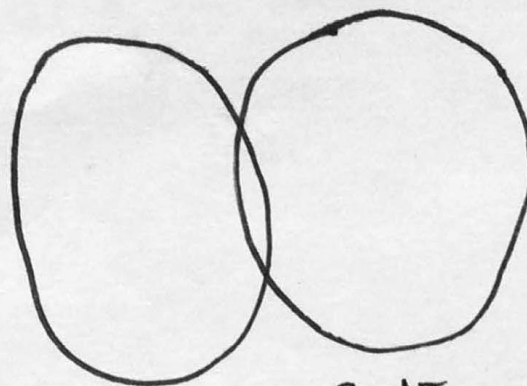
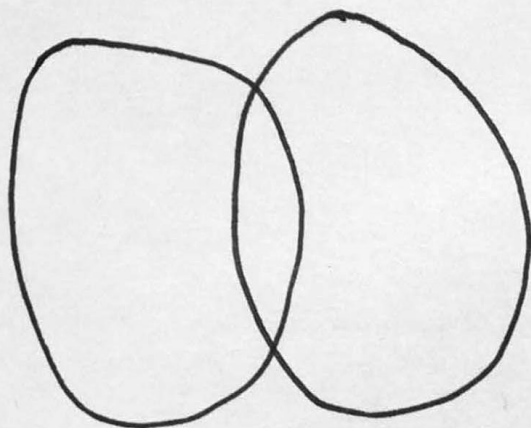


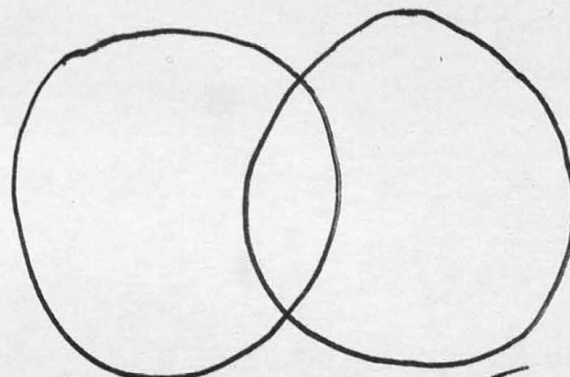
VIOLENCE IS HUMAN NATURE
RESILIENCE IS HUMAN NATURE



LOVE ALL PEOPLE
SOME PEOPLE ARE DOING EVIL THINGS



RESOURCE HOARDING
LEGITIMATE SCARCITY



PEOPLE ARE SO GENEROUS
PEOPLE ARE SO SELF INTERESTED

HOW DO WE THINK ABOUT HUMAN NATURE?

THE POETRY PROJECT

FEBRUARY / MARCH 2017 ISSUE #250

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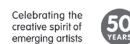
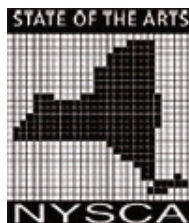
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Cover art: detail from Rachel Schragis' *Confronting the Climate: A Flowchart of the People's Climate March*, mixed media 12'x3', 2016. Courtesy of the artist.

Letter from the Director

1/2/2017:

I'm still digesting and metabolizing The 43rd Annual New Year's Day Marathon Benefit reading and will be for days to come. It was extraordinary for all of the reasons it usually is— for being a celebration of the Project's legacy, its future, and the present moment in poetry and the arts in NYC, collective agency, and multigenerational (and inter-disciplinary) dialogue. In the wake of the election and leading up to the inauguration, the aspect of ritual on the first day of 2017 was pronounced. CAConrad wrote an essay in verse called "Poetry & Ritual" where he says many wonderful things, including this:

the ritual to
find the energy lines under our
feet

In my time at the Project, I've never experienced such a fierce and loving Marathon. The energy lines under our feet took it there. Thank you to performers Kimberly Clark, M. Lamar, Miguel Gutierrez and Nick Hallett, Brenda Coultas, Jack Ferver, Cheryl Clarke and dozens more whose talent, humor, and vulnerability moved me, and reminded me to pay close attention to the ever present forces that tell us to retreat.

Lastly, we raised \$28,000, a new Marathon record, which will help us continue our work, and make sure poets get paid for theirs. Read on for a complete list of thanks. I want to particularly acknowledge Poetry Project staff Simone, Nicole, and Laura for their creativity, stamina, and acumen behind the scenes. Whenever I look calm it's because of them.

Stacy Szymaszek

The Poetry Project's 50th Anniversary Campaign

The Poetry Project has been a public forum and home for the most restless and challenging creative minds of the past 50 years. In hosting over 3,500 readings featuring more than 5,000 different poets, we have connected with more than 200,000 people. Our audio archive of 4,000+ hours of poetry is housed at the Library of Congress.

The Poetry Project— like poetry itself— is much more than numbers. We're a scrappy arts organization run by poets. And we are proud that we've thrived on a shoestring budget with our core values intact: devotion to poetry as a way of life, supporting poets, inclusivity, curiosity, and community.

As we enter our second half-century, we plan to strengthen our local, national, and international connections through:

- Web-based workshops
- Live-streaming of readings and events
- A digital magazine with audio and video content
- Online audio archives of all Poetry Project readings

Our goal is to sustain our core programming while reaching an additional 100,000 poetry-lovers with cutting-edge technology.

That's where you come in. In order to sustain our programs and realize this expanded vision, we must raise the money for new technology and to bring aboard staff skilled in managing digital content. Our goal for our 50th Anniversary Campaign— the first campaign the Project has ever undertaken— is \$350,000. **We have already raised \$150,000 toward the goal.** We invite you to honor the Project's legacy, its dynamic present, and its inspiring future with a generous contribution. Please visit our homepage at poetryproject.org to make a donation or send a check to The Poetry Project, 131 E. 10th St. NY, NY 10003. Thank you for being a crucial member of our community!

Notes from the Project

MARATHON 2017 THANK YOUS

The Poetry Project Staff would like to extend a very hearty THANK YOU to all those who donated their time, effort, energy, food, beverages, and books to help us raise \$28,000 at the 43rd Annual New Year's Day Marathon Reading. This is a new record for the Marathon! In addition to 140 performers and 100 volunteers, roughly 1,200 people showed up to celebrate the power of poetry. We are so moved and emboldened to carry this energy forth into 2017.

Volunteers: Adam Degraff, Aelian/a Nicole Anderson, Adam O'Reilly, Adeena Karasick & Safia Karasick Southey, Alex Penagos, Amber Atiya, Amy Matterer, Andrew Gayle, Anna Gurton-Wachter, Anna Kreienberg, Atticus Fierman, Ariel Goldberg, Arlo Quint, Ben Fama, Bob Rosenthal, Boo Froebel, Brenda Coultas, Brenda Iijima, Brendan Lorber & Aurora, Carley Moore, Carolyn Hehir, Carolyn Kohli, Cat Tyc, Chanice Hughes-Greenberg, Charles Wolski, Cheryl Fish, Citron Kelly, Conor Messinger, Cori Hutchinson, Damla Bek, Dan Owen, Dave Morse, David Berrigan, David Kirschenbaum, David Satkowski, David & Laura Wilk, Davy Knittle, Dia Felix, Diana Cage, Diana Hamilton, Diane Ludin, Don Yorty, Dorothy Friedman August, Douglas Rothschild, Elinor Nauen, Elizabeth Devlin, Elizabeth Sanzari, erica kaufman, Erkinaz Shuminov, Evelyn Reilly, Ezra Green, Farnoosh Fathi, Filip Marinovich, Fran DeMusz, Fred Verillo, Gabriella Gonzales, Geoff Mottram, Grey Vild, Hadley Gitto, Hannah Hiasen, Heidi Boyson, Ian Dreiblatt, Ian Wilder, Jack Murray, Jackie Clark, Jane Glucksman, James Barickman, Jaye Bartell, Jeff Perkins, Jennifer Bartlett, Jeremy Hovenaar, Jillian McManemin, Jim Behrle, Joanna Furfman, Joe Cosmo Cogen, Joe Dobkin, Joe Elliot, John Coletti, John S Hall, John Priest, Jon Allen, Judah Rubin, Julia & John Barclay-Morton, Julie Turley, Katie Fowley, Katie Taylor, Karen Weiser & Sylvie, KB Jones, Ken Walker, Kenyatta JP Garcia, Kimberly Wilder, Linda Hayes, Lisa Ozag, Lydia Cortes, Lynne DeSilva-Johnson, Marcella Durand & Ismael, Marie-Helene Bertino, Marina Reza, Maryam Parhizkar, Matt Daly, Matt Longabucco & Malka, Matt Win, Maxe Crandall, Mel Elberg, Melissa Tolve, Michael Honigberg, Michelle Munizaga, Nat Roosa, Nicole Peyrafitte, Nina Puro, Olivia Grayson, Patrick Schlotterback, Peter Bogart Johnson, Phoebe Lifton, Poupeh Missaghi, Purvi Shah, Rachel Levitsky, Rebecca Teich, Rey Carrasco, Sara Jane Stoner, Sarah Anne Wallen, Shane Hanlon, Shanxing Wang, Shelby Ann Cook, Stephanie Gray, Sue Landers, Ted Dodson, Tom Savage, Trace Peterson, Tracey McTague, Vanessa Rosenbaum, Wei Jie Chen, Will Edmiston, and Zachary A. Edminster

Food Donors: Bob Rosenthal and Don Yorty, Brooklyn Brewery, David Bowler Wines, Gillian McCain, Nicole Peyrafitte, Otto's Tacos, Porto Rico Coffee, Sobaya, Two Boots, and Veselka. And a GIANT thank you to Phil Hartman of Two Boots Pizza for expertly coordinating food and beverage donations for the second year in a row!

Book Donors: Akashic Books, Augury, Belladonna*, BookThug, Brooklyn Arts Press, Burning Deck, Button Poetry, City Lights, Commune Editions, Futurepoem, Letter Machine, New Directions, Noemi, Portable Press @ YoYo Labs, Pressed Wafer, Roof, Rust Buckle, Solid Objects, Susan Mills Artist Books, Ugly Duckling Presse, United Artists, Wave, Wonder, YesYes Books, and Zephyr Press

Audio: Jim Behrle and John Priest

Lights: Carol Mullins

Video: Robert O'Haire

Photography: Jacob Burckhardt and Ted Roeder

Marathon Guest Hosts: Anselm Berrigan, CAConrad, Ariel Goldberg, Yanyi Luo, Eileen Myles, Elinor Nauen, Camille Rankine, and Judah Rubin



photo credit: Jackie Rudin

SPRING 2017 WORKSHOPS & MASTER CLASS

**CONTROVERSIES IN POETRY:
LEGISLATING THE WORD AND THE WORLD**

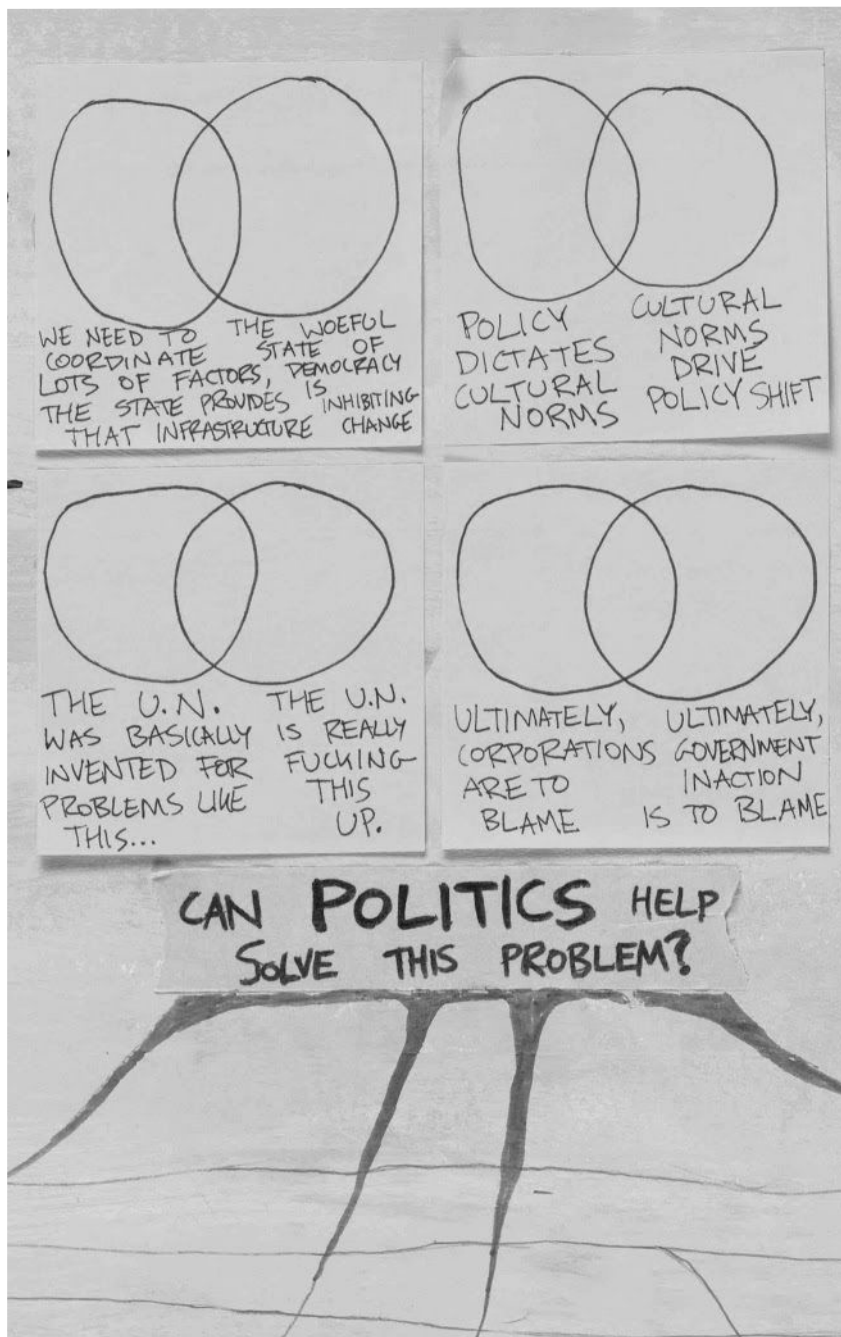
Workshop with Lisa Jarnot

10 Sessions | Saturdays, 2-4PM | Begins 2/4

Location: Neighborhood Preservation Center (232 E 11th St, New York, NY 10003)

Are poets unacknowledged legislators? Does poetry make nothing happen? Should poets be picking roses or agitating on the front line? These are the questions we grapple with as we dip into the long history of poetical warfare (Catullus's invectives, Ezra Pound's World War II radio speeches, Ed Sanders and the Investigative Poetry Group's *The Party: A Chronological Perspective on a Confrontation at a Buddhist Seminary*, Jennifer Dunbar Dorn's "Rolling Stock: A Chronicle of the 80s", Kevin Killian's "Activism, Gay Poetry, AIDS in the 1980s", Claudia Rankine's *Citizen and Don't Let Me Be Lonely*, Vanessa Place's "Miss Scarlett," CA Conrad's "From Whitman to Walmart," Kenneth Goldsmith's performance of Michael Brown's body, Cathy Park Hong's "There's a New Movement in American Poetry..." and more). We will observe, analyze, and see what it's all about. We will also write poems, invectives, rants, and well-reasoned arguments inspired by our readings and discussions.

Lisa Jarnot is a gardener, homeschooling mom, and author of several books of poetry and a biography of Robert Duncan. She lives in Jackson Heights, Queens, with her husband and daughter.



IF EVERYBODY HAD AN OCEAN: READING AFTER LORENZO THOMAS

Master Class with A. L. Nielsen

Thursday, February 16, 2017 | 7-10PM

Location: Parish Hall, St. Mark's Church

The occasion for this session is the working through of the poetry of Lorenzo Thomas on the way to an eventual *Collected Poems*. Each member of the session will be provided in advance with a PDF of the poems of Lorenzo Thomas, which will be the basis of our discussions. There will be short video and audio recordings of Thomas to share, and a bit of more formal presentation, then we will dig into the poems together. The discussions will range from Thomas's earliest works, composed in New York in the 1960s (many during his years as part of the Society of Umbra) through to the collection published shortly before his untimely death in 2005. We will consider the aesthetic and poetic affiliations of Thomas's work moving through Umbra to the Black Arts and beyond, and discuss his continuing relevance for poets and readers today.

A.L. Nielsen is the Kelly Professor of American Literature at Penn State University. His most recent books of poetry are *A Brand New Beggar* and *Tray*. He is the author of critical works including *Black Chant* and *Integral Music*.

POEMS AGAINST THE DEMAGOGUE

Workshop with Arlo Quint

5 Sessions | Thursdays 7-9PM | Begins 3/9

Location: Parish Hall, St. Mark's Church

This workshop will be centered around the study of demagogic language. We'll pay special attention to the mechanisms underlying linguistic propaganda described in Jason Stanley's *How Propaganda Works* and Theodor Adorno's catalog of rhetorical devices used by the 1930s fascist-style demagogue and radio personality Martin Luther Thomas. While we study this language, we'll work collectively to theorize and practice writing poems against the demagogue.

Arlo Quint is the author of *Wires and Lights* (Rust Buckle, 2016), *Death to Explosions* (Skysill, 2013), and *Drawn In* (Fewer & Further, 2010). He collaborated with writer Charles Wolski on *Check Out My Lifestyle* (Well Greased, 2012).

TRANSLATIONAL POETICS: ZAUM AS A SECOND LANGUAGE — Workshop with Matvei Yankelevich

*Note: The title of the workshop borrows the term "Zaum as a Second Language" from Filip Marinovich, who coined the phrase.

5 Sessions | Tuesdays 7-9PM | Begins 2/7

Location: Neighborhood Preservation Center (232 E 11th St, New York, NY 10003)

The Russian Futurists posed a utopian project for poetry to overcome linguistic barriers through a new language of personal and indeterminate meaning. What can we hear, learn, and write from reading foreign voices trans-rationally? Can the *zaum* part of a text (the untranslatable) be translated, and if so, how? Translation also attempts to overcome the boundaries of time, nation, linguistic difference. By revealing our biases, prejudices, received literary notions, Translation — as process, procedure, and metaphor — calls on us to make crucial aesthetic and political choices, thus recuperating our volition and agency in the encounter with the authority(ies) present in any given text. Through a wide range of *zaum* practices we'll explore the generative aspects of translation and "mis-translation": how translating might open up new reserves of language for us to mine; how it might loosen our grip on our own "voice" and let in others; how our own language might affect our encounter with a foreign or faraway voice. We'll examine several zones of freedom and choice available to the translator as agent, far from a silent medium for a text, and we'll experiment with homophonic translation, revelatory redactions, variations on a theme, and devious deviations, translating against contemporary taboos with wild interpretations and trans-creations.

Knowledge of a foreign language is not required. Some reading of exemplary and theoretical texts will be assigned.

Matvei Yankelevich's books include the long poem *Some Worlds for Dr. Vogt* (Black Square), a poetry collection, *Alpha Donut* (United Artists), and a novella in fragments, *Boris by the Sea* (Octopus). His translations include *Today I Wrote Nothing: The Selected Writings of Daniil Kharms* (Overlook), and (with Eugene Ostashevsky) Alexander Vvedensky's *An Invitation for Me to Think* (NYRB Poets), which received the 2014 National Translation Award. He has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York Foundation for the Arts. He is an editor at Ugly Duckling Presse, and teaches at Columbia University's School of the Arts and the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts at Bard College.

Madmen Who Were Poets

**A chapter from al-‘Iqd al-farid (The Necklace Without Peer)
by Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi, translated with an introduction by
David Larsen**

Pre-modern Arabic literature abounds in tales of madmen. Many are dedicated to provoking laughter, some to pathos and pity, and almost all contain poetry. This last is such a pervasive condition of Classical Arabic narrative that *prosimetrum* better describes the corpus than *prose*. Tales of poets are abundant too, and in Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi’s chapter on “Madmen Who Were Poets” (*Shu‘ara’ al-majanin*) they are consubstantial with tales of madmen. In some, the poet is a madman first, i.e., an object of ridicule, and his poems are ridiculous too. In others, the poet’s madness is incidental and the poems are first rate. There are no female madmen in the chapter.

A note on madman, a word that is neither gender-flexible nor fit for clinical use. The English word translates Arabic *majnun*, a passive participle meaning “possessed by jinns” – spirits of the air held responsible for seizures and other mental ills. A similarly externalized model of madness is reflected in the epithet *al-Muwaswas*, meaning “The Whispered-At” (i.e., “Who Hears Voices”). By this surname were called two mad poets of the mid-ninth century CE, Ju‘ayfiran and Mani, and at the end of the chapter a lesser-known Abu Bakr al-Muwaswas is mentioned too.

Now it is true that out of all the professions, the most attuned to unseen voices are the poets. This is made plain in the reports of poets assisted in their work by a private muse (called a *shaytan*). Some had names: al-A’sha’s in the early seventh century was called *Mishal* (“The Ready Tongue”). When it happened that the mid-seventh-century poets al-Farazdaq and Jarir came out with the exact same verse, one of them said to the other: “Didn’t you know we have the same *shaytan*?”

But none of the poets in this chapter interact with unseen speakers. In some stories, the madman is a mere simpleton; in others, an urban eccentric. The man made mad by disappointed love is a repeating type. And in some stories there are touches of medical realism. Al-Mubarrad’s much-repeated “Tale of the Mad Lover” is set in the historical asylum of Dayr Hizqil (the Monastery of Ezekiel along the Tigris between Baghdad and Basra), and shows an appreciation for mental illness as a heterogeneous array of pathologies. It also gives the impression that for curious passers-by to look in on the mad was commonplace.

The Necklace Without Peer is an anthology of historical anecdotes, divided into thematic sections named for gemstones. “Madmen Who Were Poets” comes from a section called “The Second Iridescent Bead” (*al-Jumana al-thaniya*).* About its compiler Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi (d. 940 CE) not much needs saying here. A man of al-Andalus, his text has hardly anything of al-Andalus in it. All the stories here come from cosmopolitan Iraq. A couple are narrated by famous poets, but these attributions are suspect. The tale told by Abu Nuwas (d. 814) is a chronological impossibility, as the mad poets in it postdated him by two generations. The encounter between Abu Tammam (d. 845) and Mani is more feasible, though I find small warrant for confidence here either.

* Under the title *The Unique Necklace*, Issa J. Boullata’s translation of the whole is being released one volume at a time in the *Great Books of Islamic Civilization* series by Garnet Publishing; the volume containing “The Second Iridescent Bead” has yet to appear.

The chapter’s most oft-cited narrator is the grammarian al-Mubarrad (d. 898). While the majority of al-Mubarrad’s books dealt with grammatical subjects, his surviving belles-lettristic works feature much discussion of both Abu Nuwas and Abu Tammam. But these reports are of a more realist character than those of the *Necklace*, and do not include any madman’s tales that I can find, making al-Mubarrad’s credit hard to evaluate. Least likely on its face is the tale of al-Ma’mun and the wine cup. To cast verses by Abu Nuwas into this caliph’s mouth ill harmonizes with the scholar’s exacting treatment of Abu Nuwas’s poetry elsewhere. In fact it is unclear what the anecdote is doing in the chapter, lacking as it does an evident madman.

It may be that the reports attributed to al-Mubarrad were drawn from books that now exist in fragments only. His *Kitab al-Fitan wa-l-mihan* (Book of Acumens and Tests) is one possibility, and so is his *Kitab al-Rawda* (The Book of the Garden). My suspicion however is that Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi’s main source was a text called *Akhbar ‘uqala’ al-majanin* (Reports of Madmen Who Were Intelligent) by al-Mubarrad’s student Ibn Abi ‘I-Azhar (d. 927). Our loss of this text is made up for somewhat by the ‘*Uqala’ al-majanin* (Madmen Who Were Intelligent) of Abu ‘I-Qasim al-Nisaburi (d. 1015), a work that survives to our day and includes several tales of madwomen. But it offers no clue to the sources of *The Necklace Without Peer*, and I present Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi’s chapter with no more authoritative guarantee than its trans-historical relevance for readers who are poets.

[JU‘AYFIRAN AL-MUWASWAS]

The poet Ju‘ayfiran al-Muwaswas was a madman of Kufa. Met by a man who gave him a dirham and said: “Rhyme for me a poem,” Ju‘ayfiran said (meter: majzu’ al-khafif):

Heal me, Lord! May all my worry
be cured and turned into relief.
My cup of worries away be hurried;
I’d like my cup of wine now, please.

[Shortening his name to Ja’far,] he says in another poem (meter: *mujtathth*):

Ja’far’s nothing to his father,
and no one is his like.
He is the slaughtered sheep of a crowd
who all lay claim to [his flesh].
“My son!” one calls him, while another
takes his case before a judge.
All the while, his mother laughs at them,
she who knows his true parentage.

Abu ‘I-Hasan [‘Ali ibn al-‘Abbas ibn Abi Talha] said: Ju‘ayfiran paid a call on a certain governor, and was admitted to his dinner table. On the following day, he paid another call, and was made to eat behind a screen. On the third day he asked again, and was denied

entry altogether. So he called out at the top of his lungs (meter: *basit*):

Entry is yours to grant [or deny]. Having dined,
we will not offend with a repeat visit.
May the heat of our onetime feast give you heartburn,
and warm us up while we fast!

[ABU WA'IL]

[Abu 'Abd al-Rahman Muhammad ibn 'Ubayd Allah] al-'Utbi said: Abu Wa'il said to my father: "If you ask me about poetry you'll find that I know a thing or two about it, despite my dementia." My father asked, "Do you compose any yourself?" "Yes," said Abu Wa'il, "much better than yours. These verses are by me (meter: *kamil*):

If, after my ribs lie buried, their weeping forgotten,
Jawmal would only speak to me,
I bet my dead bones would answer her.
I bet my old carcass would spring back to life."

"Not bad," my father told him, "except that the woman's name is ill-chosen." "In reality her name is *Juml*, but I improved it," said Abu Wa'il. "God save us from the dementia that makes you think so," my father said.

My father also told me that Abu Wa'il recited to him (meter: *mukhalla' al-basit*):

When it hurts this much to part from a stranger,
how much more from a close friend's side (*min habibi*)?
My heart is stupefied with longing
when I remember that he is dead (*yamutu*).

My father said to him, "[That doesn't even rhyme!] One verse ends with the letter *ba'* (ب), the other *ta'* (ت)." "And you cannot supply the missing point?" said Abu Wa'il. "My good man," said my father, "[the end-voweling is discordant, too]. Where the first verse has *-i*, the other has *-u*." Abu Wa'il replied, "I say: when faced with difficulty you supply no point."

[SALIH IBN SHIRZADH]

When the mother of Sulayman ibn Wahb al-Katib passed away, a lunatic scrivener named Salih ibn Shirzadh regaled him with an elegy, reciting (meter: *tawil*):

By what happened to Umm Sulayman we are laid low
as if at a blow from the amputator's sword.
You were the reins of the house, Umm Salim; now,
the house's reins have wound up in the grave.

Ibn Wahb said: "Who in God's Creation has been through sufferings like mine? To lose my mother, and have to hear her mourned with such a [crappy] poem, in which my name is changed from Sulayman to Salim!"

Another verse of Salih ibn Shirzadh's goes like this (meter: *basit*):

Don't mistake the silent fart for a curative;
the audible fart is the true *Adharitus* [Adrestos?]*

[VARIOUS MADMEN]

Abu 'l-Wasi' [a companion of the poet Abu 'Isa Salih ibn al-Rashid] was in the company of his sons when a poet of the madmen called and asked permission to perform an ode. Abu 'l-Wasi' declined, but the poet importuned until his resistance fell. After the final verse (meter: *mukhalla' al-basit*):

Irrefutable man, on this day you are their head,
and around you the cream of your eminent sons!

Abu 'l-Wasi' said to him: "If only you would get away from us all at once (lit. 'head by head')."

It is said that a mad poet of the Bedouins visited Nasr ibn Sayyar [an Umayyad governor of Khurasan] and declaimed a poem composed of one hundred amatory verses and only two lines of praise. "By God," Nasr said to him, "the words of your poem are as graceless as their meaning. All your efforts went into amatory prelude, with nothing left over for panegyric!" The poet said, "I can change that." So he came back the next day with a poem that began (meter: *rajaz*):

Can you make out the house of Umm al-Ghamr?
– Enough of that! Let's have a poem in praise of Nasr.

"Neither one of these [poems is any good]," said Nasr.

A certain scholar said: For sheer hermeneutic depravity, the only thing I have heard to rival Shi'ism was something a madman of Mecca said about a poem [by al-Farazdaq]. This man said: "The Banu Tamim are the biggest liars I have ever heard. In the poem (meter: *kamil*):

He Who hung the sky has built for us
a house whose columns soar above all others.
The house the Sovereign built is ours, and what
Heaven's Arbitrator builds cannot be shaken.
The house in whose courtyard Zurara sits arrayed,
and Mujashi' and Nahshal, father to horsemen...

The Banu Tamim claim these names belong to their own!" [Which was the case, Mujashi' and Nahshal being al-Farazdaq's ancestors, and all of them being tribesmen of Tamim.]

The scholar said: I asked him, "In your view, what do they mean?" He said, "The 'house' in question is the Ka'ba, and Zurara is the stone that is 'buttoned' (*zurirat*) onto it. *Mujashi'* is the well of Zamzam, whose water is 'coveted' (*jushi'at*), and "Father to Horsemen" is the mountain of Abu Qubays in Mecca." I said to him, "And Nahshal?"

For a whole hour he thought it over, then said, "It is the tall black lamp-stand of the Ka'ba. That is what Nahshal is."

* Explained by commentators as a medicinal remedy of the Greeks (evidently a stomachic).

[THE “TALE OF THE MAD LOVER”]

The grammarian Muhammad ibn Yazid al-Mubarrad said: En route to Wasit from Baghdad, we turned aside at the Monastery of Ezekiel to see the madmen there. Their madnesses were all of kinds we had seen before, or so we thought until we spied a well-kept young man in laundered clothes sitting apart from the others. “If anyone,” we said, “then he.” So we approached him with a pious greeting, which he did not return. “What ails you?” we asked him. He said (meter: *majzu’ al-basit*):

God knows how sad I am.
To none other can it be described.
My soul is two. One soul is in this land,
while a separate land keeps the other.
The one stuck here can endure no more.
The hide around it is about to give out.
I believe the absent soul to be in the same state.
By my troth, hers is the present soul’s matter.

“Well done, by God!” I said to him. At this, he motioned as if throwing something at us, saying, “Who says ‘Well done’ to the likes of me?”

Al-Mubarrad said: We were making haste to get away from him, when the young man said, “Come back, by God, I beseech you, until I recite for you another poem. Then you can say whether it’s well or poorly done.” So we went back to him and said, “Recite.” He began (meter: *basit*):

Just before dawn, when the palomino camels were knelt
for their saddles and a shapely cargo to trudge away with,
when, face to face through a gap in the curtain [of her howdah]
she looked out at me, [our] eyes engorged with tears,
at the wave of her [henna-stained] hand like a bough of ‘anam,
I called out to the camel, “Let your hind legs not bear [her] away!”
I wail for the split that undid what she and I had,
the split that came down, that undoing split when they moved off.
Palomino driver! Stay their steps, that we may lengthen our farewell.
Palomino driver! Your haste speeds my ending.
Never to renounce my desire to be with them, for the rest of my life,
I wish I knew: what did they with the rest of theirs?”

We said to him, “They must have died.” At this, he gave a cry and said, “Then I, by God, die also!” Falling to all fours, he lay prone and died. And we did not leave the place until we had seen to his burial.

[A shorter variant of the same report.] Al-Mubarrad said: On entering the Monastery of Ezekiel, we were met by a madman with a rock in his hand. “O assembly of my brethren, he said as the people scattered, “hearken unto me!” Then he began to recite (meter: *majzu’ al-mutaqarib*):

Many’s the soul of an eminent man
reduced to moaning without remit,
who whirls upon the host in battle
but shrinks from single combat.

[MANI AL-MUWASWAS]

Al-Mubarrad attributed these verses to al-Mani al-Muwaswas (meter: *tawil*):

The cheeks on him are white and red:
red in their middles and white at the rim.
Thin but dewy, like a cup’s glass walls
streaked by swirling wine within.

Al-Mubarrad said: I got caught in a rainstorm, which quickly abated. At that point, Mani al-Muwaswas happened along and said (meter: *majzu’ al-khafif*):

Don’t mistake for a real rain
the rain that fell just now.
A single tear from my eye
flows more freely, when
assailed by the gloom
of my worried thoughts.
This is what it’s like to watch
the change of heart inside a friend’s bosom.

[Another time,] Mani al-Muwaswas went up to Abu Dulaf [al-‘Ijli, an Abbasid general] and said (meter: *majzu’ al-khafif*):

The look in your eye ‘mid the enemy host
saves you the trouble of taking out swords.
“By God,” said Abu Dulaf, “no poet has ever praised me so well!”
and ordered ten thousand dirhams be given him. But Mani declined to accept. “It’s all the same to me as half a dirham’s worth of harisa,” he said.

Calling all poets!



Ladowich, a new venture from the editors of *The Hat*, Jordan Davis and Chris Edgar. ladowich.com

Also by Mani al-Muwaswas (meter: *basit*):

Grazing on hearts, some gazelles are intent on necklaces,
but in my heart there is just grass.
My life is forfeit to gazelles. Instead of antlers,
they are hooped with gold and rubied and empearled.
O beauty that stole my eye unwittingly,
seldom though the stolen glance unwitting be!
The one I gifted my heart to, taken with the beauty
of a pair of eyes – if only she accepted what I give!
What I want from them is to be regarded.
If she declines, what hope in eyes have I?
A thief and his hand are soon separated,
but hearts are for stealing at no such penalty.

[‘ALI IBN AL-JAHM AND THE MADMAN]

The poet ‘Ali ibn al-Jahm came upon a man in the grip of a brain-fever who was encircled by a hostile crowd. On spotting him, the man seized the bridle of ‘Ali’s horse and said (meter: *majzu’ al-kamil*):

Do not swell the company of
wastrels I see [before me].
By the truth of the One Who imposes them on me,
and the One Whose forgiveness I beg on their behalf,
[I swear:] Compared to the fallen of their number,
these are fallen [further still].”

His rolling gaze then fixed on a well-shaped boy with a handsome face, and he rent his clothes and said:

Now this one, their most nobly favored,
treats me more shabbily than all his fellows!

[ABU FAHMA]

Abu ‘l-Bakhtar [Wahb ibn Wahb] said: The tales I used to hear of Abu Fahma, a madman of Baghdad with a gift for poetic improvisation, led me to seek him out. Our meeting took place in a lane of the city, where I said to him, “How are you today, Abu Fahma?” He replied in verse (meter: *kamil*):

I am now at the edge of a cliff. Through you
I stand exposed to the wellsprings of my ruin.
I see you turning, but not toward me.
Whose heart is least corrupt you least attend.
O you whose estrangement prolongs my pining,
may you be struck with pinings worse than mine!

Abu ‘l-Bakhtari said: At this I withdrew from my sleeve a small bouquet of narcissus, and pressed it on him with my wishes that God prolong his life. He stood smelling them for a time, then delivered these verses (meter: *kamil*):

On my wedding day, there came from the South rain-decked,
hard-spattering, black and brilliant [clouds].
Then kicked in the East Wind with its fecundating showers,
and the curtailment of our nuptials was hard to bear.
Our babe was born still. Labor pains came on,
and there was parturition, and that was the issue.
Springtime wove a shroud, and as one hand
the dew and breeze gave color to its fabric.
It was [this] flower’s composite yellow, white petals
cupping ornaments of unsmithed gold
on emerald columns raised aloft with the morning,

like unto the sun in eye-like splendor.

[ABU NUWAS AND THREE MAD POETS]

Al-Hasan ibn Hani’ [the poet better known as Abu Nuwas] said: I paid a call on Mani al-Muwaswas, who delivered these verses (meter: *khafif*):

A live man’s poem is uttered to you by a dead man.
Stuck between death and life, he stands [right here].
Vicissitudes have whittled his frame, and at his end
he stays in hiding from the rest of creation.
To look me over, inspecting my persona,
is to find not one iota of my former charm.

I then went on [continued Abu Nuwas] until I met Ju‘ayfiran al-Muwaswas, an elder of the Banu Hashim with a speech impediment. Around his neck was a golden collar with a silver chain. “Where did you crawl out from, Hasan?” he asked me. “Mani’s house,” I answered. “Here’s one for the vulva of Mani’s mother,” he said and, calling for pen and paper, told me to write this down (meter: *basit*):

Under cover of the night, the rooster makes no sound
– except on nights I strive along the pathway to your door.
Not every eyeful leads the peeper to delight!
At night, the joys of bed-rest are what’s best,
– except on nights I mount the dark,
desiring you. Braving a pair of linked shackles,
I am playing with my life when I come to you. “Sweet Hope!”
I am calling out, amid the night’s black suit,
to the stoker of flames that lick this wretch’s heart,
taking no care for his welfare nor his reputation.
For treachery and fickleness your nature is unsurpassed
by all the jinn and mortal men living put together now.

With that [continued Abu Nuwas], he told me to tear up what I had from Mani, which I did.

I went on until I encountered ‘Adrad the Afflicted. Ringed by a crowd of boys, he was slapping his face and weeping as he wailed aloud: “O people! Bitter is the taste of separation!” So I asked him, “Abu Muhammad, where are you coming from?” “Seeing off the pilgrims bound for Mecca,” he said. “What makes it so hard to bear?” I asked. “Some of my kinsmen travel with them,” he said. “Did you deliver a poem on the occasion?” I asked. He responded that he had done, and recited:

They departed Thursday morning, and I bid them farewell
as they hoisted up their burdens and took their leave.
When they turned to go, my soul turned with them.
“Come back!” I said. “Come back to where?” said she.
To a body bare of flesh and empty of blood,
no more than a rattling skeleton
with a pair of eyes overcome by weeping and grief,
and an ear defiant in its deafness to all blame.

[A MAN OF LETTERS WHO LOST HIS MIND]

Abu Bakr al-Warraq said: A friend of mine told me: I saw a scholar who lost his mind from love-sickness and was left to wander, trailed by a pack animal that belonged to him. I stopped him and said, “Oh man, where is the grace in the state you’re in?” “Grace went bad for me,” he said, “and my heart went with it.” I asked him, “By what was it spoiled?” “By love!” he cried, then rose up speaking (meter: *basit*):

I see resilience as a quality I lack. How am I
to hide the passion that my tears make known?
How is a lover supposed to go on when his heart falls sick,
anyhow? Made gaunt and sad by longing and isolation,
with no bondmate there to succor him,
he craves forgetfulness, but for him it is impossible.
How to forget erotic torment when its irritant is you,
and the downward cast of your eyes is the test he's failing?

"Well done, by God!" I said. "Stay a while," he said, "and by God
I will fling something heavier than lead into your ears, and lighter
than a crow feather on your heart." He recited (meter: *basit*):

Love has a flame that my heart is afire with.
The flame in hers isn't one tenth of a tenth as hot.
[True,] water wells from the sockets of her eyes,
[but] come see the water [in mine,] fed by flame!

Then he stopped/stood and recited (meter: *mutaqarib*):

[My beloved] is back to avoiding me, reviving my ardent desire
and exposing me to harshness [to be borne] "with beautiful
patience."*

He sent my letter back to me unread,
that I might send him no more messengers.
I give my soul its due. As you can see,
fretfulness will [soon] drive it into long exile.
I give my heart its due. From what I see,
in small decrements it will [soon] run out on me.

Then he dropped my hand and went away.

[AN AUDIENCE WITH THE CALIPH AL-MA'MUN]

By al-Mubarrad the tale was told that 'Amr ibn Mas'ada paid a
call on al-Ma'mun, who was holding a glass jar of coarsely hewn
sugar and finely milled salt. "He returned my salutation," narrated
'Amr, "and invited me to eat. 'God increase your happiness, O
Commander of the Faithful,' I said, 'I don't want anything, for I
breakfasted early this morning, after going to bed hungry last
night.' At this, the caliph dropped his head and then raised it,
speaking [these verses by 'Abd Allah ibn al-Mubarak, meter: *basit*):

Do not hide your food, but offer it to all who enter.
Do not take refusal lightly. Be grateful to those who eat.
And do not lay a meager spread, nor incur the shame
of meanness. [If privation be] your fate, you cannot uproot it.

And he called for a quantity of wine. At this time, there entered an
eminent jurist, and when al-Ma'mun held his hand out to him, he
said, 'By God, O Commander of the Faithful! I never drank it as a
young man, so do not serve it to me as an old man.'"

So al-Ma'mun reached out to 'Amr ibn Mas'ada, who took
[the cup] and said: "O Commander of the Faithful, to God I made
a vow! To God I vowed at the Ka'ba that I would never drink." The
cup stayed in 'Amr ibn Mas'ada's hand while the caliph thought,
until he decided on the order he would give. And then he spoke
[these verses by Abu Nuwas, meter: *kamil*):

Give me back the cup. It avails you nothing.
The two of you know nothing of the cup.
Tasting what I taste would be a passionate encounter.
You'd find it mixed with nothing but your tears.
You want the fear of God your Lord in me, and

fear Him I do! My hope is in Him just the same.
If you won't drink with me, if you fear retribution,
[it is no problem.] All by myself I'll drink [this cup].

[ABU TAMMAM AND MANI AL-MUWASWAS]

Al-Mubarrad said: Habib ibn Aws [the poet better known as Abu
Tammam] told me: I keep a room overlooking the banks of the
Tigris. Early one autumn morning, I was there when a boy known
as Jamal ("Comeliness") stripped off his clothes and threw himself
into the river for a swim. The fridity of the water turned his
skin bright red. Just then, Mani al-Muwawas came along and said
(meter: *khafif*):

May the water outrage his dewy skin, until
a diaphanous gown of wine seems to coat him!

"God's curse be on you, Mani!" I said. "Here there is no call for
defensiveness or aggression. You fear a boy who rents himself out
in bathhouses?"

"Imbecile!" he said to me. "That verse wasn't addressed to
the likes of you, but to This One" – and he swept his arm toward
heaven, saying (meter: *kamil*):

You are content with stirring hearts. Meanwhile,
my experience is one of agony. So what's my crime?
You created faces [that shine] like lamps to be a test,
saying, "Shun them!" And that is no small matter.
If you won't allow a loving man to act on what You created in him
then give his heart escape from desire's anguish.

These verses by Yazid ibn 'Uthman have the same meaning (meter:
mutaqarib):

O Lord, [how can] You create what You create
and prohibit Your worshipers from loving madly?
Which of Your creatures will resist the urge to fornicate,
if you fashion faces that are this handsome?
You created desirability to be our trial,
saying: "Worship your Lord, and be aware!"

And Abu Bakr al-Muwaswas said about a Christian (meter: *basit*):

In my sleep I saw your person. It was entwined with mine
the way that lam and alif entwine in a scribal hand.
O you who study the Gospels, you go on turning
the heart of this sincere believer from the Qur'an!

And on the same theme (two lines of *rajaz*):

A Christian wrapper enfolds his waist
like a cutlet butterflied from my own liver

David Larsen is a poet and an academic living in New York City. His
translation of the *Names of the Lion* by Ibn Khalawayh (d. 980 CE)
reappears this year in a new edition from Wave Books.

The Town of Radiological Reserve

welcome
with permission only to post-disaster,
to ginger-brown pine dead, soaked,
bulldozed, buried in trenches,
covered in carpets, thick, dreaded sheets
of sand, then planted, then pressed, then stuck with pine
sapling. to the decay
beneath the soles, beneath the heels.
to the stunted, blunted growth of flora
smothered firm in bile, toxin. then to fauna
rich and multiplied, three, four, five, six, seven, eight-
fold. boars, storks, wolves, beavers,
damned deers, eagles by
Pripyat. welcome
with permission, all
back to abandoned blocks
of abandoned living, to village-hubbles ruined,
to rubble, to rubble, to decay, to debris
to the grass grown back, to the carcass of a piglet
to deformed legs, to deformed lungs,
to misalignment of wings,
to the tumor, to the mouth, the mouth
closed in. to beaks plucked, bent
asymmetrical tails twisted,
cataracts, small brains, less brains,
less. welcome
with permission to the distance
it takes to know the distance
between safe and unsafe,
to the hot breath rapid in decline,
to flesh of tainted pigments, to the blind
and defective. welcome
back to nature uncivilized, renaturalized
welcome back to decay,
to cement bricks breaking
back to brittle, back to weeds overgrown
grass vines, back to grasslands. welcome
back to decay, uninhabitable habitation
of wolf packs and covens of toxic owls
granted permission
to proceed, to multiply,
to stifle, to ruin. welcome
with permission
to decay.

Sasha Smith is a Poetry Project 2016-2017 Emerge-Surface-Be Fellow. She is currently studying literature at NYU's School of Professional Studies. She is a native Bronx resident and cofounder of the Bronx Blaqlist, a community arts organization. Her poetry can be found in *Poet's Country* No. 1. Prior to publication in NYU's Literary Journal *Dovetail*, her work has been published by CUNY's Literary and Arts Journal Thesis. She is currently working on projects about gentrification in the Bronx, and the voices of Mount Everest. She blogs at <http://stesseract.com>.

_____Black Lesbian Navigates Internet Porn: A Sestina

black ebony big breasts tits lesbian [click](#)
Ghetto Dykes really? POPUP Melissa (1.1 miles away)
just sent you a fuck request girlbye [click](#) scroll
Two Hot Scissor Sistas Grinding wonder who
came up with that title *It's All Pink Inside Scene*
6 is this the porn version of #AllLivesMatter

Burning Hot Ebony Sluts sounds like a medical matter
ooo actual names Skin Diamond feels problematic but [click](#)
skip the chit chat wait was she reading a book this scene
cute yaaas you betta make that gas station romance novel look away
from the camera please ugh no she ain't even eating it right who
moans like that I can't with this weird yawn giggling scroll

pregnantpuss: you can see the chemistry between these two scroll
makeme_leak2: black bitches don't do it for me no matter
how big their tits and asses POPUP Kaitlyn (300m away) who's
going to suck your dick tonight I actually hadn't thought about it Kaitlyn [click](#)
fat big onion booty Latina lesbian pov [click](#) scroll hover over hover away
mmmm reverse cowgirl I wonder if she talks dirty in Spanish in this scene

Gloria Anzaldúa is shaking her head down on me right now *Scene*
2 Sophia Castello [click](#) dayum gurl is he really wearing timb boots scroll
Ingrthnurs: what's the name of that song? aww community a home away
from phones bonerbabe: Nate Turnher = AIDS kush_squirt: doesn't matter
I'd still take black cock yaaas to AIDS advocacy but... [click](#)
white people love saying cock open they mouth just like a rooster who

likes and shares porn videos 1,245,178 views I wonder if I know anyone who
has a porn profile this is taking forever I feel like I've seen
let's try categories anallbukkakelcartoonfeetforwomen [click](#)
scroll *Halle Berry Bares It All in Monster's Ball* ya'll got jokes scroll
POPUP Busty milf is on live chat want to accept her invitation? aw consent matters
but I'll pass [click](#) scroll *Hot Asian Dominates While Her Wife is Away*

[click](#) she bad yaaas to the bush wait what who is this dude why can't I look away
I wish I knew what they were saying what type of what is he doing who
censors a dick in a porno wait no she actually looks scared shit what's the matter
with the wifi reload fast forward I wonder if my roommate can hear this scene
through my headphones omg no this is not what I scroll
Hot Asian Whore Dominated While His Wife is Away ugh [click](#)

Nicole Shanté White is definitely the quiet one yo mama warned you about. Currently residing in Brooklyn, this cluster of Midwest accents and Southern hospitality writes, dances, and teaches from a black queer womanist lens. She is a recipient of a Poets House Emerging Poet Fellowship and a Weeksville Summer Arts Fellowship. Her work can be found in *Wussy Mag; The Feminist Wire; 92Y; Glitter Mob Mag; Wall Street; Yes, Poetry; Word Riot; and Day One*. Nicole Shanté is a contributing staff writer for Sula Collective, a Work/Study Fellow at the Mark Morris Dance Center, and a Writer in Performance at the Tribeca Performing Arts Center. This Brave New Voices alumna has performed at several notable venues, but would rather you be impressed by her functional addiction to Ben & Jerry's Half Baked ice cream.

Emerge-Surface-Be Fellows

Andre Alexander, 1984

Everyone becomes elaborate
with effort. Virtue
is a one-note
swan bucking
against
her own narrative
& here we are,
surprised. Thinking
some second-hand shit
you thought of
is new—no. What's
true is what remains:
I caught
the only light in
the room.
The work of
becoming nothing
was my job—
a consequential
carnage, deadened
by meaning.
What arrogant
assumptions of
permanence while
a city crumbles.
In the syntax of a
given moment,
elegance—

Jayson P. Smith is a freelance writer, educator, & curator. Their poems & interviews appear / are forthcoming in journals such as *Gulf Coast*, *Nepantla*, *Vinyl*, *fields magazine*, and *The Offing*. Jayson is a 2016 Emerge-Surface-Be Fellow & has previously received support from The Conversation Literary Festival, Crescendo Literary, Millay Colony for the Arts, & Callaloo. J lives & works in Brooklyn as a Workshop Coordinator for Cave Canem, Mentor at Urban Word NYC, & founder of NOMAD, a Crown-Heights based performance series.

Calendar of Events

All events begin at 8pm unless otherwise noted. Admission \$8/Students & Seniors \$7/ Members \$5 or free. The Poetry Project is wheelchair accessible with assistance and advance notice. For more detailed information about St. Mark's and accessibility, visit poetryproject.org or call 212.674.0910.

WED 2/1

Allison Cobb & Omotara James

Allison Cobb is the author of *Born2*, *Green-Wood*, *Plastic: an autobiography*, and *After We All Died*. She co-curates The Switch reading, art, and performance series.

Omotara James' work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Winter Tangerine*, *Visceral Brooklyn*, *The Coil*, *Gnosis*, *Font*, and *The Anthology of Young American Poets*. Currently, she is an editor at *Visceral Brooklyn* and *Art of Dharma*.

FRI 2/3

Cat Tyc & Nicole Shanté White

Cat Tyc is a Brooklyn-based writer/ videomaker whose work exists on the precipice of poetic mediology. She co-directs the Poet Transmit and is the author of the chapbook *An Architectural Seance*.

Nicole Shanté White's work can be found in *Wussy Mag*, *The Feminist Wire*, *92Y*, *Glitter Mob Mag*, *Wall Street*, *Yes*, *Poetry*, and *Word Riot*. She is a contributing staff writer for Sula Collective, a Work/Study Fellow at the Mark Morris Dance Center, and a Writer in Performance at the Tribeca Performing Arts Center.

MON 2/6

Rin Johnson & Oki Sogumi

Rin Johnson is a Brooklyn-based sculptor and poet and the author of two books, *Nobody Sleeps Better Than White People* (Inpatient Press) and the forthcoming VR Book, *Meet in the Corner* from Publishing House.

Oki Sogumi first surfaced c. 1988 in Seoul, Korea, migrated to the U.S., and currently lives in Philadelphia. Her writing dreams via friendship, speculation, communism, and squirmy life forms.

WED 2/8

"hey, you there, boss, i'm talking":

AWP OFF-SIGHT*

YES OR NO

The primary purpose of AWP is professionalization; It is difficult if not impossible to make money from writing and/or selling poetry; therefore, professionalization is a hoax insofar as

poetry is not a profession. **Simone White** hosts this groupthink, reading, strategy meeting, party for AWP reflections, critique, defenses and proposals for alternative gatherings. An up-to-date list of participants—writers, publishers, and arts administrators—will live on our website.

***Note: This event will take place at The Poetry Project in New York City!**

MON 2/13

Open Reading

Open readings have always been an integral part of The Poetry Project's programming. They provide a time and space for writers of all levels of experience to test, fine tune, and work out their writing and reading styles in front of a supportive audience. Sign-in at 7:45pm.

WED 2/15

Rizvana Bradley & Saretta Morgan

Rizvana Bradley is Assistant Professor of Film and Media Studies and African-American Studies at Yale University. She was the guest editor of a special issue of the journal *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* and recently appointed Assistant Editor at the journal, *boundary 2*.

Saretta Morgan is a Brooklyn-based reader / letter writer / animal keeper / veteran / plant waterer & water color enthusiast interested in [pleasure filled / queer / adverse / state] intimacies, shame and being Black.

WED 2/22

Lyn Hejinian & Jacqueline Waters

Lyn Hejinian is a poet, essayist, teacher, and translator. Her most recent book is *The Unfollowing*. Her prose work, *Positions of the Sun*, will be published by Belladonna in 2017. Other volumes include *The Book of a Thousand Eyes* and *The Wide Road*, written in collaboration with Carla Harryman.

Jacqueline Waters' book *Commodore* will be published by Ugly Duckling Presse in late 2017. She is the author of *One Sleeps the Other Doesn't* and *A Minute without Danger*. More recent work has appeared in *Elderly*, *Harper's Magazine*, and *Prelude*.

FRI 2/24

Sean D. Henry-Smith & Quito Ziegler

Sean D. Henry-Smith is a poet and photographer intrigued by their intersections. His first chapbook, *Body Text*, was selected by Lucas de Lima for the New Delta Review 2015-2016 Chapbook Competition. His work has appeared in *Tammy Journal*, *New Delta Review*, and is forthcoming in *Newspaper* and *Tagvverk*.

Quito Ziegler is an artist and curator with a radical imagination and an endless supply of sharpies. Quito is a founding member of the WRRQ collective. Other collaborative art projects include Queer Planet, the Forest of the Future, and many moonlight beach parties. They currently serve on the board of the Third Wave Fund.

MON 2/27

Julian Talamantez Brolaski & Francesca DeMusz

Julian Talamantez Brolaski is the author of *Of Mongrelitude* (forthcoming, Wave Books 2017), *Advice for Lovers*, *gowanus atropolis*, and co-editor of *NO GENDER: Reflections on the Life & Work of kari edwards*. Julian is the lead singer and rhythm guitarist in the country band The Western Skyline.

Francesca DeMusz is a working artist who has recently relocated from New York City to Portland, Oregon. Her work can be found in *All Stars*, on the Poetry Foundation's Harriet Blog, *Lit Hub*, *The Poetry Project Newsletter* and in various chapbooks and zines.

WED 3/1

Launch of Joel Oppenheimer's Lessons: Selected Poems

Joel Oppenheimer was the first director of The Poetry Project (1966-1968). Please join **White Pine Press**, **Jeff Wright**, **Basil King**, **Martha King**, **Elinor Nauen**, **Stacy Szymaszek**, **Dan Oppenheimer**, **Nat Oppenheimer** and others TBA in celebrating the publication of this new volume of his work.

MON 3/6

Lindsey Boldt & erica kaufman

Lindsey Boldt is the author of *<(())>*, *Titties for Lindsey*, and *Overboard*. Poems, essays, and other writings can be found at *Art Practical*, *The Drunken Boat*, and in the forthcoming *ON Contemporary Poetics*:

New Narrative Feature.

erica kaufman is the author of *INSTANT CLASSIC* and *cessory impulse*. She is also the co-editor of *NO GENDER: Reflections on the Life and Work of kari edwards* and of *Adrienne Rich: Teaching at CUNY, 1968-1974*. Recent work can be found in *SUPPLEMENT*, *Mantis*, and *The Brooklyn Rail*.

WED 3/8

Lee Ann Brown & Jackie Wang

Lee Ann Brown is the author of five books of poetry, most recently *Other Archer*. She is the founding editor of Tender Buttons Press, which is dedicated to publishing experimental women's poetry and recently celebrated the its 25th Anniversary with the publication of *Tender Omnibus*, co-edited with Katy Bohinc.

Jackie Wang is a writer, filmmaker, performer, and prison abolitionist based in Cambridge, MA. She is the author of *Tiny Spelunker of the Oneiro-Womb* and "Against Innocence." She writes dream-inspired poetry and is a doctoral student at Harvard University. Find her @ LoneberryWang and loneberry.tumblr.com.

FRI 3/10

Legends, Statements & Stars! (LSS): Raw NYC's up and coming children **Das Mannequin** and **Banjela Davis** bring you yet another dynamic evening of sound and vision with **Legends Statements & Stars! (LSS) Raw**: an open mic for the gods where we will invite self-identified LGBTQ rappers, writers, poets, beatmakers, singers, activists, and other noisemakers of color to sound their truth for a chance at \$100.

Das Mannequin a.k.a. Kaimi Glover is a Jamaican-American visual artist born and raised in Brooklyn. Das Mannequin fuses digital and traditional media to showcase black aesthetic, black pride, and black subject matter.

Banjela Davis a.k.a. Zach Frater is a Jamaican-descended producer, curator, and androgyne from NYC. She is a main collaborator on **Legends, Statements & Stars!**, a multimedia platform highlighting the personal testimony and creative spirit of the QTPOC community through talk series, showcases, street journalism, and zines.

MON 3/13

Tommy Pico & Sasha Smith

Tommy "Teebs" Pico is the author of *IRL*

and *Nature Poem*, forthcoming 2017 from Tin House Books, and has poems in *BOMB*, *Guernica*, and *The Offing*. Originally from the Viejas Indian reservation of the Kumeyaay nation, he now lives in Brooklyn where he co-curates the reading series Poets With Attitude (PWA) with Morgan Parker.

Sasha Smith is a Poetry Project 2016-2017 Emerge-Surface-Be Fellow. Her poetry can be found in *Poet's Country No. 1*. She is currently working on a project about gentrification in the Bronx, and the voices of Mount Everest. She blogs at <http://stesseract.com>.

WED 3/15

For Opacity: Visceral Poetics Now

A symposium that continues the collective work of Poetics of Healing and takes **Eleni Stecopoulos's** *Visceral Poetics* (ON Contemporary Practice, 2016) as a point of departure for new writing & dialogue to treat these times. Readings & performances may engage opacity & transparency; anti-imperial & anti-colonial poetics; "the chronic syndrome of the West"; healing & somatic practices; mother tongues & mongrel tongues; otherness & immigrant poetics; the writing of Antonin Artaud, Édouard Glissant & others.

Hosted by **Stecopoulos & Thom Donovan**, co-editor of ON Contemporary Practice. With **Charles Bernstein, Melissa Buzzeo, Jeanne Heuving, Madhu Kaza, Robert Kocik, Andrew Levy, Sean Labrador y Manzano, Marissa Perel, Kristin Prevallet, George Quasha** & others TBA.

MON 3/20

19th Annual Urban Word NYC Teen Poetry Slam Preliminaries

NYC's hottest teen poets compete for a chance to represent their city at the Brave New Voices National Teen Poetry Slam. Come support the voices of the next generation, as they take the stage and speak their minds.

WED 3/22

Pierre Joris & Kit Schluter

Poet, translator, essayist and anthologist **Pierre Joris** has published some 50 books, most recently, *Barzakh: Poems 2000–2012*; and *Breathturn into Timestead: The Collected Later Poetry of Paul Celan*. With Jerome Rothenberg he edited *Poems for the Millennium, vol. 1 and 2: The University of California Book of Modern and Postmodern Poetry*.

Kit Schluter is translator of Marcel Schwob's *The Book of Monelle* and *The King in the Golden Mask*, Jaime Saenz's *The Cold*, Michel Surya's *Dead End*, Amandine André's *Circle of Dogs* (in collaboration with Jocelyn Spaar), and several forthcoming. His writing can be found in *BOMB*, *Boston Review*, *Folder*, *Hyperallergic*, and the chapbook *Inclusivity Blueprint* from Diez.

FRI 3/24

Anna Craycroft & Thomas J. Lax

Anna Craycroft is an artist mining the fields of education, cinema, psychology, literature and art history to examine our cultural models for fostering individuality. Current exhibitions include a major new commission from the Institute for Contemporary Art, Boston as part of the exhibition, The Artist's Museum, and Tuning the Room a solo exhibition at Ben Maltz Gallery, Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles.

Thomas J. Lax was appointed Associate Curator of Media and Performance Art at the Museum of Modern Art in 2014. For the previous seven years, he worked at The Studio Museum in Harlem, where he organized over a dozen exhibitions as well as numerous screenings, performances and public programs. In 2015, Thomas was awarded the Walter Hopps Award for Curatorial Achievement.

MON 3/27

Talk: Trisha Low: Socialist Realism: Affective Geography for End Times

Trisha Low is the author of *The Compleat Purge*. She lives in Oakland where she is currently working on a book-length essay entitled *SOCIALIST REALISM*.

WED 3/29

Launch of *What Is Poetry? (Just kidding, I know you know): Interviews from The Poetry Project Newsletter (1983-2009)*

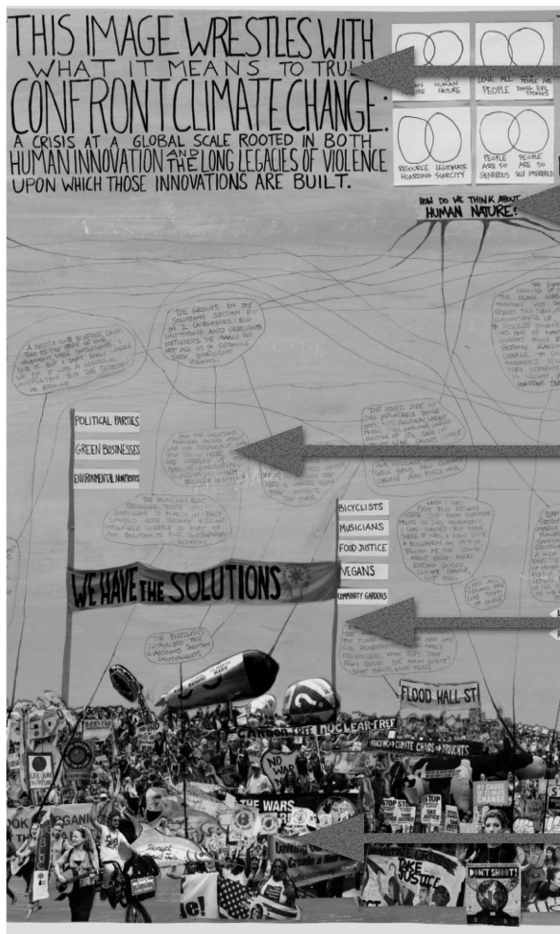
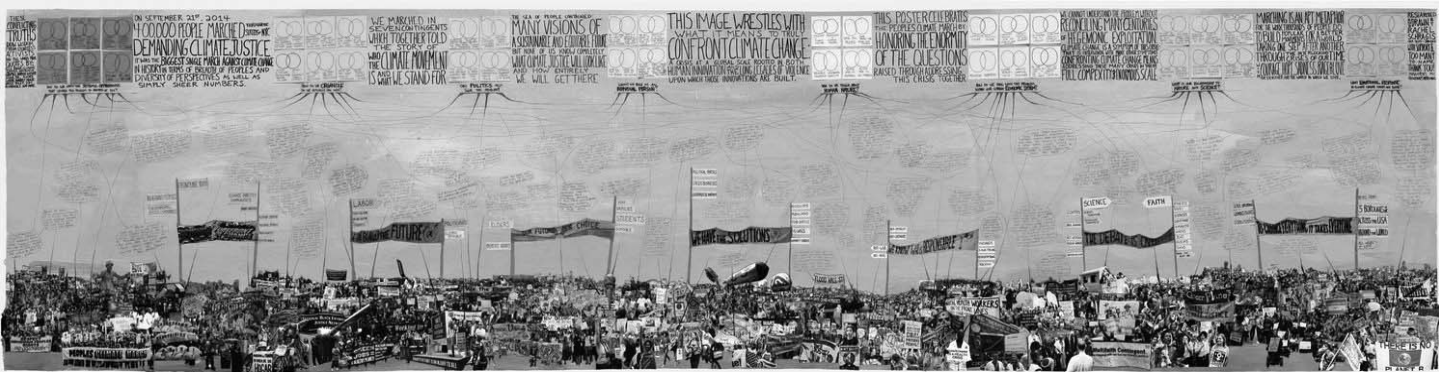
Book party and reading for *What Is Poetry? (Just kidding, I know you know): Interviews from The Poetry Project Newsletter (1983-2009)*, edited by **Anselm Berrigan**, published by Wave Books, and furtherly celebrating The Poetry Project's 50th anniversary. Various contributors will read/perform, including David Henderson, Marcella Durand, Edwin Torres, Brenda Coultas, Bruce Andrews & Sally Silvers, Arlo Quint, and Edmund Berrigan.

Art

This issue features details from **Rachel Schragis'** *Confronting the Climate: A Flowchart of the People's Climate March* (12'x3' mixed media, 2016). More information is available at <http://www.rachelschragis.com/>, <http://justseeds.org/>, or by contacting flowchartart@gmail.com.



Rachel Schragis



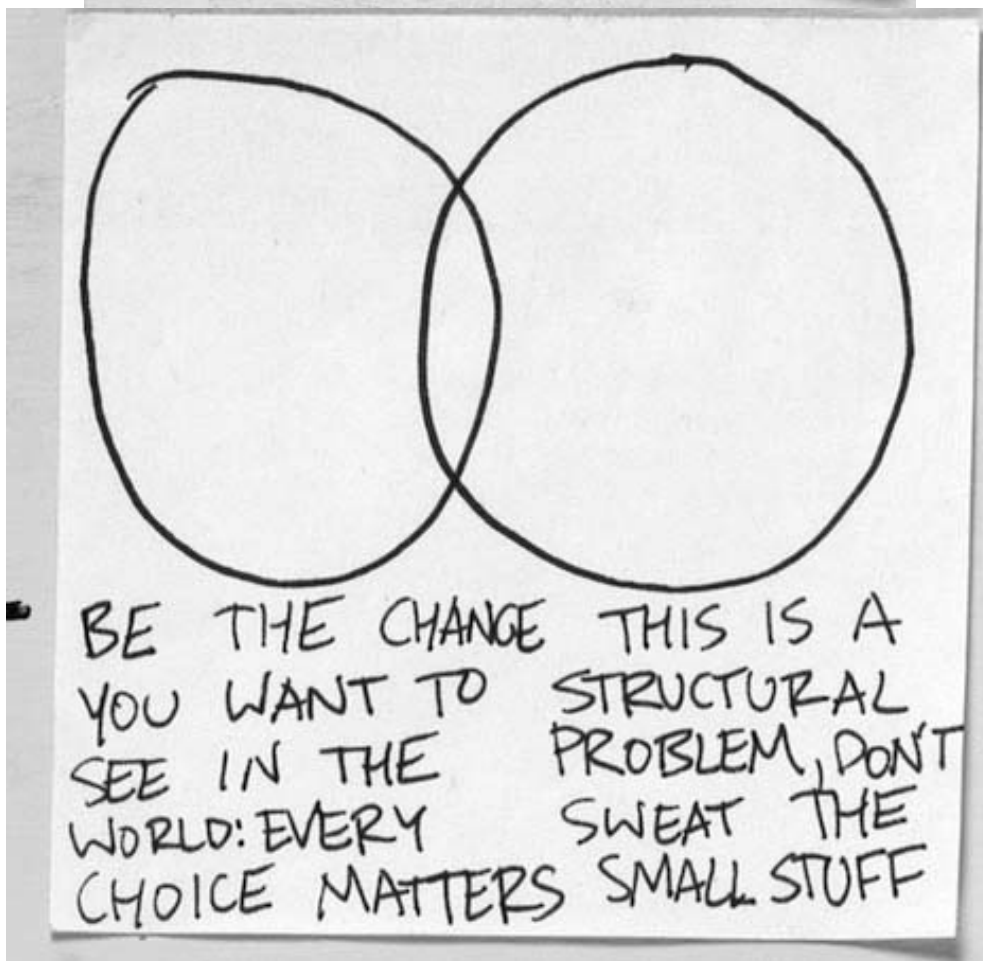
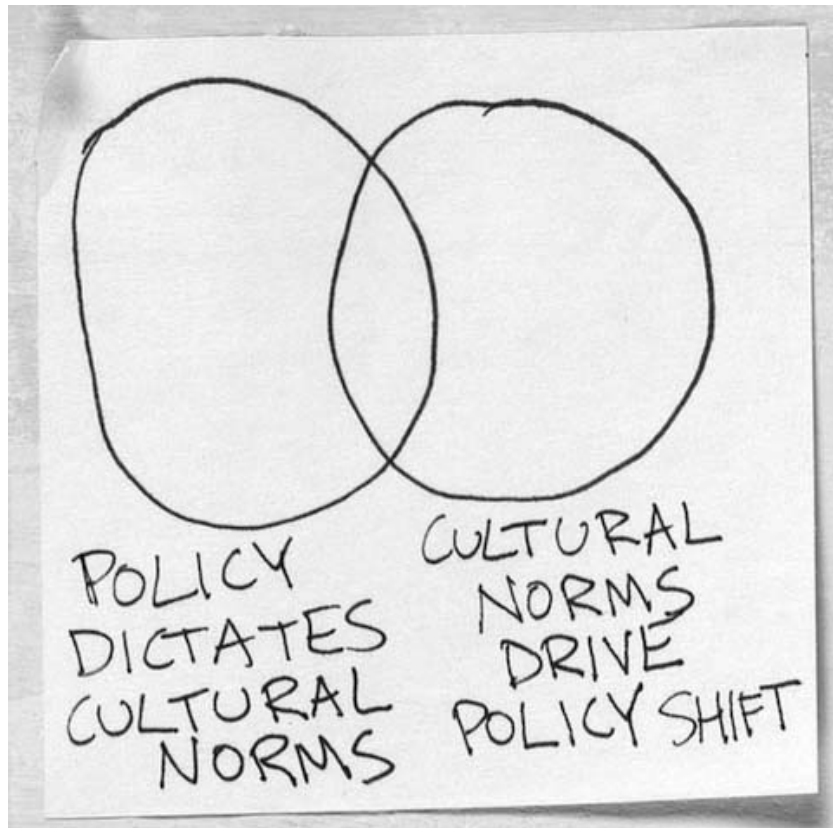
FRAMING TEXT EXPLAINING
WHAT THIS IMAGE IS ALL ABOUT

CATEGORIES OF BIG QUESTIONS
OF CONFLICTING TRUTHS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

STORIES OF PEOPLE ORGANIZING FOR
THE PEOPLES CLIMATE MARCH

FLAGS EXPLAINING
CONTINGENTS OF MARCHERS
AND WHO WAS IN THEM

COLLAGE OF THOUSANDS OF
MARCHERS IN THE ORDER THEY LINED UP





EVEN IN THE SECTION OF THE MARCH FOR POINTING FINGERS THE "DANCING FISTS OF RESISTANCE" WERE A HUGE HIT. DOES THE PERSISTANCE OF HUMAN OPTIMISM KEEP US FROM GETTING AS MAD IN THE STREET AS WE NEED TO?

Society has long leaned on artists as an important force in the participatory sport of Democracy. Artists help us see the poetry in the arduous work of demanding change. What social movement has succeeded without masses of people in the street, and also without gripping images and inspiring songs to bring those crowds to life? *Confronting the Climate: A Flowchart of the People's Climate March*, is an image that I have been working on for the past two years, that tried to rise to this challenge. It's an image that was generated out of my experience as the arts coordinator for 2014's People's Climate March, and that attempts to synthesize some of the many things I learned through that work. On the surface, this is a piece about the day of the march- a watershed moment in the climate movement, more than two years ago, when 400,000 people descended on Manhattan to demand just solutions to the climate crisis from global leaders. But it's also an image about a lot more. I chose to make this image about The People's Climate March because I see this event as an example of what is possible when we are not deterred by complexity. The image names many unsolvable contradictions of our world, and lifts up the experiences of real people choosing to act in the face of these contradictions.

As we prepare to face Trump's presidency and a cabinet of known climate denialists, it has never been more urgent for each of us to step into the fight for justice. Under the guise of championing regular working people, Trump points a direction for the United States that denies climate change, maintains white supremacy, and wildly exacerbates our unequal society by destroying the little social safety net we have in place for each other. Perversely, his vision makes palpable how all the different symptoms of injustice in our society are linked. To counter Trump's plan for this country, we need to have a shared vision for how we will work together to move off of fossil fuels, and build an economy and a culture where all people have the right to thrive. To win that vision, we need it to feel more real and be more seductive than the false alternatives.

Many days, I myself do not believe that this is possible. If we are to confront the climate crisis and the interlocking crises of oppression and inequity that fuel it, our work will require acts of collective moral clarity and coordinated bravery on an unprecedented scale. We need to be able to point to the People's Climate March, and to many other historic moments of collaborative heroism, as we prepare ourselves to be wildly ambitious and brave in the years to come. My hope for this art project is that it will operate as a bolster for this coordinated bravery, a handle we can grab onto as we lift ourselves up. The image is an invitation to fill an empty space or a quiet moment in your life with an ongoing, complex conversation about confronting climate change. I don't pretend this project is going to solve the climate crisis or defeat Trump- but neither do I want to shy away from the transformative potential art carries, or the scale of what is possible when all of us choose to step out from our daily routine, and into the giant, messy work of transforming our world.

- Rachel Schragis

Reviews

Residual Synonyms for the Name of God

Lewis Freedman

Ugly Duckling Presse, 2016

Review by Abraham Adams

It begins transparently, this book of opacity, a book that people will call difficult by virtue of the difficulty they themselves will experience when trying to think and speak about it in words other than its own. The transparent beginning (following a slipperier preface, attributed to an L. Freedman and dated to the week after the Nuremberg Trials) is a quotation from the German-born Israeli philosopher Gershom Scholem, at the heart of which is the sentence:

The meaninglessness of the name of God indicates its situation in the very central point of revelation, at the basis of which it lies.

This statement of poetics identifies the book as synonyms of something meaningless, which in Scholem's theological context is itself rendered through a group of synonyms: incantatory vehicles for the possibility of witnessing that for which meaning is a tautology, an obstacle, and a separation.

"The name has a name!" Levinas remarks enthusiastically in one lecture. If in Jewish prayer the revelation is affected among the incantation of formal synonyms of the Tetragrammaton, in Freedman's book, incantation is itself the "synonym," passages instead of proper names, "residua" of a process. The process is a performance of writing, and in this work, Freedman has not prioritized what poets normally do with that performance, that is, efface it through the *ex post facto* shaping and reduction of isolated gestures, the various techniques of which constitute what is normally considered poetic craft. It is instead witness to the movement of incantatory language, and it

tends to ramble, unlined, through given moments that could in themselves be seen as modest, or bland:

(18) Damn

The oft-repeated sin... stratum of excessive fatigue copying again in thought from the thought of fallen asleep within the overripe dream. Or a ring of half-anthropomorphic outsides painting the backdrop of what proves to be approaching... distance within the wire garnished with pictures of between telephone poles silhouetted as meaning.

For those who listen for it, Freedman's theonymic residua are variations in opacity, conductors of the sensorial variations of the reader's own attempt to read. Even if troubled by a growing sense that something is hidden (that this is actually a "poetry/essay," as Ugly Duckling [where I used to be an editor] has categorized it), the reader recognizes how the phases' manifest tendency toward being meaningless reflects and amplifies the various forays of the reading self's "failed" attempts to compose meaning in its encounters.

Reading opacity, I think: the quotidian range of movement in meaning is like the quotidian range of movement of the body, the spark of a sudden exception as sensorially recognizable as the activation of an obscure atrophied muscle, a sprain, vertigo, a sudden blow; beheld now in a disarticulated manifold.

(4) Speaking Ersatz

A known punishment is the loss of your soul... but did you know... like the national scene resists the foreign language speaker... great wealth passively corrects its crime by making pubic hair iridescently visible... through cloth... as a metaphor for... the negation of the said?

Here I am moved forward so that I do not await meaning, expecting to unlock reserves

of it. Where would it be, anyway? I see its passing atoms fragment my gradual sense an essay is becoming encrypted beneath my reading. Perhaps I hesitated at the title's threshold, or, for instance, the phrase "through cloth" reverberated with my recollection of the Photo-Secessionists, who photographed through gauze... but in the manifest arbitrariness of these instantaneously enfolded speculations, the atoms seem as if on their way somewhere, or genuflecting, turning toward something like leaves of "one of those trees that turns all its leaves over, silver, in the wind" (Anne Carson).

This book is undoubtedly framed by a discourse, and its particular references to the time of the Holocaust (not to mention formal resemblance to Blanchot's fragmentary Holocaust book), its invocation of the beginning of modern Israeli philosophy, and a feeling of the presence of Levinas, as one looks less into the meanings of passages themselves as outward toward the manifold of language at large... all this suggests there is much left to consider about this book beyond this initial encounter. Not the least of which is why opacity in general tends to arise in political repression and exile—Édouard Glissant from Martinique, Tomaž Šalamun from Yugoslavia, Wendy Lotterman perhaps from the Internet—and especially Paul Celan from Germany. One might easily rush to say that repression prompts artists to hide (to encrypt) meaning, and yet for an artist such as Celan, whom literal hiding failed in the sense that he could not hide his parents from the Nazis who kidnapped and killed them, perhaps (as "The Meridian" in fact suggests) the opacity of a singular place, a singular thought stands against language's ability to encrypt any horror.

Abraham Adams is an artist based in New England.

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Voice's Daughter of a Heart Yet to Be Born

Anne Waldman

Coffee House Press, 2016

Review by Alex Braslavsky

Among the much that is striking in Anne Waldman's *Voice's Daughter of a Heart Yet to Be Born*, published this year by Coffee House Press, is the cutting imagery throughout, so close in its alignment with the female form that it is almost too proximal. Yet a solace also comes with the prospect of cutting (i.e. of the umbilical cord) as an act that occasions birth.

Each section of the poem is inaugurated by a photographic shot of a woman who has been carved out by another woman, sculptor Kiki Smith, and whose image is the direct result of having been chiseled. Waldman's poem thus explores both the acute danger and the creative potential of directed and applied force upon an object.

Blake's presence is potently drawn upon, as Waldman traces the behaviors of his unborn figure Thel. As an allegorical figure, Thel is expected to stand the test of time. She is subjected to eternity. But in *Voice's Daughter*, Thel is "ignited by impermanence" and wields an exacting control over time's outcome, by "cut[ting] obstacles before they arise" (13). Waldman also evokes the triumvirate of Mary figures, of which "the temptress Magdalene / [is] like a razor of circumstance" (20, emphasis mine). Again, we see how a timeless figure like one biblical Mary carves out her own 'circumstance.'

In an awed moment, the speaker also tells us she

“brushed past [her] own sex / twitching body / saw-toothed pattern / vibrates the brain scan” (18). She is confronted with the teeth of her own existence, accompanied by a sense of estrangement from womankind, a sense that culminates in the last stretches of the poem, when the breast is taken from the speaker.

With all of this cutting, so comes bereavement—the perverse imagery of stacked graves, ripped from the earth and treated as token items by the “surgical” hands of power, the memory of a deceased friend which surfaces in the process of undergoing surgery, and the recurrence of the Blakeian Lily, Worm, and Clod of Clay, all reminders of the cut as bringing death, and of death as a reaping figure.

But the poem is not bereft of humor. In the funny and poignant “Dear Locator” section of its midriff, the poet responds to a series of inquisitive letters sent to her by various people, starting off with a figment from someone who attempts to locate the poet through a dream. The section builds as the poet re-appropriates in newspaper-clipping fashion an archive of requests of the female “to send articles of intimacy” (26).

To parallel the experience of women, we see the powerful truncation of language throughout Waldman’s poem—“writ” as a stand-in for “written,” for example (13). The speaker inquires incisively into the reader’s psyche, asking “why is your desire? / a missing link brittle, world link-brittle” (81). The appearance of the dash between link and brittle emphasizes fracture despite doing the work of ‘linking’ and the article “a,” which replaces the expected “the” before “missing link” generalizes that fracturing. Even with the pain of lopped-off language, “Allow[ing] in mind the it / short of iteration” (78), the speaker still vows to “want a bigger poetry” (81).

Voice’s Daughter also recedes from bereavement. A care after posterity is expressed throughout the piece, and also after the vast primordial realm that precedes birth, the moment before the umbilical cord is snipped, when mother and daughter are still connected. With the umbilical cord as a site of severance comes a woman’s need to navel-gaze. And with all of this comes the sense that the unborn is still among the living, causing us to question when birth begins. Birth’s blurred origins helps to repair scars and healing comes “in the pleasure of feeling all the divisions / in the torment of feeling all the divisions” (82).

Alex Braslavsky is a writer and scholar studying at Barnard University.

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PearlStitch
Petra Kupperts
Spuyten Duyvil, 2016
Review by Marissa Perel

I was carrying *PearlStitch* on the B train on a humid late Spring evening. Petra and I laid in the Elizabeth Street Gardens and laughed at the horrible inaccessibility of New York City. I had touched her feet on the grass; beneath our skin laid red clover and webs of plants gone wild. *Heavy Cassandra, your form (leaching) beneath my fingers. Is this clover? Is this clay?* I was wearing a pink linen shirt, a black leather bow tie. With one hand, I held her book; the cover, a dripping wet lace-covered tongue, and with my other hand, I steadied my black wooden cane against a metal pole of the train car. Both the holding of the book and the holding of the cane against the metal becoming dialogic, becoming sexual, part of a queer-crip mastery of balance and style developed through years of reading poetry on a crowded subway. Whether it was subversion or spell-casting, I cannot say: *The body that surrounds this light a prison, poison, shade, the world is sick / where is my place of rest?*

Two guys seated across from me spotted the book cover, they stared and averted their eyes when I looked up at them. *listen all the way to the end, whore, widow, gather your wood... / in the men’s domain, beg for the pig to disturb the roots.* A woman who had been standing in the adjacent doorway was about to leave the train, but before she exited, she shouted at these men, “I am pregnant and you didn’t think to offer me a seat.” Then, she pointed at me, “she has a cane, and you’ve been staring at her without giving her your seat.” The men stare blankly at her, and start to laugh... *now / shy not release the lioness the panther flesh-eating revenge goddess.*

The men start heckling, which means they start talking loudly so that everyone on the train can hear them, “We didn’t know she was pregnant, she was hot! We didn’t know she actually needed the cane, it looks like a style!” (*Alien’s vagina dentata, my mouth does not clamp shut, Frankenwoman with invisible wires / where I can’t feel them, feminist cock stranded shore flesh politics...*). I look at the men with a cold stare, and just at that moment an older woman of color sitting on an inside seat offers me her seat. I tell her to stay there. “Which one of you is going to get up?” I ask the men. Silence.

Now you have pierced the storm cloud shred the membrane/ slash the lions and tigers circle... One of the men gets up and takes the metal pole overhead. He continues to talk about the body of the pregnant woman loudly to his friend. “Stop talking about that woman’s body,” I demand, “See if you can remain silent for the rest of the time I’m on this train.” “Bitch,” he says.

ravenous maw that cuts into curve balance on the needle/ one breath, and it falls: sword bite, I turn toward the window away from the man’s face. He sneers, “I bet you like that book.” He hasn’t seen the

words in the book so I guess he means I like the book’s cover. I guess he means I like a fem/femme’s tongue wrapped in lace. I would like that. I do like my tongue wrapped around a fem/femme’s lace. Or I like a dripping wet tongue. Of course I do. I look up at the guy and say, “Yes.” *Invagination implies a confusion about the side you are on / Which team do you play for and what about the organs? / The heart / is more or less in the middle.*

The woman sitting next to me gets up. The man slides into the seat, glaring at me. He’s not going to stop. He sees the small Whole Foods bag I am also carrying. “So you like Whole Foods. I bet you are one of those people who ‘cares about the environment’.” *Inflammatory responses attack the pollutant don’t go away/ help wouldn’t hurt so much let me rephrase / let me speak with my liver / Bioremedial intervention requires the transformation of the toxic element, / its ree / valuation and reinsertion into the holistic organ / ism.*

“I guess I am one of those people,” I say, as if we are even having a conversation. As if, with every line he utters, he’s outing something shameful about my identity, as if a picture of a wet tongue on the cover of a book signifies deviance as read by my gender, as if holding a cane is a magic trick meant to confuse his ableism, as if holding a Whole Foods bag means something humanitarian. As if not holding my dick in one hand and a hot dog in another renders me a non-being, a traitor. *maybe it would be safer if you walked back, do not take the bus, avoid the public spaces / do not talk to strangers / keep your gender alive in the luminous image on the wall above your bed.* The train arrives at my stop and I get up. I look around and realize that everyone in the car has been staring at this harassment. I make eye contact with the people standing around the door, mostly other men who

give me sympathetic eye rolls and grunts as I exit.

Marissa Perel is an artist and writer making solo and collaborative performance on subjects including choreography and disability, crip time and queerness, power and access, and pain and desire.

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Calamities **Renee Gladman**

Wave Books, 2016
Review by Saretta Morgan

Quotes I remember often while reading Calamities.

“Being is sufficient.”

— Tonya Foster, often

“I imagine they imagine their freedom in the spaces they create.”

-Torkwase Dyson, Studio Museum Harlem, February 2016.

“[Leslie] Hewitt heightens our awareness of the split temporality of photography as not only an intellectual and emotional experience, but also an embodied one.”

-Jennifer Blessing on Hewitt’s “Rifts on Real Time, 2006-2009” for the Guggenheim’s *Photo-Poetics*

Three events to consider alongside one another.

In early December I woke up in a hotel room with two poets. A third poet arrived. I changed my clothes over a dark bed while one poet showered in the tiny shower and the remaining two continued conversation by the window against cutouts of morning light.

The third solo in Reggie Wilson’s *CITIZEN* begins with a male performer standing to the rear of the stage. He tilts his abdomen slightly left and then slightly right in order to reach down and remove his socks. They are tall, dark, athletic socks. He then continues his movement by stepping onto the stage.

Typed on a piece of paper. A note in one of several display cases, item #107 of Beverly Buchanan’s show, *Ruins and Rituals* (Brooklyn Museum, October 21, 2016 – March 5, 2017):

LEON’S CHIMNEY – Part 2

Interview Question:

Would you say knowing that SLAVE hands built this chimney has a special meaning or says something about SURVIVAL?

Answer: (Direct, unblinking, eye contact)

What I thought to consider alongside Calamities.

- *Expanding the Repertoire: Continuity and Change in African-American writing*, (Tripwire issue #5, Fall 2001). Collected critical writing, conference papers, poems, images, panel transcriptions and afterwords from Will Alexander, Wanda Coleman, C.S. Giscombe, Renee Gladman, Erica Hunt, Arnold J. Kemp, Nathaniel Mackey, Mark Morris, Harryette Mullen, Julie Patton, Giovanni Singleton and Lorenzo Thomas, participants in the conference of the same name organized by Gladman and Singleton in 2000 at San Francisco’s New College.

-Ariel Goldberg’s text-based encounters with Renee Gladman, as presented in *The Estrangement Principle*; particularly these excerpts from Gladman: “I want to present the difficulties I perceive one faces when speaking of experience in language, especially when one’s sense of identity is complicated by an estrangement from the dominant culture.” But also that

growing up in a Black city around Black people gave me a relationship to language that I’ve fought to hold on to. The instinct to create a language within a language...

- *Toaf* (Atelos, 2008)

What I feel reading Calamities.

When Gladman writes, as she does at the start of the majority of essays in this book, that she “began the day...” I understand that well before she sat or stood to commit pen to notebook or finger to keyboard or paper to unimagined geometry, she was writing. Not by forming sentences in her head, though maybe all the time she was doing that as well, but through attention to the history and potential embodied in a gesture / phrase / piece of light— the unfolding narrative often masked by private automations and mythology.

In these essays (and their collection) I find several nods to a question I’ve asked now too many times to count: as queer black and brown women, how do we both speak and maintain what is ours? Or how do we present an alternative without being perceived and targeted as the threat we represent?

Gladman’s wonders— brilliant and self-aware even when materializing just beyond her reach— on the mechanics and experience of writing through objects that are at once foreign and intimately felt, compose her narrative movement: her deepening into a set of reflective postures, a singular cartography that both models (and creates space for) story-making we have not yet been equipped to recognize.

To tell a story is to be moved physically through time and material. Mouth opened and then shut. Tongue lifted. Gladman doesn’t fight it. She begins the day by looking up at a white board, asking for a map, imagining a [suitable] place, or by *staring into the face of the question of narrative*. She begins the day this way even while acknowledging the inexhaustibility of narrative— its tendency to absorb what it touches, so that Gladman’s thinking about narrative quietly evolves into the thing itself.

Gladman continues this way throughout *Calamities*: her precise gestures and her

fumbling each their own embodiment of thought through which she steps perhaps not outside of, but with little regard for, “the essay” as it is most easily identified. This mode of progression / refusal to narrate solely from within an inheritance of discursive impulses codified by western academic ideologies, appears not for the sake of transgression, but rather to be simultaneously seen and rendered invisible in plain sight.

Saretta Morgan is a Brooklyn-based train reader, animal keeper and plant waterer.

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The Crown Ain’t Worth Much **Hanif Willis-Abdurraqib**

Button Poetry, 2016
Review by Laura Henriksen

I’m on a bus in California thinking about *The Crown Ain’t Worth Much* by Hanif Willis-Abdurraqib, by which I mean wondering what is bigger than life. Sovereign power? Ohio? Music? Death? Whitney Houston? Nothing? Summertime? And I’m wondering if that’s even a clear articulation of the question I’m asking myself, looking out the window, listening to sad power ballads.

Well, I think it’s clear for one that sovereign power is not the answer. Before we even begin the book, Willis-Abdurraqib has told us how much a crown is worth. He explains further in “On Hunger,” the first and perhaps thesis poem of the book, when he writes

And I say now what I have always known: // a king is only named such after the blood of anyone who is not them pools at their feet and grows to be a child’s height before running down a hill, flecking the grass of a village crowded with quivering mothers and their boys, huddled underneath a new and undone black sky.

This king and their power is made of blood and pain, but not in the same way a living human body is, because a king’s blood

is always already spilled and never was their own, whereas for the people if anything is their own it is their body and blood, which perhaps is why state violence is so invested in spilling it, and most invested in doing so if it comes from a black body, which it sees as threat to its sovereign power, unbelonging in its national borders.

Against the crown Willis-Abdurraqib proposes things that bring pleasure and enable survival. Music, friendship, parties, love. One thing this book is an argument that to fight a tyrant you have to tell your own story, that in many ways you yourself and your own power are the alternative to the tyrant. And so *The Crown Ain't Worth Much* tells a life's story beautifully— it takes us from a boyhood in Ohio, in longing and in danger, never unaware of mortality as friends and family die, but never untouched by life, running away from sirens without being told, getting into punk music no matter how unwelcomed by white kids. It takes us through college years, the apotheosis of dancing in basements, the solitude of being the only one stopped by the police after the party,

belonging and not belonging:

both this one in front of us, and all of the other towering kingdoms on this land which is not truly ours but still feels like it is ours by right, or by the journey.

It takes us to marriage, to all the wise things a wife says, a ghost mother says, to a grown man, husband and son. A punk venue closes, but there's no time to worry about whether or not punk died / is dying / will be dead, because that is not what death is about.

So goes the story.

This is where I tell you what I most want to hear myself: none of it was real. I am still sitting in a diner on the Eastside of Columbus and it has not felt like summer for ten whole years. There is still a living mother, hovering over a sewing machine in the home I can always come back to. My name is still scrawled on the bathroom wall of a dive bar. The dive bar is still a dive bar. I am a forest of beginnings. I am never alone. I do not bury. I do not funeral. I can still look into mirrors.

Much like in confronting the brutality of the crown Willis-Abdurraqib presents, not the false alternative of a different sovereign or a differently named oppressive power, but

instead the alternative of the power of his own life, body, and self as representative of a diffuse power present in all those who survive a state who would prefer they did not, his own pleasure and pain, the chronological narrative is also a sort of simultaneous time, like the way listening to the same song in different places at different points in your life (in Jeff's mom's car, in Club 185, Bexley, 2003) is always still the same time, you are still all of you, still everyone you love and every place you've been and everyone who cares about you, your body and your joy. This book is subversive in its power to survive being black in the United States, and one of the locations of that subversion is through Willis-Abdurraqib's escape from chronological time and violent state power.

In "On Hunger," the lion, here the wearer of the crown, is torn apart by the wolves, here those the lion would seek to rule. This book is about Ohio, but not limited by Ohio. Willis-Abdurraqib asks us to imagine the violent overthrow of the lion in a world with only one land, "where the wolves do not have to lose any of their own to be fed. Where the food they desire

comes, trembling, to even their smallest // children. Where they have a homeland. // Don't have to run into every untethered // night howling into emptiness." On the bus in the golden state, I gladly imagine such a land, the end of hungers that do not serve, tyrants, gentrification, violent summers, and racist punks. More music, more love, more fresh, more music. If anything is bigger than life it's a bigger life.

Laura Henriksen's poems have been featured in Poor Claudia's Crush series, and Fewer and Further Press's Asterisk series. Her poems and reviews can be found in *The Poetry Project Newsletter*, *Brooklyn Rail*, *Clock*, and *No, Dear*. Her first chapbook is forthcoming from Imp.

—
A Dark Ordinary
Susanne Dyckman
Furniture Press Books, 2016
Review by Alexandra Matraw

If you open to any page of poet Susanne Dyckman's second book, *A Dark Ordinary*, you'll witness a quiet battle between longing and belonging, the oppressed and the oppressor. With near prophetic power,

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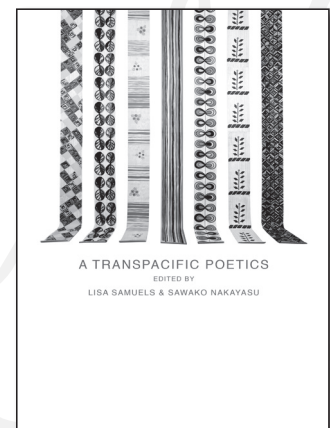
A TRANSPACIFIC POETICS

EDITED BY Lisa Samuels & Sawako Nakayasu

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—Elizabeth DeLoughrey

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Dyckman captures America's current social divisions, tracing tensions that are as relevant to the 1910s as they will continue to be after Trump's inaugural year. In these spare poems, she gives lyrical voice to early 20th century American immigrants, child laborers, and low wage workers whose civil liberties were denied and whose histories have been silenced by time's passage. The middle and main section of the book, *crossing*, imagines those voices through the early 1900s photographs of labor reformer Lewis Hine, animating his under- and mis-represented subjects as bodies

become math, done and undone
... listing, we are

finite and frightening

or an infinite always

Lines like these summarize the

book's indictment of a system that willingly commodifies children and struggling adults as mere "bodies," numbers in a listing that add up to a lucrative bottom line. The poems explore dark notions of lost innocence, marginalization, mortality, and home(lessness). Yet throughout, Dyckman also paints a "finite and frightening" human nature, a selfish one we've come to expect as ordinary, as one with extraordinary and "infinite" capacity for empathy.

Although the bulk of the work features the Hine-inspired poems, *A Dark Ordinary* is bookended by two brief sections called *mercy* and *return*. Interestingly, *mercy* opens with language from "the traditional Latin mass, translated into English," while "The OED provided the source for *return*." Taken together, the Latin mass, Hine's photographs, and the OED are all meaning-

making documents that offer people ways to recover a sense of meaningful location in lives that can feel all too dislocating, particularly due to corrupt social systems and time's inevitable slog.

Here, Dyckman suggests, through religion, photography, and language, identity reclamation is possible. These modes, which might all be called art, provide panacea: "when the unspoken intercedes / a secret is / to remember your (name) and your (name)." *mercy*, sometimes given to abstraction, provides prelude to the heart of the book with engaging lines like these that seem to ask the reader to "kindly" enter a conversation with the "unspoken" stories hidden in the faces of Hine's photographs. Certainly, the fragmentary nature of Dyckman's poems, and American history itself,

depends upon such empathetic reflection if forgotten lives are to be uncovered in poetry that acts as a "kneeling to memory as sung and known." *mercy* invites the reader to consider the process of writing and reading as a spiritual practice, with its stripped religious language and images of ritualistic prayer an evocation of the muses. Art becomes a form of devotion to the past and present that offers the poet/reader potential protection from "misery": "protection / misery means my mercy thoughts / enter my right side." Yet can art ethically give agency to those society represses and history forgets?

For Dyckman, who seems to be the "I" in the *mercy*,

the word [she] strike[s]
is bread is servant
is forever
[she] strike[s]
Mary Mary May Ma

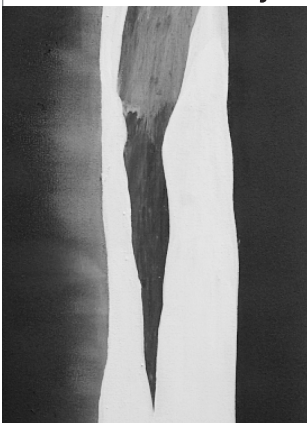
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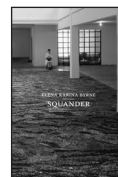
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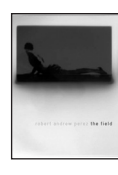


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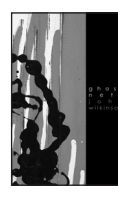
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“The word” is not that of “God” but of poetry itself, a landscape where Dyckman reaps for harvest and “strikes” for gold, a space where words are mined as “bread” that nourish the body in place of Jesus, cleanse the soul in place of “Mary,” rejuvenate like spring’s “May”, and nurture as any good parent.

return features similarly beautiful, surprising images that explore concepts of family and home. Like most of the poems, they too address questions of representation, but in a more universal way. Aren’t we all, one way or another, “connected to a false relation” and “looking for refuge”?

crossing documents these politics of representation by alternating versified vignettes, written in the first person voices of Hine’s subjects, with third person omniscient prose blocks. Dyckman avoids heavy handed social commentary in favor of quieter, factual poems tended with rich imagery. In narrative lyrics that recall the characters of William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, she describes an America where immigrant children are “sorted” like objects on a grocery shelf, where they are “told to say / [they’re] all of age or near,” where they are “heavy under harness” of change purses and “shell the treat [they’ll] never buy” with hands that become “leather. . . full of sting. For one child, hope is the small “coin sewn safely in [her] hem.”

For all, time translates into a yearning to “make the day go quickly and to stop the speed of night.”

Dyckman creates further paths and social critique through forms that frequently juxtapose two poems on a single page. For example, midway through *crossing*, she presents two poems about accidents. The top versified poem acts as a suggestive verbal snapshot telling of a cloth making child who lost a hand to the greedy capitalist machine, “a spider on a hunt. . . that is, for [his] hand.” “food,” the bottom poem of the same page, acts as an ironic coda to the child’s trauma, describing a rich family’s bountiful meal, “filled with platters, resting heavy on a white damask cloth whose starched surface is dotted with spills. . . A single green bean slipped from its hold.” One imagines the mouthwatering food that wealthy factory owners devour, while Dyckman’s juxtaposition implies that these well fed consumers think as little of tarnishing their “white damask cloth” as they think of how the system they empower has tarnished the innocence of those children who suffered to make it. The child becomes the “single green bean slipped,” his hand and future prematurely cut down by the gentry’s appetite. The poem “seams” on the opposite page strengthens Dyckman’s interrogation, detailing cloth that must be stitched so “pristine” that both sides maintain “invisibility

of work, no trace before completion.” Clearly, these marginalizing power dynamics speak to today’s immigrant families, undocumented peoples, and other innocents threatened with deportation or other forms of erasure. The tensions between these poems also demand that readers reflect upon what part *they* have in this “machine that has always been.”

Clearly, high stakes attach to a project in which anyone, particularly a person of relative privilege, chooses to speak for the voiceless dead. Some readers may worry Dyckman herself risks objectifying her subjects for the sake of good poetic material. Yet the poems’ precise, concrete imagery, self consciousness sensitivity, and observational style ultimately unveil issues that are too real and immediate to dismiss. Dyckman holds her subjects with the same tenderness she imagines young laborers devote to their work: “heat on my back but can’t look / the spool moving so fast / I attend to it.” In fact, the poet’s attentiveness encourages readers to face their own discomfort and complicity as she admits that all art, and language itself (“A part, apart, aperture. Too many definitions”), contain elements of violation and misrepresentation. She does not exclude herself from this judgment. Because of the shifting, slippery properties of language and interpretation, truth cannot hold, and we’re all suspects of exploitation.

Effortless and exact, *A Dark Ordinary* confronts dark themes while reckoning with ways to find “an infinite always” in “some elsewhere.” These captivating voices speak convincingly from history’s edges as they relish the senses and the imagination, glimpsing “shafts of light with tangled ends,” believing there is a way “To sing away the threat, to find solace in echoes.” Dyckman encourages us to do the same, despite the violences inherent to the act of living in a hierarchical society where “a scatter of debris trails our patterns” and where “time will multiply” our regrets without mercy. As we dive into the political tumult of 2017, look, listen, and empathize:

She has heard of windows being cut into walls... has noticed sunshafts bend around corners... has felt a breeze blow in from no source.

Alexandra Mattraw is the author of four poetry chapbooks, the most recent of which is forthcoming from Dancing Girl Press in early 2017. Her reviews, poems, and interviews have been featured in places including *The Volta*, *Denver Quarterly*, *American Letters & Commentary*, *VOLT*, *Coldfront*, *The Conversant*, *Fourteen Hills*, and *1913 Journal of Forms*. A former Vermont Studio Center resident, she curates a quarterly writing, art, and performance series in Oakland called Lone Glen.

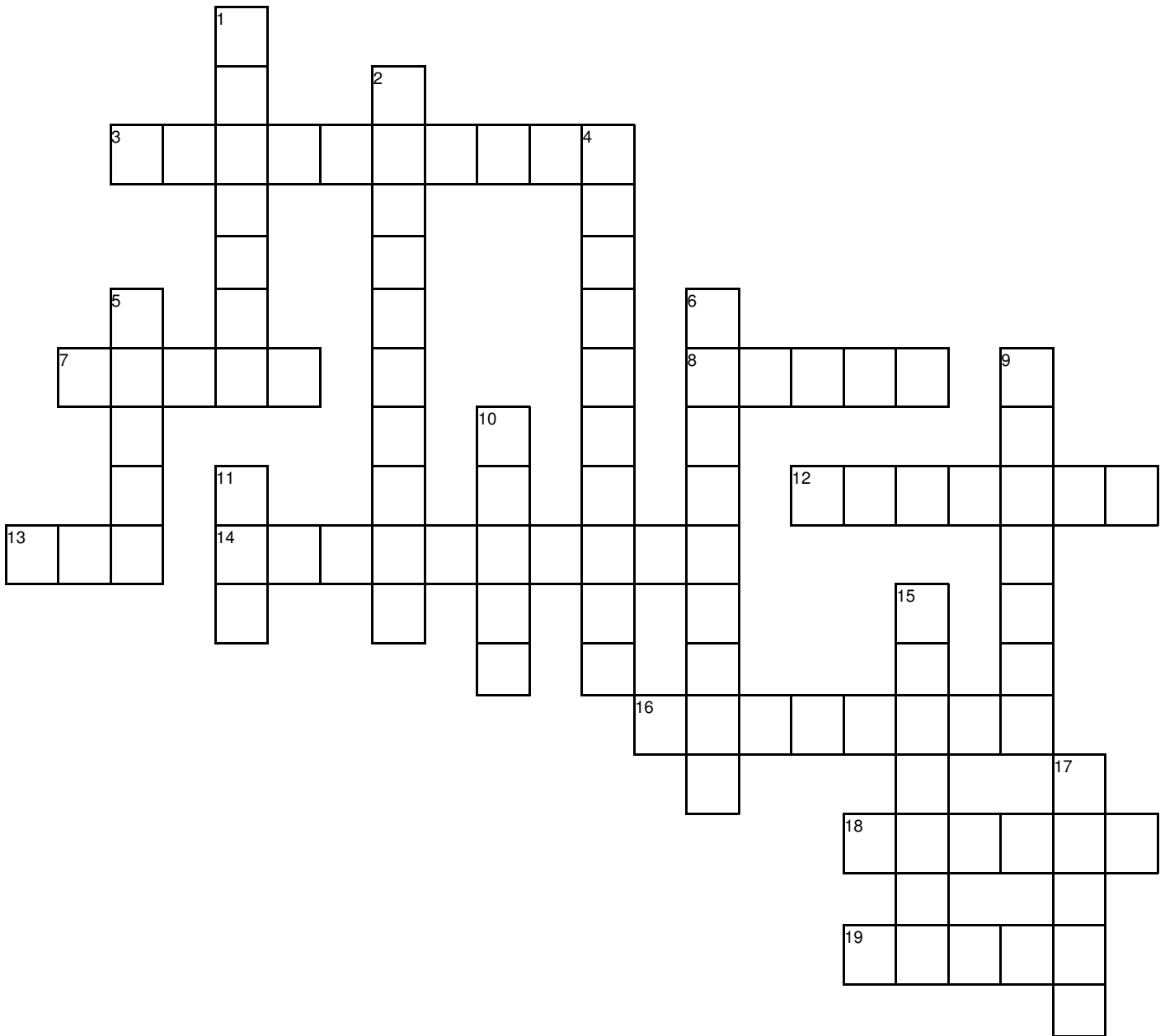
Clues and answers to the post-truth puzzle are taken from

**William Shakespeare’s “When my love swears that she is made of truth”
(Sonnet 138),**

Emily Dickinson’s “Tell all the truth but tell it slant —” (1263), and

Maya Angelou’s “A Brave And Startling Truth”

post-truth



Across

- 3. We are the..., the true wonder of this world
- 7. When my love swears that she is made of...
- 8. Past... stars, across the way of indifferent suns
- 12. Nor the Gardens of...
- 13. And the body is quieted into...
- 14. It is possible and... that we learn
- 16. The Truth's superb...
- 18. The Truth must... gradually
- 19. We... that we are neither devils nor divines

Down

- 1. Success in... lies
- 2. On both sides thus is simple truth...
- 4. Unlearned in the world's false...
- 5. And children dress their dolls in flags of...
- 6. In whose mouths abide... words
- 9. I do... her though I know she lies
- 10. Tell all the truth but tell it..
- 11. Therefore I... with her, and she with me
- 15. A... where every man and every woman
- 17. Or every man be...



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