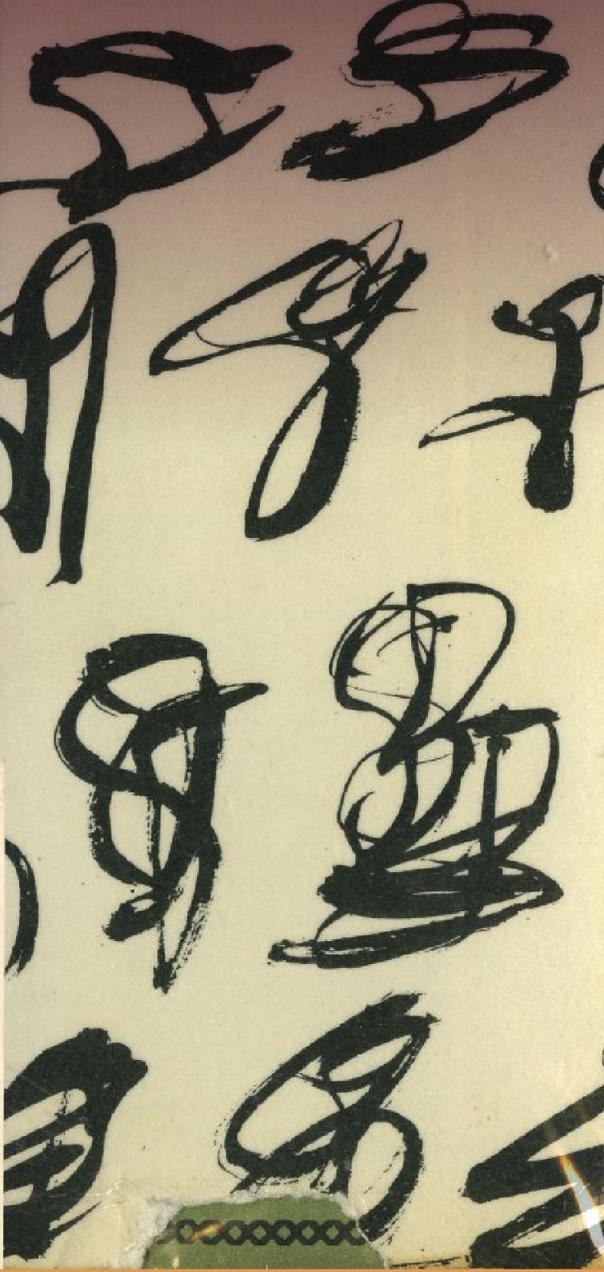


Manuscript Archives & Rare Book Library

OF EMORY UNIVERSITY

spring 2013 ~ volume 6, number 12



quilt around the idea The Emmet's Inch & Eagle's Mile
Guaranteeing the --William Blake
the old pitch-god (one-eyed) man *(the other life-gods*
are the trail // bookmarking the eagle's mile. -- *writes like*

high	smoke	for	over	so	sewn	sown	soon	soon
step	drawn	ear	shot	flow	flight			
stand	unheard	hang(ing)	time	age	blind			
one	eye	thin	risk	waste	charged	rain		
fever	certain	level	blond	prisoner	implored			
toward	tranquil	slaked	hollow	narrow	froze			
pale	history	put	out	crippled	deep	run		
utter								
height								
stunned								
ancient								
off-place								
string								
conquered								
always								
hollow								



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Manuscript Archives & Rare Book Library

OF EMORY UNIVERSITY

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Monday–Saturday: 9:00 am–5:30 pm
For exceptions, check
marbl.library.emory.edu/visit-marbl

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Images from the Poetry at Emory Libraries poster featuring
a selection of books and manuscripts housed in MARBL.



EMORY
LIBRARIES

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

What is the place of poetry in the research university? There is, of course, a long tradition of teaching poetry in English and creative writing departments. Many other disciplines have drawn on poetic writing in the study of everything from religion to cardiology to law. And certainly poets have regularly enjoyed a special place of honor during visits and talks at universities.

Has Emory taken the role and place of poetry even further? The answer, it seems to me, is yes—and this issue of the MARBL magazine demonstrates the many ways in which we do so.

Emory was founded on the belief that “The wise heart seeks knowledge” (Proverbs 18:15), and these words are as true today as they were more than 175 years ago. Through poetry we deepen the wisdom of the heart and our shared knowledge of the human condition. Faculty member and Poet Laureate Natasha Trethewey reminds us that poetry offers a special kind of knowledge that speaks to special occasions, to a historical moment, or a deep emotional experience. Kevin Young, poet and curator of the Raymond Danowski Poetry Library, affirms that poetry provides a kind of private language that nourishes our minds, souls, and bodies. The poet Lucille Clifton invites us to celebrate with her a kind of life that had no model.

Poetry is not a luxury on the fringes of the academic enterprise—it defines who we are and reveals our aspirations. Poets on our faculty have received national and international recognition, while the creative writing program has been noted for its excellence in teaching. Poets have served as commencement speakers and delivered Ellmann Lectures.

MARBL—with its rich array of poetic manuscripts, rare books, and materials—resides at the very center of campus as an essential dimension of the scholarly enterprise. Our national reputation as a cultural center—and poetry haven—is growing as we expand our public programming offerings. Through the Raymond Danowski Poetry Reading Series, intimate student sessions with visiting writers, Creativity Conversations, and hosted book panels at the Decatur Book Festival, we connect our campus and community with world-renowned poets, artists, and thinkers.

During a 2008 Creativity Conversation I conducted with Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney, whose papers are housed at MARBL, he articulated the special responsibility of the poet to speak to and on behalf of humanity. This sense of responsibility is also what we take so seriously at Emory. By highlighting the importance of poets and their work, by making this work accessible in MARBL, we are enabling more wise hearts to seek and find knowledge. The place of poetry, where the deepest yearnings of the human spirit reside, is indeed at the very center of who we are. &

Rosemary M. Magee



Coming to Attention

*

Good, at certain hours of the day
night, to look closely at the world
objects at rest. " Nevada

GRENNAN PAPERS REVEAL HIS CREATIVE PROCESS

by Sarah Clayton and Sarah Quigley

MARBL HAS FINISHED ARRANGING AND DESCRIBING THE PERSONAL PAPERS OF IRISH POET EAMON GRENNAN, which are now open to researchers. Born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1941, Grennan received his BA and MA from University College in Dublin, then moved to the United States and earned his PhD in 1973 from Harvard University. He began teaching at Vassar College the following year and continued to teach English there until his 2004 retirement. He has published twelve volumes of collected poetry in addition to the large number of poems published in journals and magazines such as the *New Yorker*. Grennan has also been involved in editing volumes on Irish poetry and translating others' works.

His papers include correspondence, manuscript and typescript drafts of his poetry, drafts of prose pieces and translations, notebooks, diaries, and printed material. Included in the collection is interesting evidence of Grennan's writing process, which is apparent in the numerous drafts present for each poem and each collection. Materials for most collected works include folders titled "Towards [work]," as well as other files that show his early efforts at crafting a collection. Many works also include multiple typescript drafts of the collection, some with up to four variant titles, indicating the amount of thought and care that Grennan puts into the writing of his work. Researchers using this collection will be able to track the work of the poet virtually from the birth of an idea through the final stages of the publishing process.

The collection also includes much evidence of Grennan's close ties to the literary community. Grennan not only wrote and published poetry but also wrote reviews of other poets' works. His strong relationship with his colleagues can be seen in the inscriptions of poems sent to him. Poets—including Paul Muldoon, Peter Fallon, Chuck O'Neil, and Dana Gioia—sent him copies of their work with kind words. His relationships with editors and other members of the literary community also can be seen in his correspondence, particularly in letters between Grennan and publisher Peter Fallon. &

JENNIFER MEEHAN

NAMED MARBL ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

I AM DELIGHTED TO ANNOUNCE THAT JENNIFER MEEHAN WILL BE JOINING THE EMORY LIBRARIES AS THE NEW ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR MARBL ON MARCH 18, 2013.

Jennifer brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to this new position in MARBL. She is currently serving as the head of processing in the Manuscript Unit of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, a position she has held since May 2010. In this position she supervises a staff of five professionals and five paraprofessionals, oversees the offsite processing operation, and coordinates the processing activities of the Manuscript Unit. Concurrent to this she served as the interim head of digital projects and metadata (June 2011–May 2012), and prior to this was the accessioning archivist from February 2007 to April 2010. Prior to joining Yale in 2007, Jennifer worked as a project archivist at the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution (2004–2007), and as the manuscript archivist in the Digital Library and Archives Department of the University Library at Virginia Tech (2003–2004).

She earned her master of archival studies in 2003 from the School of Library, Archival, and Information Studies at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, British Columbia. In addition, she holds a BA from the University of California–Berkeley in English and film studies. She is an active member of the Society of American Archivists, the Group for Literary Archives and Manuscripts (North America), the Association of Canadian Archivists, and New England Archivists. Jennifer has published and presented widely in the area of special collections librarianship with a focus on arrangement and description and processing of archival collections. &

Rosemary M. Magee, MARBL Director

MARBL celebrates the life and honors the memory of author, cultural historian, Atticus Haygood Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies, emeritus, and longtime library friend and generous library patron Richard A. Long (1927–2013).

[above] Manuscript epigraph for "Coming to Attention," which eventually would be published as "Wildly for Days." Eamon Grennan papers, MARBL, Emory University.

“more than a common occurrence”

LUCILLE CLIFTON'S LITERARY COLLECTION ON DISPLAY

by Amy Hildreth Chen, Emory PhD student in English



LUCILLE CLIFTON DISCARDED HER FINAL COLLECTION OF POETRY, *THE BOOK OF DAYS*, WHEN CLEANING OUT HER OFFICE AT ST. MARY'S COLLEGE OF MARYLAND. “Resurrected” later by Clifton’s editor and the former poet laureate of Maryland (2004–2009) Michael S. Glaser, the sequence remained unpublished until Glaser and Kevin Young released *The Collected Poems of Lucille Clifton 1965–2010* (2012). *The Book of Days*, which Young describes as “a wonder,” demonstrates Clifton’s ability to connect to readers through her deceptively simple style. Clifton writes in “mother-tongue: to man-kind,” “all that I am asking is/ that you see me as something/ more than a common occurrence.” This plaintive appeal belies Clifton’s status as a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for both *Good Woman* (1987) and *Next* (1988); a finalist for the National Book Award for *The Terrible Stories* (1996); and a winner of the National Book Award for *Blessing the Boats: New and Selected Poems 1988–2000* (2000). Her papers, safely residing at MARBL since 2006, are now the subject of two exhibitions featured during the 2012–2013 academic year: “come celebrate with me: The Work of Lucille Clifton” and “She Sings So Sweet: Lucille Clifton’s Children’s Literature.”

“come celebrate with me” examines Clifton’s career as a poet, nonfiction writer, professor, and mentor. One unique item found in the exhibition is Clifton’s Magnavox Videowriter 250, which occupies its own pedestal case. An early word-processing machine from the 1990s, the videowriter does not have the capability to store information. The diskettes on which Clifton saved her work are the only remaining records of the videowriter’s use. Currently, these diskettes are undergoing preservation. Although they are not accessible, many poetry drafts found in typescript within the literary collection utilize a font that indicates that they were printed from this particular machine. “poem beginning in no and ending in yes,” placed into the videowriter for display purposes, is one such example.

Later published in *Quilting: poems, 1987–1990* (1991), “poem beginning in no” demonstrates how the physical constraints of the Magnavox screen shifted the way Clifton formatted her work. Forced to compose in chunks of text, Clifton had to go back over the typescript with black ink to indicate where line breaks should occur. This item preserves not only Clifton’s initial draft of the poem and her editing decisions, but also it shows how technology began to shape how she composed. Later, when using computers, Clifton began to

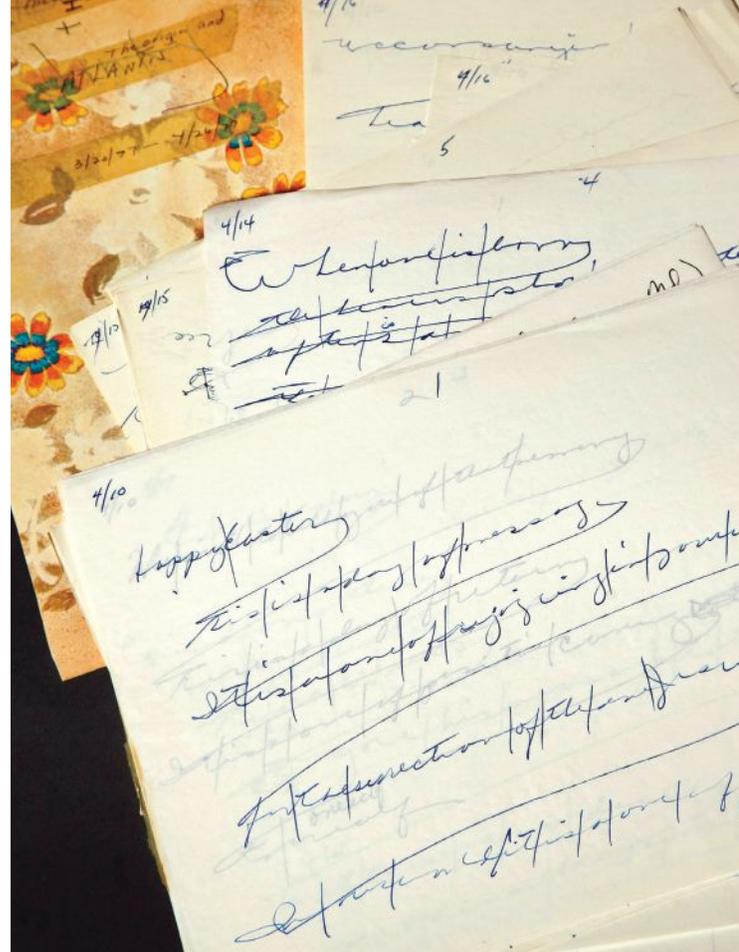
Lucille Clifton. Photographer unknown, circa 1940s. Lucille Clifton papers, MARBL, Emory University.
June Jordan, Alice Walker, Lucille Clifton, and Audre Lorde at the Phillis Wheatley Conference in Jackson, Mississippi. Photographer unknown, 1973. Lucille Clifton papers, MARBL, Emory University.
Spirit writing from 1997. Photograph by Bryan Meltz, 2012. Lucille Clifton papers, MARBL, Emory University.



write her poems in blank emails in order to avoid the standardized grammar and spelling imposed by word-processing software. Given that studying the interaction between authors and the technology they used when creating born-digital work is an emerging field in literary studies, the poems Clifton printed from her videowriter will prove to be a rich resource for researchers to investigate.

“She Sings So Sweet” takes its title from a jump-rope rhyme Clifton recorded and concentrates on Clifton’s career as a children’s book author. As books made for juvenile use are often damaged and therefore often are made to be disposable, children’s books are less likely to be preserved. Children’s literature is more commonly written by women, which historically contributed to lowering its status. For this reason, children’s literature is a frequently overlooked genre within studies of American literature. The choice to dedicate an exhibition to Clifton’s work for children begins to address this critical oversight by asserting the importance of children’s literature as well as emphasizing that Clifton pursued a career as a children’s writer as well as a poet.

Clifton published *What Watches Me? A Writing and Drawing Book for You*, her first children’s book, in 1968. A year later, a short story titled “Mae Baby” appeared in *Highlights*, a children’s magazine that is still popular today. Just as in her work for adults, Clifton did not shy away from difficult topics. For example, “Mae Baby” follows the title character’s move to a larger public housing unit. In *Amifika*, Clifton portrays a child whose father is absent due to military service. Through all circumstances, however, Clifton celebrated the everyday challenges and rewards of growing up. One of her older characters, Everett Anderson, appeared in eight volumes from 1974 through 2001. In the later decades of her career, Clifton began to teach children’s literature classes. A photograph from George Washington University in the 1980s documents one of these courses. Given that Clifton’s literary collection includes drafts of her work for children, fan letters, and syllabi from her many seminars on the genre, the items on display, as well as those



remaining in the archive, are crucial to establishing Clifton’s place within the field of children’s literature.

Together, “come celebrate with me” and “She Sang So Sweet” only begin to cover the richness of Lucille Clifton’s archive; however, these exhibitions offer tantalizing glimpses into unexpected aspects of her literary collection. For example, casually left in one of the annual calendars Clifton kept filled with letters and notes is what may be her final poem, “In the middle of the Eye.” On display beside the Poetry Society of America’s “A Tribute to Lucille Clifton,” the poem’s two drafts are written on the same page. The second version, placed upside down on the opposite side of the paper from her first attempt, includes lines that summarize Clifton’s life of personal and creative integrity:

I asked how to be brave
and the thunder answered
“Stand. Accept.” so I stood
and I stood and withstood
the fiery sight.&

Listen to Lucille Clifton and other Raymond Danowski Poetry Library Reading Series poets:
<https://itunes.apple.com/itunes-u/danowski-released-danowski/id422862491>



Poetry as a Kind of Knowledge



On October 8, 2012, Natasha Trethewey, US poet laureate, participated in a Creativity Conversation with MARBL director Rosemary M. Magee. Trethewey is also Robert W. Woodruff Professor of English and Creative Writing, and Magee serves as vice president and secretary of Emory University. Here is an edited excerpt of their opening remarks.

ROSEMARY MAGEE: I'm wondering how it feels when you hear that term, "poet laureate," and think of yourself.

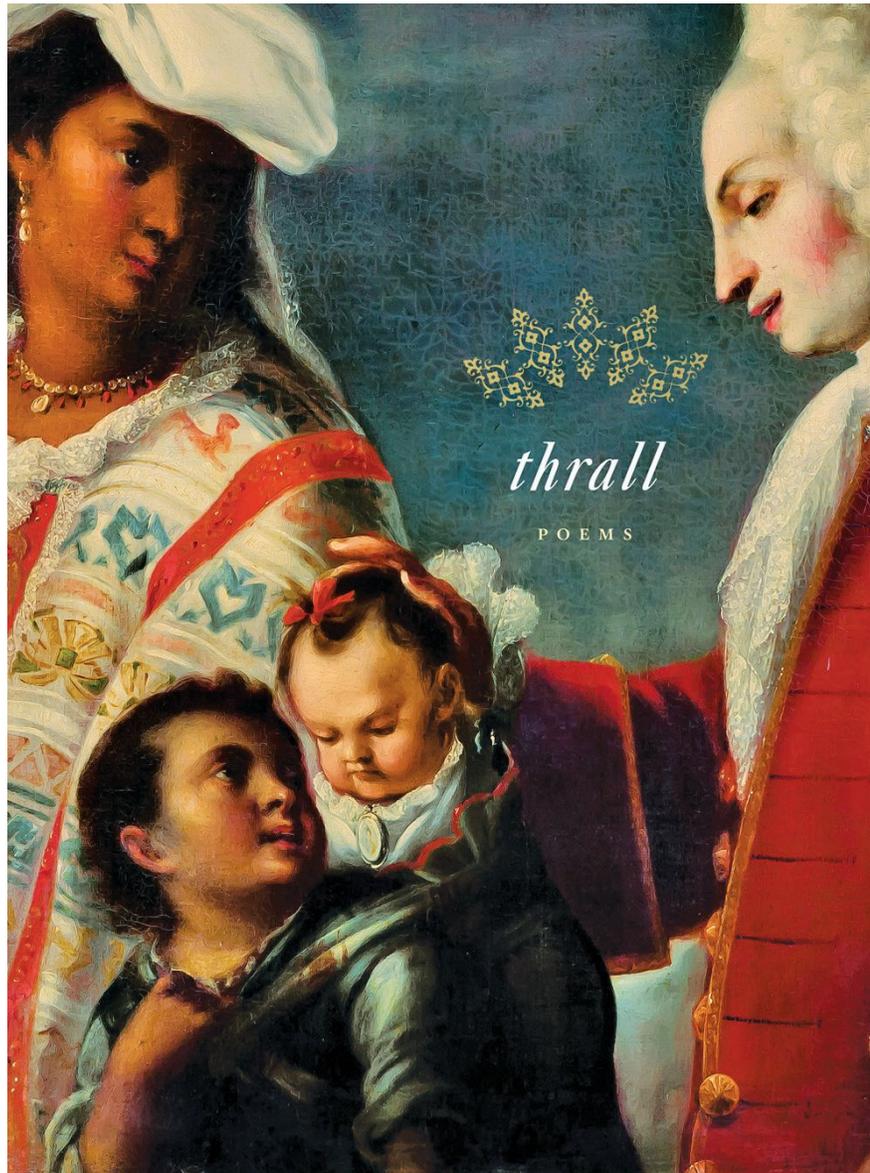
NATASHA TRETHEWEY: Well, you know, it's going to sound silly to say this, but I just gave a reading yesterday and this has happened a couple of times—walking into a room of people who applaud what I know to be the office of the poet laureate, more than the poet who inhabits it. And so, it's very humbling to have that title accompany my name. When I first went to the Library of Congress to meet with all the people there, the librarian, and also the head of the Poetry and Literature Center there told me that—well, first I said to them that when I went to the Pulitzer celebration, they said to me, "Now you know the first line of your obituary." And when I went to the Library of Congress, they said to me, "Well, now you know the line that replaces that line." So, it's a little daunting. It's humbling. It's a deep, deep honor.

RM: It feels to me that there's some kind of quality in our culture that is seeking the kind of knowledge that you are suggesting through your poetry. Do you think of poetry as a particular kind of knowledge, a way of seeing and being in the world?

NT: I absolutely think so. One of the things that I've noticed already in this position, it's not completely unlike the kinds of things that people would say to me after a reading before I was a poet laureate. Often times, people get dragged to readings. And I've taken note of it even more since June—how many people come up to me and say, "I'm really not a poetry person. I really didn't think I had any interest in poetry. I came to this because my sister, my cousin . . ." or "I saw it in the newspaper" or "I come to all the events they have at this place, no matter what they are." And they show up and they say to me, "But now I think I'm kind of interested in poetry. I kind of think that I might go to another one of these things."

And so I think that people end up there accidentally, but what they realize is that poetry has always been a kind of knowledge that's been there for them all along. Something that

we may have forgotten, we could relate to, something that perhaps we've never known, and yet it's hearing a certain poem or reading a certain poem that can bring any of us to poetry, to the kind of knowledge that poetry is. I think people turn to it in all sorts of situations, from the extremes of grief, like all the people who wrote poems after 9/11, to the extremes of joy, like all the people we know who ask to have a poem read at their weddings or at the christening of a child, a birth. But poetry, of course, speaks to us all the days in between, all the ordinary days of our lives, if we find the right poems for us.



NATASHA TRETHEWEY

winner of the Pulitzer Prize



© Matt Valentine

RM: Do you remember hearing poetry as a child and thinking and feeling connected to that? The words and the images then, as well as now?

NT: Well, you know, I think like most people I heard verse as a child, everything from the rhymes of Dr. Seuss to the things that my mother would make up, the little rhymes she made up. Then there was, of course, in high school the Rudyard Kipling poems that so many of us loved. My father, of course, is also a poet and so I heard his poems from an early age as well. And yet, there was a moment after all of that, after the joys of rhyme and meter, the cadences of song that we often love as children, that I somehow got turned away from poetry,

I really remembered liking poetry was the poems of Robert Frost—"Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening," "The Road Not Taken"—but also that poem, whose author I can't recall right now, about Richard Corey. Maybe some of you guys remember that poem, but I remember thinking, "I like what this poem says; it's also saying it with rhyme." But then that was kind of it for a while, which seems odd to me because, as I said before, I'm the daughter of a poet. But the moment that I came back to poetry

or understood that it could grieve with me, as well as celebrate with me, was sometime after my mother died. I had tried writing poems right after that myself, and they

“. . . what they realize is that poetry has always been a kind of knowledge that's been there for them all along. Something that we may have forgotten, we could relate to, something that perhaps we've never known, and yet it's hearing a certain poem or reading a certain poem that can bring any of us to poetry, to the kind of knowledge that poetry is. . . ."

thinking that once the playfulness of it is gone, what else does it do for us? And so I listened to my father's poems—I liked a lot of them but then I didn't understand a lot of them, either. And it wasn't until finding quite by accident in a class the right poem at the right moment that spoke to me about something that was going on in my life. That helped bring me back to remembering that poetry speaks to us all the time.

RM: And, in a way, I think that it's possible to be a bit afraid of poetry, to think it's something that's outside of your reach or something that you can't really understand until perhaps when they hear you or another poet read—or read a poem oneself—and there's that connection.

NT: Right. Well, you know, I certainly felt that way. I think the last time as a high school student that

were very bad poems, but something in me knew that, in order to try to make sense of that loss, I had to write a poem and I don't know why. But I knew that was the only language that could help me make sense of that loss.

Well, it must have been in an English class when I was an undergraduate that I read Auden's "Musee des Beaux Arts"—"About suffering, they were never wrong, the Old Masters . . ." Of course, this is a poem that is talking about the landscape with the fall of Icarus, and seeing that tiny little Icarus falling into the sea over in the corner while the rest of the world goes on about its business, not even knowing about this tiny little tragedy. And that's what it felt like when I lost my mother, that I was completely alone. And then I read that poem and I thought, "Well, I'm not alone. Not at all."⁶

Watch the entire Creativity Conversation:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=F13m2x83X3E

EXCAVATIONS IN THE ARCHIVE

by Geraldine Higgins,

Associate Professor and Director of Irish Studies

WRITING IS A LONELY BUSINESS. ONE OF THE GREAT PLEASURES WORKING ACROSS COLLECTIONS IN MARBL IS THE CHANCE TO OVERHEAR CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN WRITERS AND TO WITNESS THEIR SUSTAINING FRIENDSHIPS. The two Seamuses, Heaney and Deane, were friends and schoolmates at St. Columb's College in Derry before becoming Ireland's foremost poet and literary critic respectively. As directors of the Field Day Theatre Company (along with Brian Friel, Stephen Rea, David Hammond, and Tom Paulin), they were at the forefront of Ireland's creative and cultural life throughout the Troubles and beyond. Deane's centrality to intellectual life in Ireland is everywhere confirmed in his archive, newly acquired by MARBL last year.

Of particular interest to scholars of Irish poetry are the drafts, letters, and frequent exchanges between Deane and Heaney. In Deane's archive, we can see a rare copy of Heaney's first forays into print in *Gorgon*, the Queens University magazine where he signed himself "Incertus." Here too is a draft copy of Heaney's most controversial volume, *North*, published in 1975 when he had moved from Belfast to live in a cottage once owned by J. M. Synge in Glanmore, County Wicklow. In *North*, Heaney turns to "the man-killing parishes" of Jutland where the exhumed victims of prehistoric ritual killings provide metaphor and matter for his exploration of the violence in Northern Ireland. *North* was hailed by Conor Cruise O'Brien as listening to "the thing itself . . . the actual substance of historical agony and dissolution, the tragedy of a people in a place: the Catholics of Northern Ireland" and tendentiously reviewed in the *Honest Ulsterman* by Ciaran Carson, who called Heaney "the laureate of violence." By examining the drafts, edits, and annotations of this volume, we get beyond the headlines to the poetic process. We see the poet's hesitations and uncertainties as well as the evidence of his craft.

Perhaps this process is best illustrated by two examples from the drafts of *North*. Heaney's final

NORTH

by

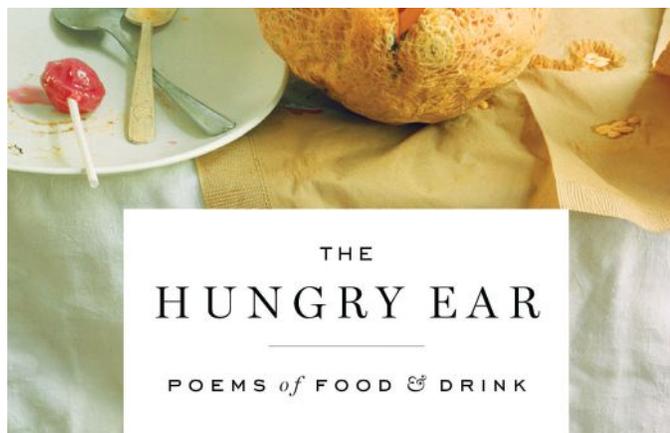
SEAMUS HEANEY



bog poem, "Strange Fruit," anatomizes the "leathery beauty" of a beheaded girl exhumed from the Danish bog and examines his own response to her. The girl's stare unsettles the poet's urge to transform and venerate her, "outstaring/ what had begun to feel like reverence." The poem's title also invites us to consider the more recent lynched bodies hanging from the "southern trees" of Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit." However, when we examine the manuscripts, we see that the published title only became final after several drafts of the poem bearing less evocative titles such as "Triceps," "My Reverence," and "Tête coupée." Our second example also shows Heaney trying out different variations of the volume's titular poem—from "North Atlantic" to "Northerners" to the final, emphatic "North." Apart from the scholarly interest of these drafts, they inspired another, more creative, conversation. Seeing the drafts of this poem in MARBL moved our own poet laureate, Natasha Trethewey, to write her award-winning poem "South."

These archival treasures and many others will be on display in our major exhibition on Seamus Heaney opening in February 2014.&

SAVORING FOOD *through* POETRY



by Kevin Young, Curator of Literary Collections
and the Raymond Danowski Poetry Library at MARBL
Atticus Haygood Professor of Creative Writing and English

“Food sustains us in such an important essential way, and so does poetry,” says distinguished poet Kevin Young, editor of The Hungry Ear: Poems of Food and Drink (Bloomsbury 2012).

Young’s new anthology collects a feast of lesser-known poems by well-known poets about food and drink—from onions and oysters, berries and barbeque—to celebrate the ways that food and poetry nourish those who partake.

THE SAME WAY FOOD SATES MORE THAN JUST APPE- TITE, POETRY OFFERS UP SUSTENANCE FOR NOT SIM- PLY WORDS, BUT WHAT LIES BEHIND THEM. It was at my family’s table that I learned how to be a poet, realizing that poetry is the kind of talk that sticks to your ribs.

While I’ve had plenty of good food alone, a truly great meal requires other people. Conversation, connection, and some good spirits (in all senses) contribute to making a meal memo- rable. In the same way, a poem doesn’t really live until some- one else breathes life into it, reading it silently or more often aloud. Like food, poems belong to the body. Poems are meant for the mouth, though they involve all the other senses as well; the look of the poems, their very taste and tone, are a crucial part of their pleasure. “If it ain’t a pleasure, it ain’t a poem,” William Carlos Williams said, though the good doctor knew that pleasure sometimes takes many forms, from brief to brainy.

Still, food and poems differ in ways, too. Unlike food, poems are meant to be permanent. As I say in the introduc- tion to my new anthology, *The Hungry Ear: Poems of Food and Drink*, the better food is, the faster it disappears. This holds a certain amount of pleasure for poets, who in my experience are quite enthusiastic about good food—especially when it’s free—and have even been known to enjoy a drink. Or three. This I think is because poetry is necessarily a lonely art, one done at our desks in relative quiet, with music or children’s voices circling around.

“Poetry is like bread,” Pablo Neruda said, and went on to prove it with his “Elemental Odes” to primal things like salt— and laziness. I know a couple who fell in love over his “Ode to Onions”; I am trying not to make too much of the fact that they are also now farmers. “I begin with the proposition that eating is an agricultural act,” writes farmer-poet Wendell Berry. Food, folks are starting to remember again, is an active process, not a passive one. We know that the art of poetry, like Thanksgiving dinner, takes time. That doesn’t mean you can’t sometimes want something short and bittersweet, like this poem by Howard Nemerov, “Bacon and Eggs,” quoted in its entirety:

The chicken contributes,
But the pig gives his all.

Not every poem asks us to give our all. Not every food is for you. That’s why there are at least 31 flavors. But every part of us is spoken to by poetry in ways little else can.

In putting together an anthology of poetry that celebrates the everyday and celebratory quality of food, I was struck by the way many of the best poems were filled with thanks. The ode appears as a favorite form, offering a way to praise the everyday yet complicate that love with hard truths. This may be because both food and poetry have lately been taken too much for granted, poetry exiled to the kids’ table. But our food, like our poetry, is a reflection of us, filled with consid- erations of justice, politics, and those less fortunate; and sometimes of those fortunate enough to find the perfect apple. Or the perfect apple pie.

Take this poem by the late Jack Gilbert, called “Hunger”:

Digging into the apple
with my thumbs.
Scraping out the closed nails
and digging deeper.
Refusing the moon color.
...
Getting to the wooden part.
Getting to the seeds.
Going on.
Not taking anyone’s word for it.
Getting beyond the seeds.

The end of this poem isn’t about eating anymore, but writ- ing and, inevitably, living. Food gives us life, but poetry helps shape its meaning. And if you sit at poetry’s welcome table long enough, you might find something you like. &

Listen to Kevin Young discuss his new book, *The Hungry Ear*, as well as read two of his own poems and discuss their genesis:
http://news.emory.edu/stories/2012/12/er_book_report_kevin_young/campus.html.

OTHER VOICES

BARELY SCRATCHING THE SURFACE

Many archivists and librarians carry with them an academic interest or area of expertise into the professional world. Mine was history. In college I became more interested with the how and the why of historical writing, wondering more about sources than the actual writing itself. So, when it came time for me to devise a secondary project as part of my appointment to the Research Library Fellows program, I was nervous about the topic that was eventually settled on: poetry.

My first goal was to get a sense of the manuscript collections overall. I knew the big names, but I wanted to see what else occupied the stacks. Yeats, Muldoon, Heaney, and others were quickly added to my list of collections. But others I was ignorant of cropped up as well: McGuckian, Kinsella, Fallon, Hecht. I was somewhat daunted by the scope of knowledge I needed to at least be limitedly familiar with, so I nervously started enumerating (84 collections), quantifying (2,738 boxes) and categorizing (Southern, African American, Irish, British) all the collections in MARBL related to poetry, to get a better sense of my task.

I started mining the Emory Libraries website for past events. I familiarized myself with the Danowski Poetry Library Reading Series poets. Alexander, Kinnell, Sanchez, Oliver: the names kept piling up. I went further back, using the Emory University Archives to find records of past events and programs highlighting poetry. By now, my spreadsheets were becoming busy with different colors, extra columns of information, and headings for events of various kinds: readings, symposia, exhibits, book talks, book signings. The list went on and on.

The background research all led up to creating a timeline of significant events related to poetry. But would it even be possible to pick a representative sample? Naturally, we consulted our in-house experts and a list was formed. I immediately have to thank Emory Creative Group and Stanis Kodman for not only creating such a great poster from the MARBL images we gave her, but also for reminding us about the relationship between visuals and the message being conveyed. This was apparent to me at the Decatur Book Festival, where handing out the poster to festival goers resulted in catching many people off guard: “So I can come to MARBL to see these things?” I answered that question many times. I spent more time talking to people who have never heard of MARBL or who never knew of our poetry events than I did to those who were well aware of such things (which was the whole point, after all).

Although this project gave me a crash course in the overall landscape of poetry, what I ultimately learned is that I never will be an expert. Even with years of reading, the nuances of poetry are seemingly endless. Not to mention the fact that MARBL contains evidence of the deeper context behind poetry and the poets who compose it: drafts of poems, unpublished writings, and correspondence all provide details that enliven a poet’s bibliography. One could spend decades studying a poet’s collection housed in MARBL and potentially could obtain expert knowledge. But such an examination wouldn’t even approach the complete story of poetry in MARBL. The collections often speak to each other, either through similarities in styles or even literally, in correspondence, when a collection contains letters written from one poet to another, both with papers in MARBL. Adding exponentially to these layers of connections are the poets themselves, who have been coming to MARBL and Emory to speak for years. Events such as “An Evening of Irish Poetry”—which occurred many times in the 1990s and more recently with the impressive lineup of contemporary poets brought in for the Danowski Poetry Library Reading Series—demonstrate how MARBL has been committed to bringing poetry to Emory and Atlanta.

MARBL’s turning point came in 1979 with the Woodruff gift, a bellwether year for Emory as a whole. The Woodruff gift not only set Emory on a path to growth and improvement, but also allowed for the Yeats collection to come to the libraries. Ever since then, MARBL has been on a trajectory that continues to this day. The typical trope about archives and special collections libraries is that they are dusty places where interesting things are stored and subsequently forgotten to the world, save for a bookish enthusiast or two. But this project has shown me that manuscripts and archives have vitality when institutions like MARBL continue to make connections between its collections and its audience, whether they are scholars, students, or just curious individuals.✂

EXHIBITS

Now on view

And the Struggle Continues: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference's Fight for Social Change

The exhibition examines the continued social and political relevancy of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), a significant civil and human rights organization, in the decades following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968. Challenging popular assumptions that the famed civil rights organization reduced its activities post-1968, this exhibition highlights the SCLC's efforts to broaden and adapt its strategies to achieve affirmative social change. Featuring primary source material from the rich archive of the SCLC housed in MARBL. Curated by Carol Anderson, Michael Ra-shon Hall, and Sarah Quigley. Schatten Gallery, Level 3, Woodruff Library.

"come celebrate with me": The work of Lucille Clifton

This exhibition includes a family reunion of writings by Clifton taken from her archive in MARBL. They range from her earliest poems with their delicate penmanship, to poems composed on her beloved Videowriter word processor, to last works composed at writer's workshops, dashed off in an email, or found in her many daybooks. All are on view here in an exhibition that hints at the breadth of her work and the richness of Emory's holdings. Curated by Amy Hildreth Chen and Kevin Young. MARBL Gallery, Level 10, Woodruff Library.

She Sang So Sweet: Lucille Clifton's Children's Literature

A smaller companion exhibition of Clifton's children's books, this exhibition includes one of Clifton's first books and her unpublished compilation of jump-rope rhymes, which inspired the display's title. Curated by Amy Hildreth Chen. Concourse Gallery, Level 2, Woodruff Library.

Annual gifts enable the Emory Libraries to serve a vital role in the academic and cultural life of the campus. They help build unique special collections and allow MARBL to acquire exciting new materials. They fund digital innovations that lead to groundbreaking scholarship. And they support an engaging array of public programs and exhibitions that enliven the community. Make a gift today and join the community of annual donors who are making a difference at Emory Libraries.

For more information on giving, contact Alex Wan, Director of Development and Alumni Relations for Emory Libraries, at 404.727.5386 or alex.wan@emory.edu.

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