



SES: When did you first begin writing?

KG: I've always been engaged in some form of writing. Poetry has erupted from me at intervals since I was a kid. In the spring of 1999, I felt the need to write poems again and I've been at it steadily since.

SES: How long did you shop *case sensitive* before it was taken?

KG: I sent out my first manuscript relentlessly for several years. Nothing happened. *case sensitive* is my second manuscript. It got picked up in the first round.

SES: How did you remain patient and keep at it after the difficulty of attempting to publish your first manuscript?

KG: Well, I found it hard--the way everyone does. The individual poems weren't getting picked up either. Seems like that started to shift just in time. If it had gone on much longer, I might have stopped submitting. Max suggested that I collect 500 rejections--that I wait to give up until I'd had that many poems turned down. (Some poems were refused more than once, of course!) Deep into the 300s, things began to change.

SES: Wow! I love your persistence. After *case sensitive*, do you have any plans to re-circulate the first manuscript?

KG: I ended up distilling my first manuscript into a chapbook called *Learning the Language*, published by Etherdome in 2005. And some of the other poems from that manuscript were also published eventually (in *26*, *Pool*, *Bird Dog*, *The Massachusetts Review*, and a few other journals). So I feel it's had its full life.

SES: "Great Women of Science" (the first section of *case sensitive*) has feminist implications. What role if any does feminism play in your work?

KG: The idea that men are better than women is still pervasive--not just out there, but in here. My basic definition of feminism is: that's gotta go.

When I was writing *case sensitive*, I was reading what my protagonist was reading: Lorine Niedecker's poetry and letters, biographies of Marie Curie and Rosalind Franklin, the journals and letters of Paula Modersohn-Becker, interviews with Louise Bourgeois, Agnes Martin's writings. During their lifetimes, these women were working (Bourgeois still is) in profoundly male-dominated fields. This was very much on my mind. I'm

inspired by the lives of women who have managed to accomplish something. Their example (including what held them back, what they were forced to forget, how they met the obstacle) provides me with the equivalent of my character's inherited house.

SES: I'm a big fan of Niedecker too. How did you first come to her work?

KG: A year or so after I started writing poetry again, I took a workshop with Jean Valentine. Four Sunday afternoons at the 92nd St. Y. On the last Sunday, Jean gave me a journal with Lorine Niedecker's face on the cover--that was the first time I heard of her.

SES: Do you see similarities between Niedecker's work and your own?

KG: I think Jean brought me that article because of some similarities between my *life* and Niedecker's: the menial/manual labor, the caring for the parents, and something else maybe--a persistent "outsider"-ness. I came to Niedecker's life and work at the same time, and I read everything about her that I could find, as well as the *Collected* and the books of correspondence. I don't think our work sounds alike. There's a cento in "Great Women of Science" made of phrases taken from a few of her letters--I don't think even that sounds like her really. But there are similarities: our interest in a stripped-down plain-spokenness and the actual (quoted) talk of regular people (though she preferred to read poems silently and I'm just the opposite). Like her, I've included quotations in my work not as decoration but because (in *case sensitive* at least) reading is part of the subject matter.

SES: Many feminists might not consider Niedecker to have a feminist lifestyle--she is known for being seemingly repressed by Zukofsky. How do you feel she fits into a feminist canon?

KG: I'd be uncomfortable saying that Niedecker was repressed by Zukofsky. It does seem to be the case that he controlled the relationship, setting personal limits that she went along with because she preferred a limited relationship with him to none. That can be viewed as weakness on her part, or perverse strength. She may also have allowed herself to be limited somewhat by his ideas of what poetry should be, later in life regretting that she hadn't gone further with a less condensed, more surrealist branch of her natural bent. But basically she went her own way. She stayed on Blackhawk Island, she was solitary and self-supporting. At 60 she married Al Millen against everyone's opinion, which looks from here like a good move for her as a writer. I wouldn't call her a feminist. I'd call her an eccentric, a survivor, an original, a tough-minded sensitive artist who did what she had to do to keep herself and her writing going.

SES: What is the place of feminism in poetry today?

KG: Women need to work together to make things happen in our own lives and in the life of the world. This includes our poetry, of course.

SES: Do you feel that poetry is still a male-dominated area, like painting and science? If so, why?

KG: There's been discussion about this lately on a couple of listserves and, from what I've read, I think the answer must be yes. I haven't felt it personally but I'm not working in academia. I'm not competing with men for teaching jobs and, as far as publishing goes, I'm on the fringe. The world seems full of poets and many important poets are women. Poetry doesn't feel male-dominated to me. My editor is a woman and a majority of the writers I read are women--that may color my view.

SES: To shift back to the poems, you have many great correlations in *case sensitive* between poetry and painting. How do you feel the two fit together?

KG: I've been a painter for a long time. It's very different to *do* poetry and painting. Painting is a physical activity, so there's a relief in it unlike the relief of writing. But poems and paintings are both made things. Something arises from somewhere, a shape, a phrase, an idea, and then you make something out of it. I like to make things.

I work (am employed) as a graphic artist, so I'm continually combining words and pictures. I also do that at my blog. For years I put writing into all my paintings. Looking for connections between what is seen and heard seems to come naturally. (I always think of poetry, and most writing really, as something heard.)

SES: What do you perceive as the similarities and differences in the art and poetry worlds? Which one do you find more difficult i.e. gaining recognition? Are you still painting?

KG: I am still painting. I stopped sending out slides to galleries quite a while ago. Maybe I should have racked up a few hundred more rejections. There are a lot of paintings in big wooden crates in the garage and I haven't completely forsaken the idea of freeing them from those crates at some point. I've managed to get a little further with my writing, facilitated by the internet. I'm not sure what it takes to make it in the art world--in New York, say. As with poetry, it seems to help if you've gone to school and have had a way to meet people. But I don't really know. I don't know any painters who are pursuing recognition at the moment.

SES: I love the "first book" interviews you are doing on your blog. I particularly like the one with Rachel Levitsky. Do you feel blogging has helped or hurt your work?

KG: For me, blogging has made the difference between feeling that I could be part of a community and feeling almost totally isolated. That's a pretty big difference! I don't mean that I believe there is a homogenized entity called "The Poetry Community" or that I've found a home within a group of poets. It's more like living in a town, as opposed to the sticks or a big city. It's a good-sized town, there are lots of different groups--but, because you're a resident of the town, there are various ways to meet the other residents and to get a sense of who they are.

It takes time away from other things, yes, but the blog has been an essential part of my "coming out" process and coming out is essential to the work.

SES: What is your opinion of the sort-of "blog culture?"

KG: I'm for bloggers and the blog culture. I wish everyone had a blog. I love the internet, the possibility of free exchange across borders of so many kinds.