

chiron

REVIEW

Issue #73, winter, 2003



PETER MONEY

– POETRY –

Doug Riston
Ruth Moon Kempfer
Katherine Soniat
Fredrick Zydek
Wilma Elizabeth McDaniel
Tom Schmidlin
Michael Kriesel
Robert Cohen
Amy Spade
Michael Hoerman
Steve Henn
Jean Esteve

– FICTION –

Reuben Burger
D.E. Baris

PETER MONEY

This Here Horizon

First: say so;
the difference between
constancy of silence
& confluence of subject
under silence of being:

Water emergent under
fog from where they both
began – the white vaporous
now undulates, modulating
event horizon, a bookmark
between two rooftops

vague & plenty

as paper,

as this

voice.

*

What We Do

Birds singing is a language.
Birds sing all the time.
Birds' language is singing?
Song is language elevated.
Birds fly & flying's poetic.
To the birds what I do is poetic:
to lay around all day
on the deck in the sun.
But in doing so I say
nothing. To them I am singing.

My silence must be song.

Silence becomes my language;
the long pause; the semi-
colon before other sounds.

The birds love it.

They go crazy
over me,
they want to indulge in me,
their language is song
& is me,
because we both speak
lovingly.

Gratefully.

*

From "To day – Minutes only"

... How it came to night. In the sky: ash. On the ground: more snow. And
when sleep should have me: instead I find myself in a café, communicating
alone – a chair by a window, a light – far off ... an elderly man wrapped in
white & smoking a pipe stared at me, stares still. By day the color is flaked
skin, the taste is dust, the sound is nothing but once in a while a breeze
wrapping around a tree; a motorcycle or swift small car is the only passing
action. I feel I am beginning to understand what exile will be –

They let a word escape their lips, ink a pen, a poem beat like blood drawn
from Naji Al-Ali's eyes, just a short one, not a rant but word, after word, a
child's haiku only – whispering just this little beauty: as much part of land-
scape, as a flowering weed, or snow –

we, they, smoke curls backward as if a word upon itself, rising only with
wind, dissipating – the blue sweeps upward, leading the eye above; and now
there is no difference between smoke and cloud.

Earth is left, and we, – we figure the minutes to day.

String Version

I am here. Tell the angel to keep watch
at a distance. I will build a wooden box
to hold my things, let the acre grow
grass, weeds, wild flowers,
what will.

*

On the crystal candle holder is the remnant
of an evening warmed by breaths on wine.
Clear wax spread & dotted the leg of divinity.

*

In the foothills, Oakie sips his brother-in-law's brandy.
Sheep on the hillside are stars for a sky
already intoxicated.

*

At home I listen to the music & read
Anselm Hollo's words about it:
"stop, dear mozart: you're making me cry"

*

Where the sunlight finally comes through the window
is a warm patch created on the rug where I rest now,
wider than a grave, shorter than
head to toe. I hold the book in it – a white fire,
then rise impulsively to conduct the music about the space.

*



Established February, 1982

Michael Hathaway, Ed., 702 N.
Prairie, St. John, KS 67576. Con-
tributing editors: Gerald Locklin,
and Ray Zepeda, Long Beach, CA
and John Brantingham, Twin
Peaks, CA.

e-mail: chironreview@hotmail.com
website: http://www.geocities.com/
SoHo/Nook/1748

It's time! Time to start making
plans to come to St. John for
Chiron Review Poetry Festival
2004, August 7 and 8.

CR is indexed by *American
Humanities Index*, 1717 Central
Ave. #201, Albany NY 12205 and
*Index of American Periodical
Verse*, POB 12109, St. Peters-
burg, FL 33733. It is available on
microfilm from Pro Quest: Infor-
mation and Learning, 300 N. Zeeb
Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106. CR's
archives are housed at Beinecke
Library, Yale U., New Haven, CT.

CR PATRONS

Al Vopata
W.R. Marcy
Maxine Mavis
Barbara Peck
M.B.
Betty Johnson-Miller
Michael Hoerman
Joyce Metzger

CONTENTS

Peter Money poems	2
Peter Money interview	4
Katherine Soniat	8
Jean Esteve	9
"Aunt Fan," Kathy J. Karlson	10
Rawkinrec	11
Tom Schmidlin	12
Michael Hoerman	13
"Broken Rearview Mirror," R Burger	14
Flolid, Spiel	15
Doug Riston	16
Robert Cohen	17
"Cars in Water," Laura Selby	18
Griffin, Church	19
Ruth Moon Kempher	20
Amy Spade	21
"Wrinkles," Tony Báez Milán	22
Heather Gabriel	22
Weidman, Martin, Wyman, Cutter	23
Fredrick Zydek	24
Michael Kriesel	25
"Animal Rights," Anis Shivani	26
J. Wesley Clark	28
Steve Henn	29
"The Wanderer," Ian Grey	30
Loar, Agostino, francEye, Allison	31
"Snappy Chicken," Alexandra Leake	32
Lockie, Steward, Inman, Rubin	33
"Juneau," D.E. Baris	34
Charles Rammelkamp	35
Wilma Elizabeth McDaniel	36
justin.barrett	37
Nesteroff, Poage, Bogen, Hicks	38
Antler, Lifshin	39
Book Reviews	40
Ian Young Books	41
Doyle, Trachtenberg, Peters	45
Northup, Lindeman	46
Chiron Review Poetry Festival	47
Ryan Rowe	47
Speer, Young, Widing	48

PETER MONEY

2.7.03

DEAR FIRST LADY MRS. LAURA BUSH:

In the spirit of what literature will offer the open ear, I enclose for you the poem I would have hoped Sam Hamill would carry to your hand.

As poetry offers, a bird – a blackbird – is not limited to the allusion of a plane of destruction. If we stay with that bird, a creature of origins, the seed it finds and gives to flight: we read in the moment the promise of renewal, a garden – which is to say, a created thing, not manipulated devastation. Perhaps in this brighter day Ophelia may rise too, in epiphanies to witness the blessing of a simple recognition: humanity – a cry away from boxed-in impulses to destroy – is gifted with this choice that we honor each other, knowing that we are “all in this extremely strange situation together” – requiring a compassionate response, a sympathy which suggests we ourselves would not want to be bombed, no less bombing our Eden, our origin, our basic humanity.

We are an extraordinary country of poets and gardeners – many of whom have carried the weight of themselves to defend and to free. If we learn anything at this moment in history, may it be that we had a chance to choose beauty.

Sincerely, Peter Money, poet, former librarian

This Seed

*as if between water and the universe lay the secret of the first sleep,
the first shiver. / Today, we lend you a hand to find our garden.*

– Saadi Youssef (Iraqi poet)

And when we woke shivering there was a word: blackbird,
pushing through air above us – dashes to the ear quieting
the roars of angry men, over blankets of snow, tablecloth, the dead still near –

(& who are the dead whispering today? Such patience
while we practice,) Ophelia's hands quiver with the word, floating,
– bird, she said Yes – and by her word knew the difference between:

the living and the dead. Over the spread
shadows of lone maple – a tremendous lung splayed
flickers & seizes on the frozen field, an angel, mercy, in light, raising

bones of one sweet hand on a promised bed, palm pressed
to a distant window touching glass, moistened – desperate to sign
humanity, reaches, this: blackbird flying, carrying an orange rind

by beak – flesh, seed, enough, holding on, gaining (*at least this*) peace
– found in mound of winter & taken to the setting sun, a forthcoming:
glimpsed, not captured, eye praises living & compels the eye with blessing,

lets remain, to see each eye opening. Now who would crack the back of time?
Sentient born, You, would you? bomb our Eden, once arose?
Would you bear, scar, the fruit of Eve? Or divine the garden from a bird ...

Firefly

Angelic pilot
I saw yourself in my eye,
where feet stopped & danced
away from “if I had lived”
retrospection
into the actual
firefly in the brain that whispers
“remember this” & does.

I know now day with wider eyes:
Raccoon! Mollusk! Walnut!
Curious attentions.
Six white stags graze on the hillside
& watch when I pass, a matador bloodied by a pen.
Dairy cows hump in the feeding yard
as if grain were consolation, as if erotica hadn't a thought,
a scent dog bounding in the woods after not even it knows.

A smile & a laugh
too physical for memory,
an eyelid peeking
between tent flaps.
The night sky is a bucket in a well.
Here, now, forever:
three words sustain me.
Existences emerge less matter of fact
& more miracle; – when I try to count
the stars, for instance.

The prodigal de facto industrialist
is back from the living dead,
led by faint wordless voices
– angels & memories who're real people.
It's me they greet. It's the paratrooper who packed
a hanky for a chute.
When they hold the center of my forehead with their thumbs,
the way the Down's Syndrome girl did in school,
I can tell they've been here before & know me.

They do not try to claim time
but keep a well
in songs, long silences,
& a few questions.
As if from the wisdom of one who has been
a falling point in the sky of a distant galaxy,
anonymous & exiled only to itself,
they find themselves in their jar, letting the dark
give itself to what lights.

*

Peter Money: The Chiron Interview

interviewed by David Oliveira

DAVID OLIVEIRA: Peter, let's begin by giving you something of a personal context. Where, did you grow up?

PETER MONEY: I like to think the first five years of my life in California were influential! I was born in Napa, 1963. November. Same day sixty years after Carl Rakosi was born – a fact which continues to thrill me because Carl was a revelation to me after Ginsberg directed me to his work. Napa, back then, wasn't such a rich place. It was ordinary country, not unlike the Midwest in terms of civic character. My father's family were civil servants and farmers. Money Rd., south of St. Helena, is where the old family farm had been. My great-grandfather John built a couple little stone bridges in Napa Valley as well as the clock tower building on Main Street St. Helena, and named it for his father-in-law: The Richie Building. Now of course, with all the vintners, it's gotten truly 'richy.' My family left California and moved to what's known as 'The Northeast Kingdom' – the far northeast section of Vermont – when I was about five. I returned to California in 1992 and lived in San Francisco and then in Berkeley until 2002.

D.O.: Why have you returned to Vermont?

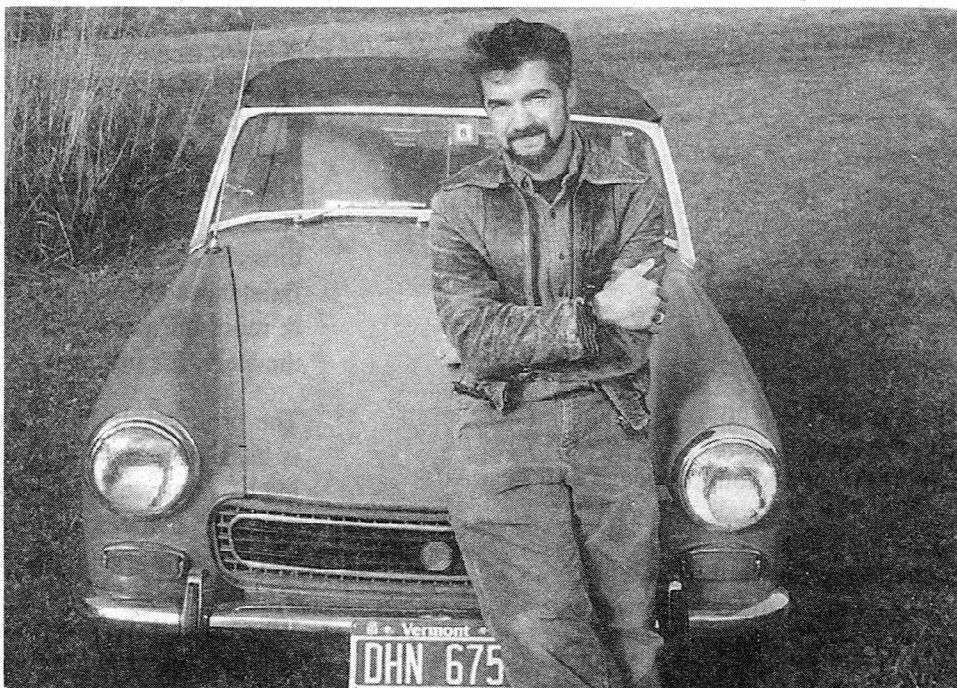
P.M.: Turns out I missed the drama of New England seasons, the northeastern landscape, and the small village 'hamlets' tucked into shaded valleys. My mother had grown-up in southern Vermont, in a funky town called Putney (Bob Dylan's son went to the Putney School, I've been told; high on the loft of unseen Putney Mountain. Actually, my uncle attended The Putney School, I guess in the early 1940s). It was and still is an independent school but kids from town got to go, I suppose by some sort of lottery. My mother, however, had to go to the one room school house which was a short walk from her parent's meager farm. Something about being a girl, perhaps, prevented her from enrolling in The Putney School at that time. Or at least because she was the eldest girl in the family, and not the eldest son, maybe. My mother in a one room schoolhouse! It's a historical concept now, isn't it? I sound like Tom McGrath in "A Letter To An Imaginary Friend!" I think it was a magical place, though. One room, one playground next to a hill of cows, and all the imagination could gather. Much later, John Irving lived across the road from my grandmother. I never knew him. It was only by chance that someone mentioned him there, otherwise it was a humble part of the world. Putney was also a holiday place for us. Sledging during Christmas vacation (one hill over from the one room schoolhouse), mud pies, chickens, avoiding bloodsuckers in the brook, sitting in old abandon automobiles in cow pastures – sweltering through the jammed up windows in summer, cannon balling into the swimming hole near Ruth Grandin's house (she, turns out, was a poet! I didn't know this until a year after she died. But I always did like her house, and something about her), 'the Boogie Man' in the hay and secret passages of the red barn, a W.W. I German hel-

met my grandfather had in a dry dusty cobwebbed middle room off the barn (the New England fashion was to keep 'adding-on' to the farmhouse between house and barn; originally these were seasonal rooms – for example, for splitting winter firewood). I admired places like The Putney School and when I got to Oberlin, in Ohio, I'm sure I felt there was something akin to The Putney School there also.

D.O.: You also have strong ties to Massachusetts. How does that state figure in your growing up?

P.M.: We moved from California to Vermont to Cape Cod, Massachusetts. I was excited about moving to a seaside culture because I was fascinated by the ocean, boats, sailfish. There was a man who lived off the square in Lyndonville, in the Northeast Kingdom, in a big brick house and he had a sailfish on his wall (far from any ocean). It was one of the most beautiful and mysterious things I had

to that culture as we've seen since). On my cluttered desk now I keep a framed letter from The White House, dated August 3, 1970, which reads in part: 'Thank you for your letter to President Nixon. He understands your concern about the war in Vietnam and wants you to know that he and his advisers are doing everything they can to obtain a just and lasting peace.' So, you see, I – at the young age of seven – started feeling a kindred level of awareness with, I imagine, the older students in my dad's high school. Many of all ages in America came of age around the war in Vietnam, wouldn't you say? Of course the extent to which Nixon had lied to me, even if by proxy, became increasingly clear much later. But it was the beginning of realizing that Presidents, authority, may tell you they have your best interest at heart but really what's in their minds is something else entirely, and largely concealed. One from our high school group was a summer cop at the



ever seen. And I'm sure I had retained a mythical impression of the ocean from having seen the Pacific in my first years. I'll try to cut to the chase here: we lived in a typical self-assured suburban 'development' in what-could-be-a-more typifying place called Centerville. Now, if you go, the best thing about Centerville is Four Seas Ice Cream, on your way to Craigville Beach. It hasn't changed since 1960, I'm sure. We arrived in 1972 so my dad, a history teacher, could become the new principal of Barnstable High School. I was proud and treasured the headline in *The Cape Cod Times*: 'Mr. Money Wants To Teach About Life'. It was an awkward time in America: Nixon, Vietnam, open-classrooms, 'values clarification', alternative youth cultures bucking the system (it seemed particularly radical then because the alternative was in direct defiance of authority and norms rather than anything conjured by fashions marketed

Kennedy Compound; that strip of beach was common to my friends and those houses were remarkably simple. I got involved in summer theater at The Cape Cod Melody Tent ('the oldest tent theater in America' they liked to say). My friends worked on tour boats on Nantucket Sound. A couple summers I sold bait, ice, and souvenirs in a shack by Hyannis harbor. Big soggy cardboard crates would be delivered from Maine and I'd have to pick out these incredibly slimy and nasty multi-legged 'seaworms' (with pinchers!) and sort them into smaller boxes for visiting busloads of day-fishermen (and women) from New York. I was supposed to get ten or so dozen per crate – that's 120, ten inch, worm s! – and there were often 13 or 14 crates! During college breaks, I read meters for the electric utility company. Bought a beat-up MG Midget for four hundred dollars I named Dylan, for Dylan Thomas (although some preferred to

think it was for Bob). Never did catch that sailfish. Would have to go to Mexico, I think. And I realized I was opposed to the idea of taking such a wondrous creature from its habitat simply to adorn my wall. There's still an art installation piece I want to do on this theme. It was a good place to grow-up, despite seeming decidedly closed to worldly concerns. Provincetown was an exception and I would take visitors there to see liberated progressive artistic culture at work along side old time fishing culture. This is the turf (sand!) of Eugene O'Neill, Norman Mailer, Marsden Hartley, Dos Passos, so many. Closer to Centerville, Edward Gorey and Kurt Vonnegut summered. Kerouac spent time in Hyannis. I did meet Edward Gorey when one of his plays was produced by the Atlantic Theater Company, a group my brother Tom was involved with for a couple seasons. You can see legacy – or association – means a lot to me. It's difficult to explain but I do know there is a reason why our encounters matter, or come to matter. And we can be inspired by other people's stories, presences, proximity. So I've paid attention.

D.O.: Will you talk more about Dylan, your MG? I think that is an amazing story.

P.M.: In very strange circumstances, seems to me – I recently bought back the first car I ever owned (twenty years ago!). I had 'retired' the MG Midget and was living in California when I decided to donate it to the MacDowell [artists'] Colony, for I'd been paying for storage across the country and the car was closer to New Hampshire, where the colony is, than where I was). MacDowell promptly sold it, although I heard they'd considered using Dylan to deliver their famed basket lunches to artists in residence who were tucked into cabins down the dirt roads of the MacDowell estate. I think such a delivery would have been fun but probably loud and smelly. Plus, I'd be surprised if you'd fit more than five or six baskets in a Midget. I thought that was that. It was 1998 and I regretted letting Dylan go, but I suppose I always wondered if a future buyer would fix it up such that I could buy it back once I had space and money. We finally moved from California to Vermont, more or less by chance settling in this house, and as it turns out Dylan was only 15 minutes away! And, it had been on a road I'd gone down once a week for the past two years, along my way to teach. For most of those two years it wasn't for sale and I bothered to stop and talk to the owner. When recently it did come up for sale, the kicker is I didn't confirm it was Dylan – or have reason to – until the last moments of the sale. Yet bizarre confluences were creeping in (I imagine a bit like encountering an old friend who's gone through a gender change: the old car in new apparatus was almost beyond recognition). I told the seller about certain features my 71 Midget had had ... and he basically said, 'My gosh, this is your car!' He'd changed the look of it in a number of ways so I couldn't be sure until we talked on about the details, things he fixed. Then we compared photos! So here I am

with a thousand dollar convertible – which I paid \$450 for when I was 20! I'm beginning to believe in angels. I mean, how many roadside mechanics would drop what they're doing and go out of their way, go home and get a part, somewhere lost in upstate New York, because their favorite poet is Dylan Thomas? This happened to me. It was a lucky car. And it's happening again.

D.O.: What age were you when you started writing?

P.M.: Seven. Half a dozen or more poems in a toy safe, handwritten, careful, tiny.

D.O.: What made you realize you were a poet?

P.M.: It was as much a change in my chemistry and outlook I don't think I could have predicted. Up until my junior year in college, I had always wanted to be in theater. But the realization arrived out of a sense that I needed this feeling of being compelled by the ordinary world in which I suddenly found myself, having come of age. There was no 'act' to be had. Being a poet became my way to be alive in the thoughtful sense (although, at first, this meant intellectualizing too much – but the process got me a place at which I can function with words fairly quickly, unlike in speech). I had to articulate maybe a feeling of being amid events and outside them at the same time, which I had never done – perhaps lacking the gift of perception and expression before. Now I saw: these gifts – not just from the world (as theater offers) but of the world, and immediate – were all around me. All I had to do was give them names. And continue to describe them for as long as I found possible, as dedicatedly as I could. For this payless occupation matters. To be honest, studying in Dublin my junior year was a pivotal grace.

In such a place loneliness and incredible beauty (and Joyce!) struck profound. And there was only one way to talk about it: poetry. I remember being in a bus in the middle of Ireland, looking out the window, saying to myself I'm going to become a poet. But it could be anywhere: a kid in a library.

D.O.: Will you please talk a little about your books?

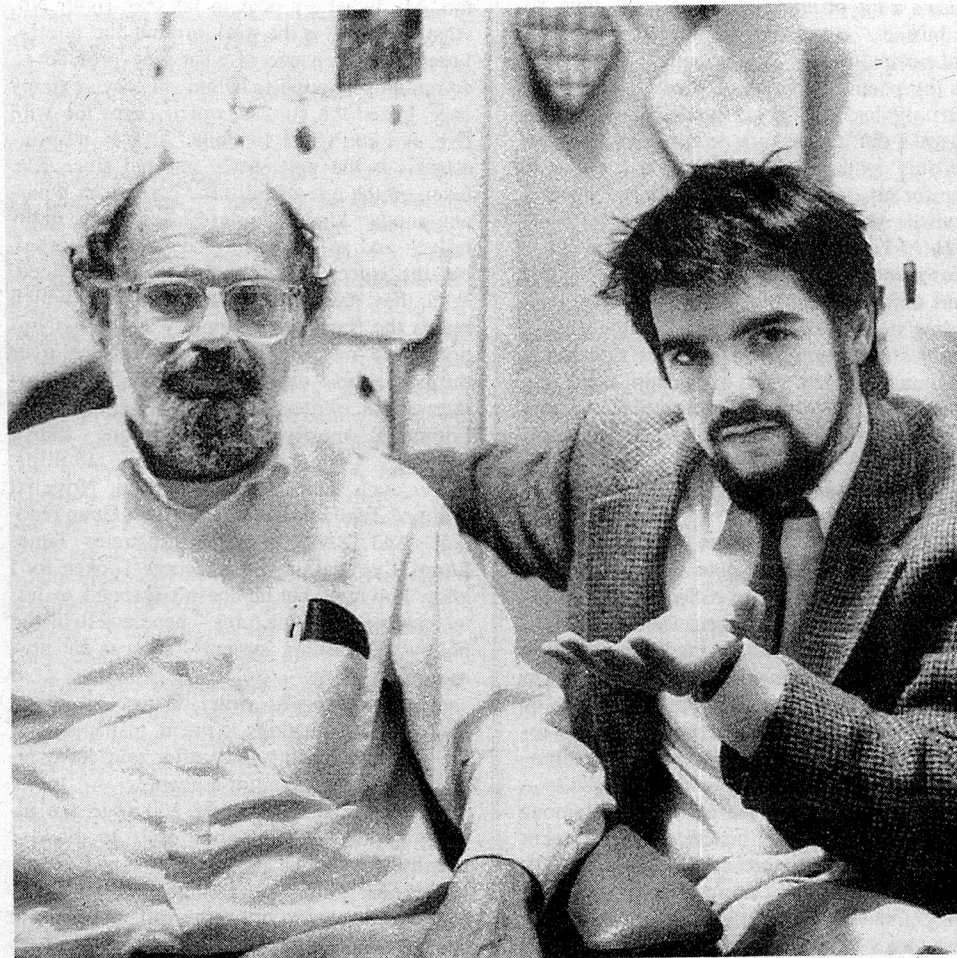
P.M.: Books are a necessary reward (and gift). Living this life would be frustrating (less satisfying, at least) without them. Don't you feel books contain an immediate future which is their sacred / tangible / recording transcending? You might say books represent a collection of hours, days, months carried into a further friendship. I feel a little selfish referring to books as an author's 'reward' because I pride myself on being patiently process oriented not product oriented – which tends to consume us. To hold a book in the hand, and to hold a book which is your own work, which itself holds words you've sifted and tried – which amount to a focus on time and dedication, to say everything about an essence, is a tremendous joy, as you know. It lives its own life, then, perpetuates itself – like an organism, a mollusk in Bachelard's Poetics of Space terms, revealing over time even what it left behind and travels out to unknown bedsides, beyond where we can fathom. Books spread the circle wider. I have been fortunate but I haven't really been met with the kind of luck or pedigree that would otherwise make more people aware of me, my poetry or other writings. I sent my first manuscripts to those random centers of judgment: Yale, Pitt., Wisconsin – I've forgotten the names that mattered. Supposedly, James Merrill remarked I'd 'never win the Yale prize – because they just didn't publish' my 'kind' of poetry. But I never thought of my kind as be-

ing significantly different from others. What has mattered has been the human to human contact. Richard, my first publisher, was a Columbia grad who happened to have a desire to publish books as a sideline to his studies at law school. We met on the 40th floor of a building which stood over a bar where Woody Allen played jazz (I never went) and over a pub where newspaper men (that's what they said: 'men') smoked up the place and drank the Irish stuff (P.J. Clarke's, on Third Ave.). Richard heard I was a poet and asked to see my manuscript. I told him I was still waiting to hear from The Walt Whitman Award. He waited. I got my rejection and he got his book. We had a terrific publication party at The Knitting Factory – when it was on Houston Street. Lucinda's step-grandfather Josh, a character, and her grandmother Ruth, took over behind the bar before anyone from the place could stop 'em. I had Leo [Koettke]

you can, with what comes natural. It's what builds community, and it's a human generosity that we've seen for generations in all sorts of commerce and aid: this guy's got the hay and that lady's got the horses. They should know each other, they're both good people. It works like that. You, David, were an exception. You contacted me through *American Poetry Review* bio. I think I might have been the first, in 97/98, to list a web page/e-mail. But how you found me has been rare, in my experience. I've been grateful ever since.

D.O.: Can you tell me which poets have had the most important influence on your own writing?

P.M.: Initially I was influenced by what I'd read of Dylan Thomas, Keats, Wordsworth, and John Ashbery. Since I spent a semester in Dublin, Ireland, to a lesser extent the work by Yeats, Joyce, O'Casey, Synge, Beckett and Behan mattered. When I entered the M.F.A.



"ALLEN GINSBERG & PETER MONEY at home, class party writing workshop November 23, 1989, my kitchen – for P.M. – Allen Ginsberg"

CDs playing low over the sound system when I wasn't reading (actually I only read one poem: 'To The Lady In Pink Standing Atop The Bridge' – as I wanted people to read the rest for themselves). Every publisher I've ever had, and they've all been small, has come about through a personal recommendation or personal solicitation. Elder poets have been kind enough to include me by sharing me with their publishers (Larry Fixel and Cloud/Markings publisher Michael Thorpe in England, Ted Enslin and Backwoods Broad-sides publisher Sylvester Pollet). The Backwoods pamphlets are an impressive series and I'm grateful to be part of it. John Martone's Tel-let Press (Cid Corman, David Miller, and Ted Enslin, among other friends, have published there). Likewise with many magazines. In Vermont, my friend James Sturm includes me in projects. It's the Ginsberg thing. This is to say: you help each other where and when

program at Brooklyn College, I had few books of my own. A Marianne Moore, Robert Frost, and Selected William Carlos Williams from college, a Norton anthology, Yeats, Dylan Thomas, I think a Plath and a Sexton, the *Selected Poems of John Ashbery*, *Contemporary American Poetry* edited by Donald Hall (in which was X.J. Kennedy, Creeley, Snodgrass, Ashbery, Stafford, Lowell, Wilbur, Levertov, Bly, Kinnell, Wright, Rich, Synder), Hart Crane, Robert Penn Warren, and an odd paperback the size of a thin novel which were the poems of a New Zealander named Sam Hunt – looking very Kerouacian on the cover, and praised by a check-out girl at a grocery I visited while traveling in New Zealand. During my study with Ginsberg (at Brooklyn College) I found I took to Carl Rakosi. Ginsberg turned my attention, also, to Marsden Hartley's poems (I had already had a vague sense of his paintings). A guy from the

Bay Area I met traveling sent me some George Oppen (thankfully!). Olson, O'Hara, as a student reads them for a time. I had Richard Brautigan early on. I remember defending him as legit against the more formal opinion of a fellow student. Williams continues to be touchstone, cornerstone, milestone. Now I've ventured into periods of Ignatow, Bronk, Levertov, Kyger, Thomas McGrath, Di Prima, Milosz, Hass, Kenneth Fearing. Another unknown, William Pillin. But these are just names, right? I think it comes down to one or two poems a piece for a lasting connection, or a feeling based in subject and tone. The obvious three for me, aside from Rakosi and Williams, are Allen Ginsberg, Theodore Enslin, Lawrence Fixel. But in subtle ways, also: Carol Snow, Joan Larkin, August Kleinzahler, Baron Wormser. These are all people I have known. Ted Enslin and I have maintained a steady correspondence and his works *Ranger* and *Views* and the Black Sparrow selected have made a difference to me. I worked with Larry Fixel quite closely, at his house (a couple doors down from where Williams stayed – on Willard Street – and all sorts of visitors to The San Francisco Poetry Center). I've also been influenced by correspondence I've had with David Cope (early), Jim Cohn, Bob Arnold and Cid Corman. Of course I read and like the work of friends: John Martone, Joseph Duemer, Susanne Dubroff, John Phillips (in Cornwall, UK), David Miller (UK), Ilya Kaminsky, Will Walker, Tsering Wangmo Dhomp, and several others. And poets who were also editors of journals I've been in: Jay Meek, David Oliveira, Glenna Luschei, Ed Foster, Steve Berg, Phyllis Walsh. Raymond Carver poems certainly mattered. Even Jim Harrison's, A.R. Ammons'. Campbell McGrath's "Capitalism." A dozen years ago: Paz, Patchen, Neruda, June Jordan; have I mentioned Robinson Jeffers' 'Love The Wild Swan' – or Kenneth Rexroth's 'At Least This Abandon?' David Wagoner? More recently: John Berger's *And Our Faces, My Heart, Brief As Photos*, Gerald Stern's *American Sonnets*, or Grace Paley's latest poem in *The New Yorker*. A single Rilke poem goes a long way. It's a whole range (there was a time I sat listening to *The Writer's Almanac* while at work as a paralegal, a job I did not enjoy but which showed me another culture, stunned by the work of Billy Collins – at the time an unknown [in fact I thought he was an elderly retiree, I guess due to his name] dock worker or something who'd published a book long ago; I decided I wanted to write some narrative poems which succeeded as Collins' poems could. Eventually Garrison Keillor recorded one of my poems, and it was from my first book. In 2002 I started getting to know the remarkable Arab Modernist and Iraqi exile Saadi Youssef. Now see the connection I've made with my old friend Lawrence Fixel (and Fixel: a friend through Rakosi; Rakosi, a friend through Ginsberg), as I've written a 'dialog book' of prose-poems based in lines by Saadi. Some of the others I've known, one way or another: Antler, Jack Hirschman (I took the cable car to meetings together, in North Beach), Joan Larkin (one of my teachers), Harry Smith – the Grammy award winning Smithsonian musicologist Bowery eccentric whose apartment caught on fire twice. There's Bob Arnold (through Fixel and Corman), Jim Cohn (through Cope), etc. etc. These days there's Jackson Wheeler, Ron Bayes (you could say through you). And from Jackson, there's Sebastian Matthews – the late poet William Matthews' talented son. I also enjoy Katy Lederer's poems, first having seen her as an un-

dergraduate read with Robert Hass. She edited *Berkeley Review* which published my poem 'Thinking About Braque; Reading Braque.' Then there's a whole Provincetown connection also. And, as it turns out, several of those 'Province town poets' live up the valley from where I am here in Vermont. They teach at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire and then travel to Ptown for the summer, to work at The Fine Arts Work Center (a place Lucinda's great uncle Hudson helped to found). It gets to be a long list if we keep going!

D.O.: It's a long and impressive list now. It's great to see that you are open to such a diverse collection of styles and genres. Too many poets seem interested only in poets who write the same kind of poetry as themselves. You mentioned that your wife's great uncle helped found the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown. Do you maintain any connection there?

P.M.: I'd like to believe I've been a hand-shake away from actually doing anything at FAWC, but I'm just a supporter and a visitor. The Work Center remains a place which is important to me, which I contribute to in other ways (I've donated items to their annual auction, served on a committee which has ultimately helped them a great deal), and the whole place and concept gives me a sense of pride. Someday I'd love to read there, in the Stanley Kunitz room. But actually it would take a lot more recognition before this happens. Their faculty has NEAs, Pulitzers, Guggenheims, and big house publishers behind them. I'm an unknown, even to those who know me. But it's simply inspiring. This is as much due to place as it is lineage. The whole landscape and oceanscape there in Provincetown, is a pivot for me. It is where I go to feel revitalized. And yet the place is simply a slim sandy oasis testing its limits, jutting into the Atlantic. For us, it's 'the end of earth', a star point – a place for viewing. If you know the legend of poet and writer Harry Kemp, you know people will do almost anything to be there. Harry lived in a tiny shed in robust dunes. He'd walk to town, a few miles, for water. And he wrote poems to my wife's grandmother, using a seagull feather in ink. Centerville is an hour away from Provincetown. But in Ptown, as it's known, you'll find Mailer, Pinsky, Mary Oliver, Mark Doty, Joel Meyerowitz, John Waters, Michael Cunningham, Stanley Kunitz (who raised a fist and said 'Carry On!' to me – that's the most Stanley I ever got, but it was enough), an array of famous others.

D.O.: You've mentioned Ginsberg several times. What sort of teacher was he?

P.M.: I called Allen a 'paternal inspector.' He was fatherly, grandfatherly, really. And he loved his professor guise. Here's a guy who'd gotten kicked out of Columbia, who'd battered about on the road with addicts and criminals, who was watched and criticized as a no-good outsider picking in politics and government operation, who'd had his poems confiscated on both sides of oceans, and finally he was a respected professor! Well he'd earned that! I think he thought that was kind of ... groovy. Suit coat, tie, attendance book, attentiveness ... Realize: his life led him to be a scholar, although most of it was through his own education – and from observing others. The great poets were scholars on some level. They had the gift of extraordinary mind, and a capacity for remembering and broadening that base of knowledge. Allen was tireless, generous, though – being human – sometimes crabby about it. He had a grin, not a temper. That's what I saw.

D.O.: Your writing doesn't often follow a direct narrative path, nor do you indulge in what is loosely termed 'confessional' poetry or in what I think of as the diaries, those sorts of poems in which we are exposed to the minutiae of a poet's daily travails and ruminations. How would you characterize your poems, and why have you chosen to work outside the predominant strains of popular poetics?

P.M.: I suppose I work 'outside' because that's where I find myself. And, because my interests are varied (which drove me into librarianship for a while), my poems show themselves to be many different creatures, each having a unique birth. 'Vividness is self-selecting' Ginsberg would say. And I find this particularly true for me. I find a range of subjects vivid enough for my selection. Or, I suppose, the subjects select me. I will say, though, I have tried to find an average reader. It takes a lot of energy and devoted time to the business aspect. For instance, I wanted to send poems to *The Sun* because I wanted to put my poems in front of those readers. Yet I've only had one poem published there. In general I don't have time to consider a reader. The only reader is the poem. It's a dialog I keep for my own survival, and for the poem's survival. And it honors its subject.

D.O.: Yes, I agree with you that a poem is its own integrity. However, poems also exist as art objects and when we present them at a reading or publish them, they become public art objects, subject to someone else's construal and, one might say, joint ownership. What is it you are hoping for from an audience when you send one your poems out to fend for itself in the world?

P.M.: Abandon. For someone to in some way embrace that orphan and take it home. And, okay, yes, for the poem to live as a kind of object itself. I have lots of objects here around me – things I've collected and oddities I can't throw away – because they enter a life (mine or others) as a sort of new member of the family. They make a new life. They help renew. So I hope my poems – even a phrase or image – will survive long enough to help renew another person through a moment elongated.

D.O.: You remind me of Auden's famous reply when asked how he knew when a poem was finished: 'They are never finished, only abandoned.' Your work appears to be delicately and very thoughtfully constructed. Do you work a long time on your poems?

P.M.: Oh, that's funny. I frequently have the feeling my poems become orphaned, or perhaps the subject is abandoned. Fragments formed for the sake of its maker. The poem itself, of course, will be abandoned – and in doing it's then gifted over to a reader, or to the streets, or to dust. But there of course it becomes part of the soil again, and our grounding. So I bet Auden meant something positive in that statement. I'd say I take longer and longer on my poems these days. Partly, as an at-home parent, there are necessary pauses. Larry Fixel liked to tell me, when I became a father for the first time: 'First the laundry, then enlightenment.' I guess that's a paraphrase of something another writer a long time ago said. Recently I put a poem through five or six drafts, often simply changing a word or punctuation. But, really, until I was in my mid to late 30s, I don't think I ever wanted to revise much. If there was care in composition, I have to attribute that feeling to the subjects. Now your poems, David, strike me as far more measured, crafted, honed beauties.

D.O.: Yes, Peter, my poems need a lot of work. Perhaps the beauty that only a parent could love. Writing is a solitary occupation, but most poets seek out the advice and guidance of other poets when shaping the final drafts of a poem. Is this your practice too?

P.M.: My friend from Oberlin, Mark Herrera has offered good feedback, but I rarely send anything. A couple others – lawyers, actually – see poems from time to time. Lucinda's uncle, Will Walker, is a great poet who's been associated with *Haight Ashbury Literary Journal* for years. Will's feedback is detailed and dedicated. Jackson Wheeler and Ron Bayes have received poems by e-mail as a sort of exchange/query. Again, rarely. Once in a while I've exchanged poems with Rodney Koenike, who taught at Stanford and Patti Glington-Meicholas in Nassau (by e-mail). Lucinda reads my work when I ask her to and her reactions are often helpful. And my parents too. My father's a poet in his own right. No, what I seek out is the work around the poetry. I seek the sustenance of what they provide in community. Support, habits, history, experience. I need the contact which keeps the wire live, so I don't feel so alone. And, to be honest, this is the part that's suffered since I've taken on the role of full-time parent. As a parent, another kind of nurture takes place, naturally – and so I am still 'fed' and supported, but the voices doing so are less experienced. Well, they are experienced in a world which makes the 'business' of poetry seem less important to me. But my correspondence over the past almost twenty years has been important: with writers such as Enslin, Fixel (although mostly through phone calls), Wormser, Cope, Cohn, Dhompaa, Phillips, Miller, you and Jackson and Ron. Novelist Philippe Tapon (we met at a Thom Gunn reading). And lately the writer/illustrator James Sturm. I've sent poems to George Tooker, for I know him now, but he doesn't respond to letters anymore. His pictures – people left in the hollow of a failing system – seem as apt now as ever.

D.O.: When you write, do you sit down and wait for something, a poem, to happen, or do you start writing only after you have already formed an idea for a poem?

P.M.: I tend to sit down and urge the already formed subconscious draft to flow! I usually know what the subject is, and wait – in the near distance one might call 'verge' – for the moments to bring the gift of the right words. And so form likes to develop out of the organism which is the subject's particular, peculiar, identity. And this is more a normal method of composition than it used to be. We can thank a connected multi-cultural world for it. And Whitman for content, Williams for form. And Ginsberg for both. I overstate it a little ...

D.O.: When you were talking about the poets who have influenced you, you said it often came down to a matter of one or two poems a piece. Can you pick from among all those poems just two or three to tell us what you think is as good as poetry gets?

P.M.: Well, a poem like '3 Stances' by William Carlos Williams. Sweet. Or Saadi Youssef's 'Sparrows' (and his notion of 'shiver'). They sink their truth in a single moment and I am changed, better, by it. George Oppen's 'Night Scene' is probably the poem I'd single out. It tells a story but there's also enough ambiguity – lyrical counterpoise, you might say – which leaves the scene open to interpretation. 'The Encounter' by Czeslaw Milosz ('I ask not out of sorrow, but in wonder'). David Wagoner's 'Staying

Alive' and Antler's long 'Factory'. ... To me, this poem is dramatic, tender and uses only spare language – offering suggestion, which is all one can say. But Rilke ... I don't read him enough, yet every time I do I'm blown over. Intimate, meditative, reflective, frank. There should be Whitman in this answer. Keats' 'This Living Hand' pulls me into life. Rexroth's 'At Least This Abandon' – a sympathy of being with, though at a distance, another being. I think I mentioned this poem earlier. Robert Hass had one, if I'm remembering correctly, about a couple making love while 'the angels' watch overhead – upset, I think, that they could not be as alive as the living are. Ginsberg's 'Aunt Rose' – or when he sings 'Father Death Blues,' astounding candor, fragility, love for his subject. It's a really difficult thing for a poet to name – because we see so many. And we appreciate them for their parts as well as the whole and it gets to be a matter of then having to measure extraordinary parts against spectacular wholes. Joan Larkin's 'Blackout Sonnets' are knock-outs. Campbell McGrath's 'Cap-italism,' Baron Wormser's 'Atoms,' or a short one (his tend to be) by Cid Corman like 'WILLOWS / pushing buds / I // only/ reach to feel / more' from *Livingdying*. Twenty years ago I would have answered John Ashbery's 'A Wave.' You know it when the word within you wells up and wants to call the author friend. Robinson Jeffers' 'Love The Wild Swan.' Fixel's 'Breathing Lessons' and 'What The Wastebasket Tells.' Enslin's 'The Glass Harmonica.' So much William Carlos Williams, long and short ('Between Walls,' 'The Red Wheelbarrow' – but it's true, they work deceptively simple, cut through time). It's as good as poetry gets for the eye and the ear in need, like a long-time-coming drink of water to a person wandering without it for too long. One recalls that water. As the poet said, 'So much depends.'

D.O.: I want to ask an impossible question. If you had to choose from among your poems a handful, say three or four, that most please you – which, at this moment, exemplify and represent you at the apex of your art – which would those few be?

P.M.: 'To The Lady Standing Atop The Bridge' from my first book, which is about having passed under a jumper on the Brooklyn Bridge. 'Firefly' – which is a lyrical ramble about being a poet, or about one feeling temporarily outside-looking-in. That's in *Finding It: Selected Poems*. And there's a short one which has always meant a lot to me called 'Traveler In New Zealand' – also from my first book (The whole poem is: 'So many stars / I can't believe it! / The face in the window / is mine'). It sounds corny, but that moment looking out of the passenger window in the deep of morning, well below the equator, and seeing my reflection in the window among more universe than I have ever seen, before or since, at once set my sympathies and perspective. You are not in the world only but of the world. And beyond it. Of course, I was 23. Also, the more I think about it: the one I sent to Laura Bush, called 'This Seed' feels significant (even though anthologists, at least to date, did not): 'And when we woke shivering there was a word: blackbird, / pushing through air above us // ... carrying an orange rind.' I enjoy reading 'Forms of Prayer' and 'Revolutionaries' in public. And the book I'm about to publish – the prose-poem sequence *Today – Minutes only*, which is an unusual and unexpected form for me, feels like a pivotal stage. I like a long poem which had only a few readers, 'A Poem Beginning in

Labor' which chronicles (usually short lyrical sections) my emerging parenthood – from carefree caring less about conventional worries (the outside world) to overly careful and lovely preoccupations with intense elongated time (it was published in the journal *Bongos*, in Japan). Another long poem I feel good about which hasn't been published in book form is one I wrote about the Na Pali Coast, published in *Hawai'i Review*. I was proud of it, as it was sort of an impromptu challenge by a local man. 'Memorial Day' was that sort of poem also – and these end up mattering to me. Perhaps because someone else invested in the journey ('Okay, Peter, so are you going to write a poem about our weekend?') the poem had the pleasure of community before it was even finished. Before it began, actually. I knew three or four eager readers awaited as friends. The length of those poems became a sort of sacrifice – or commitment approaching obligation – yet there's also an unfettered freedom to venture out in search of a community of images kindred textures and hues. There are poems in *Minor Roads* (only fifty copies made) which have been personal favorites, such as 'In Nethermead' (about a spot in Prospect Park), yet they remain in the slumber of almost abandoned things. A poem of mine which appeared in Kenneth Warren's *House Organ* is one of those.

Favorite orphans. In 'Teakettles, The Moon' (from *Shoes*), I'm still attached to the line: 'The moon is not worth killing for, but I / would be sorry to see it go' – sentimental as it seems. It's a poem which starts local, 'Landed in Vermont' and leaps (with the help of the moon) to Islam (at a time some wanted 'to massacre the author of a western / book, a fiction' [referring to Rushdie]); this poem ends, I hope, in universal common ground. From *A Big Yellow*, a brief section I later called 'Beautiful / never knew' about a doctor friend who had hit a deer – (a twenty-two line poem that ends, 'for the now / distance / between') which continues to be as tender to me as when I first realized it. I like the pacing, the tone, the way the images are presented. For these reasons I am fond of a little poem after one by Raymond Carver called 'About Louise'. 'String Version' – in which I quote Anslem Hollo's compelling line 'Stop, dear Mozart, you're making me cry,' wherein I see 'sheep on a hillside' as 'stars for a sky already intoxicated.' And there's the narrative poem 'The Family Rental,' which surveys the bay in Provincetown. I had wanted that to be direct treatment of bayscape, as a painting (in narrative!) – and it does adequately commemorate my feeling of being there. It's an indulgent question, you realize. And I'm a generalist, so I'm bound to give you lots of answers! But one only remembers what one is used to remembering – so I'd say any answer is, as my friend Larry Fixel said, 'subject to change.' I think 'Firefly' confirms the most about me.

D.O.: You are an accomplished visual artist as well as a poet. Does painting influence your poetry, or poetry your painting?

P.M.: Well, thanks for saying 'accomplished.' In truth, it takes a great deal of skill I don't apparently have to render, at will, subjects which we'd like to represent (I'm talking about realistic representation). I've done it a few times, but in pencil and pen. The painting I do ends up being abstractions of anything I had intended. It could be a matter of available time, too. I'll admit I've never been adequately set up and so my visual work is always on-the-fly (and often on-the-sly, as with 'installations' I sometimes create outside our home). But it's incredibly fulfilling to

move the paint around. For me, painting with oils or acrylic, is an exploration which changes as the composition changes. And the composition is always changing as long as you're adding to it. In a way I suppose it's sort of like dancing in a club. You don't know what the next song is going to be but you pick up on a groove and you let yourself see where the music and your instincts can take you.

D.O.: Have you studied formally?

P.M.: The best teacher I ever had was an artist named Juanita Pierce. I have one of her paintings in our big yellow bathroom now, called *Summer Garden*. Abstract, and very liquid. Not thick at all (and I tend to like impasto). Dreamy. I studied with her at Cape Cod Conservatory when I was eight, nine and stopped around age twelve, I think. People thought I had talent, including Juanita Pierce, for a young guy. Really it was my first 'literate' education. Around the same time I got my share of literature in the form of scripts. I was auditioning and acting in plays and musicals, some of it professional – though I never got to join a union. Again, I did this while I was young.

While I was living in Brooklyn and studying with Ginsberg, I decided to make these 'poem boxes.' Now it could have been that I'd seen something like this in Harley Terra Candella's work, although I don't remember them. He's a painter who had a studio in Oberlin and I visited him several times when he moved to Sonoma, California. I made these multi-media boxes using tiny matchboxes, adding words and sometimes whole poems to them. Several were shown at Berta Walker Gallery in Provincetown. Some sold. One included a tape of Harry Smith's memorial. I sent that to a guy named Wilton Woods and I never got it back. Wilton was going to edit a tribute anthology to Harry and was willing to photograph the box for a possible cover.

D.O.: What are some of the influences on your painting?

P.M.: Marsden Hartley's paintings exemplify range. They say: form is only an extension of content in as much as subject and place create new circumstances requiring individual attention, unique handling. His poems, too, were like this. And he was a loner, much as he needed an influential circle, he was by himself. He's my primary inspiration, I suppose, to carry on. Maybe this is overstating it. He's one. Robert Motherwell's Dada anthology became important to me when I was 28 – and I think it gave me the enthusiasm to continue with my 'poem boxes' and anything else I've done with found materials (sculpture that other people wouldn't call sculpture ... totems to me; leaning things, assemblage, simple composition, the creation of 'sacred spaces' or secret spaces [I'll freely admit I do this even with the mower, for there's ten acres here of mostly open area – good for visuals]. Books on this subject that have been important to me are Kandinsky's *Concerning The Spiritual*, Ben Shahn's *The Shape of Content*, Marsden Hartley's *Adventures in the Arts*, Hugh Kenner's *A Homemade World*, and even Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*. The *New York Times* often has had excellent profiles on artists' work which I've clipped and kept in a file called 'Range.'

There was a painter I admired named Michael Eder who lived in New Jersey and painted in Vinelhaven, Maine, during the summer. I once took some slides of his work to my wife's cousin, who has a gallery, and she was thrilled but said 'Oh, he went to RISD! Well!' She felt he was just being clever. He

painted, for instance, a sandbar from a seagull's perspective. I wish I'd bought one of those paintings. I still like his work. And clever's fine as long as it works. Marsden Hartley was clever. But he was just as much practical and patient, letting the setting suggest its own view. So, with regard to poetry, painting offers another way of seeing but also it allows the literal part of the brain to relax while the visual / physical elements of the body get to approach subjects while exercising artistic impulses which serve as adjuncts to the poet. Painting and drawing often brings me to the place of poetry, and brings me there ready, relaxed, keen about the physicality of things. Perhaps reading and writing poetry does likewise for the painter. I know Robert Henry, a fine painter whose 'swimmer' series is profound to me, reads a lot of poetry.

D.O.: Are you working on anything now?

P.M.: Right now I'm trying to paint a large – large for me (24 x 52) – canvas which is the most realistic painting I've done in a long time (it's a country scene, to be given to my first publisher). Part of the difficulty is that everything about the subject changes. If I try to paint a cloud, I see many different kinds of clouds (and lit from different times of day) over a period of several days and I forget which cloud I want to paint! And as a consequence, the light in this painting is likely to be a little bit of all times of day. I'm best, probably, when I let the paint lead me. It's more a visceral thing with visual work and me. A gestalt. And so I tend toward abstractions, though not without symbols. This painting is for my first publisher, Richard, whose office got destroyed inside the WTC.

D.O.: You were very active as a poet speaking out against United States involvement in the war with Iraq. Given the aversion most people seem to have to poetry, why do you believe that poetry can affect public debate?

P.M.: If you look at all the articles and other media coverage around that Laura Bush mistake, however measured, poetry – as a venture, as a cultural asset – had a great day. Far more than 'fifteen minutes' of fame. But the aversion to poetry is misguided and that is poetry's job to clarify and it is also a sort of public deception which has to be overcome by those who encounter poetry. In other words, it's a problem which is only increasing in this hyper-capitalist society. Our aversions should be to greed, mistrust, egotism, bigotry, nationalism, fundamentalisms, hate. Poetry addresses these, sometimes directly and more often through the alternative: beauty. So I think our culture gets the idea poetry brings us what we cannot face without coming out the other end feeling guilty or unloved or alone or concerned or sympathetic to the degree that we would 'lose ourselves' in another's (heaven forbid!) life and struggles. In the hyper-capitalist regime (and I'm no anarchist, I'm a Democrat), the time a citizen spends considering the plight of others is time wasted, income spent, and anxiety added. If we pay less attention to what's marketed to us, and what rhetoric we're asked to accept, we then pay more attention to the illuminated possibilities in our own landscape and relationships. So, you could say, poetry disturbs. It disturbs the norm (which is, in fact, what it does to prose – which is, as it happens, the order of our democratic language).

Iraq had to be addressed through poetry because Iraqi people were not being addressed. As an American poet I had to ask myself, especially after 9/11: Well, do I know many non-American poets? I hardly know any Canadian ones, it's awful to admit. Did I

know any Iraqi poets, whose homes my country's appointed leader was about to bomb? Did I realize my implied relationship to Eden, a place quite probably within Iraq? And so I found myself Saadi Youssef. And I had meant to publish my book *Today – Minutes only* or a biography on Saadi (or an article) in an effort to add another human face to an otherwise staid military story. So of course I had to read poems by my new Iraqi friend to as many as I could sway.

D.O.: You mentioned you have come to realize those in authority, particularly presidents, largely conceal from the public their true intentions and the circumstances involving Iraq prove your point. We're about to enter again into the great test of public deliberation, a presidential election. As a poet, a truth discloser, do you feel any sense of optimism coming?

P.M.: Now I feel differently about presidential candidate Howard Dean. Let's hope he's true. Here's a man, a physician, who as governor of Vermont basically gave free health care to every child. And, as Doonsbury has illustrated, he's fired-up and he's got young voters encouraged that he's not talking-the-talk that gets conservatives elected. You can feel how pissed he is at this sad state of American politics, apathy and belligerence! He's a great speaker, in the way Jessie Jackson is.

D.O.: Should poets become galvanized over the election in the way they were compelled in the war debate?

P.M.: Everyone has to answer that themselves, but since you asked: Well, do you like the place where you live? Are you sympathetic to others? Do you agree the local and the universal are interconnected? Then I don't know why a poet wouldn't become involved, if only by voting. Something greater has to happen in this country, though, and obviously voting alone isn't doing it. So, poets have voices which work alone and in chorus, but which work because every breath and syllable, each subject brought – barely beating, defeated, or affirming – records in all the sensitivity and candor we can muster a truth which survives. I think Solzhenitzyn in his Nobel acceptance speech said only one word is enough. If only one word of it survives, we have a chance. And not only 'we' but the eons. We have a duty, yes. But it's not really anything communal, it's our lineage and our individual obligation (maybe) and instinct. We are compelled by the things which threaten to destroy us, because we are so compelled by what we can love, and how little a lifetime offers in its time. And by how much. I'd say we act to save ourselves, but really we speak because it is the poetry in us speaking. Like the douser branch to water, if the poet is in it for life, we struggle through any topic for the sake of seeing it more clearly. For the sake of adding breath, not taking it away. This is a concept Allen [Ginsberg] shared.

Chiron Review

In March, 1989, when we chose the name *Chiron Review* (kie'-ron), astronomers classified Chiron as a minor planet. According to *Astronomy* (9/89), Chiron is instead perhaps the largest comet, not a planet. Due to gravitational perturbations, its orbit is unstable and some day, Chiron may come closer to the sun – or be flung out of the solar system altogether.