

Maureen Owen &
Barbara Hanning



Poets on the Road

**MAUREEN OWEN &
BARBARA HENNING**

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2019

Barbara Henning - Acknowledgements:

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MAUREEN OWEN

Mom

She wears my flip flops
In mid afternoon sun
I shade her ankles & feet
with my shadow

the pines nap too
still & drowsy in their altitude
as a baby breathes soft &
scarcely
it hurts my neck but I can't stop
staring up at them their
glassy needle tops bristle rolling heaving
sea above

August 2018

Dazzle Camouflage

Green that goes straight up tousled locks of branches
then green as still as baize firs and pines
the great green cargo of these branches in layers thick
green hunks of rafts of forest pitch and foam

kids across the way put up a makeshift stand
by the side of the road shake dust from
little trucks & chant “Toys
for Sale!” they plan to buy ice cream with the money

placing cloth chairs in the sun for her moving to dappled
shade when sun too hot then back to sun when shade too cool
try to find a level spot for her chair in slantedness
move small table for water with chair keep moving as sun
moves tall shadows of the pines

screeching Stellar Jays Dark-Eyed Junco

no summer insects sing not one utter silence breaches

it's the last of the 8th Giants up & leading 3 to 1

Pentecost

I first saw the word
Facsimile on the nameplate
of a race horse's halter a deep
chestnut gelding I a kid standing
in the shed row mid afternoon sun setting
his coat a red orange fire he leaning from
his stall door

Her fingers were like little green lizards

except for a lower case r rain had washed the ink off the note
fringed as hastily torn paper encountering a leaf a
neighbor goes into the grey stucco on the other side of the white
stucco where wild cactus grows never let me say
three bare boys stand a stripped strip of ribbon chartreuse
plaster jet rojo forest moss fluttering across genitals

shirts strung
in witty dyes fold round his shoulders

button down button open at the collar
cherry metallic jacket panted leg
balanced on the heel of sparky ebony loafers sans socks
a poor boy dressed for magic rococo

there was nothing

**where I haven't been since I hadn't gone
for such a long time**

or everybody wants to buy your car

swollen braided breathing
seascapes landscapes bedroom paintings

did I come away edgy on the way back
might those even so not just need

some fabric never noticed
all the while this uniquely insisting

what you'd guess but don't expect
we know the names of the mistakes now

tiny fields of view seem to squeeze the moon
in a snow like bundles of sheets rolled in cotton
where dancers move their arms through heavy satin

for Ed Friedman

**balmy tomorrow
saturday more snow predicted
the lilacs are in turmoil**

or lariat

“All of those years here are gone,” she said in Spanish
as she picked through the wreckage littering the trailer
where she and her husband and their five children had
lived for almost a decade

the way it looked

butter moon in battered shards one fourth up the east wall
of the beauty parlor
much as honeycomb that face

that moon squinting out along
such a sing of cricket katydid hopper
& cicada loose
stitches in the seam

Chanel referred to the nuns at the orphanage as her “aunts”
through the glassless windows

on Saturn diamonds rain down

as into a pool lit from below
whether we were different fissures

down hill to us came
a kimono woman swinging a bright Japanese
lantern igniting tufts of grass

like a child I have
checked my closet
before bed

Was death ever
so beautiful with
carefully drawn wings
In a long black sheath
an orange yellow lantern
fan in her hand

unbearably slow the Vortex aviates their arrival

that's just one of the reasons filming birds is frustrating

When you leave someone you said
to yourself in the elevator going down
the folds and creases of a shirt the threads and
buttons rushing past
the instant making such economic noise
a tipping solace awkward if you're on your own

when you leave someone
you said so yourself in the elevator going down
here's what you should do
borrowings chipped in haste adumbrating a plum ferocity
Was that for being too chic too steep for angling
Perched on a painted result of things

at some point you will know artifact how we are the result of
what we do to our nature But it being summer when you
came down
in the elevator the grass was sizzling

Liquitex my darling Fatty acid bloom my love
white haze newsprint and wax paper saying it still does

Or
except various tho she headed

Must we die Mesopotamia
clocks set right but the time is wrong

You can help me tie your shoe for you
a little crystal blister found in a grain field

My mother dreamt of the wind the ponies
drifting up into the thick dust draft of it

Tiny rectangular forms with legs rushing
about in an ocher glaze

rolls of crepe twisting in manes & tails
wild eyed for oxygen & water

We bring our own territory with us
terra cotta louche and long it's dawn now taken

we pose clad uniquely

fungible
 the window behind us

BARBARA HENNING

The Moon

—hang a dress—in the lobby—wrong size—for 2016—
once twirled around—like a flower—on a highway—soon
on a hanger—in some other closet—reading Walter
Benjamin—*Berlin Childhood*—what was and what might
be—a shelter—the rhythm of the railway—ringing of a
bell—a butterfly hovering—each passing moment—to
gaze—to touch—as a child—the moon—out a Berlin
window—*High above the horizon*—then a pale circle—in
the afternoon sky—growing growing growing—until it
sucks up—tears apart—people place—iron rails—like
Krishna opening the veil—*it was my farewell*—Benjamin
writes—“*O star and flower, spirit and dress, love, grief, time
and eternity!*”—In 1938—this miniature deleted—perhaps,
too much—the melancholic grip—start over—at the
beginning—with children—the weight of the book—
pressing against my chest—drift off—*I collected what I
wanted to take across*—he writes—from then to now—
(13 Mar 2016)

On the Q

—to Manhattan—through the slit—between my eyelids—
an almost empty car—two women dozing—one leans
forward—hair cropped—ear level—mid sixties—
freckles—arms crossed—head bobbing—as the train
jerks—“little brown bag”—on her lap—the other woman—
one leg crossed—over the other—shoulder length—
glistening black hair—leaning to the side—head against
rail—dozing—trading relatively quiet today—investors
returning—from Thanksgiving vacation—the car quiet—
climbs over—the Manhattan bridge—behind the ropes and
rails—the Brooklyn Bridge—dark scattered clouds—the
western sun—a golden hue—a six foot three inch—
Justinian cross—over the World Trade center—young
adults—brought here as children—soon sent—to places
they never knew—underground we go—the conductor
says—this is Canal Street—Chinatown—the older
woman—stands up—head still bowed—doors open—and
then she’s gone—

(28 Nov 2016)

String Ball

for Nevine Michaan and Charles Blow

—*the body's organized—on a square—*so says Yogi
Nevine—I walk around Tompkins Square—all four
corners—surely this is the center—of the universe—*the
goal in life—should be joy—*in Larung Gar—the Chinese—
are tearing apart—Tibetan monastic—dwellings—*plan
your life—like a chess game—move analytically—with
intent—it's very practical—the way to attain joy—even for
civilians—trapped in Aleppo—with artillery shelling
overhead—defeat in life—is bitterness—*buck up—writes
Charles Blow—it's over—the bully's—in the white house—
for the time being—alt-right is not—a computer
command—they're a batch of fanatical racists—*if you're
happy—you'll help everyone—if you're miserable—you won't
help anyone—in Shuafat—a refugee camp—in Jerusalem—
Baha helps the orphans—work, find direction, survive—
then a drive-by—ten bullets—one of the children—will
surely—take his place—you can follow—fake news sites—
from one to another—unravel the molecular structure—of
ribosomes—a tangled mess of rubber bands—and coiled
wires—a new pattern—of income equality—life
expectancy in the US—declines slightly—be careful—it's
like a string ball—if we keep going around—in the same
direction—we will surely unravel— (1 Dec 2016)*

Me, Too

—rheumatic fever—turns the skin—yellow—a heart,
scarred—soon—my mother says—you will—take my
place—I wear her old stockings—dye my hair henna—like
hers—smoke cigarettes—wear red lipstick—her fringed
leather jacket—at 18—at the sewing machine—my foot is
hers—pressing the pedal—there’s a murmur—in your
heart—the doctor says—but soon it will heal—in the
afternoon—I birth a child—walk down the hallway—in her
turquoise bathrobe—at the zoo—an old female
orangutan—locks eyes—with a young woman—
breastfeeding a baby—yes, she nods, *me, too*—at 37—my
two children sound asleep—and all of a sudden—I wake
up—surprised to be alive—what about—the others—I
think—the motherless migrants—the refugees—the
cumulative wound—rooms—that murmur—and
whisper—remember me—take care of them—take care of
you—

(20 May 2017)

Tompkins Square

—on location—the Grateful Dead’s—first East Coast show—Prabhupada’s first US kirtan—chanting and dancing—a rebellious artifact—or ultimate destination—to blow a trumpet—bang on some buckets—if I had money—I’d buy a tiny apartment—across the street—a comeback with millennials—a micro machine—with its own heartbeat—trying to find a dot—in the pacific—Amelia Earhart disappears—upward—an old stately elm—leans toward me—then the voluminous sound—of branches cracking—soon this tree will be gone—In Mosul—Isis leaves behind—blurred Disney figures—and piles of—religious rubble—gone like—the birdhouse tree—the men now say—they’ll let women—make birdhouses—to my left—a guy dozing—on a park bench—a tropical print short-sleeved—button-down—100 percent rayon—a lovely shade of blue—the ultra rich have great views—but trees do poorly—in the shade—I, on the other hand—love sitting here—under the Krishna tree—eating chocolate—and looking—across the street—at my old apartment—

(12 July 2017)

Now and Again

—to cover misdeeds—puff yourself up—with exaggeration and falsification—your allies—a glittering who’s who—in the corporate financial world—supporters—homegrown—Detroit Right Wings—the eighth letter—their icon—88 HH for Heil Hitler—nonetheless—here we are—moving along—as usual—on the train—an old woman—late 80s—her hands shaking—thin—wearing a baseball hat—every human body—a marker in time—a squat woman—body like a boxer—red dyed—ear length hair—unwinds a long—snaking bracelet—carefully reorders—then rewinds—glittering diamonds—on the 6 uptown—a skinny guy—grey messy hair—tiny rimless glasses—tattered jeans and shirt—reading a book—many paper markers—what is it?—lean left—catch “Benjamin”—lean further—“lter”—*Walter Benjamin*—every human body—a marker—to escape nazis—he took—an overdose of morphine—1940—at 51st street—I stand up—have you read *Berlin Childhood?*—I ask—*yes*—and he likes it too—my favorite Benjamin—did you read the early version—the one—about the moon—*I will*—he says—we nod—then off the train—walking east—just as—the moon crosses over the sun—the city in darkness—for a fleeting moment— (21 Aug 2017)

Private Eye

—new lessons for cab drivers—in Karachi—don't look at a woman—in your rear view mirror—don't say anything—about her clothes—don't ask—if she's married—the exact words—of rickshaw drivers—in Mysore—to a younger me—now through a green tunnel—of trees on 12th street—I walk to the car—turn on the radio—69 and my eyesight a little blurry—what to do——an 18 year old girl—testifies—the detective's partner watched—in the rear view mirror—guilty of wearing—a nipple ring— then his turn—keep your mouth shut—they said—in the women's bathroom—my head hurts—coughing so hard—I could burst—a brain vessel—Nick Buoniconti'll donate—his brain—to science—they buy and sell—footballers—the brains typically—come by fed ex—Dr. Vogel expects Paddock's brain—any day—why did he—shoot—all those people—Robert E Lee—says General Kelly—was *honorable*—men and women—of good faith—*on both sides*—even those—who owned and sold human lives—as hedge funds—monetized—securitized—leveraged—multiple times—then a good cotton and sugar season—in 1837—the banks collapsed—don't say a word—shut your mouth—a tax cut—millions of dollars—for the most privileged—I slam on the brakes—and just miss—a cyclist swerving—into his cell phone— (6 Nov 2017)

Chocolate

—the dog whines—thumps her tail—pajamas—bare feet—
tiptoe down stairs—in the frig—nothing sweet—no left
over pudding —scurry up—on the counter—quietly—into
the cupboard—a box of cooking chocolate—police
officers—lie in wait—nabbing—the child—who sneaks—
under the turnstile—unwrap a square—take a bite—uck!—
put it back—into the wrapper—into the box—who took a
bite?—who did it?—not me—not me—why so skinny—
second helpings—for the well fed—a lesson well learned—
early on—when they blow a whistle—we scurry to our
feet—slam into each other—enough—is enough—why
lavish a bully—with the acclaim—so clearly—he
demands—the forgotten white majority—where are we
going—our young lithe bodies—deep inside—these flesh
bags—heart throbbing—climb down—to get away—years
later—here alone—in the dark—me, me, me—throbbing—
oh so loudly—

(20 Feb 2018)

With a Bang

—with a bang—the hairy flower wild petunia—flings its
tiny seeds—sudden and far—how and why—the
scientist—kneels down—clamps a metal band—on a
pigeon’s leg—her initials—and id number—my broken
toe—x-rayed, recorded—at the Bleecker Street station—an
old man—with head bowed—kneeling—on cardboard—an
over crowded—shopping cart, a sign—*repent—the end is
near*—the Indian guru whispers—the only sin—to harm
oneself—to harm another—is to harm oneself—to repent
too much—is to harm oneself—on the platform—the next
generation—leans over a keyboard—riffs, breaks, runs—
his body hunched—fingers flying—30 miles an hour—all at
once—released—the seeds spin outward—the bird flutters
into the air—

(18 Mar 2018)



Maureen Owen's most recent book is *Edges of Water*, Chax Press. Other books include: *Erosion's Pull*, Coffee House Press, finalist for the Colorado Book Award; *American Rush: Selected Poems*, finalist for the L.A. Times Book Prize; and *AE (Amelia Earhart)*, Before Columbus American Book Award. She was the publisher and editor of *Telephone Magazine/Telephone Books*. Maureen lives in Denver and has taught for Naropa University. Her readings can be found on PennSound.

Barbara Henning is the author of four novels and seven collections of poetry. Most recent books are a novel, *Just Like That* (Spuyten Duyvil) and a book of poetry, *A Day Like Today* (Negative Capability Press). She is also the editor of a book of interviews, *Looking Up Harryette Mullen*, and *The Collected Prose of Bobbie Louise Hawkins*. Barbara lives in Brooklyn, has taught for Naropa, and presently teaches for Long Island University and writers.com. Her website is barbarahenning.com

