

Souling

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Janus Head could possibly be credited with saving a person's life. Such is the nature of conjecture in language. At the beginning of this issue 1 of Volume 12, the authors Rolf and Elsa von Eckartsberg propose that, "Language can accomplish immortality." Early on in its existence as a journal devoted to the interdisciplinary endeavors of Literature, Continental Philosophy, Phenomenological Psychology, and the Arts, *Janus Head's* contents portrayed a myriad of complex subject matter and writing style, which if one were to attempt to read through its labyrinthine paths valued secrets could be garnered. At least that was the case for me more than ten years ago, even before then Poetry Editor, Claire Barbetti, generously published my work in its pages in 2001. Three years later Claire offered me the position she left in order to pursue other avenues in academia. It's been my honor to solicit work from Robert Bly, Liz Bradfield, Andrei Codrescu, Clayton Eshleman, Richard Hoffman, Fanny Howe, Sidney Goldfarb, and Pattiann Rogers, translations of Cristian Aliaga, Paul Celan, Pablo Neruda, Tomas Tranströmer, and César Vallejo, along with acceptances from less well-known writers of no-less valuable work.

The current issue staggered to the finish line. Few literary journals outlive the inevitable inertia of grueling publication demands, deadlines, and commitments. Some of those which have run their course made an impact during their time, and afterward, for readers and writers alike. Think of *Black Mountain Review*, *The Dial*, *Origin*, *Sulfur*, *Yugen*, etc. Often these journals depend on a small coterie of diligent, dedicated enthusiasts. As it now stands, *Janus Head* can credit its survival to the staunch, creative will of Brent Dean Robbins, along with added contributions by Manager, April Robbins, and newly appointed Associate Editors, Sean Connolly and Amy Taylor. I am thankful Brent decided to continue publishing. The decision to go on was probably as difficult as getting a journal of this quality out online and in print biannually.

This issue gives us a chance to publish the work of William Heyen, whose book, *A Poetics of Hiroshima*, as I have written elsewhere, is in my opinion the best book of poetry written in the past decade. At the same time Jerome Rothenberg has given us a large sheaf of brilliant poems representative of his vast historical take on the world. Mr. Rothenberg's own editorial

work has been nothing short of monumental, what with both volumes of *Poems for the Millennium*, co-edited with Pierre Joris, a veritable encyclopedic analysis of modern/postmodern poetry worldwide. The editors' annotations add up to some of the most insightful, risk-taking criticism of the genre ever compiled. It's the most comprehensive anthology of its kind since *America a Prophecy*, which he edited with George Quasha in 1973. Over forty years ago Mr. Rothenberg showed me what poetry can do as he chanted, played ancient instruments, and read to an astonished audience in Cambridge.

As I peruse the current issue I know I will return often to the von Eckartsbergs' article concerning the "democratization of fame" and narrative activity devoted to the service of spiritual immortality. Their article is counterpoint to Michael Siporia's analysis of Hesse's *Steppenwolf*, in which the hero is saved by immortals such as Goethe and Mozart led by the Feminine portrayed by Hermine, a character Siporia sees "akin in her spirituality to the prostitutes in Dostoyevsky." I'm intrigued by Siporia's point that the spontaneity of the Jazz Club in the novel will offer the *Steppenwolf* the milieu for possible redemption, reminding me of Barthes' comment, "... man's spontaneity is his culture..."

There's a fine mesh going on in the articles Robbins has chosen here between connections and juxtapositions, where the hero of the Hesse novel defaults toward his razor as a Nietzschean alternative, while Kontoulis & Kitis examine the abandonment of language in DeLillo's *The Body Artist*, where at the center of the novel a suicide is dealt with by performance art and language reduced to "autistic repetitiveness and involution," "echolalia," or a "barely semiotic language." An experiment in writing close to Marguerite Duras giving silence a voice, the body alone having its say. Similarly, yet quite distinctly, Sylvie Gambaudo's investigation into "the Phallic Mother" in the novel *We Need to Talk about Kevin* via its "impolite narrative dealing with social themes most would prefer to keep under silence" is superb. The difficulties she undertakes and unravels in examining the relationship between Kevin and his Mother, Eva, (and ultimately the author herself, Lionel Shriver) are equal to the example she gives of Julia Kristeva unmasking "Maternity" as "the metaphor of the invisible."

Janus Head has long been known for its excellent literary criticism, psychological analysis, and philosophical inquiry, rarely fiction, so it is with great pleasure to offer what I consider our finest piece of fiction thus far in Gregory Phipps's short story, "Matisse of Montreal." Cezanne's preparatory aesthetic approach to the canvas leading up to his gestural act of painting

comes under scrutiny by David Dillard-Wright using insights offered by Merleau-Ponty. The latter's use of phrases toward aesthetic perception and appreciation such as "communion" and "carnal intersubjectivity" reminds one of Kristeva's theories of the chora as an internal preverbal vibration prior to language and cathexis as the erotic charge ultimately transforming the body into language. Dillard-Wright manages to link both art and writing as similar aesthetic processes seeking ecstasy, but cautions against it stopping there.

There is more to be found in this volume, but the impetus to write something here at the last moment was spurred on, not as an apologia, or attempt to justify to the authors, and readers alike the delay in publication, but a brief statement of appreciation to all involved for exhibiting patience and courage, the two qualities Lacan calls both wings needed for "Souling."