida where he is currently Florida State University Libraries Poet in Residence.

David Samas is a queer, SF native polymath composer, conceptual artist, wilderness advocate, poet, and wizard working in the grey areas between science, magic and art. His work has been seen in most major Bay Area museums, and concert halls. He is director of Pet the Tiger, an instrument inventors collective, and curates the Window Gallery for invented instruments at the Center for New Music SF. He was curator of the Meridian Gallery's Composers in Performance Series and six seasons at the Turquoise Yantra Grotto.

Aaron Shurin is the author of fourteen books of poetry and prose, most recently *The Blue Absolute* (2020), a collection of prose poems from Nightboat Books. A pioneer in both LGBTQ+ studies and innovative verse, and a longtime educator, Shurin is the former director and currently Professor Emeritus for the MFA Writing Program at the University of San Francisco.

giovanni singleton earned a BA from American University and an MFA from the New College of California. She is the author of the poetry collections *AMERICAN LETTERS: works on paper* (2017) and *Ascension* (2011), which won a California Book Award for Poetry. Founding editor of *nocturnes (re)view of the literary arts*. Her honors and awards include fellowships from the Squaw Valley Community of Writers, Cave Canem, and the Napa Valley Writers Conference. Her work has been anthologized widely and appeared on the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts building. singleton has taught at Saint Mary's College, Naropa University, and New Mexico State University.

Will Skinker works for the Denver Public Library and feels for everyone who doesn't.

Dale Smith attended the Poetics Program at the New College of California from 1994-96, earning an MA, and now is an associate professor of English at Ryerson University, Toronto. His monograph, *Poets Beyond the Barricade: Rhetoric, Citizenship, and Dissent after 1960*, addresses poetry and public culture in the works of Robert Duncan, Charles Olson, Edward Dorn, Lorenzo Thomas, and others. With Robert J. Bertholf, Smith edited *An Open Map: The Correspondence of Robert Duncan and Charles Olson* and *Imagining Persons: Robert Duncan's Lectures on Charles Olson* (both 2017). Additionally, as a poet, Smith has published five volumes of work, and a forthcoming publication, *Shreve*, will appear with Talonbooks in fall 2021.

David Levi Strauss is the author of *Co-illusion: Dispatches from the End of Communication* (The MIT Press, 2020), *Photography & Belief* (David Zwirner Books, 2020), *Words Not Spent Today Buy Smaller Images Tomorrow* (Aperture, 2014), *From Head to Hand: Art and the Manual* (Oxford University Press, 2010), *Between the Eyes: Essays on Photography and Politics*, with an introduction by John Berger (Aperture 2003, and in a new edition, 2012), and *Between Dog & Wolf: Essays on Art and Politics* (Autonomedia, 1999). *To Dare Imagining: Rojava Revolution*, edited by Strauss, Michael Taussig, Peter Lamborn Wilson, and Dilar Dirik, was published by Autonomedia in 2016.

Susan Thackrey began composing poetry when she was three. Already in a graduate program she took a long leave of absence to become an inaugurating student in the Poetics Program at New College. It was an extraordinary experience to study with Robert Duncan and Diane di Prima formally and

informally over a number of years. She has given invitational lectures on Robert Duncan, Charles Olson, and George Oppen, including as a keynote speaker at the George Oppen Conference in Buffalo, and most recently on Duncan's H.D. Book for the San Francisco Poetry Center. Books currently in print are *Andalusia* (CHAX Press), *Empty Gate* (Listening Chamber), and *George Oppen: A Radical Practice* (O Books and San Francisco Poetry Center). Thackrey's day jobs have included co-founding and managing Thackrey & Roberson Gallery. Her current work is as a Jungian Analyst in the C.G. Institute San Francisco.

John Thorpe "I listened to a talk by Robert Duncan at the San Francisco Exploratorium on 'Poetry and Science.' It seemed to me that we might be entering a Dark Age at that time. When Duncan McNaughton somewhat later told me that he, Louis Patler, and others, were attempting a Poetics Program at New College, I thought that it was a good move against the coming Darkness. I joined the group and was commuting 3 days a week from the country to the city with my neighbor Bobbie Louise Hawkins. This continued for several years, until Robert's physical health was afflicted, and eventually, despite assistance from Michael Palmer and friends, he felt too wretched to cope with the public."

Justin A. Tisdale graduated from the NCOC's MFA in Poetics program in its final year, 2007, where they taught a NCOC humanities undergraduate class, *Women and the Blues*. They have published poetry in a smattering of journals and have two self-published chapbooks. They have traveled widely and managed to make their way back to the Bay Area where they somehow currently manage to scrape by as a freelance editor and ever-aspiring poet in the quickly changing landscape of tech and wealth. They are queer and non-binary.

Christopher Winks is Associate Professor and Chair of Comparative Literature at Queens College/CUNY. He is the author of *Symbolic Cities in Caribbean Literature* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), and he has published articles, reviews, and translations (from French and Spanish) in many journals and edited collections. He is the editor and co-translator with Adriana González Mateos of *Los danzantes del tiempo*, a bilingual English-Spanish anthology of Kamau Brathwaite's poems that received the 2011 Casa de las Américas prize. Current translation projects include *Labyrinth*, a bilingual English-Spanish anthology of the selected writings of Cuban poet Lorenzo García Vega (Junction Press, forthcoming) and the poetry of Haitian surrealist Magloire Saint-Aude.

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