

Preface

This is the second volume of Point of Contact Productions' poetry series. As in Volume One, five poetic voices— Joyce Hayden, Tamara Kamenszain, Mary Karr, Anthony Seidman and Bruce Smith -are unified, perhaps harmonized, in a book we call *Corresponding Voices*, a gathering of independent voices that can be judged individually but also as an assembly. (The word "judged" is of common usage but can be misleading, for there is no right or wrong in art, and less so in poetry, only readings, a sort of implicit agreement between somebody that writes and somebody that reads.)

Ironically, there is correspondence among poetic texts in the measure that they are assembled but refuse to become yet another *unified text*. We don't need to force feed them coexistence. We also don't need to force upon them analogies or similarities, not even stylistics. All we need is a reader. Poets of all times never forget that notwithstanding their solitude, theirs is a dialogue, somehow, an addressing of somebody to *somebody*. Of course, Shakespeare's or Calderón's *somebody*, their imaginary reader, is different from us. But albeit the difference, we can still read them, and if we *truly* read them, as if they are part of us, we rescue their distance by feeling addressed. We correspond with them.

But this is not to say that arbitrarily *everything goes* is the name of the game. The poets we have chosen are as stripped of classicism as of pure relativism. Language is open in as far as it's not the result of just individually saturated meanings. And if we assume and presume the existence of an *I*, it's because, as we said previously, we assume and presume the existence in the other side of the equation of a *thou*. One could say that here lies the first instance of diversity, and it is in this diversity where languages, memories, rhythm and the existential vision

coexist.... Or not. It is for us to choose. But not arbitrarily. Because every poem is a specific act of language, Poetic language is more than linguistics, more than rhetoric, more than you and me. By *more* we don't mean *outside* of language, a free consumerist *laissez faire*. Outside of language poetry is nothing. A second way of dealing with diversity is to accept that's the way we predicate about poetry's ways with meaning, which is every artistic way, but in poetry, because of its condensed forms, it is more exacerbated. And this exacerbation adopts the form of defiance. Poetry is nothing outside of language and poetic language is nothing if it's not a defiance of language, a defiance of the world of which this language is an expression and a result.

On the long sinuous line of the history of poetry there is this alliterative repetition of this defiance.

The nature of an assembly of voices is the *polyphonic*, as Mikhail Bakhtin referred to the dialogic novel. And we could extend this to the assembly of poetry voices. As in the case of Bakhtin, *polyphonic* here means that the validity of each individual voice must be allowed to stand for itself. But it must also enter the assembly. It must interact, play intra-textually, converge or diverge, give in to the fruitful artist mode of contrasts and similarities. Poetry, more than any art, is the privileged territory of metaphor, which is what we get as soon as we juxtapose diverse realities. We could try as much as we want to invent an imaginary reunion and fill pages with ready-made signs, but without the presence of individual voices, the metaphors are empty. Perhaps it would be fitting to redefine this troublesome word —*diversity*—to avoid becoming one more tourist island in the other's psyche, but to discover for ourselves the value of cross-fertilization.

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