

Cascadian Zen 14- Feb-2020

**SPLAB's 20 year Bioregional Cultural
Investigation**



www.splab.org

SPLAB

SPLAB (Seattle Poetics LAB) was founded 14-Dec-1993 to create public affairs radio programs. We created over 450 hours of interviews that soon aired weekly on 18 stations (KING-FM, KZOK, The Mountain, KGON-Portland, Village 900 in Victoria & others) and soon began to focus on whole systems approaches.

www.splab.org/listen

Listen



Thanks to a grant from the [Collections Care](#) program at [4Culture](#), awarded in December 2017, we can begin the process of digitizing some of our audio interview collection that goes back to the 1980s.

Current interviews, and some of the interviews that were syndicated to as many as 18 stations weekly during the heyday of our broadcasting era, are accessed via the [American Prophets](#) webpage. The broadcast era was from November 1990 to September 2004. Syndication started in

January 1994.

Also, interviews that were part of a short-lived series that aired locally on [KBCS-FM](#) are [still available here](#). There is also a [post about it here](#). Numbering systems differed between programs that aired on KMTT (The Mountain) and other stations, like KZOK, which called the program the *Sunday Times*, a half-hour version of the program, Focus (KMPS and other stations) and *Sunday Morning Magazine* on KKNW (pre-December 14, 1993) before our non-profit was formed. Numbering systems merged a few years into the project which began in 1990. Some tapes have been discarded. Below are the shows that have been saved and are awaiting preservation, or if digitized, have links to free online audio made possible by 4Culture.

[Program summaries for 2004, the year the program ceased syndication, \(and one program from 2005\) are here.](#)
[Program summaries for 2003 are here.](#)

Interviews with thinkers, activists, poets & visionaries

Over the past decade or so, no one has done more for poetry in the Pacific Northwest than has Paul Nelson. He has sponsored and hosted free public readings and workshops while bringing to Seattle notable poets like Wanda Coleman, Nate Mackey, Michael McClure, Brenda Hillman, George Bowering and other leading figures in the world of Organic Poetry. He is as fine an interviewer of poets as anyone working today, coming to each interview thoroughly informed but retaining great flexibility, letting the various threads intertwine. These interviews, combined with lengthy scholarship, have produced a number of remarkable essays and, ultimately, his manuscript *American Prophets*.

— Sam Hamill

Paul Nelson is the founder of SPLAB (Seattle Poetics LAB) & the Cascadia Poetry Festival and serves as Founding Director. SPLAB was founded in 1993, has produced hundreds of poetry events and has created over 600 hours of interview programming with many legendary poets and whole systems activists and theorists including Allen Ginsberg, Michael McClure, Joanne Kyger, Robin Blaser, Diane di Prima, Daphne Marlatt, Nate Mackey, George



Bowering, Brenda Hillman, Jean Houston, Riane Eisler, Larry Dossey, Father Matthew Fox and many others. His published books include *American Sentences* (2015), *A Time Before Slaughter* (2010), *Organic in Cascadia: A Sequence of Energies* (2013) and his 2015 interview with Cuban poet José Kozler was published as *Tiovivo Tres Amigos* in 2016. Co-Editor of *Make It True: Poetry From Cascadia* and *56 Days of August: Poetry Postcards* Paul is engaged in a 20 year bioregional cultural investigation of Cascadia, lives in Rainier Beach, in the Cascadia bioregion's Cedar River watershed with Bhakti Watts and his daughter Ella Roque and serves as literary executor for the late poet Sam Hamill.

American Prophets

Paul E. Nelson



Current interview landing site www.AmericanProphets.org

**One of those interviews was with Peter Berg
of the Planet Drum Foundation and that aired
April 12, 1992.**



Peter Berg

April 12, 1992 on The Imperative 1:19:

**[https://paulenelson.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/
Peter-Berg-on-The-Imperative-1.19.mp3](https://paulenelson.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Peter-Berg-on-The-Imperative-1.19.mp3)**



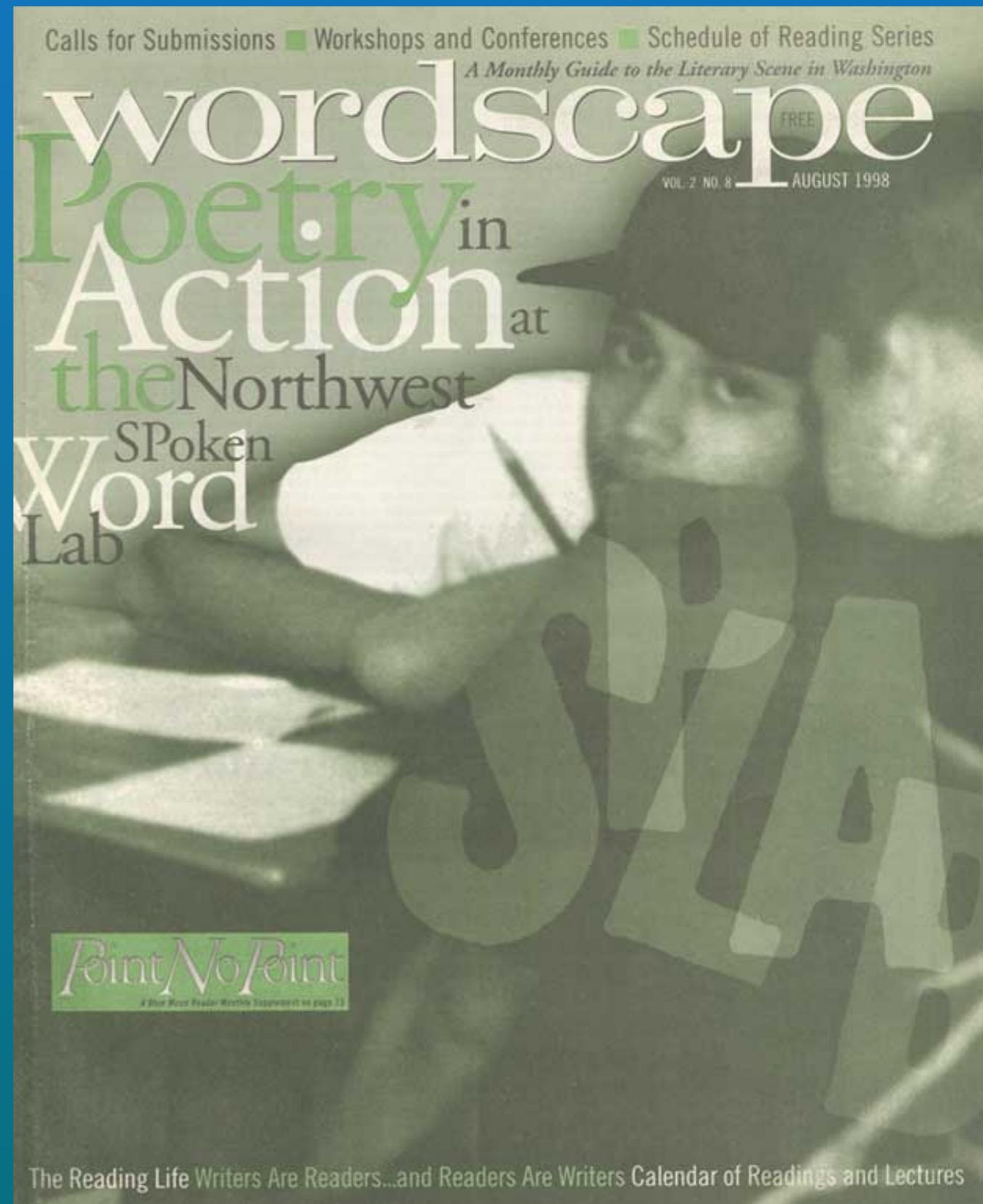
**Iron Bridge,
over the
River Severn,
Shropshire, England
opened 1781**

Since that time, Western consciousness has been dominated by the idea of taking natural systems apart for their ingredients and then reassembling the ingredients to make other things. This is a chemical trick that has been enormously powerful – I’m not going to say “successful” because the end product is *garbage*. The end product of the cars and refrigerators... is a landfill or a dump... “soft shoe planet murder.” <https://paulenelson.com/2014/12/10/bioregionalism-or-endless-garbage/>

POETS

**Allen Ginsberg, Ethelbert Miller,
Michael Hureaux, Michael McClure,
Clarissa Pinkola Estes, Pamela
Sackett, Paul Hunter, Marion
Kimes, Joanne Kyger, Victor
Hernandez Cruz, Nikky Finney
Diane di Prima, John Olson, Sharon
Doubiago, Ed Sanders, Wanda
Coleman, Anne Waldman**

**Andrew Schelling, Lewis
MacAdams, Jerome Rothenberg,
Eileen Myles, Sam Hamill, Yusef
Komunyakaa, Monica de la Torre,
Coral Bracho, Tedi Lopez Mills,
Pedro Serrano, Diane Wakoski,
George Bowering all these and
more by 2005.**



What the Water Knows

Sam Hamill

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4qlvsjoTrXM>

What the mouth sings, the soul must learn to forgive.
A rat's as moral as a monk in the eyes of the real world.
Still, the heart is a river
pouring from itself, a river that cannot be crossed.

It opens on a bay
and turns back upon itself as the tide comes in,
it carries the cry of the loon and the salts
of the unutterably human.

A distant eagle enters the mouth of a river
salmon no longer run and his wide wings glide
upstream until he disappears
into the nothing from which he came. Only the thought remains.

Lacking the eagle's cunning or the wisdom of the sparrow,
where shall I turn, drowning in sorrow?
Who will know what the trees know, the spidery patience
of young maple or what the willows confess?

Let me be water. The heart pours out in waves.
Listen to what the water says.
Wind, be a friend.
There's nothing I couldn't forgive.



In 2009 SPLAB moved to Seattle, opened a space in Columbia City (2010-2012.) In 2012 SPLAB produced the first Cascadia Poetry Festival & started a 20 year bioregional cultural investigation of Cascadia. We produced Cascadia Poetry Festivals in 2014 and 2016 in Seattle, 2015 with Wordstorm in Nanaimo, BC, 2017 in Tacoma, 2019 in Anacortes. The 2020 edition is at The Multiverse on San Juan Island.



2020

GO DEEPER
into the intersection of
poetics & bioregionalism

poetry readings
open reading
panel discussions
breakout sessions
meditation session
lectures
workshops

CASCADIA
poetry
festival

2020
MAY 1 2 3

poets & scholars

Blaser Biographer & Literary Executor,
Miriam Nichols [Vancouver BC] •
Mary Norbert Körte [the Beat Nun
from Willits CA] • Daphne Marlatt
[Vancouver BC] • Sharon Thesen
[Kelowna BC] • Bill Yake [Olympia WA]
• Barry McKinnon [Prince George BC] •
Jason Wirth [Seattle] • Thomas Hitoshi
Pruiksmas [Vashon Island WA] • Laura
Yon [Seattle] • Matt Trease • Nadine
Maestas • Meredith Clark • Peter Munro
• Cate Gable • Our Hosts: Jennifer, Ian
& Gavia Boyden [San Juan Island] +
Others are Scheduled to Participate

GOLD PASS \$50

SPLAB
seattle poetics lab

www.CascadiaPoetryFestival.org

May 1-3
The Multiverse
San Juan
Island, WA

CASCADIA
POETRY
FESTIVAL

TRIBUTE TO LIFE & LEGACY OF
Robin Blaser
The Practice of
Cascadia
The Practice of
the Self

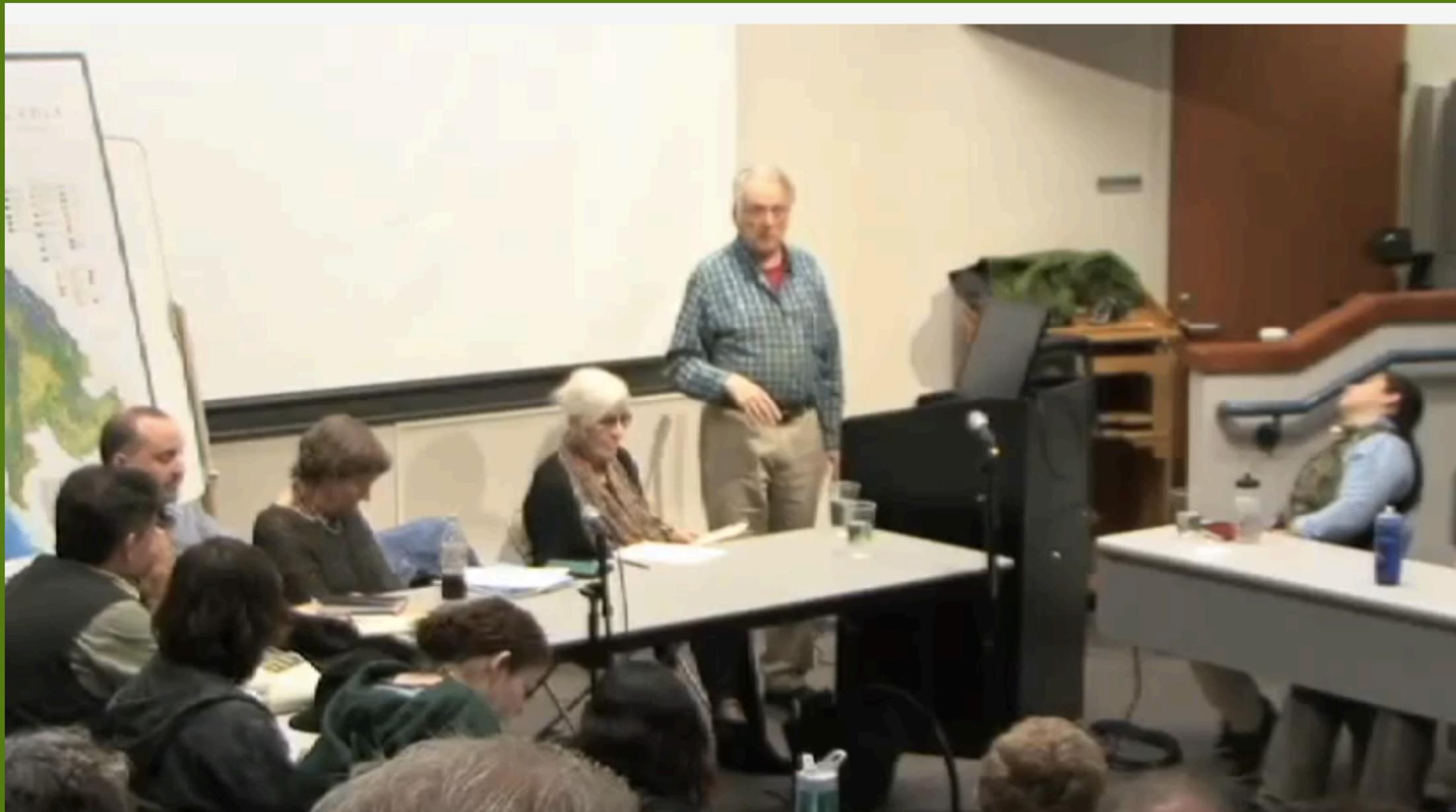
SPLAB
giving voice to poetry



**Out of the fests came a
few important
developments in our work.**

**2014 had a panel called:
Innovations from Here**

**George Stanley was part of the panel and said that what contemporary poetry has is the “tyranny of irony.”
To make it new we had to:**



Ultimately the best of the poems herein have an exactness of naming and imagery, the light of the mind Diane di Prima recognized as "intellectus" along with the wildness of the mind Charles Olson would suggest was a use of speech at its "least careless and least logical." They sing, or they baffle. They inspire and/or they reveal. They are among the best poets practicing here in this place today, as best we could gather as a starting point for discussion and for the effort to remember (or imagine) what it is to BE somewhere and be fully present. To live here as if we again venerated this place and all its marvelous interconnected systems. —Paul Nelson

Reading over these poems, I think younger poets in particular may be moving past irony—past writing that conveys no more than a cynical, tongue-in-cheek, or superior attitude—and writing more straightforwardly about the realities and conditions they believe need to be addressed in this world. —George Stanley

If the word "subject" is still in the post-modern lexicon, I believe the poet's subject is time—and that language discloses the actualities therein. Emotion is the poem's fact. Herein, then, the Cascadia poets in the reality of their time, their actualities, writing in the necessary task of what language and emotion reveals. —Barry McKinnon

\$30.00 CAD
\$24.00 USD

 leaf press

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MAKE IT TRUE

POETRY FROM CASCADIA



MAKE IT TRUE

POETRY FROM CASCADIA

EDITED BY

PAUL NELSON GEORGE STANLEY
BARRY MCKINNON NADINE MAESTAS



30. The Day the Weather Decided to Die

Other Anthologies:

56 Days of August

56 DAYS of AUGUST Poetry Postcards

Ina Roy-Faderman, Paul E. Nelson, and J. I. Kleinberg, Editors

Ina Roy-Faderman,
Paul E. Nelson,
and
J. I. Kleinberg,
Editors

Postcards are electric. I get excited just turning a rack of postcards around at the drugstore. There was a time before Facebook and Twitter and Instagram when we sent postcards to people. These were generally times of change and travel, new cities, new landscapes, new friends, new languages. The challenge of the postcard was to get all your news on the back where the space for composition was small. You had to condense. You had to take all the excitement of a moment of vision and squeeze it on the back of a card. The poems in this collection are just that: condensations of amazed observation. They have more to do with spirit than place. Subjects vary from baseball to summer rain, the orphans of Aleppo to the taste of honeyed tarragon on the tongue. Their brilliance comes from the region of the mind where there are no borders, a zone of uncharted existence where we are all immigrants.

John Olson, Stranger Genius Award Winner, Literature, 2004; Author of *Dada Budapest* (Commonwealth Books, Black Widow 2017)

Maybe there are two kinds of poetic craft: one in which a poet steadily hones and polishes a draft until it shines, and one in which a poet simply opens a channel between the self and what needs to be said. Paul E. Nelson's August Poetry Postcard Project is a powerful example of the second type. This anthology gathers a mailbag of short poems that all possess stunning immediacy, as well as several visual poems for the eye to wander into. A watermelon smile, Frank O'Hara jotting on a street corner, 'lips a-drip with deep fried meat' – the vibrant details have me spinning and spinning this postcard rack, fascinated by the insistent freshness of its offering.

Daniel Ari, Poet Laureate of Richmond, California; Author of *One Way to Ask* (Norfolk Press, 2016)

Seattle Poetics LAB
Seattle, Washington
www.splab.org



Jacket photo: Doris Lynch; Jacket design: David O. Seaver © 2017

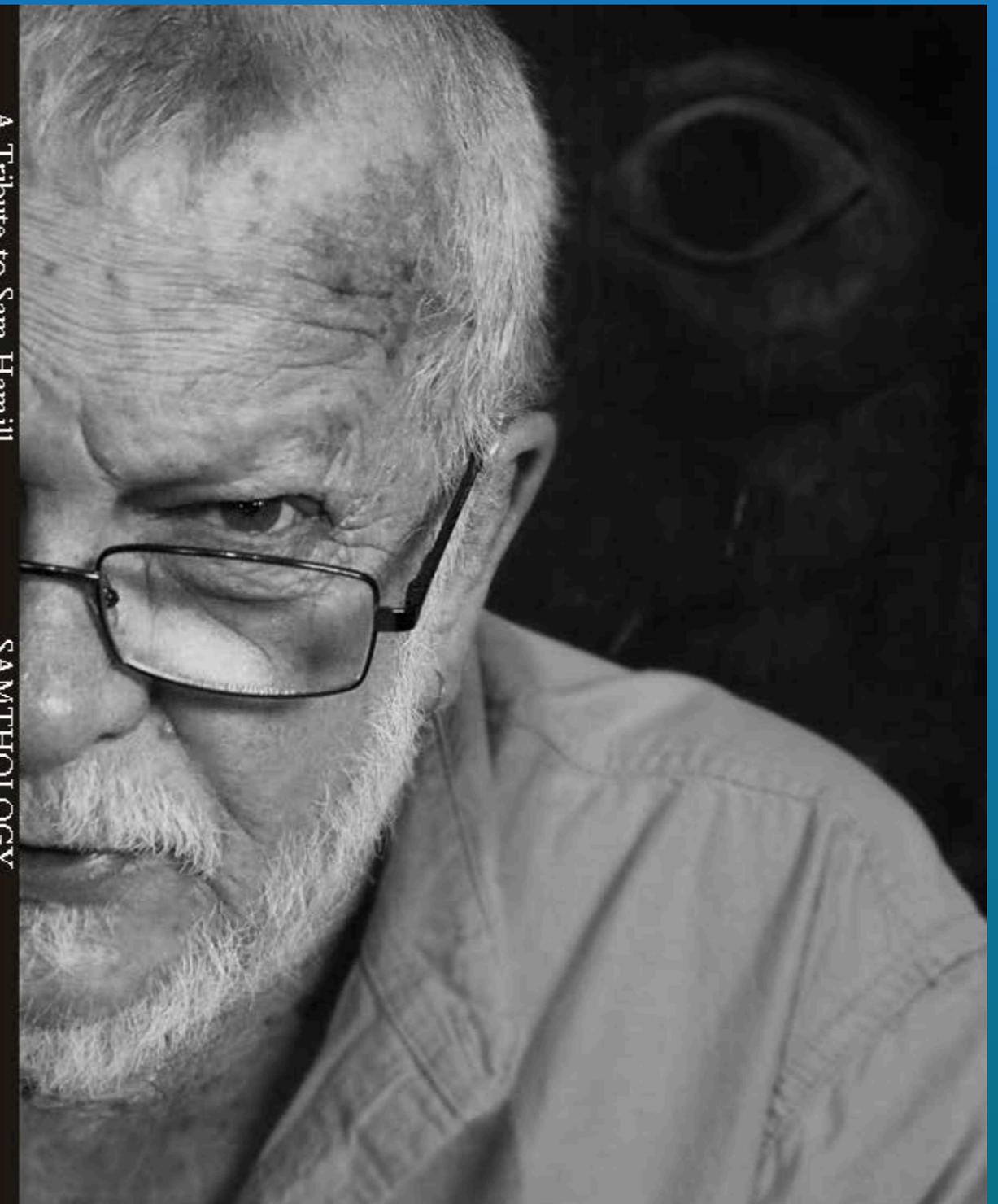
**PoPo, encouraging
spontaneity, seriality,
community.**

Samthology: A Tribute to Sam Hamill

A Tribute to Sam Hamill

SAMTHOLOGY

SPLAB



SAMTHOLOGY

A Tribute to Sam Hamill

Make It True meets Medusario

MAKE
IT
TRUE
MEETS
MEDUSARIO

CASCADIAN & NEO-BARROCO POEMS in English & Spanish

PLEASURE
BOAT
STUDIO



make it
True
meets
Medusario

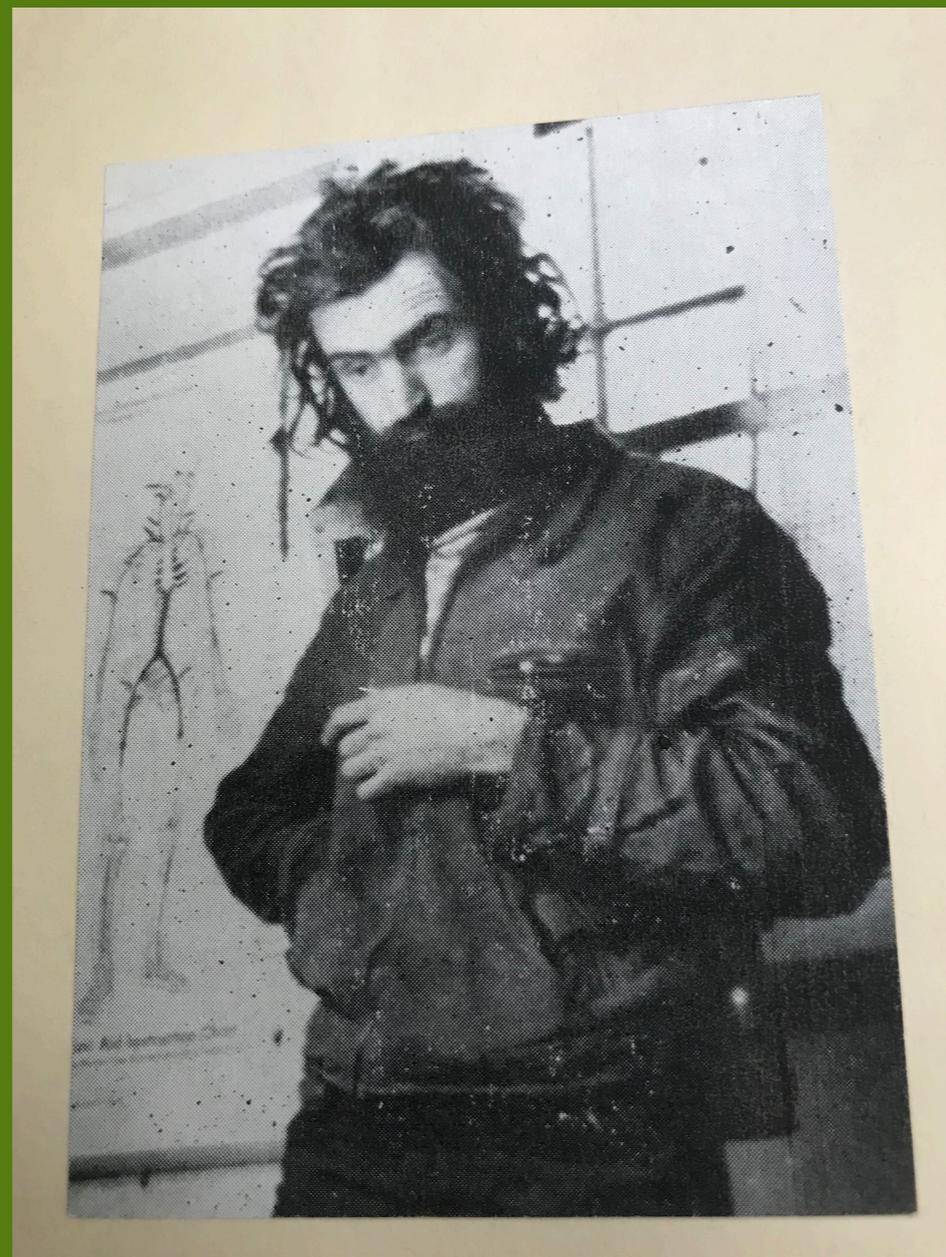
Edited by José Kozar, Paul E. Nelson, & Thomas Walton

Poetics of Seattle

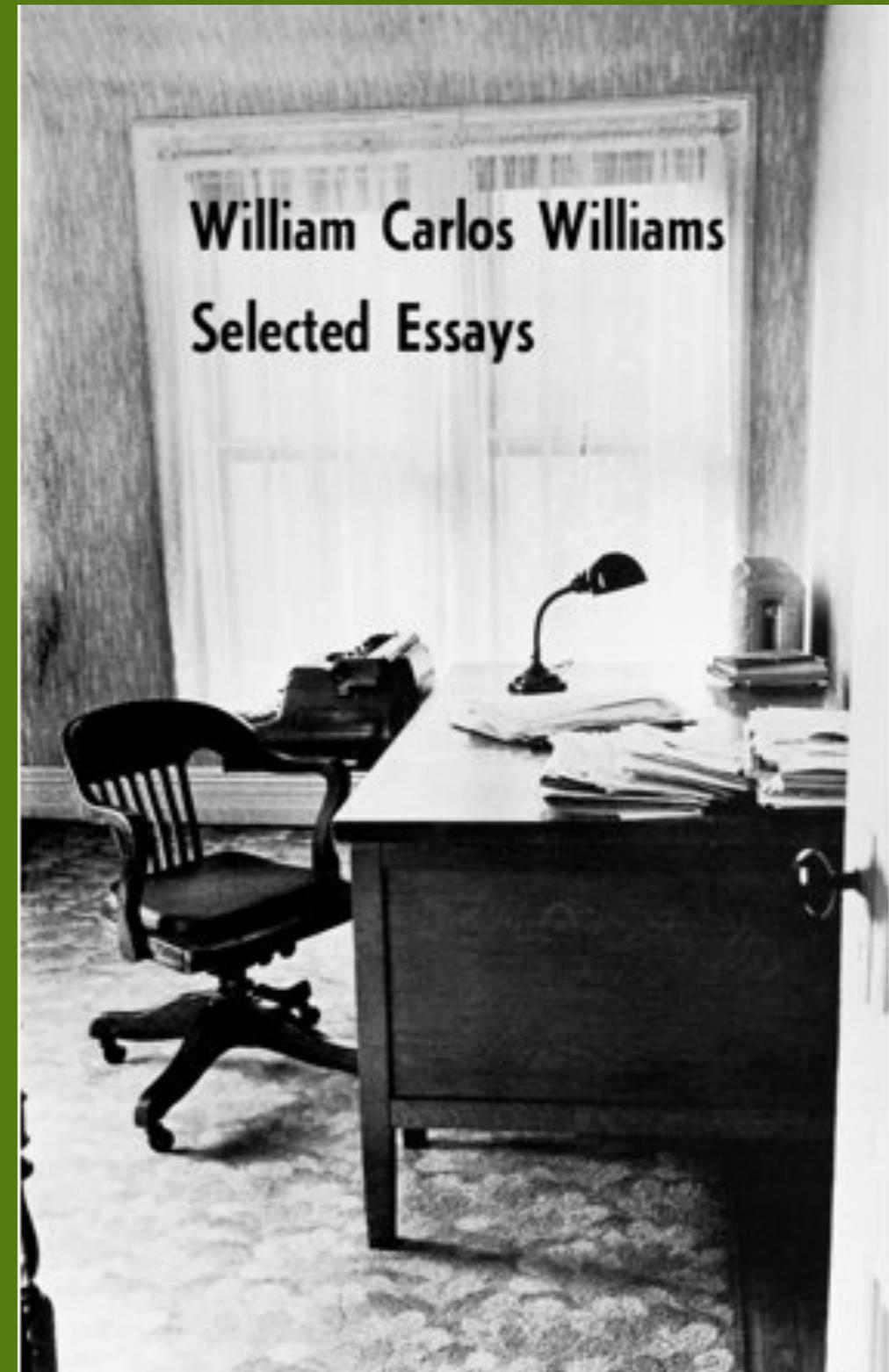
Poetics LAB

<https://paulenelson.com/writing-or-rewriting/>

1944 - Glen Coffield - A conscientious objector in WWII stationed at CPS#56 near Waldport, Oregon (the "first hippie") and he said he was interested in art as a "crystallizing principle for determining which objects and situations are worth being concerned about.." (*The Horned Moon*, UntidePress, Waldport OR, 1944.)



**Taking off
from *The
Poem as Field
of Action* an
essay by
William
Carlos
Williams
given at the
University of
Washington,
1948**

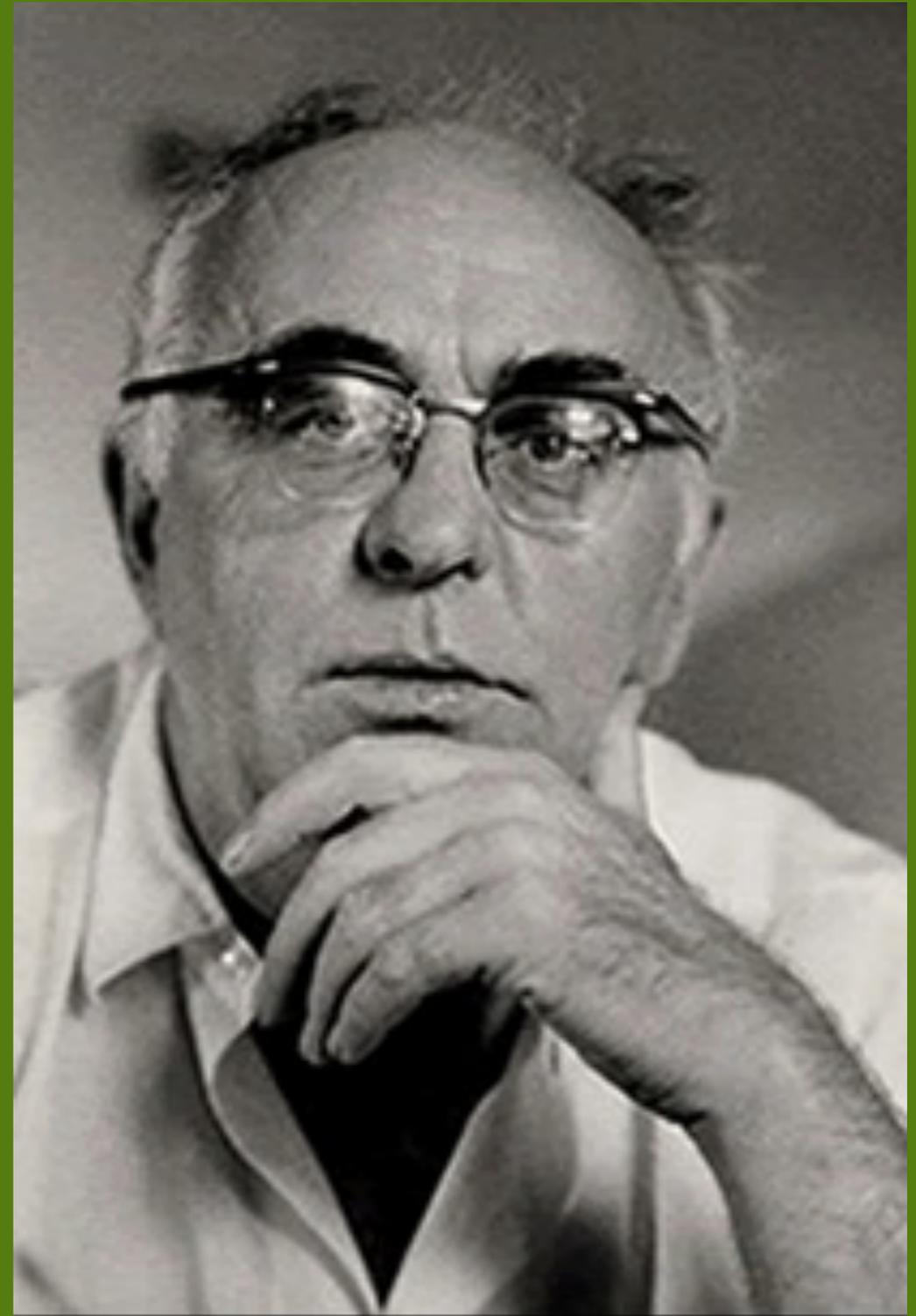


**What is the structure
of a modern poem?**

**There is no such thing
as Free Verse. (Open
Form)**

**Projective Verse:
Composition by
Field**

**Charles Olson
1950**



“Form is never more than an extension of content.” (Denise Levertov would say “revelation” of content.)

**“to engage speech where
it is least logical and
least careless.”**

“a whole flock of rhetorical devices” (simile, metaphor, adjectives) “drain the energy” of the poem.

**The content does change
when one writes
projectively.**

**What stance
toward reality
brings such verse
into being?**

Denise Levertov
Some Notes on
Organic Form
(1965)



A method of apperception

Such poetry is exploratory

Most free verse is failed organic poetry.

The condition of being a poet is that periodically... a constellation of experiences demands, or wakes in him this demand; the poem. The beginning of the fulfillment of this demand is to contemplate, to meditate; words which connote a state in which the heat of feeling warms the intellect.

**To contemplate means... not simply
to observe, but to do these things in
the presence of a god.**

Robin Blaser - The Practice of Outside



I do not compose poetry to show you what I have seen, but rather *because* I have seen...this poet's job is not to tell you what it is like, but to make a poem...Not trying to use your poems to prove a point, or address an argument. Not to try to control what they're (the poems) are doing...but rather to be a kind of audience listening to where the poem is going to go...*the practice of outside*...Try to forget your own voice...and listen hard for what the language is saying... you yourself are the audience, *hearing a voice you've trained your ear to receive* (emphasis added)... George Bowering, *Craft Slices*, 1985.

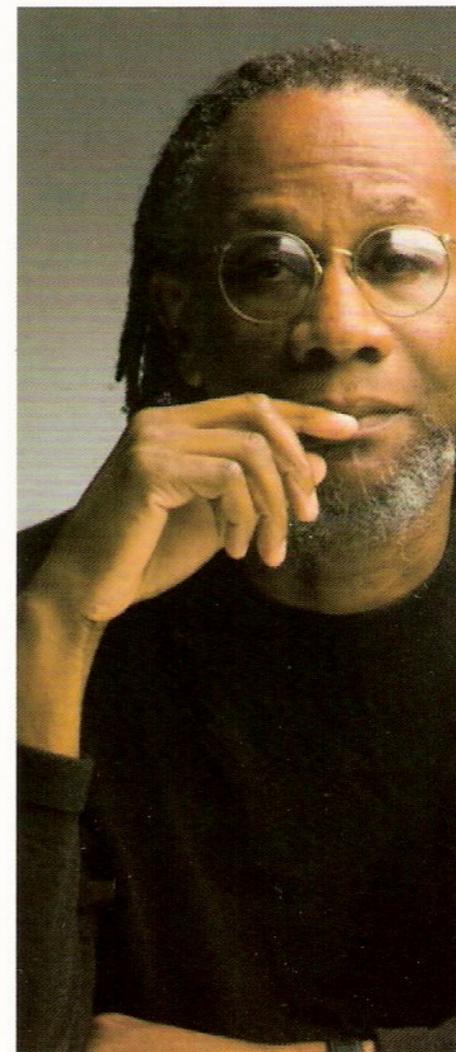
Seriality

(Nate Mackey)

SPLAB
giving voice to poetry

“You have to
talk and write
from what you know,
about what you know,
with what you know.”

—Nathaniel Mackey



PEN: What is the appeal of the serial form? What attracts you to it?

NM: The fact that things remain open. It's an open form. The well-wrought urn aesthetic, where the poem is this discrete, self-contained accomplishment in which everything fits together and works together in this well-oiled, machine-like way, imposes a certain sense of closure on each poem that I find constricting and found constricting. I wanted there to be the possibility of things coming into the poem that were not necessarily resolved in that poem, that were not necessarily pursued to their fullest or most exhaustive sense in the poem. I wanted things to come into the poem that would have a life beyond that particular poem and that would become part of an exploration that I'd be involved in in my writing. The appeal of the serial poem is that it allows that. It's not so much a matter of it's there and it's done, but that again and again, again and again, again and again, you come back to certain concerns, certain motifs, certain figures. In a sense, there's the freedom of not feeling that one has been definitive, that one has closed things up, that one has shut the door on further exploration. That's been a real driving force in a lot of the work that's been important to me and it's become, I think, a feature of my work as well.

PEN: It sounds like the notion of negative capability, rich with that.

NM: Yes. To be in areas that you're feeling out, you're groping your way, you're feeling your way. You have a bit of light, you go into the poem with some sense of what you're doing and what you wish to say, but you also leave yourself open to the information you get from the poem itself in the act of writing and the act of exploring and thinking about writing. You find out what the work might want to say that you hadn't necessarily intended to say. So it's kind of a dialogue with the work, more of a dialogue with the work than a certain other model of writing might propose, which is that you are in command, you are in control and you simply have to find the technical means of executing your will.

Brenda Hillman *EcoPoetics*
Minifesto: A Draft for Angie

A—At times a poem might enact qualities brought from Romantic poetry, through Baudelaire, to modernism and beyond—freedom of form, expressivity, & content—taking these to a radical intensity, with uncertainty, complexity, contradiction;

B—such a poem employs knowledge from diverse disciplines—including scientific vocabularies, but it does not privilege only the human. Research includes rural & urban wilds as well as knowledge from all cultures; creative forms bring together earth & spirit, rejecting no sources, including the personal;



C—its energies shuttle across binaries; realism/non-realism, rationality/irrationality, refuting received authority;

D—such a poem like an animal could graze or hunt in its time, exploring each word, carrying symbolic rhythms, syntax & images directly between the dream & the myth; the imagination does not reject the spirit world;

E—then a poem is its own action, performing practical miracles:

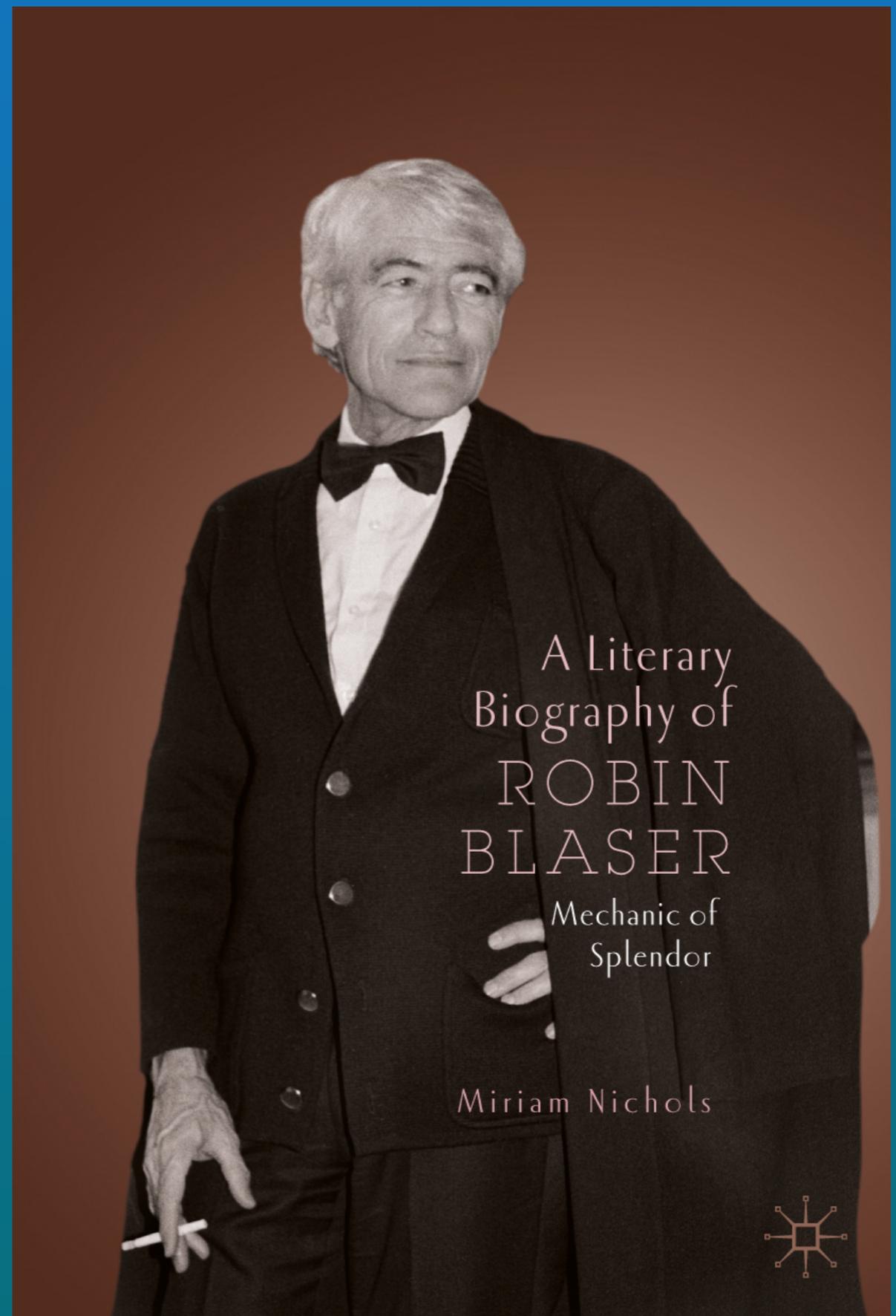
1. “the miracle of language roots” —to return with lexical adventures
2. “the miracle of perception” —to honor the senses
3. “the miracle of nameless feeling” —to reflect the weight of the subjective, the contours of emotion
4. “the miracle of the social world” —to enter into collective bargaining with the political & the social

F—& though powerless to halt the destruction of bioregions, the poem can be brought away from the computer. The poet can accompany acts of resistance so the planet won't die of the human.

Bioregionalism + Poetry
= DEEP Ecopoetics

**The latest interview
& some provisional
conclusions.**

**2-January-2020,
Miriam Nichols,
Vancouver, BC,
author of *A Literary
Biography of Robin
Blaser: Mechanic of
Splendor***



Poetry is Noetic



<https://paulnelson.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Poetry-as-Noetic-.57.mp3>

Not Spicer's Dictation

But for Robin, I think it's [process] a little different. It's more about polarity. It's more about relationship with the Other. The Other is the unthought. It's what you don't know. It's what you don't own and... when you put yourself in relationship with that, it helps to situate you, not so much in, whatever goes on in the unconscious. It situates you in the world in a way where your voice has to be always in intention with something that it doesn't know. I think that's the best way to think about it.

Some thoughts about Cascadian Zen.

**Closer to Asian and indigenous wisdom traditions
than other bioregions.**

Wariness with tradition religions. (SBNR)

**“People come here for spiritual reasons.”
(Beaver Chief)**

The presence of water falling from above.

**Water = compassion. The call to be compassionate
is stronger here than in most of North America.**