

COMMON THREADS



Volume 4, Spring 2014

COMMON THREADS
Volume 4, Spring 2014

Common Threads is an annual publication, published in the United States, by Mass Poetry, West Tisbury, MA. All contents are copyright © 2014 by Common Threads. Rights revert to individual contributors upon publication.

Authors and artists have given permission for this book to be circulated online, or printed for personal and/or group use free of charge. Mass Poetry is a 501 ©3 and this service is provided free of charge. For those who would enjoy a printed copy, please visit **Harvard Bookstore** in Cambridge, MA and make use of their print on demand service. Cost is \$10, with any and all proceeds going to Student Day of Poetry.

Cover Art: "Blue Line," by **Yetti Frenkel**. Courtesy of the artist.

Common Threads: Ten Poets and a Wealth of Readers

Volume 4

GUEST EDITOR

Lisa Olstein

MANAGING EDITOR

Danielle Jones-Pruett

for

MassPoetry

April 2014

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Acknowledgments..... | 3 |
| Introduction: Strange Calling..... | 4 |
| <i>by Lisa Olstein</i> | |
| Late Air..... | 6 |
| <i>by Elizabeth Bishop</i> | |
| Syntax..... | 8 |
| <i>by Jorie Graham</i> | |
| Spring is like a perhaps hand..... | 10 |
| <i>by E.E. Cummings</i> | |
| Poppies in October..... | 12 |
| <i>by Sylvia Plath</i> | |
| Or..... | 14 |
| <i>by Thomas Sayers Ellis</i> | |
| An American Poem..... | 17 |
| <i>by Eileen Myles</i> | |
| Lullaby..... | 22 |
| <i>by Peter Gizzi</i> | |
| Halley's Comet..... | 24 |
| <i>by Stanley Kunitz</i> | |
| Résumé..... | 27 |
| <i>by Agha Shahid Ali</i> | |
| For the Graduation..... | 30 |
| <i>by Robert Creeley</i> | |
| About the Poets Featured in this Volume..... | 32 |
| About Us..... | 34 |
| Information about Mass Poetry/Upcoming Events..... | 35 |

Acknowledgments

Thanks to **Lisa Olstein** for choosing this year's selection of poems, which together sing her own song, her own wonderful "strange calling."

Thank you **Michelle Moon** and **Katie Theodoros** of the Peabody Essex Museum for offering us a new way to interact with the Common Threads poems, and for being just as excited about it as we are.

Thanks to **Yetti Frenkel** for the cover art, "Blue Line." These poems, that image, yes.

Thanks to **Ryan MacDonald** for accepting our challenge to create a video collage that captures all the threads, and for doing it with such talent and enthusiasm. You were a pleasure to work with.

Thanks to **Susanna Baird** for helping me see the big picture, and for providing me with editorial advice and laughter. Always laughter.

Thank you to **Alice Kociemba** who has stood behind Common Threads every step of the way, in every way imaginable. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Thanks to **Laurin Macios** for always saying "how can I help?" and to **January O'Neil** for always saying "yes."

Thanks to **Michael Ansara** for creating Common Threads and Mass Poetry. Where in the world would all these words be without you?

Thanks to the poets for creating these poems, and for sharing them with all of us.

And when I say "us," I mean "you." And you. And especially you. Thank you!

Sincerely,
Danielle

Introduction: Strange Calling

Lisa Olstein

We are surrounded. By what we can and cannot hear, see, taste, smell, touch, know. By what is close by and what is long gone and so much that is halfway between. Memory, perception, information which we are constantly gaining and shedding by equal measure. Always we stand in a place constructed by our knowing and our ignorance, what we have and what we've lost or still hope to gain. Both sides of the equation coalesce in a kind of calling. We are *called by* what haunts or inspires or is forced upon us. We *call out* in need, joy, confusion, despair, curiosity.

“We treat desire as a problem to be solved,” reports Rebecca Solnit, pointing out that separation is the origin of longing and, “something is always far away.” “Language can be hazardous as it is our primary grip on the world. When language is skewed, the world is viewed differently,” James Tate tells us. “You are asked again and again why you write poems. To find out why you are *alive*—*that is why* you write poems,” Vasko Popa asserts. Our lives are imbued with callings—those we generate, those we receive—this is part of the human condition, and nowhere is language more expressive of and responsive to this reality than in poetry.

Gathered here are ten poems that embody and reflect upon and sometimes even answer the kinds of urges and imperatives we experience. All with deep ties to Massachusetts, these poets span decades and continents and expansive aesthetic domains, and, of course, each of the poems here can be read in multiple ways, each possesses multiple powers. One way to read them is for the fierceness and elegance and intelligence with which they demonstrate how poetry, how language itself, is the locus of both call and response for our most pressing questions and needs, our strange callings. Here we find:

- In Elizabeth Bishop’s “Late Air,” longing, in all its mysterious abstraction and pinpoint precision, sent out over the airwaves across a world increasingly known and increasingly strange.
- In Jorie Graham’s “Syntax,” a barely discernable logic of agency and happenstance organizing the ungovernable material worlds of our inner and outer lives.
- In E.E. Cumming’s “Spring is like a perhaps hand,” the urgency of nature, and through nature, time, pressing in upon us, changing everything while everything stays the same.
- In Sylvia Plath’s “Poppies in October,” a crying out from the unfathomable self to the unfathomable god(s) in the face of the world’s excruciating beauty.

- In Thomas Sayers Ellis's "Or," language's own slippery multiplicity and mutability, its hidden passageways, dirty little secrets, escape hatches, and mirror-ball refractions.
- In Eileen Myles's "An American Poem," mythic American identity comes face to face with multiple real and disenfranchised identities and with the idea of identity itself, our push-pull to reject and embrace it.
- In Peter Gizzi's "Lullaby," the haunted air we move through, invisibly peopled, silently voiced, and thrumming myriad frequencies at once.
- In Stanley Kunitz's "Halley's Comet," the conflagration of past meeting present in the memory-mind of ever-renewed yearning for a lost father.
- In Agha Shahid Ali's "Resume," that thing that rises up in us and says *yes* to the impossible questions we face, the impossible, self-effacing choices we are given.
- And in Robert Creeley's "For the Graduation," the way we persist in our searching, the way our searching is our self.

Late Air

Elizabeth Bishop

From a magician's midnight sleeve
the radio-singers
distribute all their love-songs
over the dew-wet lawns.
And like a fortune-teller's
their marrow-piercing guesses are whatever you believe.

But on the Navy Yard aerial I find
better witnesses
for love on summer nights.
Five remote lights
keep their nests there; Phoenixes
burn quietly, where the dew cannot climb.

Questions for Discussion:

- ❖ There are many ways to structure a poem. Why do you think the poet chooses to break the poem into two stanzas? Do you notice a significant shift in the second stanza? What effect does the use of compound words in the first stanza have on the rest of the poem?
- ❖ Think about the line “their marrow-piercing guesses are whatever you believe.” What is the reader’s role in meaning and/or the truth when it comes to poetry?

Writing Prompt:

- ❖ Think about the perspective in the poem—how the music drifts up to the height of the “Navy Yard aerial,” before the lights look down on the lovers. Think of something in your own life that watches from low (your cat?) or high (a video camera above an ATM machine?) and write a scene from that vantage point.

Syntax

Jorie Graham

Every morning and every dusk like black leaves
the starlings cross,
a regular syntax on wings.
The gravestones lean,
each more or less than its neighbor,
as if to find
a whole view—
not unlike the way, in a crowd,

we move to exclude others
without degrading them,
or how we wish, in conversation,
to step aside without stepping back;
or in desire.
They say the eye is most ours
when shut,
that objects give no evidence

that they are seen by *us*.
Perhaps we move then
to watch a tree stay still
or move the other way from us, to feel
not so much its distance as its loss.
When the pond froze
we carved our names on its delicate surface
jumping from letter to letter

to hide our tracks.
I misspelled mine out of excitement,
seeing it so big and knowing it would last
till the first thaw
threaded the water
like a needle.
Spring we hunted bullfrogs.
We caught the ones that sang.

Questions for Discussion:

- ❖ The title of the poem is “Syntax.” How does syntax work as a guiding force within the poem?
- ❖ Think about where lines break, and where they resume. Think about the different sentence-length lines, and how they draw the reader out, then back. How does this help the emotion of the poem? Where does it create stressed positions or turning points?

Writing Prompt:

- ❖ Write about a time when you were the center of attention. Was it pleasurable, or embarrassing? Was it for a reason you were proud of, or had you done something that made you feel ashamed? Write about the specifics of the situation—the place, the sounds around you. Be detailed. Now, write the same scene from the perspective of someone else that witnessed the moment.

Spring is like a perhaps hand

E.E. Cummings

III

Spring is like a perhaps hand
(which comes carefully
out of Nowhere)arranging
a window, into which people look(while
people stare
arranging and changing placing
carefully there a strange
thing and a known thing here)and

changing everything carefully

spring is like a perhaps
Hand in a window
(carefully to
and fro moving New and
Old things, while
people stare carefully
moving a perhaps
fraction of flower here placing
an inch of air there)and

without breaking anything.

Questions for Discussion:

- ❖ What are some of the tools E.E. Cummings uses to “carefully arrange” this poem? Consider things like punctuation, repetition, form, etc.
- ❖ Compare this poem with Jorie Graham’s poem “Syntax.” What are the two poems saying about nature? About seeing and being seen? How are they similar? How do they differ?

Writing Prompt:

- ❖ Think about Cumming’s use of the extended simile “spring is like a perhaps hand.” Try creating your own simile and carrying it forward for several lines or, even better, throughout an entire poem.

Poppies in October

Sylvia Plath

Even the sun-clouds this morning cannot manage such skirts.
Nor the woman in the ambulance
Whose red heart blooms through her coat so astoundingly—

A gift, a love gift
Utterly unasked for
By a sky

Palely and flamily
Igniting its carbon monoxides, by eyes
Dulled to a halt under bowlers.

Oh my God, what am I
That these late mouths should cry open
In a forest of frost, in a dawn of cornflowers.

Questions for Discussion:

- ❖ Think about the title of this poem, “Poppies in October.” When do poppies normally bloom? Do you think the poet is describing actual flowers?
- ❖ What work does color do in this poem? How does red stand out among the pale sky, dull eyes, and the “forest of frost”? What picture do these contrasting images “paint”?

Writing Prompt:

- ❖ Think of a vivid picture of a historical scene that scares you, angers you or is uncomfortable to write about. Close your eyes. Choose one color that pops into your head when you think of the scene. Trace this color throughout the scene—the gray of the sky, a brown button, the pink of fingertips or azalea flowers, etc. Think of unexpected things, contrasting things that also possess this color. Write a poem describing the scene through that color, bringing out your own fear and anger.

Or

—

Thomas Sayers Ellis

Or Oreo, or
worse. Or ordinary.
Or your choice
of category

or
Color

or any color
other than Colored
or Colored Only.
Or “Of Color”

or
Other

or theory or discourse
or oral territory.
Oregon or Georgia
or Florida Zora

or
Opportunity

or born poor
or Corporate. Or Moor.
Or a Noir Orpheus
or Senghor

or
Diaspora

or a horrendous
and tore-up journey.
Or performance. Or allegory's armor
of ignorant comfort

or
Worship

or reform or a sore chorus.
Or Electoral Corruption
or important ports
of Yoruba or worry

or
Neighbor

or fear of . . .
of terror or border.
Or all organized
minorities.

Questions for Discussion:

- ❖ Think about how the poem establishes a pattern then continually breaks away from it. How does the formal constraint (repetition) become a tool for transformation?
- ❖ Think of a jazz riff: how does the poem work within that tradition, and how does that lend itself to the overall tone of the poem? Does it challenge or reinforce the either/or logic of the poem?

Writing Prompts:

- ❖ Thomas Sayers Ellis has referred to “Or” as rhythmically driven. Think of a word that embodies identity for you and explore that word. Allow sound and rhythm to push you forward.
- ❖ Write a poem where each line simultaneously undermines and reinforces a line that precedes it.

An American Poem

Eileen Myles

I was born in Boston in
1949. I never wanted
this fact to be known, in
fact I've spent the better
half of my adult life
trying to sweep my early
years under the carpet
and have a life that
was clearly just mine
and independent of
the historic fate of
my family. Can you
imagine what it was
like to be one of them,
to be built like them,
to talk like them
to have the benefits
of being born into such
a wealthy and powerful
American family. I went
to the best schools,
had all kinds of tutors
and trainers, traveled
widely, met the famous,
the controversial, and
the not-so-admirable
and I knew from
a very early age that
if there were ever any
possibility of escaping
the collective fate of this famous
Boston family I would
take that route and
I have. I hopped
on an Amtrak to New

York in the early
'70s and I guess
you could say
my hidden years
began. I thought
Well I'll be a poet.
What could be more
foolish and obscure.
I became a lesbian.
Every woman in my
family looks like
a dyke but it's really
stepping off the flag
when you become one.
While holding this ignominious
pose I have seen and
I have learned and
I am beginning to think
there is no escaping
history. A woman I
am currently having
an affair with said
you know you look
like a Kennedy. I felt
the blood rising in my
cheeks. People have
always laughed at
my Boston accent
confusing "large" for
"lodge," "party"
for "potty." But
when this unsuspecting
woman invoked for
the first time my
family name
I knew the jig
was up. Yes, I am,
I am a Kennedy.
My attempts to remain
obscure have not served
me well. Starting as

a humble poet I
quickly climbed to the
top of my profession
assuming a position of
leadership and honor.
It is right that a
woman should call
me out now. Yes,
I am a Kennedy.
And I await
your orders.
You are the New Americans.
The homeless are wandering
the streets of our nation's
greatest city. Homeless
men with AIDS are among
them. Is that right?
That there are no homes
for the homeless, that
there is no free medical
help for these men. *And women.*
That they get the message
—as they are dying—
that this is not their home?
And how are your
teeth today? Can
you afford to fix them?
How high is your rent?
If art is the highest
and most honest form
of communication of
our times and the young
artist is no longer able
to move here to speak
to her time... Yes, I could,
but that was 15 years ago
and remember—as I must
I am a Kennedy.
Shouldn't we all be Kennedys?
This nation's greatest city
is home of the business-

man and home of the
rich artist. People with
beautiful teeth who are not
on the streets. What shall
we do about this dilemma?
Listen, I have been educated.
I have learned about Western
Civilization. Do you know
what the message of Western
Civilization is? I am alone.
Am I alone tonight?
I don't think so. Am I
the only one with bleeding gums
tonight. Am I the only
homosexual in this room
tonight. Am I the only
one whose friends have
died, are dying now.
And my art can't
be supported until it is
gigantic, bigger than
everyone else's, confirming
the audience's feeling that they are
alone. That they alone
are good, deserved
to buy the tickets
to see this Art.
Are working,
are healthy, should
survive, and are
normal. Are you
normal tonight? Everyone
here, are we all normal.
It is not normal for
me to be a Kennedy.
But I am no longer
ashamed, no longer
alone. I am not
alone tonight because
we are all Kennedys.
And I am your President.

Questions for Discussion:

- ❖ Eileen Myles titled this poem “An American Poem.” What expectations does that title create for the reader?
- ❖ How is this poem reminiscent of a novel? How does it resemble a political speech? What effect do the short lines have on the reader? What do you think the poet is trying to accomplish? Does she succeed?

Writing Prompt:

- ❖ Create a character that either loves or hates the Affordable Care Act. Write a speech that he or she would deliver in front of an audience. Think about where the character is from, how he or she would talk. What kind of language might this person use (think of tone, class, mental state, etc.)? What would she or he leave out, or be sure to say?

Lullaby

Peter Gizzi

Everyone's listening to someone in the air
and singing knows every chestnut from way out when
the mourning dawn of living each apple and every atom
in the tooth actually small circuits uncover vast spaces
even if invisible you see the picture field and the lightning
is there a difference between a photograph of a child
and what memorials what or what is the role of art if any
within your particular emotion machine
the limits of thought and seeing perhaps
it explains water is one way to apprehend air
the morning light is in us
a stinging charge in the mouth
this is something everyone feels at least once
here before you started listening to this song
at the beach and soldiers by a desert
if anybody looked we are all stranded by the shore of something
I mean to say seeing pictures inside as they are

Question for Discussion:

- ❖ Consider this poem at the line level: how do the beginning and ends of lines work to create surprise for the reader? Do you think the poet is giving preference to sound or syntax? How does the form create a call and response with the title?

Writing Prompt:

- ❖ Think about a typical day from ten or so years ago. Find a song you might have been listening to that day. Play it. Free write for the duration of that song, but try to write in character, as the “you” of that time.

Now: go take a walk. Enjoy your walk. Forget about what you just wrote. After you come back from your walk, put on a different piece of music—one from your childhood. Write about the first memory that comes to mind. Continue writing for the duration of the music.

Now see if you can make the two memories speak to each other.

Halley's Comet

Stanley Kunitz

Miss Murphy in first grade
wrote its name in chalk
across the board and told us
it was roaring down the stormtracks
of the Milky Way at frightful speed
and if it wandered off its course
and smashed into the earth
there'd be no school tomorrow.
A red-bearded preacher from the hills
with a wild look in his eyes
stood in the public square
at the playground's edge
proclaiming he was sent by God
to save every one of us,
even the little children.
"Repent, ye sinners!" he shouted,
waving his hand-lettered sign.
At supper I felt sad to think
that it was probably
the last meal I'd share
with my mother and my sisters;
but I felt excited too
and scarcely touched my plate.
So mother scolded me
and sent me early to my room.
The whole family's asleep
except for me. They never heard me steal
into the stairwell hall and climb
the ladder to the fresh night air.
Look for me, Father, on the roof
of the red brick building
at the foot of Green Street—
that's where we live, you know, on the top floor.
I'm the boy in the white flannel gown
sprawled on this coarse gravel bed

searching the starry sky,
waiting for the world to end.

Questions for Discussion:

- ❖ Look at the sentences in this poem: look at how their lengths vary. The first sentence in the poem, for example, is forty-five words long, and encompasses eight lines. Compare this to the shortest sentence in the poem, which is just seven words long: “The whole family’s asleep/except for me.” Is there a rhythm to the variation of sentence length? A logic? What drives it, the logic of the poem, as the sentences skitter and slide through lines and lines? What engine pulls them, the speaker, and us?

Writing Prompt:

- ❖ Think of an historical moment that took place during your lifetime. Write about that moment, focusing on the “you” of that period—use personal details to shape the moment.

Résumé

Agha Shahid Ali

Below me, always below me is water.
-Francis Ponge

I
an applicant
to the water's green offices
sign my name above a thin horizon

below it reflections
of temples and mosques
a postscript on God

I wait for the sapphire
gossip of stars

but those who promised
to recommend me

place the moon's blank sheets
in my hands unsigned

Who are these authorities
with files of xeroxed rumors?

I hear orders

The clerk of climates
tears up my forms

no openings he says
no vacant reflection

only the rusted wars
and jets dissolving

in a smoke-red twilight

but if I will accept—and I say Yes

Maybe he says Maybe—and I say Yes

above me a quick ceiling of ice
I the secretary of memory
in chambers of weeds

the water's breathless bureaucracy

Questions for Discussion

- ❖ Read this poem aloud: how does the form create silence between words?
- ❖ How do the natural world and the man-made world work together within this poem? Or are they at odds? Which world do you think the speaker feels most connected to?

Writing Prompt:

- ❖ Looking in a mirror (or other reflective surface), write a poem where you describe what you see reflected. Try to keep an emotional distance from the world you describe.

For The Graduation

Robert Creeley

Bolinas School, June 15, 1973

The honor
of being human
will stay constant.

The earth, earth,
water wet, sun
shine.

The world will be
as ever round, and
all yourselves

will know it,
on it, and around
and around.

No One knows
what will
happen. That

is the happiness
of the circle,
finding you.

Questions for Discussion

- ❖ How does the form of this poem reflect its subject matter? How do line breaks and rhythms reflect the circularity of life, propelling each line into the next? How would the poem be different if it was not divided into stanzas?

Writing Prompts:

- ❖ Write a poem in tercets in which every tercet is its own sentence.
- ❖ Think about where you've been and where you've arrived in your life. Write ten words that describe the transformation from the past to the present. Write a poem about your experience, incorporating the ten words you wrote down. Think about those words, and the form you are using: should the poem have short or length lines? Should it be in stanzas, or one large block of text? Should there be line breaks, or should you write a prose poem?

About the Poets

Agha Shahid Ali <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/gha-shahid-ali>

Elizabeth Bishop <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/elizabeth-bishop>

Robert Creeley <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/robert-creeley>

E.E. Cummings <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/e-e-cummings>

Thomas Sayers Ellis co-founded The Dark Room Collective (in Cambridge, Massachusetts); and received his M.F.A. from Brown University. He is the author of *The Maverick Room* (2005), which won the John C. Zacharis First Book Award, and a recipient of a Mrs. Giles Whiting Writers' Award. His poems and photographs have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including *Callaloo*, *Best American Poetry* (1997, 2001 and 2010), *Grand Street*, *The Baffler*, *Jubilat*, *Tin House*, *Poetry*, and *The Nation*. He is also an Assistant Professor of Writing at Sarah Lawrence College, a faculty member of the Lesley University low-residency M.F.A Program and a Cave Canem faculty member. He lives in Brooklyn, NY and is currently working on *The Go-Go Book: People in the Pocket in Washington, D.C.* A new collection of poetry, *Skin, Inc.*, has just appeared from Graywolf Press.

Peter Gizzi is the author of *In Defense of Nothing: Selected Poems 1987-2011* (Wesleyan, 2014), *Threshold Songs* (Wesleyan, 2011), *The Outernationale* (Wesleyan, 2007), *Some Values of Landscape and Weather* (Wesleyan, 2003), *Artificial Heart* (Burning Deck, 1998), and *Periplum* (Avec Books, 1992). In 2004 Salt Publishing of England reprinted an expanded edition of his first book as *Periplum and other poems 1987-92*. He has also published several limited-edition chapbooks, folios, and artist books. His work has been translated into numerous languages and anthologized here and abroad. His honors include the Lavan Younger Poet Award from the Academy of American Poets (1994) and fellowships in poetry from The Fund for Poetry (1993), The Rex Foundation (1993), Howard Foundation (1998), The Foundation for Contemporary Arts (1999), and The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation (2005). In 2011 he was the Judith E. Wilson Visiting Fellow in Poetry at Cambridge University. He currently works at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Jorie Graham was born in New York City in 1950, the daughter of a journalist and a sculptor. She was raised in Rome, Italy and educated in French schools. She studied philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris before attending New York University as an undergraduate, where she studied filmmaking. She received an MFA in poetry from the University of Iowa. Graham is the author of numerous collections of poetry, most recently *Sea Change* (Ecco, 2008), *Never* (2002), *Swarm* (2000), and *The Dream of the Unified Field: Selected Poems 1974-1994*, which won the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. (continued)

Graham has also edited two anthologies, *Earth Took of Earth: 100 Great Poems of the English Language* (1996) and *The Best American Poetry 1990*. Her many honors include a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Fellowship and the Morton Dauwen Zabel Award from The American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. She has taught at the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop and is currently the Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard University. She served as a Chancellor of The Academy of American Poets from 1997 to 2003.

Stanley Kunitz <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/stanley-kunitz>

Eileen Myles was born in Boston (1949) and moved to New York in 1974 to be a poet. *Snowflake/different streets* (poems, 2012) is the latest of her 18 books. *Inferno (a poet's novel)* came out in 2010. For *The Importance of Being Iceland*/travel essays in art she received a Warhol/Creative Capital grant. In 2010 the Poetry Society of America awarded Eileen the Shelley Prize. She is a Prof. Emeritus of Writing at UC San Diego. She's a 2012 Guggenheim fellow. She lives in New York.

Sylvia Plath <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/sylvia-plath>

About the Artist

Yetti Frenkel began her career painting scenes of everyday life on the North Shore. She has painted murals for nine public libraries in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Other projects include history murals for Brookline, East Boston, and Lynn.

Ms. Frenkel's story "The River" was published in Cricket Magazine, and she is the illustrator of *Andre the Famous Harbor Seal*, published by Down East Books. She is the author and illustrator of: *Trudy and the Captain's Cat*, *The Big, Blue Lump* (Children's Choices Selection), *Libby and the Cat* (a KIND Honor Book selection of the National Association for Humane and Environmental Education).

About the Videographer

Ryan MacDonald is from Kansas City, Missouri. His story collection *The Observable Characteristics of Organisms* will be released in September 2014 by FC2. He holds the position of Lecturer at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst where he received an MFA in English and an MFA in Studio Art. He is the winner of the 2012 American Short(er) Fiction Award. Find out more about Ryan by visiting his website: www.ryanamacdonald.com

About the Editors

Lisa Olstein is the author of *Radio Crackling*, *Radio Gone*, (Copper Canyon Press, 2006) winner of the Hayden Carruth Award; *Lost Alphabet* (Copper Canyon Press, 2009), a *Library Journal* best book of the year; and *Little Stranger* (Copper Canyon Press, 2013), a Lannan Literary Selection. She is the recipient of a Pushcart Prize and fellowships from the Sustainable Arts Foundation, Massachusetts Cultural Council, and Centrum. Her poems have appeared in many journals and anthologies, including *The Nation*, *The Iowa Review*, *jubilat*, *American Letters & Commentary*, and *New Voices*. She is the lyricist for Cold Satellite, a rock band fronted by acclaimed songwriter Jeffrey Foucault. The band's first record, *Cold Satellite* (2010) was ranked #1 on Greil Marcus' Real Life Rock Top Ten list in *The Believer*. Its second album, *Cavalcade*, was released in spring 2013. She cofounded and for ten years co-directed the Juniper Initiative for Literary Arts & Action at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where she also served as associate director of the MFA program. In fall 2013, she joined the poetry faculty at the University of Texas Austin.

Danielle Jones-Pruett is Common Threads Coordinator for Mass Poetry, and program coordinator for the Writers House at Merrimack College. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Bateau Press*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Verse Daily*, and others.

Join Us

Please join us for the next Massachusetts Poetry Festival, **May 2-4 2014**, in Salem, Massachusetts.

Come experience a live discussion of this year's Common Threads poems on **Saturday, May 3rd, at 11:00 a.m.** in the Peabody Essex Museum, Morse Auditorium. **Michael Ansara, Dorothy Derifield, Susan Donnelly, Fred Marchant, J.D. Scrimgeour**, discussants. **Alice Kociemba**, moderator.

Also, new this year, the Peabody Essex Museum will host an interactive art exhibit that allows you to create visual art in response to the Common Threads poems. Artist **Yetti Frenkel** will be in the studio to guide participants through the process of creating mosaics.

The purpose of **MassPoetry.org** is to create resources to aid and support the Massachusetts poetry community, to reconnect poetry to more mainstream culture, to create new audiences for poetry, and to organize the poetry community throughout the state. We do this by bringing poetry to classrooms in public schools, by hosting a variety of diverse readings throughout the state, with the Student Day of Poetry and the annual Mass Poetry Festival and, of course, with Common Threads.

The only way that we can continue to do this is with your support:

- ✓ Tax deductible checks can be made out to "The Massachusetts Poetry Outreach Project" and sent to: MassPoetry, Attention: Joan Chaput, P.O. Box 1232, West Tisbury, MA 02575-1687 (Read more about how we use your donations on our website at <http://masspoetry.org/we-need-your-support/>)
- ✓ You can sign up to volunteer at <http://masspoetry.org/2013/03/13/we-need-help-please-volunteer/>



Mass Poetry

EVENTS | OUTREACH | MASSPOETRY.ORG