

Felino A. Soriano has authored nearly five dozen collections of poetry, with his most recent being *Aggregations: the quintet gatherings* (white sky ebooks, 2012), *In the parallel of pursued occurrences* (Fowlpox press, 2012), and *Of language|s| the rain speaks* (quarter after press, 2012). His poems appear in over 500 online and print journals including *quarter after*, *experiential-experimental-literature*, *BlazeVOX*, *New Mystics*, and *Indefinite Space*. The foundational premises of his work revolve around creating a language identifying functional association to environment and his connection to various idioms of jazz music. He lives in California with his wife and family.

Calvin Pennix holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Chapman University and lives with his wife and daughter in Mission Viejo, CA. He is currently a high school English teacher at Ribet Academy in Los Angeles, CA and an instructor at Everest College, where he teaches Composition, American Literature, Critical Thinking and Algebra.

Calvin's first book of poetry, *Grounds*, was published by Argotist Books, his second collection, *Around/ About*, was published by Differentia Press and his chapbook, *All Dried Up*, was published by quarter after press. His fourth collection, second chapbook, *On Reaction* is forthcoming from Differentia Press. Calvin has been a featured artist at *Counterexample Poetics* and has had his poetry recently appear in *Mad Hatters Review Blog*, *On Barcelona*, *Otoliths*, *Certain Circuits*, *experiential-experimental-literature*, *The Altered Scale*, and *Upstairs at Duroc*.

He is also the founding editor of *quarter after/ quarter after press* a place for poetry, poetics and art and is represented by Gallery 207.

Calvin Pennix: To start off, I want to ask about your process(es). You are very prolific - the most prolific poet that I know of - how do you keep that up? What makes you sit down and write?

Felino A. Soriano: Thank you, Calvin. Various attributes contribute to my incessant desire to write. I suppose a truncated foundation can be found in a quote from Rainer Maria Rilke:

“If your everyday life seems poor, don't blame it; blame yourself; admit to yourself that you are not enough of a poet to call forth its riches; because for the creator there is no poverty and no indifferent place.”

The luxury exists for me of having a dedicated, small writing room/library in my home, and Rilke's quote hangs above my desk, as it serves as a prominent manifesto mirroring the philosophy of my subjective responsibility as a poet. Also, within the spectrum of *why* I write, exists an ineffable quality that I cannot properly articulate. The act of writing is a naturalized inclination, one that unfolds regularly; hence, I typically write three poems, daily.

One of the most important reasons of why I am a poet is due to the elation the process of writing brings. I have an obsessive fascination with the act of *interpretation* and therefore, the connection to Rilke's quote is an easy guide to pursue.

Calvin Pennix: I love the quote from Rilke, I can definitely relate. You mention your responsibility as a poet, can you elaborate more on that? This is an idea that varies from poet to poet, and I would to hear more about it from you.

Also, you and I share the same "elation the process of writing brings." I thoroughly enjoy the process of writing versus having written. I tend to indulge in that process. This, I think, derives from my days as an athlete (a long time ago) where I spent countless hours practicing and working out. I was never quite satisfied with game time performances, which equate to publications, which are great, but there is always room for improvement and more writing. All of which come from the process of writing, whatever one's given process might be.

You mentioned Rainer Maria Rilke, who/what are some of your other influences and/or inspirations? Jazz music is one right?

Felino A. Soriano: In the complexity of identities and definitions of the *self* (the ego-voluntary definitional foundations as well as an others-attempt to create a physical reflection through subjective, unbalanced observation), transgression often becomes an influential form of intangible data. The/*this* transgressive manifestation lies within the notion of *becoming* within the many marred attempts of others shaping freedoms into an identity mirroring solely what they create rather than using our own exploratory examples of truthful identity. Often, we "see ourselves" in the quantitative notion of another's vantage point. This dangerous and misleading identity further creates in us an existence that produces compliance, where, intuitively through unconscious imprisonment, reacts in a mentality of group or pluralized objective to please another vs. pleasing the self.

To further explicate, I subscribe to the Nietzschean vantage of authenticity of the self, in the perspective of initiating life through searching for opportunities to come into living not through imitating others, but through the conscious campaign into living outside of the ruck attitude. I often visit Cornell West's words, and in particular, this quotation of his is profound:

"I consider myself a jazz man in the world of ideas, a blues man in the life of the mind because my models are jazz musicians and blues men, who have to find their voices, not just the echoes, who had to have a vision, not just a stare. And in the end, have to be true to themselves because all imitation is suicide. All emulation is a sign of an adolescent mind. Now all of us imitate. All of us emulate, but those who love us, like Monk loved Coltrane, you don't need to imitate Johnny Hodges. Go ahead and find your voice brother."

The function of *finding of the voice* burgeons from understanding the responsibility to engage with the many interpretations of how the self is viewed. The propaganda of cultural popularity is often experienced sans the realization of becoming part of a thinking/creating/acting group instead of functioning upon (and therefore, creating) the self's motivating habitual desire to disengage from outside influence, ideology, patterned processes. My friend and mentor Duane Locke once said "to be a poet, one must unlearn

almost everything he has been taught.” This formulation of conceptual understanding correlates with the absolute basis for my work: interpretation then, reinterpretation, etc.

The responsibility about what you asked earlier can be answered through the imperative spectrum of finding authenticity within the life of a poet. When Rilke states “blame yourself; admit to yourself that you are not enough of a poet to call forth its riches” when referring to finding and interacting with a productive life, this is a perceptive aspect (and also one of introspective involvement) of artistic endeavors. I do not believe in the popular term, “writer’s block”, for this is the antithetical experience to what Rilke is etching into the disposition of the poet.

You mention satisfaction, which I find a fascinating subject and experience. Like many terms of existence, *satisfaction* is an imminent one which drives us to create information based on evaluation, experience. When speaking with other artists I find the majority are not particularly satisfied with what they create, but appreciate the *process* in which one delves into when developing a poem, painting, etc. For me, the endeavor is the subconscious; the finished poem, the tangible reaction to the faculty of rendering. It is rare I think of being satisfied with a poem (satisfaction creates an unintentional limit to the act of *nisus*), as I can see a negative juxtaposition occurring with preconceived notions of how the poem should appear through various constructions of language. My poems are never *parti pris* in this traditional form; for example, if I am writing a series of poems, outside of knowing the identity of the poem through realization of the series taking place, no other aspect of the writing is preunderstood or provided to me in a predirectional facet.

The foundational aspect of my motivation to write exists within my deep desire to engage with language—to manipulate the musical qualities of speech into the posited informing of my environment. Environment is the complexity of open movement: of speech, tone, paintings, laughter, color, texture, etc., and within this ambit of unlimited opportunities, describe what my senses encounter through the descriptive language of creating the concrete through abstract interpretations.

Calvin, you ask of other inspirations, particularly jazz music. In 2000, I began listening to jazz; I purchased many albums, and during this time watched Ken Burns’ documentary *Jazz*. I became fascinated with the language of each idiom jazz represents. Early and continued favorites include Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Clifford Brown, Art Blakey, among others. I began writing poetry seriously on 1/1/2000, shortly before watching Burns’ film. However, during this time I always wrote in silence, as I found other forms of sound a distraction. Circa September, 2006, I began to broaden my jazz influence, and began intensely listening to musicians considered within the spectrum of the avant-garde: Ornette Coleman, Anthony Braxton, Sun Ra, Cecil Taylor, Albert Ayler, and more so, Eric Dolphy. Dolphy’s sound expanded, immediately, how I wrote; I then began writing while listening to jazz, and attempted to interpret what I heard through emotional

content of the dialogical occurrences of each recording, and read them using language of effectual translation. The music changed my poetic language, and furthermore changed how I constructed a poem. I began using white space and angular syntax; however, this was not an intentional effort, but it came naturally, as again, this is how I interpreted the sounds of each jazz recording.

In 2010, I devoted the year to writing a series called *Approbations* which consisted of interpreting nearly 800 jazz recordings. I've been told I have an obsessive connection to jazz, which is accurate; however, the dominant, pejorative definition of obsessive doesn't apply, as this daily act of listening is a responsible affirmation into my development as a poet.

CP: The transgression of identities and definition of the self you mention, especially the "unconscious imprisonment," seem a bit panoptic, which I totally understand and agree with. Even if we, as I do, believe that what we create lends to the definition of one's self, our creations still derive from somebody/somewhere else. As Cornell West states, "All of us emulate..." how one see/deems his or herself is a product of their context, or their works context, which then of course depends on the reader. The pleasing and/or seeing of the self seems as if it would have to be in total isolation.

This *finding of the voice* you mention, leads me to my next question. I have been following you and your work for a while now, and have immersed myself in it as of late - thanks again for the books - and have noticed more use of symbols outside of letters and space. In your latest works you have employed dashes, brackets, back-slashes, forward-slashes, even arrows. You have now published 52 - an amazing number - collections and it seems as if you are continuously finding your voice, which may translate into a continuous finding of self. So my question(s) to you is where has this use of symbols derived from? Are they an extension of the language you employ in your work, or do they serve some other purpose?

FS: You mention that I am "continuously finding my voice", in which you make a fine parallel of finding the *self* during this process. My work has indeed changed drastically since 2000. There are many foundational reasons for this/these change(s) in my work: jazz music, philosophy (Nietzsche, Heidegger, et alii), Duane Locke's teachings, marriage, family, employment, etc. Alfred Tennyson stated "I am a part of all that I have met", and within the shaping of self a correlation of influence, preference, memory, desire, and various other attributes of construct help to uncover the artistic aspect of my current writings.

My use of symbols is an extension of communicatory desires. My natural disposition is one of introversion, of shyness, isolation. Since childhood, I've found an appreciated aliveness within the ability to be alone and discover, understand. The core of my desire to write is communication—communication using a language disparate from the *au courant*. Advice I received when I began writing—and I cannot recall who provided the advice—but it was

stated to never use clichés when writing a poem. Over time this has transformed into different interpretations of what *cliché* represents. Regarding use of symbols in my poems—they serve as a nonverbal device of communicating; more directly, the symbols indicate emphasis, fraction, importance, necessity, etc., in their placement of the poem. Nonverbal communication is an important aspect of the poet's disposition. The hypersensitivity into ascertaining surroundings is a foundational and fundamental faculty to understanding language's role in developing sound, rhythm, context, and music within a poem's structural composition.

My works are always extemporized (I don't have the temperament to plan or predetermine a poem), and it is rare I revise beyond correcting the misspelling of a word. An attempt is always present when writing to create from an emotional connection to what I am interpreting; therefore, as emotions are impulsive, an extension of that facility is exposed to my writing, and I feel it imperative to *react* in that instance of burgeoning thought, and feel confident in that reactive component of choice (i.e. word, space, rhythm, image).

CP: Revision has never really been a part of my process either, and I used to feel a bit out of place in workshops when we had to submit multiple submissions for the same poem. A lot of revision seems(ed) forced and you're right about the importance of reacting and revision takes away from that initial reaction.

At times the nonverbal communication is all a poet has, unless they go out and give a reading. Do you go out and give readings?

Also, I recently read that you have a few collections forthcoming; you are up to 53 if not mistaken right? I want to ask how do you know/discern when a collection is complete? How a poem is complete?

FS: I often ask other writers about their experience |s with workshops, as I've never partaken in an aggregated effort with others to write. I've never taken poetry classes or creative writing classes either. Many years ago in an attempt to ascertain why I had such a desire to write, I queried myself in wanting clarification: Can one learn to write poetry from a teacher within a structured classroom setting?

The only readings in which I've participated were part of an online environment. A few years back, the very kind Jane Crown invited me and poet Connie Stadler on her internet radio program to discuss our process as writers and to also read some of our writings. That experience caused great anxiety for me as I had never priorly read my work in that type of format. The 2nd reading was also for Jane Crown, as she accepted some of my poems for her excellent journal, *Heavy Bear* and I read five poems. My disposition does not allow for me to give readings, as the introverted aspect is much larger than the desire to read publically. Perhaps this will change...

Yes, my 53rd collection of poetry was recently announced. The act of knowing a collection, or the foundational aspect, each poem is complete, is based on a visceral experience that at times is as untellable as the appendage of writing. Typically, my poems are short, under one page, and I write them very quickly. I attempt to reference in some form, the beginning of the poem throughout the body of the writing, and particularly at the end. The structural and corporeal aspects of a poem are based on my interpretation of what it is I am attempting to understand within the environmental happenstance taking place within the environs about which I am writing. When I feel I cannot adequately contribute to a poem any further, I move on to the next. I do not agonize over each writing which references my lack or desire of revision.