


# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Bird Float, Tree Song: dis•articulated poems by Los Angeles poets

Terry Wolverton · Wednesday, April 20th, 2016

 Most of the time a poet begins with an idea rooted in an experience, a memory, a feeling, or a response to something we've encountered in the world.. Then we set out to search for the right words—the best words, the best form—to capture that elusive, yet pressing idea.

But sometimes for poets, that process can break down. Ideas feel wedged in a familiar rut, language and images start to seem repetitive. We may fear we're not surprising anyone, even ourselves. We grow tired of our minds and search for ways to reactivate, even transform our thought process when we sit down to write.

Enter the dis•articulations process. I've pulled together different processes I use with students—writing from prompts, “fevered writing” and “cut-ups,” then added an additional element, sorting the cut-up words into their parts of speech—nouns, verbs, adjectives, prepositions, etc. I found the process of “dis•articulating” the words to be fascinating and liberating—a stage of abstraction that helped me to release my pre-conceived notions of how a poem needed to be born.

In 2015, I decided to invite twelve Los Angeles poets, one per month, to collaborate with me on dis•articulations poems. My collaborator and I would each select four prompts (drawn from the media—print, broadcast or social) and exchange them. With each prompt we were given, we would spend 3 minutes doing “fevered writing” (writing without intention). Then we exchanged those four segments of fevered writing. Working with the words provided me by my collaborator, I would assemble a new poem; they would do the same with my words. Every word of the poem, including the title, had to come from words we were given. We were not required to use every word but we could not add words.

Starting without an idea, working with someone else's words, allowing the words themselves to suggest ideas led to poems that surprise and lead us to unexpected places. The poems from this project are now compiled in an anthology (along with the writing prompts and the fevered writing): *Bird Float and Tree Song: dis•articulated poems by Los Angeles poets*. A publication party and reading will take place on Sunday, April 24 at 7 p.m. At Art Share-LA, 801 East 4<sup>th</sup> Place, Los Angeles, CA 90013. Admission of \$10 includes a copy of the anthology. RSVP: [wtrsatwork@aol.com](mailto:wtrsatwork@aol.com).

\*\*\*\*\*

Terry Wolverton is the author of ten books of poetry, fiction and creative non-fiction, including *Embers*, a novel in poems, and *Insurgent Muse: life and art at the Woman's Building*, a memoir. She is the founder of Writers At Work, a creative writing studio in Los Angeles, and Affiliate

Faculty in the MFA Writing Program at Antioch University Los Angeles. She has edited fifteen literary compilations, and including *Bird Float, Tree Song*. <http://terrywolverton.com>.



## Hover

Years ago I stirred the future  
until skyline fell to dirt.  
I whispered an outlaw language  
that only women heard.  
I tasted the orange of the city  
on the backs of their necks.  
Every day we would bend and lock;  
where was the place for wonder?  
I became mother to the whales,  
visited their seven waters.  
I could stay under a long time  
and trade funny stories in Spanish.  
This was a weapon superior  
to history; I could ask them  
how they planned to foreclose time,  
what the new world would be.  
I longed for a chair in the grass  
on top of a hill, the canyons  
of downtown before me, digestible,  
rarified cliffs and new malls.  
From this place I could see  
the after-years, when all questions  
would fall back to the orange dirt,  
when I would belong to another life.

**Terry Wolverton**

\*\*\*

**Olga García Echeverría:** Born and raised in East Los Angeles. Ultra Libra in love with the ocean and the clouds and the birds and the trees and the disappearing bees. Author of *Falling Angels: Cuentos y Poemas* (Calaca Press and Chibcha Press 2008). Teacher of English. Creator and destroyer of language. Splendid Spinster of the New Millennium who plans to joyfully spin words until her fingers turn to dust



## Wildfires

I.  
Bam! Just like that.  
Another woman of color  
eradicated by the system.  
Why not start a wildfire  
with all the newspaper articles?

It makes as much sense  
 as anything.  
 II.  
 She needed  
 more hummingbirds  
 more salvia  
 more seconds on the Universal clock  
 She needed  
 more nectar to sip  
 more time  
 to let it all hang out  
 to sit serenely, thinking  
 to small talk at dinner  
 to gossip with friends  
 She needed more time  
 to write  
 to birth  
 to live  
 to sleep  
 inside the safest place, her own navel,  
 spinning wheels of energy, yellow  
 Chakra vibrating, the mystery  
 of the undulating Universe  
 dripping from her fingertips  
 She needed more softness,  
 this purple-colored woman  
 bellowing through time,  
 wildfires in her eyes...

**Olga García Echeverría**

\*\*\*

Douglas Kearney's collection of writing on poetics and performativity, *Mess and Mess and* (Noemi Press, 2015), was a Small Press Distribution Handpicked Selection. His third poetry collection, *Patter* (Red Hen Press, 2014) examines miscarriage, infertility, and parenthood and was a finalist for the California Book Award in Poetry. Cultural critic Greg Tate remarked that Kearney's second book, National Poetry Series selection, *The Black Automaton* (Fence Books, 2009), "flows from a consideration of urban speech, negro spontaneity and book learning." A collection of opera libretti—*Someone Took They Tongues*—is forthcoming from Subito Press. He was the Guest editor for 2015's *Best American Experimental Writing* (Wesleyan). He has received a Whiting Writer's Award, residencies/fellowships from Cave Canem, The Rauschenberg Foundation, and others. His work has appeared in a number of journals, including *Poetry*, *nocturnes*, *Pleiades*, *Iowa Review*, *Boston Review*, and *Indiana Review*; and anthologies, including *Best American Poetry*, *Best American Experimental Writing*, *Wide Awake: Poets of Los Angeles and Beyond*, and *What I Say: Innovative Poetry by Black Poets in America*. Raised in Altadena, CA, he lives with his family in California's Santa Clarita Valley. He teaches at CalArts.



## The Livestock

we've places in our properties for them,  
 lots for growing them into lots more for us.  
 in the places, there, we can watch them,  
 our faces like hands having want. we, beaten  
 by a cooler outside, said they got a coat kind-of-  
 a-skin sewn up on their body until—beaten  
 by the cooler outside—we slip them out it  
 to wear it on us and so we  
 are we, for we wear their skin for us.  
 by our stove-like imagination,  
 in it, they are a wad of living Crisco,  
 Crisco shut up in them until we cook it  
 out them, them out it, into a pan, a cut of them  
 fried in it out a can and into our mouths,  
 ground inside our mouths turning us into we-  
 who-wear-wads-of-body-in-our-bodies  
 and the wad's bodies on our bodies and so we  
 are we, for we cook to enjoy this insiding.  
 times, we've agreements with us  
 to think for them impassive bodies what they think  
 our love is like, so we spin answers out slashed mouths,  
 snipped tongues, the splatterings beaten out their they  
 in our lots for growing us out of them:  
 we say they may say we are universes gashing Earth  
 or baboons long ago hardened into clothes  
 or that by their brown livings we guarantee us  
 they want in our mouths, to be our coats,  
 to tiptoe their they through our imaginations,  
 graceful as, doting as mothers sewn to cries.  
 no no no no no—our love is nothing but goodbye.  
 and how we only want to love it all and so  
 all of them.

Douglas Kearney

This entry was posted on Wednesday, April 20th, 2016 at 11:09 pm and is filed under [Fiction](#), [Poetry](#)  
 You can follow any responses to this entry through the [Comments \(RSS\)](#) feed. You can leave a  
 response, or [trackback](#) from your own site.