When you're young the last thing in the world you want to be is different, and the horrid thing is that to be different is also the only thing you really, really want. That's why I became a writer. I suppose, to escape that dichotomy. Another way to escape it is to just let yourself grow a little older, where eventually you reach a stage in which dichotomy retracts its claws a bit. You start to wonder, do I really want to be different, do I really want to fit in, are these apparently incompatible desires really but two versions of the same need?

In the face of US global incursion and the crisis of the resurgent empire our problems with writing and performance don't amount to a hill of beans, and yet, the impulse to express oneself can never be totally quenched. When I was a boy there was a TV series about a beautiful woman whose problems with her husband and neighbors were every week overshadowed by her battle with a strong-willed, Lesbian mother who kept trying to invade the heroine's space. Cleverly the creators of Bewitched had made the show into a conflict not only between generations but between sexualities, the gay older woman, the straight ingenue. Not an ingenue exactly because she had married not one, but two gay men, in a row. Whenever Samantha felt like it, when she needed or wanted something done, she could twitch her nose and alter all her circumstances, changing her house dress into a Paris gown, making a bluebird big as an eagle, whatever. We, the audience, knew that she had promised her husband she would not use the powers she had inherited from her mother, and yet, every week she did so, usually based on the mother's tempting her to give in, thus it could be read that Mother was encouraging daughter to do the Lesbian thing, which would then be read as a kind of superhuman power desire that wiped away mere human effort and frailty to uncover the ultimate acuity of what a nose can do when trained. What made the show different, well, one of the things that made it different, was its focus on her nose, and its twitch, so you could short-hand the whole show by showing a close-up of the nose, and most of the drama was a) seeing how much Elizabeth Montgomery could stand before she employed the twitch, and b) what merriment or agony would ensue for everyone around her. Thus when it came time to think about performance and poetry, I had had years to theorize that the important thing was the insertion of the body into poetry, the body, the contested site, and I imagine that Camille Roy, who turned to the Poets Theater at the same time I did, might have been motivated by the desire to link the “twitch” of Elizabeth Montgomery’s nose with the “syncope” about which Dodie has told me from her reading of Catherine Clement and Lacan. As I understand it, “syncope” is the rip in the fabric of consciousness that occurs whenever something happens to the body that causes it to black out. It could be anything from a laugh to a sneeze to an orgasm, a faint, a dream, it’s the space where the social and cultural inhibitions that keep us sedated and obedient citizens of the world state fail. They have no purchase on the involuntary contractions of the body. Thus crying, vomiting, sneezing, drug use, et cetera, are all enemies of the state. They alter the psychic landscape, if even for a minute. In that minute control is vanquished. Picture that twitch of the nose as emblematic of the way the body’s twitches allow an anarchic freedom to pour over narrative and desire like water.

But, you know, you can say something is X or Y and it doesn’t make it so. We who had participated in creating a new gay literature, for example, soon found ourselves tearing our hair out when the results came in. So that, for example, the biggest best-sellers at any gay bookstore are always memoirs by people who used to be something reprehensible, like an FBI agent, an umpire, a real estate salesman, or Rosie O’Donnell and then they come out and cash in. These people are truly able to have their cake and then eat it too. Meanwhile the rest of us console ourselves by thinking, oh, but ours are the books that will stand the test of time, but how comforting is that? Especially when the books in question are all out of print. And meanwhile we take on the struggle of trying to make sure that the books of our fallen comrades remain in print too—you know, like, Marines don’t leave Rangers behind as they say in the desert. Thus the ongoing struggle to make sure that the work of Sam D’Allesandro, Bob Flanagan, Kathy Acker, Steve Abbott, David Wojnarowicz is literally visible, readable. I was going then to illustrate the difficulties of reading New Narrative but I think my time is about up.

Except I wanted to link the “twitch” of Elizabeth Montgomery’s nose with the “syncope” about which Dodie has told me from her reading of Catherine Clement and Lacan. As I understand it, “syncope” is the rip in the fabric of consciousness that occurs whenever something happens to the body that causes it to black out. It could be anything from a laugh to a sneeze to an orgasm, a faint, a dream, it’s the space where the social and cultural inhibitions that keep us sedated and obedient citizens of the world state fail. They have no purchase on the involuntary contractions of the body. Thus crying, vomiting, drug use, et cetera, are all enemies of the state. They alter the psychic landscape, if even for a minute. In that minute control is vanquished. Picture that twitch of the nose as emblematic of the way the body’s twitches allow an anarchic freedom to pour over narrative and desire like water.