

EDITORS SELECT

Jillian Weise, *The Book of Goodbyes*. BOA Editions, 2013. Jillian Weise's second volume of poetry has won both the James Laughlin Award of the American Academy of Poets and the Isabella Gardner Prize. It deserves this kind of recognition. Verbally and sexually electric, the energy in these poems is enough to light up a city. The narrator of the poems is "disabled"—the poet's own word, as, now and then, is "cripple" — and the boy friend is called Big Logos. Their relationship is one for the ages, and begins with the question: "Will you attest to my sight-lines? / Why are you sleeping with my anyway? / Aren't you afraid?" As for the goodbyes, they "begin long before you hear them / and gain speed and come out of / the same place as other words. / They should have their own place to come from...."

Phillip Coleman, editor, *Berryman's Fate: A Centenary Celebration in Verse*. Arlen House, 2014. There have been many celebrations of the Berryman centennial during 1914. For the two in Dublin and Minneapolis, Philip Coleman edited this very interesting collection of commemorative poems, most of them imitation Dream Songs. It is excellent that Berryman's reputa-

tion, which hit a low point for a couple of decades after his death, is now on the rise. He was one of the great poets of his generation. As for imitation Dream Songs, one is of two minds about them. At the level of sheer technical challenge, they have become almost a fad and even a workshop assignment. But the form and the strange language of the songs was invented to say what Berryman uniquely had to say, and attempts at imitation quickly descend into unintentional parody. Nonetheless, I think most Berryman readers would enjoy having the book, which includes many American, English, and Irish poets: Paul Muldoon, John Montague, Robert Archambeau, Timothy Donnelly, Eilean Ni Chuilleanain, Harry Clifton, George Szirtes, along with another two dozen and the editor himself, whose reconsideration of Berryman as a public poet, *Public Vision: Relocating 'the sense of disorder'*, is also recommended.

David Antin, *How Long is the Present: Selected Talk Poems*, ed. Stephen Fredman. University of New Mexico Press, 2014. *NDR* advisory editor Fredman's selection of David Antin's performance pieces is the best possible introduction, aside from a live performance, to Antin's "talk poems." Fredman's introduction is called "How to Read a Talk

Poem,” and that’s information that anyone new to Antin’s work needs to know. How to *listen* to a talk poem is not really an issue, and Charles Bernstein is right to describe Antin’s talks as “chock-full of startlingly philosophical insight, compelling autobiographical turns, and bursts of comic genius.” Whether, in print, these texts constitute “poems” is a question that is either of the essence or totally beside the point.

Michael Longley, *The Stairwell*. Wake Forest University Press, 2014. After the death of Seamus Heaney, many poetry readers not well acquainted with the Irish poetry scene have been asking “who else,” “who now.” Michael Longley has always been Heaney’s equal. Lars-Haken Svensson made the case for Longley’s importance in a long review appearing in an earlier issue of *NDR*. *The Stairwell* continues Longley’s engagement with Homer by way of World War I. This time the focus is on a set of classical Siamese twins,—the Molinoes, Kteaos and Eurytos, Aktor’s sons—who parallel Longley and his own twin, whose elegy is written in the last sequence of this very moving book. Sebastian Barry writes that Longley is “one of the most perfect poets alive. There is something in the work both ancient and modern. I read him as I might check the sky for stars.”

Alfred Corn, *Unions*. Barrow Street Press, 2014. Corn’s volume of 2013, *Tables*, was noticed in *NDR* 36 and recommended for its versatility, variety, surprise, and formal command. The same can be said of *Unions*. Sonnets, villanelles, rhyming quatrains alternate with prose poems, blank verse meditations, and translations (this time of Paul Celan). The emotions range from deep melancholy to almost slapstick comic turns. Corn has become a kind of mid-Atlantic poet, spending a good deal of his writing time in England. This is most in evidence in the long “Eleven Londons,” versions of the city from the point of view of someone who is more than a tourist but less than a native. The dates range from 1967 and the days of Carnaby Street, the Stones and Jimi Hendrix, Vanessa Redgrave in *Blow-Up*, and “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds” all the way to a conclusion in 2007 in which thoughts about forms of expatriation merge with alarm over threats by British Islamists. For those who have known London during those years, the points of reference are familiar and make for nostalgia. The poet ends his cycle reading Shelley’s “Triumph of Life” with its “fragments of late Dantesque outcry” in a 1960s edition.

Hiromi Ito, *Wild Grass on the Riverbank*, translated by Jeffrey Angles.

Action Books, 2014. Action Books sometimes holds readings at the home of the editors, Notre Dame's Joyelle McSweeney and Johanas Goransson. Some weeks ago, this reviewer was lucky to hear Ito and her translator read from *Wild Grass*. Angles is clearly a translator of great skill and tact. He would have to be, as Ito's Japanese presents great challenges in this long narrative poem dealing with, as Lee Ann Roripaugh accurately says, "elements of traditional Japanese *sekkyo-bushi* to explore the weird defamiliarizations and surreal transplantations of postmodern diaspora. Diaspora is infused with the organic horrors of sexual vines and seedpods, invasive spores, reanimated decomp, and naturalization means to be eaten alive by bugs and wild grasses." This doesn't sound like a whole lot of fun, but a reading of the book is actually an exhilarating experience.

Cecilia Corrigan, *Titanic*. Lake Forest College Press, 2014. Like the titular doomed vessel, Cecilia Corrigan's *Titanic* is on a collision course with history: an epic romp through the dregs of theory and the heights of pop culture—or maybe it's the other way around. Centered loosely on the story of computing pioneer Alan Turing (Cumberbitches take note), Corrigan stages encounters between a codebreaker's analytic perspective and an outsider's hunger to lose herself in the mingled dis-

courses of sexuality, academia, and celebrity. The love child of Frank O'Hara and Judith Butler, *Titanic* is an unvert's wet dream, a poison pen letter to the twenty-first century, and quite possibly the funniest and most outrageous debut in the history of American poetry.

Maria Terrone, *Eye to Eye*, Bordighera Press, 2014. This foremost publisher of Italian-American poetry has given us Terrone's third full-length collection of poetry, which comes highly praised by the Dana Gioia: "Maria Terrone's poems are simultaneously sensuous and spiritual, earthy and intellectual. Her imagination takes fire from contradiction and complexity. One small image—washing a potato or rearranging a lingerie drawer—can open up vistas of private desire or public history. Her poetry explores the contingencies of time and eternity, the mysterious interpenetration of reality and the imagination." We encourage you to read this powerful collection by a long-time contributor to *NDR*.

Paul Pines, *New Orleans Variations & Paris Ouroboros*. Dos Madres Press, 2013. It is a delight to recommend Pines's latest poetry collection. The multifaceted Richard Berengarten recommends Pines's book in exuberant terms: "...this book brims, seethes, teems, with *qi*, *duende*, life. Here is a magnanim-

ity of vision that touches myths, rituals and philosophies, that garners pasts, presences and absences, that engenders probabilities, realities and impossibilities. Encompassing space-travel, dream-travel and mind-travel, here is an immense, vibrant, moving canvas.” By all means pick up and savor this prolific writer’s accomplished verse.

Brian Swann, *In Late Light*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. Swann is a frequent contributor to *NDR*, and Eamon Grennan has this to say about this important poet and anthologist’s latest poetry volume: “This various and vital collection in which articulate engagement with the sensual stuff of the natural world coexists with philosophic riffs on the meaning of night scents, stars, fireflies, and even family history is a brave, various, adventurous book that reveals with the tang of clear, immediate speech a poet in the fully earned maturity of his powers.” And we wholeheartedly agree with Grace Schulman that “Brian Swann is a magnificent poet.”

Amina Gautier, *Now We Will Be Happy*, University of Nebraska Press, 2014. *NDR* contributor Gautier has another prize winning collection of short stories, this one the recipient of the Prairie Schooner Book Prize in Fiction. Her first volume won the Flannery O’Connor Prize for Short Fiction (*At-Risk*, 2012). *NDR* has

published a number of her stories over the years. The subjects of the new book’s stories converge around the experience of Afro-Puerto Ricans, both U.S.A. mainland-born and immigrant Puerto Ricans. Erin McGraw and Mary Morris praise the volume. Morris writes Gautier “strives to find that middle ground between the two islands—Manhattan and Puerto Rico—that exert their tug on her characters and shape who they are and what they become” and McGraw concurs, “In these moving, dramatic stories about hunger and fullness, Gautier explores what it means to strive and live in the margins of American hope.” Another moving and insightful collection by a rising young writer.

David Hoppe, *Personal Indianapolis: Thirteen Years of Observing, Exhorting and Satirizing the Hoosier Capital*, Hawthorne Publishing, 2014. Another *NDR* contributor, David Hoppe’s new volume is a collection of columns he did for Indianapolis alternative newspaper, *NUVO*, one of the few locally owned papers of its kind still afloat. These columns are all fairly recent. Hoppe has been writing for *NUVO* since the beginning of the 21st century, though he’s also a fiction writer and produced playwright. At *NUVO* he is what usually is called a cultural critic, and that he is, but his primary concern is to illuminate

his world in order to benefit it, not just critique it. He is the rare public intellectual with a heart, not just a platform. Michael Martone offers in typical Martonian-eze, “These bully bulletins from the heartland target the arrhythmic rhumba of Hoosier cultural politics and political culture. The essays are thumping good, restorative resuscitation, putting the spit polish on the brass tacks of the ever-new news.” Scott Russell Sanders writes, “[Hoppe] is a passionate observer, who believes we should know and care for our home places. By turns reporter, gadfly, analyst, and storyteller, he is insightful and entertaining in every role.” A touching and important gathering of columns, a good first introduction to Hoppe’s bountiful work.

John Matthias, *Different Kinds of Music*, Shearsman Books, 2014. Matthias, *NDR*’s Editor at Large, gives us his first novel after a lifetime of poetry and criticism and memoir. Not that memoir doesn’t reverberate through some of this reverse bildungsroman, deconstructing, as it does, the narrator’s moral and psychological growth. Here it is Hello, Columbus, and the young man does go west, but returns, alas, to the beleaguered Midwest. The poet and *NDR* contributor Michael Anania writes, “Reading these episodes in the life of Timothy Westmont is... oddly magical and disquieting.... Fascinating, too, are the musical

interludes Matthias gives his story between its several sections, another set of evolving affinities, a set of pasts within music’s inevitable present—lullabies to marching bands to jazz, classical music and rock—the evolving sound track of Westmont’s life and our own.” A first novel of discovery and many delights.

