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On Working with Anne Waldman

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Waldman's writing does not distinguish between the political, the personal, and the poetic. It incorporates all of the elements of the busy, conflicted worlds of mother, teacher, shaman, diva, activist, and truth-teller. Her work both on and off the stage/page is in a constant state of flux. Her glorious ego, her humble self, pours over; she is generous in creating space for conversation between people, in absorbing the facts and shaping them into her own narrative. Hers is the constant and urgent challenge of creating a life of the mind situated to oppose male dominance (of the Ashcroft kind) by harnessing it and then directing it back at the powers-that-be-absolute. Her Medusian logic is not madness but activity, a positive, generative force unleashed to provoke change in the larger social order. As her perpetual student, my own mind is ablaze with possibility.

My own poetics have developed out of Anne's insistence that poetry can enlarge its own circular logic, radiating outward to the space where the personal and political intersect. This involves perceiving myself as a woman and a writer whose life choices are affected by, and in many ways determined by, the events of the world, the wider environmental field, the perpetuation of injustice that cannot be ignored, the genealogy of oppression that gets passed down through generations. I am a mother battling with the conventions that try to dictate how I should behave in these roles.

I think of my poetics as a synthesis of the visual, the verbal, the spiritual, the material, the spatial, the economic, the domestic, the extraterrestrial, the psychological, and the planetary. Through my poetic construction business, the form the poem takes on the page is inextricably linked with the content. And this content is in a perpetual state of rearrangement and repair, shared and redistributed among other poems. The graphic design of the page is the intersection of numerous sources of language, ideas, and emotions. I'm not aiming to write a perfect poem, only to keep the building process going.