

## ORANGES & SARDINES INTERVIEW

This interview was conducted in July 2008 for the journal *Oranges & Sardines* and appears on its [blog](#).

### 1. Do you find a correlation between poets and artists?

As a former painter who turned to poetry, yes. I guess it's been a bit of a lifelong obsession with visual culture and the act of painting, which to me is really an act of seeing, re-presenting your experience of the world for others to see, holding up the world and analyzing it, pointing out the details that the average viewer or casual passer-by may miss. It's partly why I turn to art in any form: to have the world given back to me through someone else's eyes, to have a world I never knew existed shown to me, and through that art-act making the world fresh for me again. When it comes to something like ekphrasis there's an additional layer: the mode allows you to engage another artist's way of seeing while allowing you to extend meaning by introducing your own way of seeing through interpretation. For that reason I like to think of ekphrastic poems like palimpsests, texts written over texts but both the original and the inscribed visible. There's also something there at the level of the line or brushstroke, and of course, the image.

### 2. What is your favorite poem by a 20th century writer?

Oh I hate playing favorites. It changes depending on what project I'm immersed in. Individual poems: definitely anything by Elizabeth Bishop—maybe "In the Waiting Room" or "Santarém;" every time I read her *Collected* I have a new fave. Most recently is "Roosters." Also Alice Fulton's work in *Sensual Math* and *Felt*, in particular "Give: A Sequence Reimagining Daphne & Apollo" and Anne Carson's work, in particular *Autobiography of Red*.

### 3. Have you ever spoken your poetry in public from memory?

No. I have a friend who recites all his poetry from memory and holds a blank piece of paper to give the illusion he is reading from it. But for me, the interaction with the page is part of the experience of a public reading. Even if I know the poem by heart, I prefer to read it from the page, to watch the words and line breaks come to life as a reader might see them as they follow along.

### 4. Would you say this statement to be true or false? "Most poets have suicidal tendencies or suffer from depression."

Eh, false for me. I reject the depressed poet, pain-is-my-inspiration stereotype. Do we have better ears and eyes? Yes. Do we experience the world, register and observe human behavior a little more closely than the average person? Yes. Could that lead to depression? Perhaps, but none of my poems have come out of depression (which isn't to say that another poet or artist

couldn't draw inspiration from this emotion, it's just not one I've found generative for my own work). I think I just prefer a more playful approach to life. Usually the poem for me is the act of thinking about feeling, the recording of experience and making sense of it, that intellectual work to give emotion and experience form and to record that process of living it, reflecting on it, binding it.

**5. How do you feel about print vs. online publications for your poetry?**

I find online publications reach a larger audience which is nice for the individual poem. And if the online publication does audio too then it's nice to hear the poet reading his or her own work as you read it. As for a book or chapbook of poems, I still prefer the material object: the texture and smell of the page and ink, the love and care that goes into producing and making a bound thing, seeing it on a shelf in a bookcase.

**6. Would you submit to a publisher if they used a blog for their publication?**

Yes. I would and I have. I particularly like what the folk at [qarrtsiluni](#) are doing.

**7. When was the last time you read a poem you wished you had written and if so, who wrote it?**

I haven't had too many experiences where I've read something and said "I wish I had written that." I don't find that sort of response very productive for my own work. Usually it's more "I wish to write something as good as that, at that caliber" and take it as a challenge. Some examples would be when I read Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red* for the first time (I think back in 2003) and Lucie Brock-Broido's *The Master Letters* for the first time (I think back in 2004). I appreciate a well-conceived, fleshed-out project.

**8. Are you working on a new manuscript?**

Yes. Four actually. Three full-length, two of which are complete and have been placing in book award contests and one that is close to completion (a few more poems to compose). I also have a stand-alone chapbook with which I'm tinkering.

**9. What has been the most wonderful thing that has happened to you since you were published in O&S?**

A chapbook sequence "Platos de Sal" from one of the full-length manuscripts has been accepted for publication at Seven Kitchens Press, due out in late spring 2009.