

Felino Soriano

“So much of my writing stems from wanting to exist within my need to view a ‘thing’ from a metaphysical vantage point. In doing this, I challenge a supposed truth of another, creating a counterexample.”

Felino Soriano discusses his poetry with **Kane X. Faucher**.



Felino Soriano is a Californian philosophy student and case manager working with developmentally and physically disabled adults. The juxtaposition of his philosophical studies with his love of classic and avant-garde jazz explains his poetic stimulation. Recent poems appear at *BlazeVOX*, *Sugar Mule*, *Unlikely Stories 2.0*, *Otoliths*, *Wilderness House Literary Review*, among others. His chapbooks “Exhibits Require Understanding Open Eyes” and “Abstract Appearance Reaching Toward the Absolute” are available through Trainwreck Press. For a complete publication history and for more information visit www.felinosoriano.com.



Kane X. Faucher currently lives and works in London, Ontario. His activities span academic and creative enterprises, most notably in writing, continental theory, visual art, and music. He currently holds two degrees in philosophy and is working toward his doctorate in Theory and Criticism at the University of Western Ontario.

Kane X. Faucher is an FIMS/MIT Instructor; a freelance writer for *Scene Magazine*; co-editor of *The Raging Face*; co-editor of *The Drill Press*; and serves on the Editorial Board of *Mad Hatter's Review*. He is the author of *Urdoxa* (2004) *Codex Obscura* (2005) *Fort & Da* (2006), *Calqueform*, *Astrozoica*, *De Incunabliad* (2007) and *Jonkil Dies*, *The Vicious Circulation of Dr Catastrophe* (2008).

Kane X. Faucher: I suppose my first question is on the order of position and composition of elements. Although the connections may appear rather obvious to certain readers and connoisseurs of philosophical discourse, could you discuss and describe this seemingly strong felicitous merger you make between philosophy and jazz in your poetic practice? And, as a follow-up question, what area of jazz do you find most compelling for poetic purposes? For some reason, I have in mind German free jazz of the 60s...There is no doubt that both philosophy and jazz factor strongly in your oeuvre.

Felino Soriano: Thank you, Kane. Indeed, the formula for my poetic posits stems urgently and basically from both philosophical awareness and jazz music, or more suited to my own subjective definition: musical conversation. Philosophy has created in me

(which has changed my disposition grandly) a skeptic, a doubter, a hater of many supposed truths relegated by those within society that are not qualified to posit their ideas as such. This may sound harsh to the casual listener, but I disagree. From many angular disseminations, language is used, ideologically, to corrupt the non-critical thinkers, the absent minded, the followers who prefer to be lead. I disdain much of popular culture, for this culture is populated with minds that would rather congregate, celebrating façades of the celebrity, and mimic within echoes, statements that stem from ideological sameness, rather than think critically about surroundings that create a subject of monotony.

So much of my writing stems from wanting to exist within my need to view a ‘thing’ from a metaphysical vantage point. In doing this, I challenge a supposed

truth of another, creating a counterexample. To the certain viewer, philosophy is abundant, and therefore, metaphysics is a living thing, a voice, a brand of obesity, a barrage of paradoxical reality. A thing, say, a beautiful dragonfly, is not simply the manmade definition of a dragonfly. There is a beautified, colored texture, a hyper-motional wing activity, an ensuing vanish. These qualities may or may not be visible to the onlooker, and it is therefore my responsibility to posit these interpretations of what a dragonfly is/can become. There are too many top-layer definitions of surroundings, of existence. Thus, I investigate the possible layers residing beneath, and posit through my brand of language, poetic occurrences that are not readily available, unless examined.

You mention jazz. I always listen to jazz when writing. It is part of a quartet of necessities when I am writing a poem: jazz, my computer, my writing desk, and my desk lamp (on). I have written this way for the past few years, and these layers of my existence have caused me immeasurable happiness. As with philosophical interpretations, jazz is part of my poetic starting point. I mentioned earlier, musical conversation. This is a rarified, beautiful language, for improvisation is identifiable, augmenting the reality that these individuals are not playing within so much structure that a splay elsewhere cannot take place. I become so engrossed with the recording, I switch modes into a tranced state. This allows me to interpret the emotional spectrum from which the musicians are playing.

Regarding the area of jazz I find most compelling, akin to poetic sensibilities, this varies. I listen to many styles of jazz music – from bop, to hard bop, to the attacking sound of the avant-garde. Miles Davis is my favorite artist, and his ballads are especially beautiful. Also, I will write to, say, Eric Dolphy's album "Out There", for example. Mood, want, wellbeing, facilitates and leads me to a specific recording. When listening, I often try to mimic what I'm hearing, thus many poems are written with angular syntax, accentuating white space, reiterating the milieu of the music.

KXF: I would have to say that I too feel some enduring frustration with the privileging of homogeneity over and against critical assessment of what it is we consume, experience, and do. Your practice – if I may say so – is reminiscent of what Gilles Deleuze would call a philosophy of immanence, of life (in its victori-

ous differences and not the regulated and prejudiced understanding of traditional truth norms). To that end (and with a further nod to Deleuze), jazz does represent in many ways that differential factor, that freedom of experiment that ought to be at the heart of every artistic and philosophical endeavour, disavowing stagnation. The Nietzschean antecedent here is a strong one, and one that he quite vociferously bequeaths to us as our duty to be creators and willers of the future beyond the myopia of alleged truths or even our own egos.

But what you speak of here, the inherent and grievously unacknowledged perceptions of, say, a dragonfly, heralds the "duty" of the poet: to grant the expression, the stoic "lekton", where preconceptions blind us. This expressive power to bring to life the percepts and affects of existence is the noble and thankless task of the poet – of which you are indeed an exemplar. The merger with music – specifically jazz – is a felicitous one, one that does not have to (for instance) rely on the formula of counterpoint in either the sonorous or the written. Instead, your work may better fit the strategy of Glenn Gould's "contrapuntal radio" where it is the inter-aesthetic counterpoint rather than infra-aesthetic.

For our readers who may not be familiar with your historical development as a poet, and your sudden surge back in the early part of this now waning decade, could you elaborate on what concatenation of factors led to your rather impressive and prolific output? I cannot resist the temptation to think that there was something so momentous or traumatic that suddenly unleashed your voice in the public domain, something that rose by some volcanic necessity.

FS: You mention, Kane, "duty" of the poet, and your definitional characterization is excellent. A brand of observation, finding its subsequent actions unfamiliar first (and perhaps never completely found) within an object, a thing, a language, is rather important in my poetic disposition, and therefore, my language posits sometimes document themselves within an esoteric voice, which is necessary. Though necessary, esoteric language is not intentional, though. Process of writing dictates use of language, of space, of interpretive observations of what the poem consists of.

Within rejection letters, editors have stated this very phrase, my poems being too esoteric, and further-

more, the quotidian phrases such as “too deep” “too experimental” have also made their way from editors that have chosen not to use my work. I recently read a comment on one of my published poems which stated my use of language was “daring”, was “experimental” and the commenter chooses rather to use “simpler” words within their poems. But, what are these words, really?: daring, experimental, simpler, these adjectives are completely subjective choices to either isolate, or conjoin with what the poet is stating. Such is with editing a journal, such is the philosophy of preference: the unique, singular rendition of our minds feeling connection with the relegated posit before us.

My being a poet is relatively new. While in high school I wrote for attention from my then-girlfriends, for accolades from their friends, for au courant reasons including being considered atypical, and having what many deem a specific talent. These writings, though, were derisory, indifferent to the sensibilities of absolute poetry. This changed, somewhat, circa January, 2000. I began writing to apply a cliché of “escaping” from painful aggregations involving, again, a then-girlfriend. Applying emotion with an ersatz poetic language, I began to write in abundance. At this time, I wrote solely in notebooks, for my mind was much slower (although I wrote nearly 1,000 poems in a three year period), much unaware of what reality can constitute as metaphoric, philosophic, and did not recognize many concrete falsities. Several years ago, I became reacquainted with these writings, and saw not poetry, but emotional absurdities lying within lazy rhyme structures, in limp meter. I did, though, publish my first poem in 2001 in a now defunct online journal; the poem was called “Jazz and Her”.

Jazz was an important part of my searching disposition at this time, yet I had not developed interpretations of jazz language, and the ability to discern emotional content of recordings was not yet available to me.

Two specific periods since 2000 have changed my poetic disposition principally, but more so, my life in the realm of philosophic understanding, of defining a specific concept and routine methodology for living. The first, circa 2004, I was in a bookstore, perusing the magazine section. On the cover of the International literary magazine “The Bitter Oleander” was a portrait of a man, leaning on his arm, with interesting

use of colors highlighting shadow and background. The man on the cover was poet and philosopher Duane Locke, whom back in my unaware days, my quotidian days, my following the fashionable days and lauding poet laureates, I had never read. This particular issue of the magazine was a special tribute issue to Locke, which consisted of a 90 + page interview, as well as 60 poems the editor chose from nearly 5,000 Locke had written over the prior three years. I had never heard of such prolificness, a type of a fertile poet of this caliber.

I purchased the magazine and read the interview and poems several times. Locke’s philosophy of life, irritation with what poetry was currently listed as, and his exciting poems caused in me, solely, a reevaluation of why I write, of why my poetry, though not good, was a natural sensation, a natural part of mood, of time, of being.

A current favorite poet, Antony Hitchin, recently stated in an interview that Locke is a genius. I indeed concur with this appraisal, and this is not part of being generous to a poet who has published over 6,000 poems in his lifetime, but it coincides with ascertaining a mind that has philosophy at its base, and comprehends the Nietzschean concept of separating oneself from the sameness of society that can damage through ideological sophistry, causing the mind to succumb to the selfish desires of others.

Circa 2006 brought the second of what I deem important in my mind transformation. Though I was familiar with philosophy, with conceptual aptitudes as they agree with or challenge life, I did not completely delve into this gift until this time. Through the studying of philosophy, I began writing a series of poems entitled “Vagabond’s Visions” which consisted of 145 poems documenting philosophical, or furthermore, metaphysical understandings of a wanderer’s surroundings, dreams, dissatisfaction with political structure, among other concepts. My language changed, along with poetic structure, using absence paralleled with vernacular to shape a poem’s body. Too, I discovered avant-garde jazz musicians such as Eric Dolphy, Cecil Taylor and Borah Bergman, and began, through understanding of awareness, these musicians were antithetical to say, Louis Armstrong, Lester Young (whom I both enjoy) – but vis-à-vis much more than the obvious differences in textured sound (a topographical understanding, solely). Taylor,

for example, in his famous video at his piano, garbed in a gray sweat suit, white beanie, and oblivious to the sweat forming deluge down his face, completely entranced with what he is doing: veracity, knowledge of improvisation, speaking a language considered by the à la mode to be injurious through deviating too far from “tradition”. These are the individuals I admire. Thus, the poets I enjoy reading are akin to these musicians, in that they manufacture through language a reality copacetic with a mind outside of the ritualistically praised.

After my poem was published in 2001, I did not submit others until 2004, and had one accepted, again. I ceased submitting poems until 2006, and currently still am. Since April 2006, I have had over 540 poems accepted for publication. The number, not important; importance for me is forming a dialogue through the poem with an editor, a conversational methodology in where my brand of language is understood, and more importantly, reciprocated.

KXF: It generally seems that what is labeled “esoteric” or “experimental” comes with a pejorative connotation, thereby marginalizing those of freer expression that disavow the clichés. Of course, this attack against “complicated” poetry with flagrant claims against poets as being too enamoured with their big words, jargon, theory, etc., are ways of closing discourse, and also part of a larger in-bred strategy of valorizing lazy simplification and decreased literacy while villainizing in bad faith those who choose to make language – the whole of it – a tool for expression. The problem with those who disparage against “esoteric” language and subjects is that it makes a few fatal assumptions such as assuming the poet is brandishing terms, experiences, or references for personal aggrandizement. As well, it assumes that poetry has a necessity to be “universalizable”. It troubles me that those who would criticize a poet for, say, making esoteric or obscure references are actually demonstrating their own laziness or lack of knowledge. There is no obscure reference in a poem that cannot be rendered comprehensible if the put-off reader takes a few seconds to avail him or herself via Google. The same goes for obscure words by means of searching in dictionaries hard or soft.

I have not met many poets whose origins in poetic expression were not indexed on winning the affections of a desired person. It makes us seem as though

we come from, ahem, baser and ignobler pursuits – although there is nothing categorically wrong with the act, and it is not something we have to discard in later life since we can always write our very interpersonal poems for reception by our intended loved ones. But you invoked the notebook, the trusty notebook that has long since been a symbol accoutrement of the poet. It stands as a kind of expressive touchstone, and one does not see notebooks around so much anymore with the continued advent of writing directly to screen. There is a touch of nostalgia with the notebook we ought to revisit.

I would ask to explore your sculptural metaphor, to detail it a bit further in terms of your poetics. You mention the paralleling of absence to the vernacular in the shaping of a poem’s body. My prejudice here would be to “hear” or “see” more of what you mean by the absence, this space that so often is cast aside in our consideration of the poem, the register of silence.

Could you touch on the work you have published with **ditch**, – its motley “raison d’etre”, the shapes it takes on?

And, given that you have provided us with a fascinating and insightful chronology into your development of a poetic voice (one that, as all good voices do, modulate and continue to develop perpetually, following a principle of perpetual becoming), could you speculate as to where you are orienting yourself next?

FS: Assumptions are dangerous in that they proclaim a truth of inexistence, further facilitating the concept of man needing to name everything, rename the misunderstood. Assumptions lean on the crutch of inadequately processed information. How this affects poetry is in the wellbeing of the poem, how it exists and the humorous unaware reality it can clobber what notions of top-layered definitions explain in their ignominous vernacular. The whole issue of being marginalized is fascinating to me. My view on this stems from coagulating the collocated words of interpretation/imperative.

Interpretations can lead to a beauty, even if subjective, for universality is rare, and within these vast interpretations, the mind must facilitate this brand of thinking in honoring it as being imperative. Becoming marginalized is a fashion of interpretation. A term like pigeonholed, where an individual is identified

solely or powerfully with one, or very few definitions, seen as incapable of documenting something anew – this is marginalizing. I feel, a poet can, in ascertaining the possibility of becoming marginalized, demoralize this other – given definition with a continuing leap towards positing different formats of poetry. This can be done, without leaving the self for another – given definition of what poetry should exist as.

In describing the metaphor further, vis-à-vis the parallel reality of absence and existence within a poem, the definitional certainty burgeons from my frequent listening to jazz. Earlier, I stated, many times, I attempt to mimic what I'm hearing. This act conceives the poem's shape, and learns its body as the poem is written. The outcome, of course, is solely determined by which recording I am listening to. The technique, of course which is not new, of using white space (absence) explains an antithesis to noise (existence). I will use Miles Davis' album "Kind of Blue", as an example. My interpretation of the milieu surrounding the musicians' conversations varies in its formula, ranging from the intense happiness of "So What?" to the melancholic species of "Flamenco Sketches". One recording I've written many poems to from this album is "Blue in Green". A recording such as this allows white space to be alive, to bounce, the absence to help in formulating the poem's shape; Miles' playing here, is lucid, concise, brings imagery of love, of pining. Bill Evans' piano playing echoes this spectrum of descriptive playing, for the notes are spaced beautifully, allowing the ear to construe a sense of belonging to the overall ambience of classic jazz communication. Thus, the absence in the poem will be the paused appreciation among the musicians' vernacular, and without them knowing, have helped in creating a shape of words and silence atop the page.

Regarding **ditch**, I feel it is one of the finer magazines available. John has allowed and combined a very exemplary assemblage of writers at his site. I've been published twice at **ditch**, and have two chapbooks released from its offspring "Trainwreck Press". Regarding the individual poems published, all are from both chapbooks released. The idea of writing poems for a manuscript was foreign to me prior to 2006. These poems, written in 2007 and 2008, were meant to document the notion of examining what reality constitutes, attempting to find symptoms, catalysts, experiences, and substitute the poet's reality for

the other-given, the unaware beyond the top-layer of existence.

My first chapbook "Exhibits Require Understanding Open Eyes" is a statement of metaphysical understanding. The posited question of what is reality, and more so, highlighting what are the misguided realities spoken as concrete truth. "Exhibits" are our surroundings, but require more attention than stating "this is a shadow, a tree, a lake." Language is often monotonous in its definitional garb, thus, I attempted to dislocate the monotony from that of the objects in which I was writing.

The second chapbook "Abstract Appearance Reaching Toward the Absolute" I use "abstract" to document my interpretations of objects, of language, of the philosophy of expression. Finding fault with others' thinking is the philosopher's and poet's obligation, to rectify the beautiful that has been tossed from the eye, replaced with monotony, with a culture's obsessive demeanor reaching toward indifference, as it does not fit with the *au courant*.

As to where I want to travel next, this requires discovery of desires outside and atypical to routine. Currently, I am writing an ekphrastic series which deals with various paintings I find extraordinary. The extraordinary is rare, and therefore, hyper-beautiful. Connotations revolve in the reliance on others' definitions. This, I cannot adhere to, for within poetry exists my love of language, of creating an image of solidified awareness, considered esoteric or not. I want to improve as a poet, want to strive for more fundamental awareness of my surroundings, while staying empathetic to others, and to atmospheric conditions.