

# WIRE

## Print Run: New music books

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By George Grella

*Poesy Matters* - Catherine Christer Hennix - Blank Forms - Pbk 311 pp

*Other Matters* - Catherine Christer Hennix - Blank Forms - Pbk 448 pp

Blank Forms is a non-profit curator of experimental arts, primarily music (they've produced concerts from Annette Peacock and Eliane Radigue, to name just two) but also visual arts – as of writing they are showing an installation of drawings and collages by Graham Lambkin. Since 2018, they have also been publishing media, starting with LPs – and a cassette from Charlemagne Palestine – and now they are adding books. It is typical of the organisation's self-effacing excellence that their inaugural releases include these two marvellous volumes.

Catherine Christer Hennix has already appeared on their imprint via two double LPs, 2018's Selected Early Keyboard Works and The Deontic Miracle: Selections From 100 Models Of The Hegikan Roku, which came out in 2019. These books add substantial depth to the appreciation of those albums, and they do so much more.

A glance at the content here conjures the word polymath. This is not wrong but it misleads. Yes, there is poetry, programme notes, critical examinations of the philosophy of language and mathematics (Hennix has a background as a mathematician). But where one expects a polymath to explore divergent paths, every bit of writing and thought within has a clear, if unspoken, goal: use rational means to define a coherent theory of the metaphysical power and meaning of drone music.

At least a plurality of this writing was never meant for publication, and so there is a strong sensation of eavesdropping. The editing is light by intent, so the reader will find stretches where Hennix is working out some thought for herself: the language is private and meanings can be difficult to decipher. On the other hand, there is more than Hennix within. The extensive programme notes for her Brouwer's Lattice include essays by the mathematician and philosopher LEJ Brouwer himself, and there are a handful of articles by Hennix's colleague Henry Flynt, including his notes for the Die Schachtel release of her important piece The Electric Harpsichord.

These are two separate books, though as the titles imply, they belong together. There is a reduced version of Blank Forms artistic director Lawrence Kumpf's introduction in Other Matters that refers the reader back to the first volume. Poesy Matters is the one to read first, and the one to read if you can read only one. Kumpf's introduction is more substantial and includes a valuable capsule biography; and though the contents are more abstract, they are tighter and explain more.

That is, the writing in the second volume is explanatory, but the writing in the first volume has a negative capability that is greater. She wrestles with the meaning of Gödel's Theorem as applied to philosophical language, and how philosophy cannot fundamentally explain itself. She writes nōh dramas, she writes poetry. The last is of variable quality, but the best of it has the aphoristic grace and concision of haiku and shares a view with Bashō of the mind-cleansing power of nature.

Taken together these circle the problem of how to find a way to use written language to explain what drone music can do to consciousness and the soul. There is no answer here, but the emptiness is marked with exquisite, sharp edges and calls out to be filled by Hennix's drones. Like a yoga practice, Hennix's writing is the ideal preparation for the wonders of her music.

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