ROSA ALCALÁ: “Where the Self Loses its Boundaries”: Poetry & Identity

Gayatri Spivak writes, “One of the ways to get around the confines of one’s ‘identity’ as one produces expository prose is to work at someone else’s title, as one works with a language that belongs to many others.” In this class we will discuss the ways in which the practices of translation, multilingualism, and investigation can allow for a complex engagement with “one’s ‘identity.’”

Rosa Alcalá is the author of two books of poetry, Undocumentaries (2010) and The Lust of Unsentimental Waters (2012), both from Shearsman Books. Spit Temple: The Selected Performances of Cecilia Vicuña (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2012), edited and translated by Alcalá, was runner-up for the 2013 PEN Award for Poetry in Translation. She is also the recipient of a 2015 NEA Fellowship in Translation.

SHERWIN BITSUI: The Landscape of We

In this workshop, we will create poems by allowing certain shifts in our perspectives to challenge our notions of place and identity. The space we create together will be the ground on which our voices mingle with the present. We will explore how contemporary Indigenous American poetry and perspectives help renew our understanding of our connection to our shared world.

Sherwin Bitsui is the author of Flood Song (Copper Canyon Press) and Shapeshift (University of Arizona Press). He is Diné of the Deer Springs Bitter Water People and is born for the Manygoats People. He is from White Cone, Arizona, on the Navajo Reservation. His honors include the 2011 Lannan Literary Fellowship, a Native Arts & Culture Foundation Fellowship for Literature, a PEN Open Book Award, an American Book Award, and a Whiting Writers Award.
AARON COHICK: World & Text

Writing and printing situate text in the world. Broadsides, books, and other text-bearing objects/bodies allow that text to interact with public spaces and groups, both specific & locatable, and dispersed & indeterminate. In this class we will learn and deploy the basic skills of typography, lettering design, letterpress printing, and low-tech relief printmaking to discuss and explore the functions & limits of text operating in the world.

Aaron Cohick is the proprietor of the NewLights Press, a small press focused on the intersection of writing and artists’ publishing. He is also the Printer of The Press at Colorado College, a letterpress studio that creates a cross-disciplinary space inside the liberal arts curriculum. He lives in Colorado Springs, where he co-organizes (with Corie Cole, Marina Eckler, and Noel Black) the Say Hello to Your Last Poem! reading/chapbook series.

SAMUEL R. DELANY: The Mirror and the Maze

This is a workshop in which to explore where things come from and where they are now and the disparities between them. We will read each other’s writing. Each person will have an advocate chosen from the class who will lead a question period about the work, directed toward the writer, her or himself. Texts will also be distributed to aid our conversation.

Samuel R. Delany’s stories are available in Aye, and Gomorrah & Other Stories, and Atlantis: Three Tales. His most recent novel is Through the Valley of the Nest of Spiders. His short story Eclipse recently appeared in an issue of Conjunctions. He was the subject of a documentary, The Polymath, and is the author of a book about writing.

RACHEL BLAU DUPELLIS: Deep Root Modes

Two tasks. First: to read and discuss essays by poet-critics that speak to poetry and knowledge (study) and genders and writing. Second: to address root modes of poetic practice. These seem to be “forms” or “genres,” but they go deeper: sestina (repetition and variation); ballad (selection and inference); haiku (concision and obliqueness). We will read, then study and practice these modes, with respectful curiosity and understanding.

Recent work by Rachel Blau DuPlessis includes Surge: Drafts 96–114 (Salt Publishing, 2013), Interstices (Subpress, 2014), and Purple Passages: Pound, Eliot, Zukofsky, Olson, Creeley and the Ends of Patriarchal Poetry (University of Iowa Press, 2012), from her trilogy of works about gender and poetics. Forthcoming books are Graphic Novella (Xexoxial Editions) and Days and Works (Ahsahta). DuPlessis edited The Selected Letters of George Oppen (1990) and has written extensively on objectivist poets.

NOAH ELI GORDON: The List as Literature: the art & practice of accumulative enumeration.

We will transform the ubiquitous practice of list making (to-do lists, grocery lists) into art. We’ll catalog the kinds of sunlight, number the animals, collect words & worlds. Students will be provided a lengthy reader, including lists from Homer to Bernadette Mayer. We will read Brainard’s I Remember aloud, Viegener’s 2500 Random Things About Me Too silently. In making our lists we will remake the world, cross it all out, begin again.

Noah Eli Gordon lives in Denver, CO, and is an assistant professor in the MFA program in creative writing at the University of Colorado, Boulder, where he directs Subito Press. His books include The Word Kingdom in the Word Kingdom, The Year of the Rooster, The Source, and many others.
LAIRD HUNT: Heroes

In this prose fiction workshop we will take up the notion of writing heroes and elective lineage, drawing inspiration from some of my heroes (Creeley, Stein, Ondaatje, Hawkins, Everett, Auster, Sebald, Notley, Davis et al) and yours (come with a page of something great by a writer you love). We will talk and we will write. And in the meantime, keep in mind: “Hoc Opus, Hic Labor Est”!

Laird Hunt, proud Naropa Writing and Poetics MFA, is the author of six novels including, most recently, Neverhome (Little, Brown, 2014). His writings have appeared in, among many other places, Bookforum, the New York Times, the Daily Beast, the Wall Street Journal, McSweeney’s, and the Brooklyn Rail. He teaches at the University of Denver, where he edits the Denver Quarterly.

RUTH ELLEN KOCHER: Hybrid’s Poetic

We’ll focus on hybridity as text, as body, as thing, and as an entity that permeates literatures cross-culturally in texts that defy location in order to make something new. We’ll consider how hybridity might present a locus of denial, a moment where genre is refused. As we encounter the ways hybridity resists location, we’ll also move to animate the concept and consider hybrid’s discourse in our manifest art, text, and compulsive approach to the page.

Ruth Ellen Kocher’s books are Ending in Planes (Noemi Press, 2014), Goodbye Lyric: The Gigans and Lovely Gun (Sheep Meadow Press, 2014), domina Un/blued (Tupelo Press, 2013), One Girl Babylon, and When the Moon Knows You’re Wandering (New Issues Press, 2002 and 2003), and Desdemona’s Fire (Lotus Press 1999). She’s a contributing editor for Poets & Writers Magazine and teaches in the Creative Writing Program at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

RACHEL LEVITSKY: The Complete Sentence

Can a sentence complete the indeterminate thinking that is the realm of poesis? If so, which one? The fragmentary tapestries of M. NourbeSe Philip, Gail Scott, and Bhanu Kapil? the rich language of Leslie Scalapino, Barrett Watten? the locating precision of Renee Gladman, Eileen Myles? the baroque of John Ashbery, Fred Moten? What about Henry James? We will read sentences to find the sentence we need for each of our particular and idiosyncratic practices of writing.

Rachel Levitsky’s books include Under the Sun (Futurepoem, 2003), NEIGHBOR (UDP, 2009), and The Story of My Accident Is Ours (Futurepoem, 2013). She is a member of the Belladonna* Collaborative, an officer of the Office of Recuperative Strategies (oors.net), and faculty in the MFA in Creative Writing and Activism at Pratt Institute. She is working on collaborations with Susan Bee, Marcella Durand, Ariel Goldberg, and Christian Hawkey.

SELAH SATERSTROM AND KRISTEN E. NELSON: Divinatory Poetics

In this workshop we will consider what conditions must be present in order to best position our multiple selves in the guts of the flux, all while remaining sentient and oriented towards our most pressing work. Through divinatory methods and experiments, we will generate writing and ritual-installations as a way to engage with our biggest questions, as well as deepen our practice and contract with our chosen mediums.

Selah Saterstrom is the author of the novels Slab, The Meat and Spirit Plan, and The Pink Institution, all published by Coffee House Press. Along with HR Hegnauer, she curates Madame Harriet Presents: an occasional performance series. She is the director of creative writing at the University of Denver.

SPECIAL GUESTS

FAST SPEAKING MUSIC: AMBROSE BYE
Recording Studio: Weeks 1–4

SWP participants have the opportunity to work in Naropa University’s Recording Studio to set their work to music, to record spoken word poetry, and to record their own poetic songs. Each year Fast Speaking Music, assisted by Max Davies, produces a Harry’s House cd compilation of student and guest faculty’s recorded work and adds this to our renowned Naropa Archives. Harry’s House Vol. I & II are available here: cdbaby.com/cd/harryshouse

CEDAR SIGO was raised on the Suquamish Reservation in the Pacific Northwest and studied at the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at Naropa University. He is the author of eight books and pamphlets of poetry, including Language Arts (Wave Books, 2014), Stranger In Town (City Lights, 2010), Expensive Magic (House Press, 2008), and two editions of Selected Writings (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2003 and 2005). He has taught at The Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe and will be the visiting writer at St Mary’s College in Spring 2015. He lives in San Francisco.

Lecture: Tuesday, June 16: 3:00–4:00 p.m.
Reading: Tuesday, June 16: 7:30 p.m.

ON THE ONE WHO CLOTHES ME, POUR SOME WATER ON ME. MAKE COMING MATTER CUT AND TWIRL
ON ME. THE LAW OF EMULSION IS ALWAYS BROKE ON ME. SOMEBODY POUR SOME BEAUTIFUL JUTE
ON ME. LET HER BLOW SOME HORN ON ME. THE MAN WHO CLOTHES ME IN MY SKIN IS GONNA WRITE
ON ME. YOUR WRITING MOVES TO STOP ON ME.
SOMEDAY THEY’RE GONNA CURVE THIS ON A PEARL

—Fred Moten