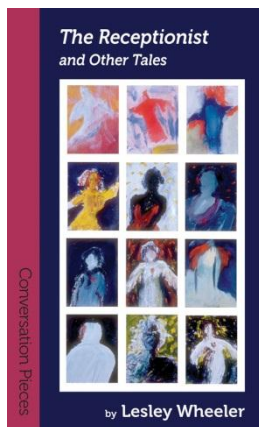


## Author Commentary

Whitman is the most important literary source for “That Shall Cross from Shore to Shore,” particularly his filament-launching in “A Noiseless Patient Spider” and the “dumb, beautiful ministers” in “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry.” My title comes from Section I of the latter: “And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are more to me, and more in my meditations, than you might suppose.” There are many reasons to love Whitman’s poetry, but some of the most goosebump-raising passages for me are in the future tense. When he addresses readers not yet born, I feel singled out personally and grateful for his notice. I learned from him that a poem can be a device for reaching others across vast distances of time and space. I wonder what happens in the brain when we experience that frisson of impossible connection.

This has been the recurrent subject of my recent writing (and maybe further back, actually): communication, reception, the launching of signals that may be heard, missed, or partially obscured by static. Neurochemistry provides this poem’s metaphors; sound and broadcasting became important when I researched a scholarly book, *Voicing American Poetry* (Cornell, 2008); and all of this material has a metaphysical dimension, too.



The project forked into two streams. I’m working towards a poetry collection with the provisional title *Signal to Noise*, though it’s still a little fuzzy. I just finished tuning a book called *The Receptionist and Other Tales*, due from Aqueduct Press in August 2012. The title sequence is a feminist speculative academic novella in terza rima: the main character, an administrative assistant at a small college, while entangled in a harassment dispute, starts hearing a disembodied voice and following its cryptic advice. This weird narrative is followed by a collection of shorter pieces that engage speculative fiction genres: there’s a riff on “The Waste Land” as zombie apocalypse tale; some sonnets about villainy; a Lovecraftian story set at an ominous prep school; and more. Most poetry-writing feels compulsory rather than chosen, but still, this is a strange program to beam out into the ether, and I’m really curious to discover who picks up the frequency.

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