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| CERVENA BARVA PRESS NEWSLETTERGloria Mindock, Editor  Issue No. 101 July, 2020Email: editor@cervenabarvapress.comWebsite: [Cervena Barva Press](http://www.cervenabarvapress.com) Bookstore: [The Lost Bookshelf](http://www.thelostbookshelf.com) |
| EditorialWelcome to the July Newsletter, 2020.Finally, the warm weather is here and with the area now being in Phase 3 from the Pandemic, it is a little easier to be outside.I would like to welcome my intern, Zachary Cook, from Lesley University. He is helping me with the readings that celebrate 15 years of the press. He will be learning all aspects of the press. I look forward to teaching and working with him.It is exciting to have new books released this month. They are:

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| http://www.cervenabarvapress.com/GetUpSaidtheWorld150.jpg[Get Up Said the World](http://www.thelostbookshelf.com/cervenabooks.html#Get Up Said the World)by Gail Goefpert | http://www.cervenabarvapress.com/WinterJourney150.jpg[Winter Journey by Alicia Aza,](http://www.thelostbookshelf.com/cervenabooks.html#WINTER JOURNEY EL VIAJE DEL INVIERNO)(Bi-lingual) translated from the Spanish by J. Kates and Stephen A. Sadow | http://www.cervenabarvapress.com/LAVINIA&HERDAUGHTERS150.jpg[*Lavinia and Her Daughters: A Carpathian Elegy*](http://www.thelostbookshelf.com/cervenabooks.html#LAVINIA & HER DAUGHTERS A Carpathian Elegy) by Ioana Ieronim, translated from the Romanian by Adam J. Sorkin |

I am currently working on a play by Brian Arundel and poetry books by Mark Fleckenstein and Charles Cantrell. These three books will be done this month and off to the printers. Also need to finalize a book by George Kalamaras. After these books are done. I am taking one week off from laying out books. Then I will start again refreshed. I have been working non-stop since January getting books out. |
| Interview with Hilary Sallick by Karen Friedlandhttp://www.cervenabarvapress.com/HilarySallick150.jpghttp://www.cervenabarvapress.com/AskingtheForm.jpgHilary Sallick lives and works in Somerville, MA. She teaches reading and writing to adult learners and serves as vice-president of the New England Poetry Club. Her chapbook, Winter Roses, was published in 2017, and her first full-length collection, Asking the Form, was published by Cervena Barva Press in early 2020. Her long-time interest in the potential of poetry to build community and to foster deep learning grounds all her work.Says author Susan Donnelly of Asking the Form, "I very much admire the beauty, depth and intensity of this collection, in which Hilary Sallick takes the materials of daily life and shapes them into profound meditations on life itself."We spoke with Hilary about her journey as a poet and educator:Q: What started you on your poetic journey? What called you to poetry? What was your most significant "poetic schooling"?I think from childhood I felt the desire to put feeling into written language, but I didn't know this was what I wanted. I began writing / struggling to write poems as a young teenager. As a college student, I enrolled in classes both in reading and writing poetry, but the intimidating academic context was not helpful to me. Then, as a master's student at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, I was introduced to Eleanor Duckworth's work on teaching and learning, and I began to put more trust into my own mind and what it might show me. This made a huge difference for me, both as a writer and as a reader. (For those who are interested, I recommend Duckworth's book of essays, The Having of Wonderful Ideas.)Q: Tell us a little about your poetic practice-what inspires you to write a poem? How do you prefer to work? Are you part of a writing group? When do you know that a poem is "done"? What are you working on right now?Inspiration can be elusive, and my sonnet sequence "Asking the Form" suggests how a poetic form can be helpful for the poet as she tries to find her way. I've experimented with the pantoum, villanelle, sestina, acrostics, and found poetry, in addition to the sonnet; all of these have kept me going when I couldn't find the source I needed, by giving me a structure to rely on.These days, however, my poetic practice has evolved into what I think of, simply, as taking notes. There is a lot of freedom in note-taking. It allows me to follow the feeling of what I see or think. And writing what I observe helps me to pay attention - to anything and everything, to whatever I notice. This practice enriches my life. I keep my notebook with me at all times, and I try to write in it every day.It's interesting to open my notebook and to try to decipher my own scribbled lines or pages. I like then to turn to the computer and to type what I find, culling and revising as I go. This work at the computer becomes the second draft, then the third, fourth, fifth ... As you can tell from all I've said so far, I am an intuitive writer. I don't usually know what I'm working on until much later.When I have a draft of a poem, I need others to read it. I rely on my long-term writing companions, Mary Buchinger and Linda Haviland Conte, as well as the New England Poetry Club Workshop and other occasional groups. When I share a draft with fellow poets, I think of this as "testing out the poem." What will happen when I read the poem aloud to listeners? How will I feel about it? What will they notice and what will they make of it? What weaknesses will emerge and how will I use them as opportunities to further develop the poem? I am not so interested in perfection as I once was. I feel that a poem is done when most of its problems are fixed - or when I have decided its imperfections are somehow essential and unavoidable.Q: Which poets, contemporary or otherwise, have most inspired you? What quality of their poetry speaks to you?These days I have been reading Ammons. I am so moved by his poem "Easter Morning" and the way in which it travels on the page and through the reader - with a kind of freedom (like those eagles it ends with) into such a deep place. I also love the idea of a "transparent poetry" that Stanley Kunitz talked about and worked toward and created, the idea of a clear, maybe even plain, language through which something can be seen. Other poets whose work is close to me for one or more of these qualities of depth, freedom, and transparency are Emily Dickinson, Lucille Clifton, Irena Klepfisz, W.S. Merwin, David Ferry...Q: What other art forms or life experiences have informed or influenced your work? How does your work as an adult basic education teacher impact your life as a poet?I love to experiment with other art forms. Painting and music are two other media that help me to deepen my attention and to see more. It can feel like a relief to work on something free of language, and what I learn I can bring back into words.Similarly, my work as a teacher gives an essential ground to my life as a poet. And sometimes it feels continuous with poetry; my students and I look at things together - poems, stories, flowers, maps, whatever we are studying - and we notice details and we keep looking. I learn so much from this experience with them, and a community of love and learning develops among us. Right now, I very much miss working in person with my class.Q: Can you tell us about your role as Vice-President of the New England Poetry Club (NEPC), and also describe the work that NEPC does? What are some highlights of your time there?I like to think of the New England Poetry Club as a learning environment for poets and readers of poetry. I want the club to bring poets into deeper connection with their own work and with the work of others. How can we do this? This is the question that our current board (Mary Buchinger, Linda Haviland Conte, Wendy Drexler, Jennifer Markell, and I) regularly turn over and explore as we make decisions about our reading series, open mics, contests, workshops, social media, etc. I think there aren't a lot of structures in the world that exist to value and promote poetry, to connect people with poetry, so there's a need. The club is a membership organization, but as the board developed and defined our vision, we agreed that we did not want to be an exclusive or elitist group; this is why membership is open to any and all. We are always working to extend that invitation.I'm excited to see the club growing, and I'm grateful to be part of this community. One highlight for me was Eileen Myles's reading at the Longfellow House last summer. Eileen's intensity of purpose inspires and thrills me. The reading was an exciting event and brought many new members to our audience.Q: How do you see NEPC and yourself within the literary community in the Boston area, the country and internationally? What are your feelings about the state of "the literary community" right now, especially in this time of global pandemic?This is a hard question! I may begin to have an answer for you in another ten years, when I can look back and see what is so hard to see when we're in the midst of it. For now, I'll just say that I think a challenge for any community or "club" is how to develop a culture that is at once meaningful, grounded in something shared, and at the same time open and growing. It's not easy. And I think this time of pandemic is creating new opportunity for connection, even as it separates us from each other; it's wonderful to have readings and workshops with poets across distances.Thank you so much, Hilary, for answering these questions, and for the great work that you do! |
| Interview with Nancy Ndeke by Gloria MindockNancy NdeteAssociate Editor, Liberated VoicesNancy Ndeke, is a Poet of international acclaim and a reputable literary arts consultant. Her writings and her poetry are featured in several collections, anthologies and publications. She has several published works, including poetry, short stories and novels.A collaboration of poetry with Prof Gameli Torzlo of Glassgow University, titled "Mazungumzo ya Shairi" is her latest work, published in 2020 and registered with the Library of Congress, USA.When did you start writing?My love in and with writing is from the day I started reading, which I have done consistently from the age of ten to date. An accident found me hospitalized for more than a year. To while time away within the hospital walls, and since I was bed ridden, relatives would bring me story books, magazines (I particularly remember the Readers Digest and its many stories). Upon recovery and eventual discharge from the hospital, I found the reading habit had formed and stuck.Back to school, and my essays and vocabulary seemed to impress my teachers. The consistent reading had somehow paid off, and I wrote my first play at the age of fourteen which was performed at the end of the school year. That first play, though not played at the National gallery was the most beautiful creation I ever had as a gift. And I never stopped writing all the way through high school and college.What is the writing scene in Kenya like?Kenya is richly endowed with internationally acclaimed writers, majority of whom are in their sunset years. However, the succeeding generation has not let the old guard down, except their focus has been primarily on curriculum based writings against the backdrop of older writers that sought writings on a broader scale, tackling themes of social injustice, poor governance and neocolonialism. The new breed of writers in Kenya are doing fairly well and especially with and in poetry. There are writing groups that support writers with ideas and I think this is an encouragement worthy of praise. I belong to a few.Talk about your books, Lola-logue and Soliama LegacyI wrote Lola-logue as part of a series based on a family set up and all the drama that has been known to afflict families especially when a child is lost in unclear circumstances and the silent accusations that often lead to the end of a marriage and further suffering of the surviving child/children. Of note, is the need to have a common front in times of disaster to mitigate further agonies. Often, this does not happen, and the result is what I used in this first book of the series to high light the ensuing struggles.Soliama Legacy delves into the insanity of war and warring, the suffering of the people caught up in such wars, the corruption that is the cause of war and the hypocrisy involved in the politics of those who support warring. This is my longest book yet and goes to beyond nine hundred pages. Am recalling it for re-editing and hope the lessons of cruelty of those seeking positions of power both in politics and religious institutions, can be more humane in their pursuits.How long did it take to write these book?Soliama Legacy took about a year to complete. It has many harrowing experiences within it. One needs longer breaks from writing such to avoid being sucked in by the events within the book and the various characters one has to deal with. It has some pretty hard incidents bordering on horror.Lola-logue took two months to finish the first series. The other three, and which are still unpublished came easy because I was building on a known theme and familiar characters.Like Mbizo Chirasha, you are also an activist poet. What was your time like in the war torn South Sudan/ what did you do there?I write about social issues. It's a subject close to my heart. From the plight of the marginalized people living with disability, to domestic violence and bad governance. I address the interconnectedness of social injustice which are never isolated cases but a part of the whole. An example is a woman losing a husband to death, then relatives disown her and throw her out of her home with the children. Unable to meet the basic needs of the children, she could end up in another abusive relationship, her children could fall out of school and end up in the streets or worse join criminal gangs and use and peddling of drugs. Had the government protected the woman, all the outcomes mentioned up here would have been mitigated. Cultural practices once allowed to keep implementing their gender unfriendly and archaic rules is one of Africa's worst cases of undermining equality and quality life. Female genital mutilation, child marriages as well as forced marriages, denial of girl children from attaining schooling and many more come to mind. My writing, be it in short stories, poetry or novels revolve around these issues.In South Sudan, I worked with an NGO as a project manager. The NGO was dealing with a serious issue of street children in the Upper Nile State of Bentiu. The project was sponsored by UNICEF but would also get food donations from WFP and UNOCHA. This case of an influx of street children in the heart of South Sudan was baffling even to the residents. This was because the South Sudanese families were closely knit and having been at war for so long, it was an inbuilt reaction to take care of any and all children who had lost their parents.These children brought a new aspect to the community that was unknown before. Once South Sudan had seceded from North Sudan, all the Southerners were forced out. UNOCHA handled the case or returnees well, but along with adult returnees were many unaccompanied children who ended up in the streets. Their stories ranged from having mothers who had married a Northerner and who opted to stay in Khartoum but opted to send the child back to the South. Others, were children born out wedlock and sometimes from mixed blood and who were not welcome in the parents' home. The worst group were the ones who had been inducted into the military as child soldiers. This category was unable even to trace where they came from and ended fending for themselves in the market and sleeping there.Their plight is still unknown after the second civil war broke out and everything scuttled.What social issue is close to your heart that you speak up about the most?INJUSTICE of whatever form, from whatever place and to whoever the victim is. This is a worldwide topic that is witnessed daily in wars and civil wars, in homes, in schools, at work and at personal levels. A case in point is about mental health issues. This is a closed issue in most societies especially in Africa. That pressure is mounting on individuals and families to cope with the demands of daily life and shrinking economies, this taboo subject keeps claiming life's. in my small way I write about it hoping to help one if not two to know there is help in admitting to the fact that they are overwhelmed and need help.You are an editor of the magazine Liberated Voices, please tell us about this publication and Womaword?These two magazines are works of excellence in literary sense and initiatives of the literary activist per excellence Mbizo Chirasha. He invited me on board because we share the knack of social justice in the broadest terms.First, Womawords showcases women/girls voices and issues in Africa and beyond. The works and personalities whose works appear on this platform speak of challenges faced by the wider society but with special emphasis on women voices. Of course a woman is a human foremost. Her rights are human rights. She is at the center of the family holding it together and nurturing it for the larger society. In time, I have learnt a great deal from interacting with these voices that carry the wealth and health of the world. Of special note is the active involvement of girl child issues in this magazine. A project is in the offing to start a campaign to equip girl children in difficulty situations with sanitary pads as part of menstrual health initiative which is a part of the larger mental health issues of our world, especially among the poor and marginalized.On the other hand, Brave voices Magazine celebrates the success stories of our collective past and present. It's about men and women who have made a positive influence in diverse fields; from writing, film, leadership, championing human rights, liberation struggles and those pioneering in the uncharted territories like climate change initiatives. Only last year, with Mbizo Chirasha on the lead, the members of Brave Voices joined with fellow Cameroon poet Nsaa Mala to come up with a multilingual poetry anthology that is now in print and available in book shops and at Amazon. The call was against the genocide against English speaking citizens of the country vis à viz the French speaking divide. I made some contribution there.You taught for many years, what did you love about teaching?True. I taught for many years and I learnt a lot from the many high school students; both in high school and colleges that taught me so much. The best of the lessons was and continues to be threefold. To be always Alert, Focused and Organized.This threefold lesson came very early in my career and at a time of my early adulthood where I could embrace it with minimal grit.I must admit that fate sent me to a National school as my first posting after college. In Kenya, National schools are where the best brains are accepted after primary schools for further education. This crop is talented and easily understand everything they are taught with ease. They also tended to read ahead of any topic, and sometimes sought comparative works to better understand whatever they were scheduled to learn. My first stint, armed with lesson notes and chalk to last forty minutes ended with me gasping for breath from questions seeking examples and giving their own which I wasn't sure was right or wrong. Let me confess that these forty minutes of a grammar class covering a topic on the use of past participle had me perspiring and stammering, before the bell saved my shaken demeanor. I learnt as fast as my learners and forever remained a mile ahead of my wards.The second lesson was a sense of childish play and adoration of simple joys in life like discussions, debates, outings, drama and music engagements. Only a young person can truly keep you seeing life through the lenses of childhood and youth by working with them. I remain grateful to them for these lessons.What I loved most about teaching is teaching thoughts brought on by words and inference through literature which awakened the students mind to a deep interaction and love for the written word. Many years later, when I taught communication skills in college, the nuances of words and how they affect relationships was something that I carry with me today, though I no longer teach. I can say for a fact, that the eighteen years were beyond worthy, for I taught and was taught.What are you working on right now?I have been working on two books simultaneously for the last three months since lockdown was declared in Kenya. The first is a book comprising fifteen short stories and a short anthology of poetry; both riding on the theme of COVID 19. |
| Book Review:http://www.cervenabarvapress.com/ShrapnelMaps150.jpgBOOK REVIEW by Miriam O'NealShrapnel Maps by Philip MetresCopper Canyon Press, 2020The Kindness In LookingAt first, my first reading of Shrapnel Maps (Copper Canyon Press, 2020, ISBN 978-1-55659-563-9) left me turning confusedly from grief to anger to a sense of sweetness, and back through the gamut. Focused on the continuing conflict between Israel and Palestine: as I returned to them, day after day, I came to accept their shifting emotional ground as necessary-as part of the territory. These are beautifully made, emotionally difficult poems to read because they insist on the reader's presence as they take us inside of what, in truth, has become so far, an endless conflict. They visit the tautologies of two histories; inverse claims on the truth of what this conflict is about and push back, as if to open a common space for breathing. They are poems of immense compassion that invite a new way to calculate the future for both Palestine and Israel. We discover unexpected communions in tragedy, but also in human kindness.It feels necessary to acknowledge that I understand I am an outsider-from a country with its own history of propaganda, land grabs, water diversions, erasure, racism, etc. I am looking from a distance. Metres' insider status occurs by way of ancestry, family ties, and years devoted to the pursuit of peace for the Palestinians and the Israelis. The poems in Shrapnel Maps speak from that devoted pursuit.The poems' images evoke the tension between visibility and erasure, as when we see Salem Saoody bathing his little daughter and his niece in a washtub "...their hair slicked/ with soap, their bodies gleaming in the brisk//delight of being bubble-wet and clean..." in the rubble of what had been his home. Metres' verbs are visceral: "My flesh has swallowed an entire dream of heaven", "...the apple died, strangled// by mute trumpets...". "When it rains in Gaza, the tin roofs clatter...". And some images are rendered in devastating brush strokes, as in "Act Two: This Tide of Blood," which shows us the cadaver recovery conducted after a bomb blast kills a wedding party. Using reported interviews, we hear a member of the team speak:         Because someone has to pick up the pieces         of G-d. We get the call & don neon vests         to sort the flesh from flesh. There is a kindness         in looking. To bring even a finger to burial.         Here is a human bomb. Here is a wedding hall.         Now scrape the bride & groom gently from the wall.         .... Something pushes them to do this.         No matter what they have done, each human         in the image of G-d.... (4. AZRIEL, 1-6, 9-10)         The scene is grisly, yet the team member goes about his work with tenderness. His "kindness/ in looking...." inscribes the poem with sorrow, not just for the victims, but for humanity in that moment-the tragedy that this is where we are. As I've written this, a female goldfinch, in her drab olive greens, has been perched on a high branch of the tree outside my window, bedraggled by the Northeast wind and steady rain, but seeming not in the least befuddled by her circumstances. She is simply where she is. And in the moment it took me to describe her, she flew away and is, by now, I imagine, perched in another tree. Not a victim in any way, she is going about her business in the storm. I think again, of the little girls in their tub in the rubble of their former home, the bridal party destroyed; what would it mean for them to be able to live with storms as the finch does?         Metres' poems are emotionally meteorlogical, historical, communal, and personal 'maps' of the urge to do more than survive. Seventy plus years after the State of Israel's formation, as the taking of land from the Palestinians continues, Shrapnel Maps lays out a cartography that is impossible to read without realizing there are almost no roads out of this territory that are not fraught with loss, whether you are Israeli or Palestinian-even so, we must try. And there it is, the sense of the 'we' these poems engender.         Shrapnel is the lasting evidence of an explosion. It shows what as well as who suffered by being near the target. For Palestinians, the map marks the rubble bulldozers have made where homes once stood, the water tanks intentionally pierced by bullets, fences that bisect or surround orange groves and olive groves, checkpoints that funnel people from one unsafe place to another, schools with crumbled facades from rocket strikes, an ice cream factory turned into a morgue, a drone's record of the heat emanating from a Palestinian woman as she hangs her laundry on a line. For the Israelis, it is the threat of retaliation, the sense of an enemy who does not sleep. No one escapes unscathed, and many die.         In "4. Rachel & Ayat" from a sequence titled "Act Three. The Matter of the Flesh of One's Flesh," we hear from a pair of women, one Israeli, the other Palestinian. Both of them killed in a supermarket in 2003. They speak in unison from beyond the grave, ".../ at first they could not tell our dark bodies apart. (12-13). And, already I can hear the argument about who caused whom to die that could be used to identify them, one from the other. Ayat is the bomber. But Metres doesn't back away from that moment of indistinguishability: two lives ended and nothing gained.         In its forms, Shrapnel Maps is kaleidoscopic; which feels appropriate given the scope of the stories, locations, and emotions carved out in these pages. Some poems use a cacophony of voices in the form of choruses for 2, 3, or 4 voices, sometimes telling different stories simultaneously. There are poems in which the words themselves have been blasted apart, their letters shoved into strange groups that require the reader to pick her way slowly through the alphabetic rubble to make sense of what is being said, as in "7. CHORUS" from "Act Three...." where the first 5 lines are laid out as follows:         lig     ht with      outhe at           wo     rd w     ithout      le          afw     ear     e         sh     ad               owsofse     l v e s          nol     ong     erlo     cke     din         bo     dies                werest     in thef     old      of      so      met     hing         likefur     a      s     hared      s      kin           li           nbsp;    ght      without      ey      ewords...         wit      h      out      m      out      h...         light without heat word without leaf we are         shadows of selves no longer locked in         bodies we rest in the fold of something         like fur a shared skin light without eye words         without mouth....         At first, "7. CHORUS" feels like an unnecessary language exercise, but as the mind becomes accustomed to making the leaps, sorting out where the white spaces need to go for the words to make sense and the poem to give its message, an awareness emerges, that this is a mirror of the demands on the hearts and minds of people in a state of constant siege and loss; the constant regrouping of experiences and the language needed to make meaning out of them. The challenge to grasp joy from the mouth of grief requires re-collecting the self out of trauma through the vehicle of language.         Prose poems, erasure poems, sequence poems, persona poems all contribute to the maps. The prose poems and narrative lyrics mostly focus on the way ideology, religion, and trauma infiltrate ordinary life: children in a back yard in an American city try to sort out why one family's Orthodoxy prevents them from playing together or sharing snacks. A lover's preoccupation with the conflict a world away leaves his partner feeling abandoned.         One poem in particular lays out the challenge to respond meaningfully to this conflict. Aptly titled "[Family]," this prose poem recounts the moment in a presentation at a College in the United States, about Israel's taking of Jaffa in 1948. A woman stands up to protest that the presenter is lying, "...this talk is FULL of SPIN.." that in fact, "the Arabs sold their land, it was too much trouble..." and that the walls are necessary because of "TERRORISTS." A man then rises to defend the presenter, "The Jews bought a tiny piece of land, but the rest, the rest was STOLEN..." The shouting goes on as the narrator and other audience members sit silently. In the end, he tells us, "It goes on like this for a long time. Years, Decades, Generations. I sit like a child at the table, watch parents grip utensils, spit words like shrapnel. I hate                  how I love them.                  Ashamed, I look down, unable                  to bury the hot metal.         Love and grief and shame are shot through these poems that hunt the heart. We rejoice in communion, look on with grief, and recognize the shame created by the violence of erasure. The struggle to be visible and known, to accept and be accepted, to do more than tolerate, pours from this collection. It takes work to remember our common humanity in the storm of so much division, so much cruelty both intended and unintended. Like an echo of Auden's, "we must love one another or die" written on the eve of World War II, in his "Afterword" to this collection, Metres reminds us that we need "to be attentive to the shards of pain, and invite the gentle flowing of kindness" (163)." With their unflinching gaze and underglaze of care, these poems accept that task. |
| Cervena Barva Press 15 Year Celebration Readings are happening in July and August.http://www.cervenabarvapress.com/CBPJuly650.jpgRaves will be next month. |
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