

CATHERINE WAGNER

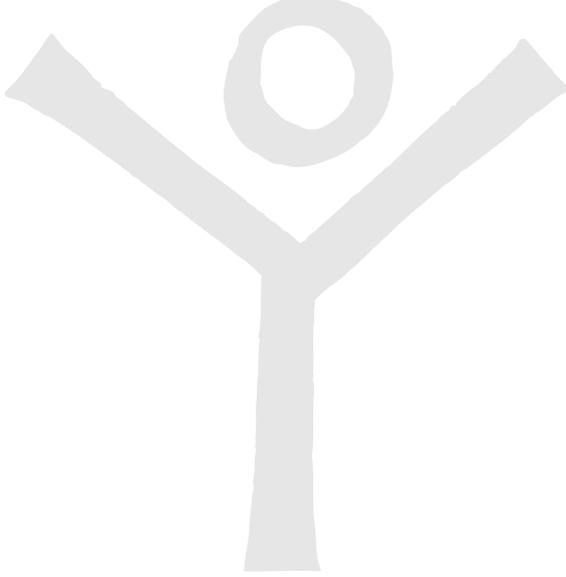
NERVOUS
DEVICE

CITY LIGHTS SPOTLIGHT NO. 8



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NERVOUS DEVICE



**City
Lights**



CITY LIGHTS SPOTLIGHT SERIES NO. 8

CATHERINE WAGNER

NERVOUS

DEVICE

CITY LIGHTS

SAN FRANCISCO



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CITY LIGHTS SPOTLIGHT
The City Lights Spotlight Series was founded in 2009, and is
edited by Garrett Caples.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Wagner, Catherine.

Nervous device / Catherine Wagner.
p. cm. — (City Lights spotlight series ; no. 8)
Poems.

ISBN 978-0-87286-565-5

I. Title.

PS3573.A3693N47 2012

811'.54—dc22

2012025575

The editor would like to thank Rebecca Wolff of Fence, Jasmine Moorhead
and Kendy Genovese of the Weinstein Gallery, and Richard Overstreet
for the Leonor Fini Estate for their generous assistance with this book.

Cover Image: Leonor Fini. *Femme costumée (Femme en armure)* [detail] ©
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All City Lights Books are distributed to the trade by
Consortium Book Sales and Distribution: www.cbsd.com

For small press poetry titles by this author and others,
visit Small Press Distribution: www.spdbooks.com

City Lights Books are published at the City Lights Bookstore,
261 Columbus Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94133
www.citylights.com

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PRESSED GO

I was ruling the world with you, which is, everyone's decision about anything was valve to next.

Continuez, in the time-braid incorp:

dust of continent, yeast infection, mercury glint invisibly wet, increasingly limited bestiary song, view from mountains I must drive to, apartments flare their parking lot huge cracked black skirts. Fat mud thighs process runoff.

Dear Garrett (editor),

Funny to be moved by exigencies of market to write poems, to deadline, out of time "must write poems to fill the huge demand for them."

Poem as blister formed through friction, swelled atoll, sucked fluid from the body of the host. I made no money from my poems but they stasused me.

Instead of tearing down the poem (scrape it D&C and exit), I made more shapely baubs, that pleasure me, hum crystal when touched. All readers: take a union breath, trust me? for I started to know-what-I-was-doing in a poem, the intuition track laid out prior, poem aligns and rolls (if rickety) headlit and through the forest. When it instead should unalign and disembark the trees.

G, you wanted poems and I trapped them in a book, guinea foul their cage, doggerel blockprint gridlock fossil.

Pixels screen what powers screens: waterfalls and turbines. Falls disappear granular down turbine funnel. But the eye need not follow any each droplet. Can watch falls quiver white static. Screen for use.

Articulate the choice between action and understanding. The poem to order. Write it cause. Thighs klutz beneath my skirt.

Dear art surface.

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A WELL IS A MINE : A GOOD BELONGS TO ME

Wide-winged heaven
mowed my garden down:
blacklily puddle. Let commerce
suck brights from all dally-halls
and string them christmas mines.

Will folded, made a napkin
Old agendas used to clean my mouth
of will.
I built this tone
ironically; that is,
it goes against itself.

“Who is responsible for the oil spill in the Gulf?”

“Did you drive here?”

“I had no choice.”

“Who took your choice?”

“If we don’t have oil we’ll need slaves, or none of us will ever read or paint.”

“I don’t see what’s wrong with not getting paid, if you’re getting

Fed and housed. I didn’t get to choose whether I drove here.

I’ll be a slave if it will save the planet.”

“OK you’re a slave.”

“Textbook will say: ‘Slavery became both colorblind and trendy.

Whether this was coincidence is matter for...”

“But only ‘one in ten men is colorblind.’ The rest of us

Might use color to decide who slaves will be.”

“*De jure*, white contains all colors.”

“*De jure*, it won’t be that noticeable if we don’t start with white people?”

“Anybody here who’s *de facto* ‘black’?”

[silence]

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“I’m afraid to speak for anybody in a different identity category.”
“And how many slaves will you need to maintain your standard of living sans oil?”

“A slave for the bicycle jitney. A lawnmowing slave.
A slave to cook and load compressed wood pellets into the wood stove.

I can do that. But then will need a slave to weed and clean.”
“Three slaves per household?”

“Three to five.”

“Will you be one of mine?”

“Let’s all take turns!”

“Can’t come to your birthday party, it’s my slave week.”

“Need categories of us.”

“A use for identity politics.”

“A use for identity. They also serve who only stand and wait.”

“Heidegger called them ‘standing reserve.’”

“If some of us are to be slaves, it’s a good thing there’s this income disparity.”

“It does make it easier.”

“A feudal system, stabilized—”

“By international trade.”

“But freedom is a value.”

“Say ‘*has a value*’ and it can be traded.”

“Freedom x Need = Reality.”

“Freedom

_____ = Art.”

Reality

“Then Art x Reality = Freedom.”

“Freedom

_____ = Reality?”

Art

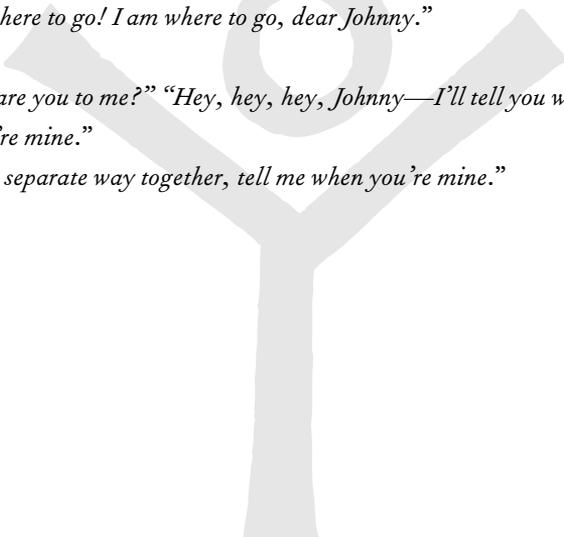
“Where art is politics.”

“Where am I to go? Oh hey, hey, hey, Johnny, where am I to go?”

“I am where to go! I am where to go, dear Johnny.”

*“What are you to me?” “Hey, hey, hey, Johnny—I’ll tell you when
you’re mine.”*

“Go our separate way together, tell me when you’re mine.”



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