

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Boundaries, Blurred

Chiwan Choi · Thursday, December 6th, 2012

Maybe it's like this once holiday season starts no matter what you're doing, but these past couple of weeks have been kind of nuts. The combination of post-Thanksgiving lethargy and five dozen work related things that need to be dealt with NOW leads to much whiskey induced paralysis and watching Hulu Plus for hours and hours. *Nashville* is an awesome show, by the way, and Connie Britton is the best actress on TV. She needs to be on every show. Every. Show. *666 Park Avenue*, on the other hand, is not a very good show.

Anyway, on a personal note regarding my own writing, I received a Pushcart Prize nomination for the first time. Please [read the poem](#) (and purchase the anthology from [Silver Birch Press](#) if you can) and let me know if it was deserving of such honor. I was also once again invited to read and speak to classes at Berkeley City College. I love speaking to city college students. There's a level of appreciation and respect from them that not even many publishers I've known show writers. I think some of the students even got dressed up for my visit, although I'm a nobody, just because they'd read my work. But my favorite part (other than the amazing Jazzy Bird sitting in) is the way the students keep your ego in check, with blunt questions that cut through all the academic bullshit. My two favorite statements of the day were: "You sound really confused in your poems," and "Have you found yourself yet?" Ahhhhh. Beautiful.

The past few days have felt like a break from my life as a publisher to live in my life as a writer for a bit. It used to be a strange shift, like I was having to rotate my brain in some weird circus maneuver. But I am finding myself more and more applying the things I'm learning and experiencing in one role into the other.

At all my college events, such as the one at Berkeley City College, I have made it a point to make them more Q&A sessions, with a bit of a reading thrown in. This is a model I was inspired to follow after attending Junot Diaz's appearance at the Hammer Museum in Westwood, CA. He was touring for *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* and he read the shortest passage I'd ever heard a writer read at a book event. It was about 5 minutes long and most of us were disappointed by it...until he started just talking and answering all these questions thrown his way.

I follow this model and encourage the students, the audience, to ask me any questions they want for the remaining time, about writing, about reading, about personal matters. I don't know if it's the right or wrong thing to do. I don't even know if it's some manifestation of a horrible narcissistic streak. What I do know is that it helps me tear down the wall between myself and my readers, the very people that will continue to support my life as a writer.



In this past year, I have tried to carry this approach into the way I do my work at Writ Large Press. Of course, each writer has a different personality and not every one of them will be comfortable opening up to an audience of strangers. But on my end, as the publisher, I can continue being open about what we do, allow our team's personalities to show through, and succeed or fail in plain sight of our supporters and readers.

I guess that's why I even started this column, so any of you out there interested could see our various plans, where our ideas are coming from, what is working and what is not. I want to keep blurring boundaries between reader, writer, and publisher, until it simply becomes a literary community.

And on that note, here is where we are as of today regarding our next title, *Eulogy to an Unknown Tree* by Billy Burgos—the book release is set for January 12, 2013, starting 4PM at Beyond Baroque; we are going through our proof copy of the book and have realized that the cover image needs to be slightly higher resolution; we are looking for ways to get a respected blog or publication to come out and cover the event; and we are still waiting for one major blurb.

Next week is, I guess, our mid-season finale! It will be the last installment before a holiday break. And we'll be going out with a bang! Or a cliffhanger, I mean! In it, I'll be talking about the official birth of the [Indie Press Cartel](#), the Takeover, and a decision that will *change everything for everyone forever!*

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