

The Flowering of Baudelaire

Brown University
October 18-20, 2007

Keith Waldrop

Keith Waldrop was born in Kansas and served in the United States military. In 1954, he met his wife, the poet and translator Rosmarie Waldrop while stationed in Kitzingen, Germany. He studied at Aix-Marseille and Michigan Universities, earning a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature in 1964.

He is the author of numerous collections of poetry, most recently *The Real Subject: Queries and Conjectures of Jacob Delafon: With Sample Poems* (Omnidawn, 2004). His other collections of poetry include *The House Seen from Nowhere* (2003), *Haunt* (2000), *Well Well Reality* (1998, with Rosmarie Waldrop), and the trilogy *The Locality Principle* (1995), *The Silhouette of the Bridge* (1997), and *Semiramis, If I Remember* (2001).

He has also translated contemporary French poets, such as Anne-Marie Albiach, Claude Royet-Journoud, Dominique Fourcade, Jean Grosjean, and Paul Keineg, and most recently Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Wesleyan University Press, 2006).

According to Waldrop, collage is a major mode of composition for him. He explains the process as: "a way to explore, not necessarily the thing I am tearing up, but the thing I am contriving to build out of torn pieces. To the extent that there is a purpose to what I do, its end is the 'enjoyment of a composition'—a concern, as A. N. Whitehead notes, common to aesthetics and logic."

About his work, the poet Michael Palmer has said, "As we would expect from Keith Waldrop, it is suffused with a particular humanity and an appreciation for the absurd, even the grotesque, in daily life. The rhythmic apposition of prose and poetry brings to mind the freedom, alertness and quality of distillation in Basho's classic travel sketches. With his quietly precise sense of modulation and his unerring gaze, Waldrop remains one of the vital and requisite, semi-secret presences in American letters."

Waldrop has received an award from the Fund for Poetry, fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Berlin Artists Program of the DAAD. In 2000, he received a Medal from the French government with rank of Chevalier in the Order of Arts and Letters, for lifetime contribution to French literature.

He currently lives in Providence, Rhode Island, where he teaches at Brown University, and has served as co-editor of Burning Deck Press, with his wife Rosmarie Waldrop since 1968.

Michael Palmer

Michael Palmer was born in New York City in 1943. In 1963, he attended the Vancouver Poetry Conference, taking part in three weeks of workshops, readings, and discussions. While there, he met Robert Duncan, Robert Creeley, and Clark Coolidge, who each became important influences on the development of Palmer's poetics.

Palmer is the author of numerous books of poetry, including *Company of Moths* (New Directions, 2005), which was short-listed for the Canadian Griffin Poetry Prize; *Codes Appearing: Poems 1979-1988* (2001); *The Promises of Glass* (2000); *The Lion Bridge: Selected Poems 1972-1995* (1998); *At Passages* (1996); *Sun* (1988); *First Figure* (1984); *Notes for Echo Lake* (1981); *Without Music* (1977); *The Circular Gates* (1974); and *Blake's Newton* (1972). He is also the author of a prose work, *The Danish Notebook* (Avec Books, 1999).

Palmer is frequently associated with Language Poetry, a connection which he responded to in a recent interview in *Jubilat* by saying: "It goes back to an organic period when I had a closer association with some of those writers than I do now, when we were a generation in San Francisco with lots of poetic and theoretical energy and desperately trying to escape from the assumptions of poetic production that were largely dominant in our culture. My own hesitancy comes when you try to create, let's say, a fixed theoretical matrix and begin to work from an ideology of prohibitions about expressivity and the self—there I depart quite dramatically from a few of the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets."

Palmer has also translated work from French, Russian and Portuguese, and has taken part in collaborations with both painters and dancers. He edited and contributed translations to *Nothing The Sun Could Not Explain: Twenty Contemporary Brazilian Poets* (Sun & Moon Press, 1997), and *Blue Vitriol* (Avec Books, 1994), a collection of poetry by Alexei Parshchikov. He also translated *Theory of Tables* (1994), a book written by Emmanuel Hocquard after translating Palmer's "Baudelaire Series" into French. He has also frequently collaborated with other artists, including the painter Gerhard Richter and the Margaret Jenkins Dance Company.

Michael Palmer's honors include two grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Writer's Award, a Guggenheim Foundation fellowship, and the Shelley Memorial Prize from the Poetry Society of America. In 1999, he was elected a Chancellor of The Academy of American Poets. He lives in San Francisco.