

## The Political Voice of Lyn Miller-Lachmann

Following is a conversation between Caitlin Hamilton Summie and Lyn Miller-Lachmann, author of the recently published eco-thriller *Dirt Cheap* that explores the tragic consequences of environmental pollution.

**CH:** Your writing focuses on themes of connection and community. Do you feel we are lacking connection and community in our country today?

**LML:** There's always been a tension in this country between the pursuit of individual happiness and success and the desire to create and preserve community, but I think several trends over the past few decades have worked to undermine communities. One of these is the flight from cities into suburbs, originally "white flight" but today cutting across racial and ethnic lines. Another is the growth of large, now multinational, corporations that transfer their employees on a regular basis, the replacement of an industrial economy with an information-based one, and the decline of unions that have been a source of connection and community for working people. A third factor is the overall disinvestment in the public sector—schools, libraries, parks, and other places that bring people together. Instead of investing in our communities, we have taken the route of tax cuts, so people can run in and out of strip malls or stay at home and shop on-line. Finally, television,

(cont. on pg. 3)

## The Land of the Murdered Poets

Between the Arctic Circle  
and the Tropic of Cancer  
(between passion  
and thought)  
and so far from heaven!—  
there blooms a land,  
beautiful  
and abundant—  
the land of the murdered poets...

Yet verses come forth.  
They well up dark.  
They tear me to pieces.  
And behold,  
like a tradition,  
the woman reaper makes a swipe  
to reap  
a wisp of sunny rays.  
"But you're alive!"—  
The eagle takes offense.  
The wolf's eyes search for my wounds.

A land for me!  
A land deep within me!  
You call from hours bereft of sleep.  
And the mad Maritza river of my blood  
is eating away the banks  
of my heart.  
And I am learning  
to write down verses  
in the land of the murdered poets.

—Lyubomir Levchev

From: *Ashes of Light*  
*New and Selected Poems*  
Translated by Valentin Krustev with  
additional translations by Jack Harte  
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## Poetry in the Park Continues to Thrive

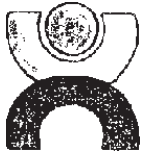
The fourth season of the Poetry in the Park Series brought an array of poets to the Julia de Burgos Park in Willimantic, CT, perhaps the only park in the United States named after a Latina poet. The poetry evenings, held every second and fourth Thursday between May and August, continue to attract many local people as well as people from surrounding communities.

The Poetry Series kicked off with a tribute to Lyubomir Levchev, Bulgaria's preeminent living poet, with performances featuring Rhonda Ward and Michael Bradford reading from Levchev's *Ashes of Light*, and from their own work.

Erik Campbell, who resides in Indonesia but traveled to the United States for his book tour in Nebraska and Connecticut, came to the park to read from his debut book of poetry, *Arguments for Stillness*, about which the *Indianapolis Star* commented, "There are times to delight in the discovery of a new voice...*Arguments for Stillness* by Erik Campbell is an argument for early recognition of a master-in-formation."

Willimantic's own poet and E.O. Smith high school teacher Jon Andersen presented an evening of poetry, reading from *Stomp and Sing*, illuminating the concerns and aspirations of the new working-class generation. *Stomp and Sing* was recently nominated for the Connecticut Center for the Book Award.

(cont. on pg. 8)



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## From the Publishers' Desk

We hope you enjoy this issue of *INK* and will share it with friends. In a post 9/11 world there is more need than ever to understand other cultures, to struggle for full human and civil rights for everyone, to protect our environment, and to be wary of official government pronouncements, as well as to find that still center in ourselves beyond sound-bytes and static where thought can ready us for action. These are some of the concerns of the writers in this issue.

We are proud to have presented four debut books last season—the exciting new voices of Erik Campbell, James Janko, Kim Jensen, and Lyn Miller-Lachmann. It is one of the major goals of the Press to give new writers a chance to be heard—and a difficult road to travel financially, so we hope you will support them by asking your libraries to purchase their books. And fresh off the press are Raouf Mama's *Why Monkeys Live in Trees and Other Stories from Benin* and John Bradley's new book of poems, *Terrestrial Music*. Our spring 2007 list also includes 3 debut books and James Scully's new book of poetry, *Donatello's Version*.

Anyone keeping an eye on the news can see that the State Department and the CIA are already preparing for the destabilization of Venezuela, so we think that Charles Hardy's memoir *Cowboy in Caracas* (April, 2007) will be an important contribution to the public discussion. His story reminds one of the prophecy of Simon Bolívar that "the United States seems to be destined by fate to plague Latin America with misery in the name of freedom," as James Russell notes in his preface. Charles is a former priest who has lived for years in a cardboard and tin shack in a barrio in Caracas and gives us a unique look at the Venezuelan reality. Let us know if you would like him (or any of our other authors) to visit your area, and we will try to arrange it.

We hope you will take a careful look at page 11, "How to Support Curbstone" and consider the various ways you can join us in supporting "books that can make a difference" and our community programs in support of literacy. Your support is extremely important to the Press.

Please visit our web site from time to time for additional information and news of author tours.

With best wishes,

Judith A. Doyle & Alexander Taylor,  
Co-Directors Curbstone Press

**MISSION AT THE HELM:**

Curbstone Press, a 501(c)(3) arts and education organization, was founded in 1975 in Willimantic, Connecticut. Throughout its history, the Press's Board and Co-Directors have nurtured Curbstone's focus on creative literature that invites readers to examine social issues, encourages a deeper understanding between cultures, and reflects a commitment to promoting human rights. Curbstone's mission weaves together two interdependent programs: 1) publishing creative literature that illuminates the issues of our time, and 2) bringing writers into U.S. communities to promote literacy, knowledge about many cultures, respect for human rights, and appreciation of good literature, among people of all ages.

## Miller-Lachmann Interview (Cont.)

video games, and the Internet have isolated people and changed the way we define human connection.

**CH:** Why did you choose to write a novel about environmental justice rather than an essay or book of nonfiction? Do you believe fiction has the same impact in shaping debate about issues as nonfiction does?

**LML:** Some causes lend themselves to essay or nonfiction treatment while others may be better understood through fiction. Fiction takes a long time to write well, so it's not the medium you'd use, say, to stop a development project or a war.



However, complex issues that develop over long periods of time make great subjects for fiction, because fiction allows readers to make emotional connections with the characters and their problems. In that sense, fiction embodies truth, even if the people and events aren't true. Characters model responses to issues. Readers can think about and discuss whether the characters—people like them—made the right decision and what should have been done

differently. Fiction has unlimited capacity to illuminate the great moral issues of our time because it can consider these in all their dimensions and depth. Anyone who has attended religious school knows how effectively stories can be used to teach right and wrong. Fiction is a more sophisticated way of doing the same thing.

**CH:** Is fiction a different way for you to have a political voice?

**LML:** Yes. It's a way of thinking outside the electoral box. Even if people still don't vote in elections, we feel most comfortable expressing ourselves politically through voting. But voting is a limited means of expression. The candidates and parties we support often don't do what we want, and in a winner-take-all system, we have no voice in decision-making if our side loses. I take part in demonstrations and sign petitions not because I think these will influence our political leaders, most of whom I voted against, but because doing so makes me feel better. I feel the same way about writing fiction.

For me, writing nonfiction is like voting. It's easy for me to do, but it's not a way I can express myself fully.

**CH:** In the last thirty years, there has been a decline in the

publishing of American political fiction such as yours. To what do you attribute this? Why do you write political fiction? Why do you believe it is important?

**LML:** I see several factors contributing to the decline in the publishing of political fiction, at least political fiction that addresses the social and cultural conflicts of our time, that goes beyond thinly veiled gossip about political leaders. One is the decline in political activism overall since the 1960s, a situation that might be in the process of changing. A second is the replacement of social consciousness with consumer culture, most explicit in the President's admonition for us to "keep shopping" after the 9/11 attacks. A third is the trend in literary fiction to privilege style over content. Finally, we have the immediacy of the television news cycle and the Internet, which discourages reading and reflection.

In the epilogue of his great social novel of the 1980s, *Continental Drift*, Russell Banks writes that when we care about "lives other than our own...especially wholly invented lives" we transcend our greed and selfishness. Those in power today talk about upholding a "culture of life." It's a beautiful concept, even though those who use the terms seem to care only about life before it is born, or the lives of the people who agree with them, and have brought nothing but death and destruction to the rest of the world.

Most of my career up to now has been in the area of nonfiction, in promoting multicultural literature and education. That's certainly a political field. On the most basic level, I've tried to help people understand and value the lives of those who are different from them.

**CH:** What do you hope to achieve in writing political fiction?

**LML:** I hope that it will encourage more fiction writers to grapple in nuanced ways with the important political and social issues facing us. I'd like to think that it will motivate all of us to think about the consequences of our actions, and inactions, for the planet and for the quality and value of human life. A lot of people talk about the "9/11 novel" and how "9/11 changed everything," but I was just as riveted by the coverage of Hurricane Katrina. It was a natural disaster but also a disaster of our own making, from our irresponsible consumption that has contributed to global warming to the pervasive racism and refusal to invest in our own country and people while we go to make war in the Middle East. The unspeakable conditions that the people endured in the Superdome and the Convention Center demonstrate how in our society today some lives are considered more valuable than others. Nothing has changed since those images

(cont. on pg. 4)

## Miller-Lachmann (cont.)

appeared on national television, and that's just wrong. I'm waiting for someone to produce the "Hurricane Katrina" novel. We might start by reading *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, seeing the way Zora Neale Hurston described the hurricane from the perspective of Janie, a working-class black woman living in the Florida Everglades.

**CH:** You are an expert on multicultural fiction. What has interested you most in reading literature from other cultures?

**LML:** I like to read about how other people live, what is important to them, how they confront problems in their lives. Growing up in Texas, I was taught that the United States was the greatest country in the world with the best technology and the most wealth and the smartest people. And of course, that we have always stood for democracy and progress.

As I came to realize in high school that none of this was true, I began to read the literature of other countries and from other cultures within the United States. Books like Alan Paton's *Cry the Beloved Country* or Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* opened my eyes to a world that had been hidden from me. I found that other countries, and groups discriminated against in my own country, had better writers with more interesting and important things to say.

**CH:** Do you see the same trend away from political fiction in multicultural fiction?

**LML:** It depends on the context. The Latin American boom occurred at a time when many Latin American countries were undergoing tremendous political and social upheavals—wars, revolutions, dictatorships. Many of those same countries have now made the painful transition to democracy and are openly confronting their past. The same with South Africa. I've read almost everything Nadine Gordimer has written. During the apartheid era she wrote memorable political novels such as *Burger's Daughter* and *July's People*. Her most recent work, such as *Get a Life*, which I reviewed for *MultiCultural Review*, is quite explicit and self-conscious in its inward preoccupations.

On the other hand, you still have countries and regions undergoing social conflict and rapid change, such as the Middle East and South Asia, and this is reflected in the literature. For instance, Arundhati Roy, from India, is best known as a political activist and essayist, but she is also the author of *The God of Small Things*. That novel, from 1999, takes on the caste system and other social and sexual taboos.

In the United States, fiction from diverse communities has

become diverted from social and political concerns. For a long time, questions of identity were paramount, paralleling the identity politics of a variety of minority groups in the post-civil-rights era. Today, even identity politics has given way to lifestyle-oriented fiction reflecting the fact that we express our identity through our possessions; we have become what we consume.

For the complete interview, please visit our web site at [www.curbstone.org](http://www.curbstone.org). *Dirt Cheap*, ISBN 1-931896-29-1, \$15.95.

## Recommended from Other Presses

Mario Benedetti, *Only in the Meantime & Office Poems*. Translated by Harry Morales (Host Publications) • Mark Brazaitis, *An American Affair* (Texas Review Press) • Bobby Byrd, *White Panties, Dead Panties & Other Bits & Pieces of Love* (Cinco Puntos Press) • Brenda Cárdenas, *From the Tongues of Brick and Stone*. Introduction by Maurice Kilwein Guevara (Momotombo Press) • Edward Hirsch, *Poet's Choice* (Harcourt) • Faïza Guène, *Kiffe Kiffe Tomorrow* (Harcourt) • Leslie Larson, *Slipstream* (Shaye Areheart Books) • José Martí, *Versos Sencillos*. Translated by Anne Fountain (McFarland) • Louis G. Mendoza (editor), *Raúl R. Salinas and the Jail Machine: My Weapon Is My Pen. Selected Writings by Raúl R. Salinas* (UT Press) • Alicia Partnoy, *Volando Bajito*. Translated by Gail Wronsky (Red Hen Press) • Paul Martínez Pompa, *Pepper Spray*. Introduction by Luis J. Rodríguez (Momotombo Press) • Rory Stewart, *The Prince of the Marshes and Other Occupational Hazards of a Year in Iraq* (Harcourt) • Wislawa Szymborska, *Monologue of a Dog*. Translated by Clare Cavanagh and Stanislaw Baranczak (Harcourt) • Bruce Weigl, *Declension in the Village of Chung Luong* (Ausable Press) • Oliver Welden, *Love Hound*. Translated by Dave Oliphant (Host Publications).

About twice a month, Curbstone e-mails news about current publications, events, and readings for different regions. If you wish to be added to this list, change your e-mail address, or be removed from this list, please visit: <http://www.curbstone.org/optinorout.cfm>, or send a message asking to be added to or removed from the list to: [cplist@curbstone.org](mailto:cplist@curbstone.org). You may also write or call Curbstone Press at 321 Jackson St., Willimantic, CT 06226. Phone: 860-423-5110.

## Torti's *The Scorpion's Tail*: Rebellion in Chiapas

Walt Whitman's famous claim, "I am large, and contain multitudes," could serve as an apt descriptor of what well-executed fiction can achieve for its readers: an expansion of the heart and mind to include the perspectives, idiomatic gestures, motivations, and storied actions of a multitudinous variety of people. By taking us into and out of the perspective of four characters of differing nationalities, genders, economic classes, and races, Sylvia Torti's *The Scorpion's Tail* (paperback, ISBN 1-931896-17-8, \$15.00) creates just such an instance of literary heart/mind expansion.

The novel's plot draws much of its energy from the 1994 Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas, in that the four main characters are all linked, through widely varied means, to the uprising. Chan Nah K'in, a young Hach Winik Mayan woman whose voice fills the book's opening chapter, provides an "insider" perspective on the rebellion as she narrates her reasons for joining, and later leaving, the Zapatista movement. Amy, a white entomologist from Minnesota, ends up in Chiapas for the New Year's Eve uprising through sheer coincidence: she was on a field research trip with a group of biologists who based their work near the rural town of Ocosingo. Already, with just these two women as foils for each other, it's apparent that *The Scorpion's Tail* has tremendous potential to both compliment and complicate the nonfiction-, social-justice-inflected literature on Chiapas that has come out of the *gringolandia* press and web in recent years. Indeed, Chan Nah K'in's personal witness of brutal military violence against unarmed indigenous peasants, and her subsequent loss of gusto for the Zapatista cause, gives readers a complex sense of inner conflict as related to social movements that banner-carrying websites, or terse news reports, could never provide. Likewise, Amy's depression following her evacuation from Mexico serves as a poignant echo to the sometimes paralyzing white guilt that progressive white Americans may struggle with, as they work to define and redefine their relationship to those with less power and privilege.

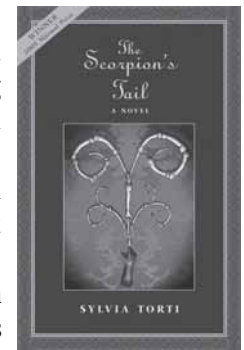
The novel casts an even wider net with the inclusion of two additional main characters, Pablo and Mario. In Pablo, we meet a young man raised in the Mexico City elite class, working as a biologist and struggling to come to terms with his identity as a gay Mexican. He is among the biologists working near Ocosingo at the time of the rebellion. Pablo stages a private rebellion by turning away from his overbearing father and the lure of safety available through evacuation to Mexico City, choosing instead to stay on in Chiapas as a clandestine messenger for the rebels. Mario, one of many young men from poor rural families who joined the Mexican National Army to help earn money for his family, provides a narrative that reveals the alternating bouts of boredom and violent tension that these young soldiers must contend with while navigating ethically tangled situations. Mario's periodic confusion highlights the

ease with which the army's orders to repress the Zapatista rebellion can translate, in the mind of a scared young soldier, into murderous suspicion of all indigenous peasants.

While the novel's four main characters provide four distinct emotional frames through which the reader can interpret the Zapatista rebellion, Torti also makes an ambitious attempt at distilling a set of collective voices and perspectives in the novel's sixth chapter. Here, Chan Nah K'in tells of accompanying her mother from village to village in the Lacandón forest, where her mother would build villagers' support for the early efforts of the Zapatista movement by "convincing them of the value of the forest and our rights." Chan Nah K'in describes how the movement began essentially as grass-roots coalition-building between the various indigenous groups present in these villages: "People met in the evenings, got to know one another, learned each other's languages and customs. They talked in quiet voices. They told their stories like secrets." This sets the stage for a series of collective accounts, provided secondhand via Chan Nah K'in, of the testimonies of peoples from five distinct Mayan groups living in the Lacandón forest. Each reported testimony begins with a blunt acknowledgment of the speakers' ethnic affiliation, e.g. "The Tzeltales said:", "The Tzotziles said:", "The Choles said:", etc. The speakers in these accounts are represented only as an indigenous "we" speaking for that particular group, with the Mexican government and military often serving as the contrapuntal "they." This collective narrative gesture, the only one of its kind in a novel otherwise focused on the unique perspectives of individual characters, highlights the sense of authority and urgency a narrative can take on when delivered in a collective voice.

It may be true that story-telling around the hearth fire used to accomplish, as its main aim, aesthetic pleasure, moral instruction, or spiritual evocation. Long may oral and written literatures continue to do so. But a strong case can be made for today's world exerting a special pressure on contemporary literary fiction, an especial pressure to turn a compassionate gaze on individuals or groups of people engaged in conflicts that are emblematic of, or directly related to, larger societal conflicts. In the age of WMD's and economic globalization, the ability to build understanding across societal and cultural lines of division seems one of fiction's most urgently needed gifts to the world. As an English-language novel linking the lives of middle-class U.S. midwesterners with those of poor, indigenous inhabitants of Chiapas' Lacandón jungle, *The Scorpion's Tail* bears this gift well.

—Maria Meléndez, Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN

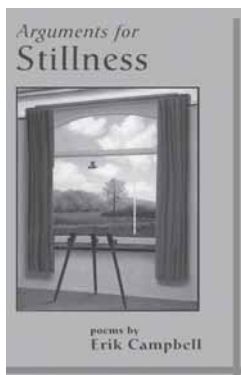


## Excerpt from Interview with Erik Campbell

The following excerpt is from an interview with Alexandra Chrisovechotis and Erik Campbell, author of *Arguments for Stillness*, a poetry collection expressing the value of contemplation in our world of frenetic motion. Campbell, who lives and works in Papua, Indonesia, with his wife Shari, visited the United States in May 2006 for a book tour in Nebraska and Connecticut.

**AC:** Why did you select the title of one of your poems, “Arguments for Stillness,” as your book title?

**EC:** I considered many titles for the book and regretted for a while that I wasn’t famous enough to simply call the book *Poems*. But I felt that the poem, “Arguments for Stillness,” encapsulated many of the book’s themes rather well and effectively indicated how the poems, hopefully, act as persuasions.



**AC:** Is *Arguments for Stillness* largely based upon your own life experiences, or simply on what you have observed to be true to your surroundings?

**EC:** The book is divided into four sections. The first section, “Potential Energies,” deals with “liberating” historical and literary figures from their traditional contexts; the second section, “Moments of Stasis,” confronts how writing can manipulate the environment and is essentially about writing and creating. The last two sections, “Still Lives” and “East,” deal rather explicitly with the theme of contemplation, and are very much autobiographical. “Still Lives” is the section wherein most of the first person poems appear and deals a lot with my marriage, whereas “East” deals tacitly or implicitly with themes governed by my time in other countries, namely countries in Southeast Asia.

**AC:** In one of the last stanzas of “Poem for Neil Postman,” you write, “I think I’ll go home and burn / All of my books / So there won’t be any evidence, / Any proof when they come for me.” Is this a direct reference to Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*, and, if so, do you believe society will ever reach the point of “book burning”?

**EC:** I suppose you could say this is an unconscious “shout-out” to *Fahrenheit 451*, which has always been a very important novel for me and is thankfully still required reading in most high schools. But I don’t believe we’ll ever get to the point of

book burning, at least not in this country, but certain ideas are still being marginalized. Decades after Bradbury’s novel, Neil Postman piggybacked off of his themes and pointed out how we are becoming enslaved by what we think we love. Bradbury is sadly becoming more prophetic, it seems that there is no longer time to read or discuss things due to the demands society places on us.

**AC:** What was your ultimate goal in writing *Arguments for Stillness*, and what message do you have for your readers?

**EC:** Ultimately, I want to connect with people. When writing, I always hope that I have something to say that is of use to the readers and that I can render my thoughts well enough to matter to them. I think that’s what makes poetry so great—most all poetry writers merely want to connect, to redeem and give form to human experience.

For the complete version of this interview, please visit Curbstone’s web site at: [www.curbstone.org](http://www.curbstone.org). *Arguments for Stillness*, Erik Campbell, ISBN 1-931896-26-7, \$13.95.

### Author News

Martín Espada is a 2006 recipient of a fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation. Guggenheim Fellows are appointed on the basis of distinguished achievement and exceptional promise for the future.

Ernesto Cardenal, priest and poet who served as Minister of Culture in the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, received an Honorary Doctorate from the National University of Costa Rica for his “tireless struggle for peace and justice in the world and for his life in the service of a strengthening of the highest values of the central and Latin American countries.”

Luis J. Rodríguez is the winner of the 2006 Paterson Poetry Prize for *My Nature is Hunger* (a Curbstone/Rattle edition).

Ana Castillo is the winner of the 2006 IPPY “Book of the Year Award” in the category “Story Teller of the Year” for her novel in verse, *Watercolor Women/Opaque Men*.

E. Ethelbert Miller’s poem “We Embraced” will be installed at the entrance to the Dupont Circle Metro station in Washington, D.C, along with Walt Whitman’s “The Wound-Dresser.”

Daisy Zamora has been named 2006 Nigaraguan Writer of the Year by the National Assembly of Nigaragua.

*BUFFALO BOY AND GERONIMO* by James Janko

“Nothing in the publisher’s biography of Janko suggests he is a poet, but his book is what used to be called, admirably, “a poet’s novel.” Readers who seek a complex plot won’t find it here, but the lives of the two antiheroes...are rendered in such rich textures that one sometimes feels Virginia Woolf is writing them.”—*Los Angeles Times*

“[Janko’s] deft touch is reminiscent of Wayne Karlin’s fine writing about Vietnam, putting him in distinguished company indeed...What puts him a cut above most fiction about the Vietnam War is his ability to engage the readers in the atmosphere of its people and environment.”

—*Hartford Courant*

*THE WOMAN I LEFT BEHIND* by Kim Jensen

“This is a novel with an edge to it, a novel that is daring in style and content, a riveting exploration of the place where politics, culture and psychology intersect, where a history of wars collides with everyday life...There is now an expansive body of literature about transnational identity and the immigrant experience, but, strangely enough, few book about cross-cultural couples where one of the partners is Arab, though many such couples and marriages exist in reality. This makes Jensen’s book unique, as does her approach...Reading *The Woman I Left Behind* makes one wish to meet her, for she surely has many more stories to tell.”—*The Jordan Times*

“Kim Jensen, up and coming Baltimore writer, fearlessly looks beyond the individual, and beyond our nation, to capture the true complexities of love in the modern world.”

—*Baltimore Urbanite*

*CALL ME HENRI* by Lorraine López

“A well constructed novel that speaks eloquently about youth and the immigrant experience. It beautifully captures the struggles of an adolescent male plagued with multiple crises brought on by family and community...another winner of a book from the imagination of Lorraine López.”

—*El Paso Times*

“López creates a moving, and realistic account of a young Latino boy’s life in the ghetto. Enrique is a hero who will appeal to teens of all backgrounds. There are few young adult novels with Latino main characters. This one would make an excellent purchase for any school or public library serving Latino teens in particular...an inspirational story that will touch and inspire.”—*Voya*

Co-Director **Alexander Taylor’s** new and selected poems, *Dreaming at the Gates of Fury* (ISBN 1-885214-35-9, \$13.00, paperback) is shipping now from Azul Editions ([www.azuleditions.com](http://www.azuleditions.com)). The book is also available from Curbstone Press at [www.curbstone.org](http://www.curbstone.org), or call (860) 423-5110. The poems in *Dreaming at the Gates of Fury* span 50 years, from the height of the civil rights movement to the invasion of Iraq, and reflect Taylor’s involvement in social protest and antiwar movements.

**Jantje Tielken** has been promoted to the position of Publicity & Marketing Manager of Curbstone Press. Jantje has worked at Curbstone since November 2004, and was previously an apprentice in 2001. A native of the Netherlands, she received her Master of Arts degree in English Language and Literature with a focus on American Literature from the University of Groningen. After living and working for several years in Scotland, she moved to the United States to live with her husband, Thomas S. Williams, in Hebron, CT. Jantje will manage all marketing and publicity related initiatives, including author events and media coverage, supervise interns and volunteers, and edit the newsletter.

**Sam Hamill** lectured at the Joiner Center for the Study of War & Social Consequences at the University of Massachusetts in June. In July, Sam attended a literary festival in Caracas, Venezuela, and visited Valencia and Paraguay for additional readings. In August, he addressed the national conference of Veterans for Peace in Seattle, WA. In September, the University of Carabobo, Valencia, will publish his *Selected Poems, Ojos Bien Abiertos*, translated by Esteban Moore, and in October Sam will be an honored guest at a literary festival in Valencia where he will receive the “Condecoración de la Universidad de Carabobo.” In November, Sam will fly to Cairo, Egypt, for a literary festival and meetings with Arab-language poets against war.

## Special Thanks to...

Curbstone Press is very grateful to Lisa Sánchez González and the **English Department of the University of Connecticut** for their ongoing support of Curbstone author tours and events.

We also greatly acknowledge the support of Penelope Pelizzon and the **Creative Writing Program of the English Department at the University of Connecticut** for the forthcoming Living Literature in the Schools Program, with a special thanks to Dean Ross MacKinnon of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences for supporting this co-sponsorship for the 2006-07 academic year.

## Poetry in the Park (cont.)

Internationally known multilingual storyteller Raouf Mama gave a stunning performance reading from a rich tapestry of oral tales from Benin, published in his *Why Monkeys Live in Trees and Other Stories from Benin*.



Internationally known storyteller Raouf Mama reading in the Julia de Burgos Park, Willimantic, CT

With her fellow Thread City Poets, Alexandrina Sergio read with George Hasapes, Joyce Fiondella, Laurence Gutterman, and Stephanie Komkov from their own work. The Thread City Poets is a writers workshop that meets twice a month at Curbstone Press.

“New Voices,” poets Denise Abercrombie, language arts teacher at E.O. Smith High School in Mansfield, CT, Gabrielle Zane, teaching artist with the Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism and Living Literature in the Schools Coordinator for Curbstone Press, and Charlie Chase, a poet well known in the area, presented their poems to a Willimantic audience eager to hear new and upcoming talent. The evening concluded delightfully with Elizabeth Thomas and two of her Sunken Garden Young Poets.

One of the highlights of this year’s Poetry in the Park Series was a reading by Richard Harteis and U.S. Poet Laureate Emeritus William Meredith. State Representative for our local district Walter Pawelkiewicz awarded them a citation for their efforts in building bridges between Bulgarian and U.S. artists and for their support of young writers.

This year’s Poetry in the Park Series ended with a reading by poet Martha Collins, who read from Lam Thi My Da’s *Green Rice*, a bilingual poetry collection she co-translated with Thuy Dinh. *Green Rice* reflects the cost of the Vietnam war, but the poems are also grounded in Lam Thi My Da’s intimate involvement with the landscape, flora, and fauna of her country, as well as love, motherhood, women’s issues, and the sometimes difficult movement into middle-age. Collins also read from her widely acclaimed new book, *Blue Front*, which was published by Graywolf Press in 2006.

## Curbstone on the Road

In its promotion of literature that reflects a commitment to constructive social change, encouraging a deeper understanding between cultures, and reflecting a commitment to promoting human rights, Curbstone Press presents its books to a variety of conferences and bookfairs all over the country in order to raise awareness of our socially relevant literature.

In March, Curbstone was present at the AWP Conference in Austin, TX, where thousands of students, writers, educators, editors, publishers, and patrons of the literary arts were brought together to enjoy readings by their favorite authors, panel discussions on contemporary literature and the art of writing, and book exhibitions. While in Austin, we attended the readings of Sylvia Torti at Book Woman and Resistencia Bookstore.

In May, Curbstone attended BookExpo America in Washington, D.C, which combines the largest selection of English language titles with special industry and author events and unparalleled educational content to create a dynamic environment for networking.

In June, Co-Director Taylor traveled to Bulgaria not only to promote Curbstone, but also a Bulgarian edition of his new and selected poems, *Dreaming at the Gates of Fury* (Azul Editions), which was launched by the Union of Bulgarian Writers at the International Writers Festival. Taylor also participated in the festival’s discussion of the impact of globalization on contemporary life and the role of the writer in a global society. Earlier this year, a bilingual chapbook of his poems, *The Look*, was published by Orpheus Press in Sofia.

Scouting for new writers from Latin America, Co-Director Taylor attended the conference of Latin American writers in Guatemala City, Guatemala, in August, establishing contact with the newer generation of writers.

Also in August, Curbstone exhibited its books with sociological interest at the American Sociological Association Conference (ASA) “Great Divides: Transgressing Boundaries” at the Palais des Congrès de Montréal in Canada.

### Now available:

*Why Monkeys Live in Trees and Other Stories from Benin*, by Raouf Mama. ISBN 1-931896-21-6, paperback, \$12.95.

*Terrestrial Music*, poems by John Bradley. ISBN 1-931896-28-3, paperback, \$ 13.95.

## Recent Visitors to Curbstone

## Erik Campbell

We were delighted to receive some recent visitors to the Press. In May, poet and bookseller Wally Swist came by to discuss future co-operation between Curbstone and the University of Massachusetts bookstore.

Wally has established a Curbstone evening series at UMass in Amherst and will present another Cutting Edge Evening with



Wally Swist and Judith Doyle

Curbstone Press on Wednesday, November 15<sup>th</sup>, featuring Sam Hamill, Doug Andersen, and Naomi Ayala.

In June, author Lady Borton brought us some Vietnamese publishers—Minh Ha and Thanh Binh from Women's Publishing House and Tran Doan Cam from World Publishing House, both located in Hanoi. We enjoyed very much exchanging ideas about publishing and learning more about the publishing scene in Viet Nam, as well as discussing ways in which our publishing houses could work together in the future. Lady Borton has been a major force in developing cultural relationships between Viet Nam and the U.S. and her books are invaluable for an understanding of Vietnamese culture.

In July, Xae Reyes brought her students from the UConn School of Social Work, Joyleen Albarracin brought students from Windham Even Start, and Esteria Barreto Cortés brought students from the University of Puerto Rico to visit the Press and the Julia

de Burgos Park. The students were delighted to visit the only park in Connecticut named after a Puerto Rican poet and enjoyed their tour of the Press and the opportunity to purchase bilingual books.



Xae Alicia Reyes, Joyleen Albarracin, and Esteria Barreto Cortés with their students.

### NAVIGATING THE DARK

In this mining town in Papua the electricity  
Has a habit of giving up at night, and this

Is a miracle of modern stasis, a secular Shabbat,  
Reminding us of what is expendable, of how so few

Of us ever truly experience the dark. We are amazed,  
My wife and I, with the heavy darkness

Of the no moon jungle, insect sounds lacerating  
All illusions of silent places. "It's so absolute,"

My wife says, and I like to think she means  
More than the darkness; the naked places

Of ourselves we dress in sunlight, lamps,  
And recorded music like antithetical

Blanche DuBois's fearing a different sort  
Of scrutiny. "We could pretend it's 1940,"

I say, "put a Jack Benny tape on the short wave  
And drink coffee, light candles." She suggests

A walk outside instead, where there are dozens  
Of others already out on paths bounded by jungle,

Stepping small and laughing loudly through various  
Uncertainties; flashlights as eyes, ears like animals'.

Soon we are trying only to remember not to disappear  
Altogether; everything is so absolutely, so darkly possible.

—Erik Campbell

From: *Arguments for Stillness*  
ISBN 1-931896-26-7, \$13.95

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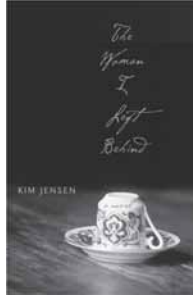
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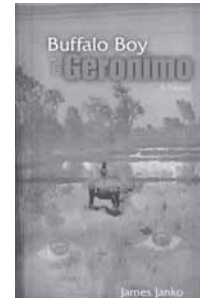


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