

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

WITH *ZYMBOL*, the editorial calendar is such that we find ourselves putting together each season's issue during the opposite time of year. Most of the selections for this issue came to us during the long, cold January and February of 2015, and seem to have formed affinities of their own without much intervention by us as editors. When I read through these pages now, once more before we head to press, I see that this issue is all about distance and connection. As a team working from separate international offices, I wonder how much of this is down to our own preoccupation with these themes. Each of us has spent winter and spring concentrating on our own writing. This summer, we'll have the rare and exciting chance to come together in person, as we prepare to expand *Zymbol's* distribution throughout the UK.

This issue shows us the labors of intentional, creative isolation (Meng Jin's "You Who Made It Happen," Clive Barker's Dream Notebook sketches) as well as touching attempts to reconnect (Virginia Konchan's "Force Majeure," Wendy Rasmussen's "Hero Route"). Two articles bridge both distance and connection in intriguing ways; these are Douglas Basford's work translating the Italian poet Valentino Zeichen, and Gail Potocki's *Freaks* portraits and feature.

Douglas Basford, the recipient of a 2015 NEA Literature Fellowship for Translation, sent us a first version of Zeichen's poems "The Nihilist's Clock" and "Once Was Cinema" in January. He and I discussed a question: What would these poems be like if Zeichen's wry zest and musicality could make the leap into English? Returning to the source material, and with the blessing of Zeichen's publisher, Mondadori, Basford produced a new pair of translations, which not only gave us our answer, but also generated an accompanying article, with insights into Zeichen's inspirations and the imaginative process of translation.

Symbolist master artist Gail Potocki formed an affectionate fascination with early 20th-century sideshow "freaks" and began painting their portraits in 2009. Many of these paintings imagine real individuals (Fedor Jeftichew, Daisy and Violet Hilton) in the dignified poses of the Old Masters, finally allowing for the nuanced consideration that was not afforded them by viewers in their own lifetimes. For our cover story, the Chicago-based artist talked of her personal and political inspirations with Timothy Grayson, UK host of the world-famous Poetry Brothel and poet-in-residence at Belvoir Castle, England. Grayson, an admirer of Potocki's work, describes their connection in terms both intimate and tenuous.

With this issue, we say goodbye to Cody John Laplante, a passionate young poet, and one of our earliest and most vocal supporters. Cody's "plural hotel closets" and "pet" were featured in our third issue. For the present, his website *The Inertia of Mistakes* is still available to those wishing to find his work. Cody's presence in our lives will be deeply missed.

On behalf of the *Zymbol* team,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Anne James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, sweeping loop at the end of the name.

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GAIL POTOCKI

FREAKS ~~OF~~ AND NATURE

Interviewed by Timothy Grayson

Photographed by Allan Amato

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