



# THE POETRY PROJECT

December 2017 / January 2018

Issue #253

# The Poetry Project

## Dec. 2017 / Jan. 2018 Issue #253

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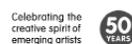
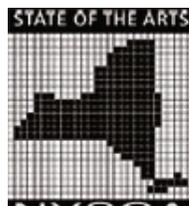
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Cover image: "Pollock Posing" courtesy of the artist Andre Bradley

# Letter from the Director

Dear Readers,

In early October, we made a big announcement on our website and email list, but for those of you who get your news from this newsletter, I will be retiring from my position as executive director at the end of June.

I'm not one to feel that anything is perfect. However, my tenure at the Project for the past thirteen years (eleven as director) has never ceased to provide me with the sense of being made for something. A life in poetry was my imperative, and it took many years to hold my own as a poet, and to figure out how to make a living "in the field." I got my dream job. Yes, everyone knows being an executive director of a nonprofit is hard, often thankless (often unseen), work. Yet even the challenges seemed to have an air of right problem, right time about them.

In my first "Letter from the Director" in Fall of 2007, I wrote that my goal was to keep doing what the Project does best—poets, readings, audiences. While an elegant goal to the core, it wasn't ever to be graceful. Maybe I always had my shirt on inside out or backwards or something. There continues to be an array of challenges the Project must face. The world changed a few times during my tenure, and will again. I'm most proud that the Project with all of its laurels was able to summon the agility to turn ships around on dimes in order to respond to the times.

I recently looked at a nerdy notebook I kept in 2003-04. I made a list of poet's names, at least 100 of them, that I was collecting from sources such as A Secret Location on the Lower East Side, All Poets Welcome, and The Poetry Project Newsletter. I would then read whatever Woodland Pattern Book Center had by them, or look for their work online. I think this is how I was brought into the New York City poetry fold so fast – via a memorized list of poets and

their work, some famously known, most not, a map both practical and phenomenal. When I knew I was going to first meet Bob Rosenthal to shop for beans for the Marathon chili together, I brought in my copy of Cleaning Up New York and asked him to sign it.

Some advice to the next director is to bring all of your awe to the job. Don't eat the bad apples. And, it's good to help stack the chairs after readings at least for a few years. I keep hearing C.S. Lewis's twist of a line from Corinthians (with my own twist): When I became a woman I put away childish things, including the fear of childishness and the desire to be very grown up. Also great advice.

I'm so grateful to every former Director of the Project (soon to be a sub-lineage of 8) for making the impossible possible "on the level everyday," and for reasons I'll spend many more months trying to express to them privately. I'm also thinking of friend, ally, and former board member Ted Greenwald a lot these days, wishing to shake his hand after all of this. At least I can watch him in Les Levine's "Poker Blues." In the remaining 8 months of my tenure, I look forward to being present for what we do best—poets, readings, audiences. And reaching the fundraising goal of last year's 50th anniversary campaign (see the next page for a status update).

Who's next!? Our board of directors is conducting a national search for the Project's next leader and will be accepting applications till December 15. Please visit our home page at [poetryproject.com](http://poetryproject.com) to see the job description with instructions on how to apply.

Stacy Szymaszek

# Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

Hope you have something warm in hand as you delve into the work of poets Jay Deshpande and Raquel Salas Rivera. Andre Bradley comes through with the archive as artform, read his statement on pg. 16.

Also feel very grateful for Cathy Park Hong's answers to my questions on

pg. 30 -- her ideas on our industry and reflections on intersectional poetics -- a continuation of a conversation we began with fellows at Poets House in 2017 -- one that has stayed with me and hope we can continue together as a community.

The reviews are a knockout thanks to John Rufo's curation, read their intro on pg. 21, and brace yourselves as

Sean D. Henry Smith turns review into beautiful epistolary.

Also in this issue, we pay homage to the greats we've lost (pg. 6) and Roberto Montes reflects on the intersections of poetry, politics, and identity.

Until soon, mh.

EDITORS EMERITI: Ron Padgett 1972–1973 / Bill MacKay 1973–1975 / Ted Greenwald 1975–1977 / Frances LeFevre 1977–1978 / Vicki Hudspith 1978–1980 / Greg Masters 1980–1983 / Lorna Smedman 1983–1984 / Tim Dlugos 1984–1985 / James Ruggia 1985–1986 / Jessica Hagedorn 1986–1987 / Tony Towle 1987–1990 / Jerome Sala 1990–1991 / Lynn Crawford 1991–1992 / Jordan Davis 1992–1994 / Gillian McCain 1994–1995 / Mitch Highfill 1995–1996 / Lisa Jarnot 1996–1998 / Brenda Coultas & Eleni Sikelianos 1998–1999 / Katherine Lederer 1999–2000 / Ange Mlinko 2000–2002 / Nada Gordon & Gary Sullivan 2002–2003 / Marcella Durand 2003–2005 / Brendan Lorber 2005–2007 / John Coletti 2007–2009 / Corina Copp 2009–2011 / Paul Foster Johnson 2011–2013 / Ted Dodson 2013–2015 / Betsy Fagin 2015–2017

# Announcements

## **THE 44TH NEW YEAR'S DAY MARATHON BENEFIT READING**

It's the beginning of November and we are swiftly approaching our annual gathering of 150 poets and performers, the 44th New Year's Day Marathon Benefit Reading!

The Marathon is, of course, our signature benefit event. Tremendous audience, volunteer, and artist support has made it so. As an event, it exaggerates what we want each reading during the season to do— to provide a site of collective agency, and create a communal and generative space for the audience and the poet to experience new work. The Project receives many requests to perform in the Marathon, and we feel fortunate that so many people want to help us meet our fundraising goals. We only have 150 spots and a seemingly unlimited artistic community to draw from.

Here is some basic information about our selection process:

- The Marathon is a curated event, i.e. not run open-reading style where people can sign up. Invitations are issued by our Programming Committee, which is comprised of Poetry Project staff and all of our series coordinators.
- The final schedule consists of people who are in one or both of the following broad categories: performers who have a longtime connection to The Poetry Project and/or the Downtown arts scene (poetry, music, film, dance, but poetry in particular); poets who are actively participating in the NYC literary arts scene by giving readings, publishing books, organizing readings, editing journals, etc.; and/or performers who have never participated in a Marathon before.
- Each year we feature 30 to 50 first-timers, which means that many who performed in prior years aren't going to be able to participate again. If you are invited one year, it doesn't mean that you will get invited every year. This is not to be taken personally!
- Lastly, reading is just one way of participating in the event. There are volunteer opportunities (about 100 are needed) to help sell books, food and drink, assist in checking in readers, etc. We deeply appreciate your support and your understanding of the effort it takes to present this feat of a fundraiser. If you're interested in volunteering please email Laura Henriksen at [lh@poetryproject.org](mailto:lh@poetryproject.org).

## **50TH ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN UPDATE**

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 - and our audio archive of 4,000+ hours of poetry is housed at the Library of Congress.

As we enter our second half-century, we want to strengthen our local, national, and international connections by starting web-based workshops, a digital magazine with audio and video content, live-streaming of readings and events, and making audio archives of all Poetry Project readings available online.

Our gala honoring Anne Waldman last April raised over \$100,000 toward our \$350,000 campaign goal. To date we have raised \$290,000. Can you help us raise the remaining \$60,000 so we can realize this expanded vision? Please visit [poetryproject.org](http://poetryproject.org) to make a donation or send a check to The Poetry Project, 131 E. 10th St. New York, NY 10003. Thank you to all of those who have already contributed!

# In Memoriam

**Sam Shepard 1943-2017**  
by Anne Waldman

## Sweet Vortex

"Careers don't interest me. The only thing that interests me is continuing to be a poet on one level or another, whether acting or writing or directing." - Sam Shepard

"Theatre Genesis is a mix of counterculture ingredients; a coolness that can explode like liquid oxygen, a dropout hipsterism, a polymorphous perversity of language and feeling, a Zap Comix mocking of straight heads." Jack Kroll - *Newsweek*

Sam Shepard got his start at Theatre Genesis. Founded in 1963 by maverick Ralph Cook, a man barely out of a nervous breakdown who happened into the incubator of St. Mark's Church In-the-Bowery. Ralph brought a host of other theatre guys (very hetero!) through the doors. This stampede included Murray Mednick, Leonard Melfi and Sam Shepard who worked as a busboy at Art D'Lugoff's Village Gate on Bleecker (now Poisson Rouge). I first saw Sam at the Gate -- heart-stopping handsome, slim, kinetic, playful, smart, 'authentic cowboy' as someone commented. This was during a run of extraordinary powerhouse Nina Simone, her performances milestones of the time. Genesis was coming into its own. This was before the funding from the Office of Economic Opportunity under Lyndon Johnson kicked in. I saw the Beckett inspired "Cowboys" and "Rock Garden" at Genesis that year and caught the bug. Everyone recognized Sam's talent. I started having dreams of Sam as my "animus". The guy I wanted to be. I was writing "The De Carlo Lots," editing *Angel Hair Magazine* with Lewis Warsh. I was writing "the Works", as Ted Berrigan called our poems. "Shepard is feeling his way, working with an intuitive approach to language and dramatic structure and moving into an area between ritual and naturalism," Michael Smith wrote in the Village. Acting a role in one of Ralph's plays of a young woman on the edge, I suddenly

heard voices from the back: Sam and buddy Charles Mingus III heckling my gravitas! I also helped produce Sam's radio play *Icarus* for WRVR at Riverside Church and remember walking down Amsterdam, Sam excited about the \$10,000 check from the Rockefellers he had burning a hole in his pocket. One night some months later, The Project began, Sam wandered into the poets zone in the parish hall where we were all waiting for John Wieners to show, late on a train from Boston. A football was being tossed around and Sam joined with characteristic esprit. Then John arrived in gold lame, weird hybrid angel, and the mood shifted as he let his poems drop like molting feathers. One leg of his pants suit was rolled to the thigh, voice stopping and starting, halting, fragile. O you poets, Sam said, aside to me in this sweet vortex of St. Mark's memory.

—  
Anne Waldman is the former director of The Poetry Project. Her most recent book is *Voice's Daughter of a Heart Yet To Be Born*, Coffee House Press, 2016.

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**John Ashbery 1927-2017**  
by Marcella Durand

## Remembrance

What do you give the person who has everything? And how to write facing all the writing that has already been written about John Ashbery? There are so many possible ways to honor John and his work, but I'll begin with what seems the appropriate focus of the Poetry Project, and how my connection to John led first through here.

It was on the stairwell that leads from the Parish Hall to the upstairs that John Ashbery and I met for the second time. I was rushing up, he was walking down. I was Program Coordinator at the time—a job I'm sure I wouldn't have held if I hadn't first heard John read from *Selected Poems* in college, an experience that subsequently shifted my life and work's trajectories toward "being" an "experimental" poet in NYC. Anyway, on that stair, John met my eyes and

smiled, then said hello. I couldn't figure out how he would know me, because I'd only once handed him a book to sign out of a long line of other like-minded audience members, but it felt like we did know each other, sort of how when I first heard him read, it was like I had already known his work, and how could I not have known it, and him, before?

Then through the Project, I met Olivier Brossard, who was working for the Cultural Services of the French Embassy at the time, and, as I found out later, assistant to John Ashbery. When it came time for Olivier to return to France, he asked if I would be interested in replacing him. Would I? And so began five years of working for John, five years of opening that door to his Chelsea apartment (Olivier and I have talked about how the photo of that door posted online may have affected us more than any other image after John died on September 3), five years of feeling much same way I first did on that stairwell—a levitated feeling, like, is this for real?

Best of all was when John would dictate letters to me. I loved following how he'd craft his sentences—often he'd add a twist to the end, and then watch to see if I'd laugh. Once he began a letter to a particularly uniquely named young poet, "Dear [so-and-so], what a funny last name you have..." (Of course, that salutation didn't make it into the actual version.) Other joys included seeing a new poem left on his manual typewriter, or listening him type as I worked in the back office, often stopping to run my eyes over all the delectable books on the shelves there—first edition Laura Ruidings, *The Kalevala* (both editions), *Travels in Arabia Deserta*...

John's world certainly had its divergences from the world I knew—many of the poets and critics with whom he corresponded didn't read at the Poetry Project, maybe wouldn't even be caught dead here. I'd feel intimidated by the larger, often international world of arts in which John was well known and well regarded. But then there would be a letter from, say, Bernadette Mayer—or some other reassurance that John could still be more raw than cooked,

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per Robert Lowell's well-known delineation, or more hip than square, per Frank O'Hara's also well-known delineation. One time John received a letter that he had been named a chancellor to some prestigious something or another. John, his husband David Kermani and I stood for a minute silent, looking at the list of chancellors before David said pretty much what I had been thinking, "John, how ever did you become part of this?"

When Anselm Berrigan, newly director of the Project, asked me to edit the Poetry Project Newsletter, I dared to ask John to write something for the first issue on a poet I knew he admired and wanted to see more admired by others: Joan Murray. Murray was a young poet who died a month before her 25th birthday in 1942, but whose work was published five years later, chosen for the Yale Younger Poets series by Auden, who also chose John's *Some Trees* for the same series in 1956 (and yes, the story around that choosing has comforted thousands of contest-submitters for decades). Anyway, the deadline drew close and even closer, then John's piece arrived: a beautiful essay I think I enjoy rereading as much as John writes he enjoys rereading Murray's work. (Strangely enough, I found a pristine copy of *Poems* by Joan Murray at an obscure bookstore around the same time.)

I miss John. There. I said it. I've been comforting myself since his passing by reading his work most mornings, opening the day to his poetry. The last time I spoke to him was on his 90th birthday, on July 28. He seemed a little sadder than usual, and after he said he had trouble moving, joked, perhaps wistfully, as I remember him saying it now, "But you know me—I like lying around anyway." Here, toward what should be the end of this remembrance, I can't seem to find a way to get there gracefully. But then, John's endings were never pat or predictable—the closure is never forced. *Flow Chart*: "It's open: the bridge, that way."

--  
Marcella Durand worked as John Ashbery's assistant from 2002-2007. Her books include *AREA*, *Traffic*

& *Weather*, *The Garden of M.* (*Le Jardin de M.*) and, most recently, a chapbook, *Rays of the Shadow*, published in October by Tent Editions

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## Jack Collom 1931-2017 by Jonathan Skinner

### Bird of Passage

Thinking of Jack now I see him up early, in bathrobe at the typescript and photocopy-laden desk in his Boulder office, amidst dictionaries, poetry books and field guides, musing over a yellow legal pad, Dot's Diner ballpoint in hand, or at the Selectric, typing up a letter to one of his many and various correspondents. Jack might be distracted by a squirrel's or sparrow's shenanigans out the window ("the squirrel in the Colorado blue spruce/ is running wild"), or his attention might wander to Jennifer Heath's wild garden out back: "I fall to dream/ in a field of Jenny."

These observations would make their way into Jack's letter: "Now it's the morning of 2012. What will fly away? Displace movement? Birdlist so far: robin (great monotone trill as I opened the front door), starling (faint squeal), then (from back door) English sparrow, crow songs."

In line with the "limitless variety" the world held for Jack, each day began a new list and ended with one or several poems. Jack's sense of nature always overstepped and upended categories—noting, in another letter from San Francisco, how he and Jenny enjoyed "the ontological endlessness of Cindy Sherman in one museum & quality dramatizations of nature in the science museum."

Jack's life and work perpetually activated such refreshing juxtapositions, including many insets of nature in the urban environment, as in his contribution to the *Avant Gardening* anthology, "A Few Crumbs from the Houston Street Median-Stripe Naturewalk." Jack might have associated these "crumbs" and "stripes" with "spandrels," a term he borrowed from Stephen Jay Gould, for the ineradicable spaces left over

from squaring an arch, to denote the "necessary fluff, the effluvia of a natural process." Jack's poetry "spandrelized" everything (nature, culture, language, corner pocket shots) through immersion and looking closely:

Surrounded by bone, surrounded by cells,  
by rings, by rings of hell, by hair,  
surrounded by/  
air-is-a-thing, surrounded by  
silhouette, by honey-wet bees, yet/  
by skeletons of trees, surrounded by  
actual, yes, for practical/  
purposes, people, surrounded by  
surreal/  
popcorn, surrounded by the reborn:  
Surrender in the center/  
to surroundings.  
("Ecology")

Jack was gifted with a lovely, expressive voice. I remember first hearing him sing *Passenger pigeon* at Naropa University, as he read from "Passage," his great documentary ode to the extinct North American migrant, once so abundant its flight "darkened the sky/ for three days": "Hoo woo!-oo—hoo, hoo, hoo."

I miss Jack's letters, but he has left us (with the help of numerous collaborators) a superabundance of carefully composed poetry, prose and genre-defying work. Jack's publishing affiliations (Lodestar Press, Rocky Ledge Cottage Editions, Dead Metaphor Press, Rodent Press, Baksun Books, The Figures, Farfalla Press, Fish Drum, Adventures in Poetry, Tuumba, Monkey Puzzle Press, Instance Press, to name a few) remained largely small-press local, with some forays into the Bay Area, New York or New England. Yet I am convinced that his work will find its place in our poetry canon beside the likes of Lyn Hejinian (with whom Jack collaborated extensively), Clark Coolidge or Ed Roberson.

I emphasize the work and the performances (for the latter, go online to hear Jack read "Recipe for a Blue Heron" and "Ecology," for the *Poets' Co-op TV Show*) because Jack may be best known for his prodigal teaching of poetry writing, over more than forty years to people of all ages, a proven pedagogy gathered in at least two

# In Memoriam

volumes published by the Teachers & Writers Collaborative (Poetry Everywhere and Moving Windows). An avid reader of science and aesthetic theory, Jack applied ideas from biology to his work in the schools, comparing visiting poets (with the "heirloom autonomy" of their strange DNA) to the "larger-than-life" mitochondria vital to the "cell life" of the classroom: "They're a bit weird but essential."

Jack also started teaching "Eco-Lit" at Naropa as early as 1989, before the academic discipline of ecocriticism had gotten off the ground and well before ecopoetics was a thing. Each year I received a stapled Eco-Lit anthology of his students' best writing. In this way, Jack's poetics have mutated out into the lives and work of literally thousands of poets. As someone who worked in factories for two decades (a toxic occupation that put Jack on oxygen in his latter years), with a decidedly non-elitist attention to creative spark, Jack was well aware of poetry's capacity to save lives.

Reading through a generous selection of Jack's poetry in *Red Car Goes By*, I note a shift—right about the time (late eighties) that he started juxtaposing bird guide language with descriptions of factory life, in his "Exchanges of Earth & Sky"—from "I"-based descriptive narration to phenomenological observation. The "I" in Jack's later writing is decentered, "just a swirl" inviting in the collapse and ironies that "arbitrary connections" bring, flaunting literary taste with goofy catches of language and bodily frankness, bursting the bounds of "poem" and "voice" for a more thorny (sometimes "pushy") process of thought.

The world pole-flips one more time, mechanically geo-mantric, shakes the pants off of objective dance to reveal gradual chance, just numbers having a ball, as the rationale of it all. ("Arguing with Something Plato Said") Jack also began writing extended essays in verse, and vice versa, putting poetry into his prose. The delights of tongue-twisting words always came

first. But from *Arguing with Something Plato Said* (1990) onwards—and evident in his sumptuous collaborations with Lyn Hejinian, their *Sunflower* (2000) being among my favorites—Jack's was serious play, with a philosophical bent, focused on the "extremes & balances" of a species whose passage is proving to be ephemeral yet catastrophic to its host planet: as Jack writes near the end of his Passenger pigeon ode, "& we are/ birds of passage"

Jack's "life's work" of this thought was put together as *Second Nature*, a book that, in Jack's own words, "ranges from more-or-less reasonable exposition through surprise-laden antisyntax, sweet field views, satire & protest, lists, found poems, rants, offbeat metrical sonnets, happenings in a universe of mice, concrete compositions, woodsy memoir, eco-theory, acrostics, misquotes, collaborations, recipes, interview excerpts, and possibility-catalogs, finding humor (incongruity) in all corners." It's one of the most various, richly interlocking texts I know.

More than anything, I remember and miss Jack's humor—"We've got about two feet of snow all around us! We're lucky to have it & lucky it's two feet – it can get up and walk away." I recall Jack's high tenor laugh, or gawp of delight at a fun line in a "pass the poem" collaboration. Or the way Jack would often close his letters with a whimsical sign-off, "May all your camels sip Bacardi through silver straws." Or with a more educational salute, "May all your camels play guitar like Roy Smeck."

As I edited Jack's *Second Nature*, with Andrew Schelling, Marcella Durand, and Elizabeth Robinson, Jack noted heartily, at age eighty, "I AM STILL learning." I will be forever grateful to Jack not only for his writing, his bird-listing, and his advocacy for vulnerable small invertebrates, but for his spirit, for teaching us to keep learning, to never be bored, and to roll with contingency: "Yesterday's walk (Boulder Valley Ranch) yielded lark sparrows, a butter-breasted chat, a big redbird, kingbirds, & I'm outa paper."

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Jonathan Skinner has authored the poetry collections *Chip Calls*, *Political Cactus Poems*, *Birds of Tiff* and *Warblers*, in addition to numerous critical essays, and is founding editor of *ecopoetics*. He teaches in the Writing Program and in the Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies at the University of Warwick.

# Job Announcement: Executive Director

Dear Friends of the Poetry Project,

We have big news: Come June, we'll be wishing a bittersweet goodbye to our executive director Stacy Szymaszek, who will retire from her position at the end of this season (June 2018). Stacy has been an incredible ambassador for the Project over the past thirteen years—eleven as director—and we remain grateful for her vision, dedication, and tireless service to poetry.

Over the next few months we'll be seeking out the Project's next leader, and we're pleased to share the job description with you. Please help us reach a wide national audience by sharing this opportunity with your personal and professional networks. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Camille Rankine  
Board President

## **POETRY PROJECT SEEKS NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

This is summary of the job description. For the full document, please visit our home page at [poetryproject.org](http://poetryproject.org).

**Start Date:** June 2018

**Deadline for Applications:** December 15, 2017

### **Key Objectives:**

Expand and deepen the organization's artistic and community impact.

Maintain, advance and diversify the organization's funding base and implement sustainability measures within the organization.

Ensure an enduring record of excellence in programming and reputation.

Collaborate with stakeholders, allies, and partners to expand organization's reach and cultivate an inclusive environment.

### **General Responsibilities:**

The Executive Director fosters the development of the artistic and strategic vision of The Poetry Project, oversees its administration and the implementation of its programs, acts as the Poetry Project's primary ambassador, and is responsible for its overall fiscal health. They ensure that (a) the quality and diversity of programming is consistent with the Poetry Project's history and mission; and (b) that the organization is effective and responsive to our stakeholders and mission.

### **Specific Responsibilities:**

The Executive Director is specifically responsible for: vision and programming, fundraising, personnel, budget and finance, public relations, media and communications, and governance.

### **Qualifications:**

Demonstrated management experience, preferably in a non-profit arts organization, or comparable experience;

Thorough knowledge of poetry and the literary arts community, preferably with experience curating a reading series;

Strong leadership, focus and self-direction, as well as strong presentation/facilitation skills;

Excellent written and oral communication and outstanding interpersonal skills;

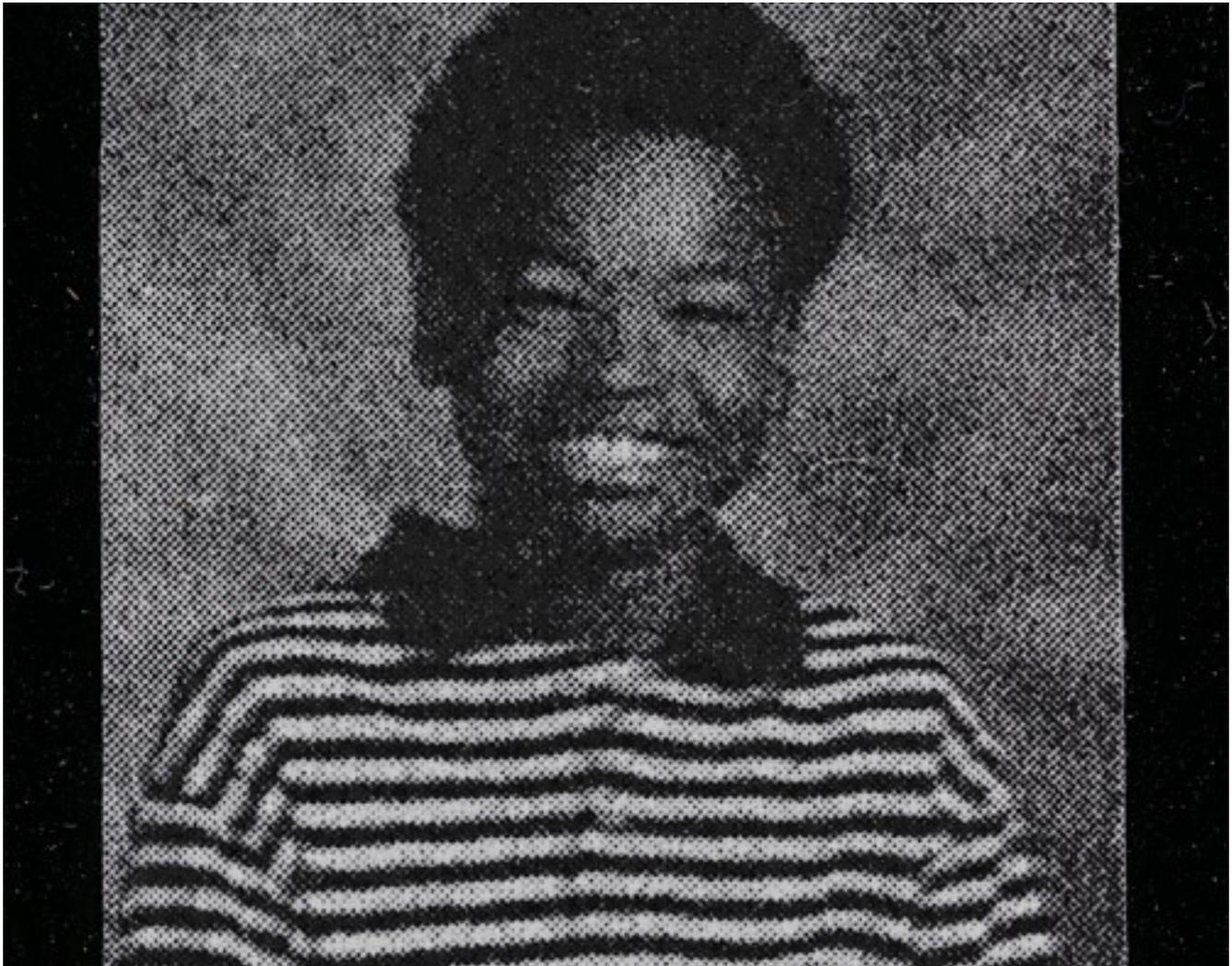
Proven ability to raise funds from public and private sources;

Facility for interacting with and building rapport amongst a culturally diverse community of audiences and artists;

History of building and sustaining collaborative partnerships/relationships among stakeholders and supporters.

**How to Apply:** Email cover letter, resume, and 3 references to [executivedirectorsearch@gmail.com](mailto:executivedirectorsearch@gmail.com) by 6pm on December 15, 2017. In subject line please put "Poetry Project Executive Director – [Your first name and last name]".

# ART: Andre Bradley



Portrait detail from cover image "Pollock Posing" courtesy of the artist Andre Bradley  
Feature continued on pg. 15

**Lost & Found: The CUNY Poetics Document Initiative**  
publishes unexpected, genre-bending works by important  
20th century writers.



**COMING FALL 2017**

**Audre Lorde  
Toni Cade Bambara  
June Jordan  
Paul Blackburn  
Julio Cortázar  
Jack Forbes**

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GRADUATE  
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# POETRY: Jay Deshpande

## YOUR FATHER WAS HERE

Your father was here. He was digging in the ground all night. At daylight, he was putting a tent in front of your door. He was standing under each tree in turn, taking meticulous notes. He was changing shirts depending mostly on the weather. Your father was here all right. He was so happy to have met you. He was absolutely more than cordial. He was a lone figure in a forest of lone figures. He was accurate unto death. Your father was forgetting phonemes, certain phonemes. Your father's eyes were getting brighter. Your father was standing on the narrow branches. Don't look up at him. Your father was here where the lead lines the basins. Your father was here and was filled to satiety. Your father said it like that, "Satiety." Your father was on the highway. He was moving with deliberate speed. He was telling you the words to a song but not singing them exactly, not with any sort of music in his voice. Your father said he was coming back. He said he was coming back. Now where was it he said that.

--

Jay Deshpande is the author of the poetry collection *Love the Stranger* (YesYes Books), named one of the top debuts of 2015 by *Poets & Writers*, and the chapbook *The Rest of the Body*. He has received fellowships or support from Kundiman, Civitella Ranieri, Saltonstall Arts Colony, and the Key West Literary Seminar. Poems have recently appeared in *Boston Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *LARB Quarterly Journal*, and *Horsethief*. He teaches at Columbia University and lives in Brooklyn.

# GRIEVANCES

compiled from the social media of Roberto Montes

If we understand cowardice as the choice to flatten possibility so that no other you is possible

If we speak for a moment openly

Last year, She said to me triumphantly, "You think I don't like Obama because he is black but you're wrong. I don't like him because he is Muslim."

Some clarity comes only through bewilderment

Just as some power comes only through its surrender

I have been stewing the past few months in the totality of my failure

Which I chose to see as a failure of poetry

Specifically, the failure of poetry to address the political realities that I

In my arrogance and wishful-thinking

Could not see

For the first time in my life I wondered

What is the purpose of poetry?

And could not answer

So I began to think about cowardice

Culturally cowardice has been introduced to us

As a failure to fight when the hope of your victory is slim or

The insistence to fight when your victory is overwhelmingly assured against a much weaker, sometimes incapacitated, opponent

There is a subtext here that a coward fears death

But that does not seem to me to be entirely accurate

A coward, most of all, wants to avoid suffering

But it is not the avoidance of

suffering that marks someone as cowardly

It is the means they employ

And the extent to which they go

To avoid suffering

This is also compounded by the nature of the suffering that threatens them

Is it physical? (e.g. imminent bodily harm)

Is it moral? (e.g. guilt, remorse)

Is it mental? (e.g. cognitive dissonance)

Is the suffering real or imagined?

A person suffers every day

But even more often than that

They imagine they suffer

If a person has an identity

And that identity becomes a source of meaning to them

Provides them with context and purpose

Does a threat to that identity

Constitute suffering?

Misgendering causes suffering

This has been scientifically and medically documented

But those who refuse to countenance trans identity

Also claim suffering

That they are "being forced" and therefore acting against their will

To recognize an identity they would prefer to not recognize

Is one claim of suffering more substantive than the other?

Of course

The recognition of this only takes some education

Which is to say

Those with no idea need only be introduced to the idea

Once they are introduced to it

It is no longer an issue of education

But a choice of what to do with the information

This choice is complicated by historical context, contemporary culture, a larger background of knowledge, etc.

But it ends at a choice, however weighted by experience and culture

How does one get to

"You think I don't like Obama because he is black but you're wrong. I don't like him because he is Muslim."

You cannot intellectualize yourself to this position

You cannot educate yourself to this position

This is a position that was slowly built up

Over time

Over many choices

What to believe

What beliefs would cause suffering

What sufferings are real

America today does not suffer an intellectual crisis

This is a crisis of cowardice

And it is cowardice that has become the mantle of the right

And it is cowardice that propaganda outlets like Fox News and Breitbart

Stoke and spread to inculcate

# GRIEVANCES

compiled from the social media of Roberto Montes

even more fertile susceptibility to cowardice in their target audience

Trump is the patron saint of cowardice

Someone who reacts to minor suffering

That of a bruised ego or perceived slight

With the full power of the office of the Presidency

His targets are hopelessly less powerful than the United States Government

And he acts ruthlessly to target them

People of Color, Queer people, Undocumented peoples, Religious minorities, Women

The GOP attacks the poor, the medically ill, the disabled, the prospects of young people

And assuages their guilt with cotton ball reasoning

In today's political climate there is no greater presence than that of political identity

And the right has developed an identity incapable of withstanding even the slightest possibility

That their beliefs are cruel

And so react cruelly to such realities

As I write this, Fox News and other Murdoch Owned Conservative outlets

Join Russian propaganda bots

In their calls for Mueller to resign

And for Hillary Clinton to be jailed

These are not positions that are arrived at through education

These are choices to assuage the suffering of cognitive dissonance

Or the brief lessening of political

power

These are choices to ravage people and institutions

That may provide the possibility

That the right is what it appears they are

Though cowardice is not solely a problem of the right

It affects everyone regardless of affiliation

The right has perfected the machine of cowardice however

Weaponized it against us and themselves

The possibility that the suffering of Roy Moore

Who is forced acknowledge a world where queer people and people of color exist

Is less than the suffering he and politically-aligned institutions

Inflict on those same people

?

If this were true

Imagine the immensity of guilt

Of humiliation

It is this immensity

The threat of this suffering in their periphery

That drives the coward deeper into themselves

They act fastidiously to nullify any possibility

That they can be changed by a revelation of themselves

They are who they are

Their beliefs are fixed because they must be

To entertain for even a moment

That other beliefs are possible

That oppressed groups are, in fact, oppressed

Can you imagine the hell that would be?

It is the possibility

That things are Other

Than what we tell ourselves

That afflicts and horrifies

That a queer person could be a good person

Is literally unsustainable for someone whose identity

Depends on queer people being evil

Either the identity is broken and reevaluated

Or the coward chooses to move further into themselves

Each time, the possibility of them being wrong

Threatens ever more suffering

If we understand cowardice as the choice to flatten possibility so that no other you is possible

If we understand poetry to be the invocation of the possible

What is the purpose of poetry?

The purpose of poetry is to destroy the universe

—  
Roberto Montes's latest book is *Grievances*, available from The Atlas Review.

# POETRY: Raquel Salas Rivera

terrorism is some shit white people  
do when they are having a bad  
day<sup>1</sup>

citizenship as prerequisite  
for empathy<sup>2</sup>

there have been nine  
reported suicides  
since the hurricane<sup>13</sup>

that time we existed  
because we were dying<sup>14</sup>

the airlines offers tickets for \$50  
if you wanted to leave home  
forever<sup>19</sup>

fema box contains:  
one can of beans  
one packet of cookies  
one oatmeal bar  
a small ricebox<sup>23</sup>

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*19 no existe un mundo  
poshuracán  
23 no duermo*

---

Raquel Salas Rivera is a Puerto Rican poet that lives in Philadelphia. Currently, they are a Co-Editor and Translator at *The Wanderer*. If for Roque Dalton there is no revolution without poetry, for Raquel there is no poetry without Puerto Rico. You can find out more about their work at [www.raquelsalasrivera.com](http://www.raquelsalasrivera.com).

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*1 esto está cabrón  
2 como con hambre vieja*

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*13 duermo aquí está noche sin  
gasolina  
14 abrió plaza las américas*

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excerpted from *UNDER THE BED IS ANOTHER COUNTRY: gringo death coloring book* published by Hostile Books an extended print version available 2018

# ART: Andre Bradley



# ART: Andre Bradley

**Andre Bradley**

**Born 1987 - Philadelphia, PA**

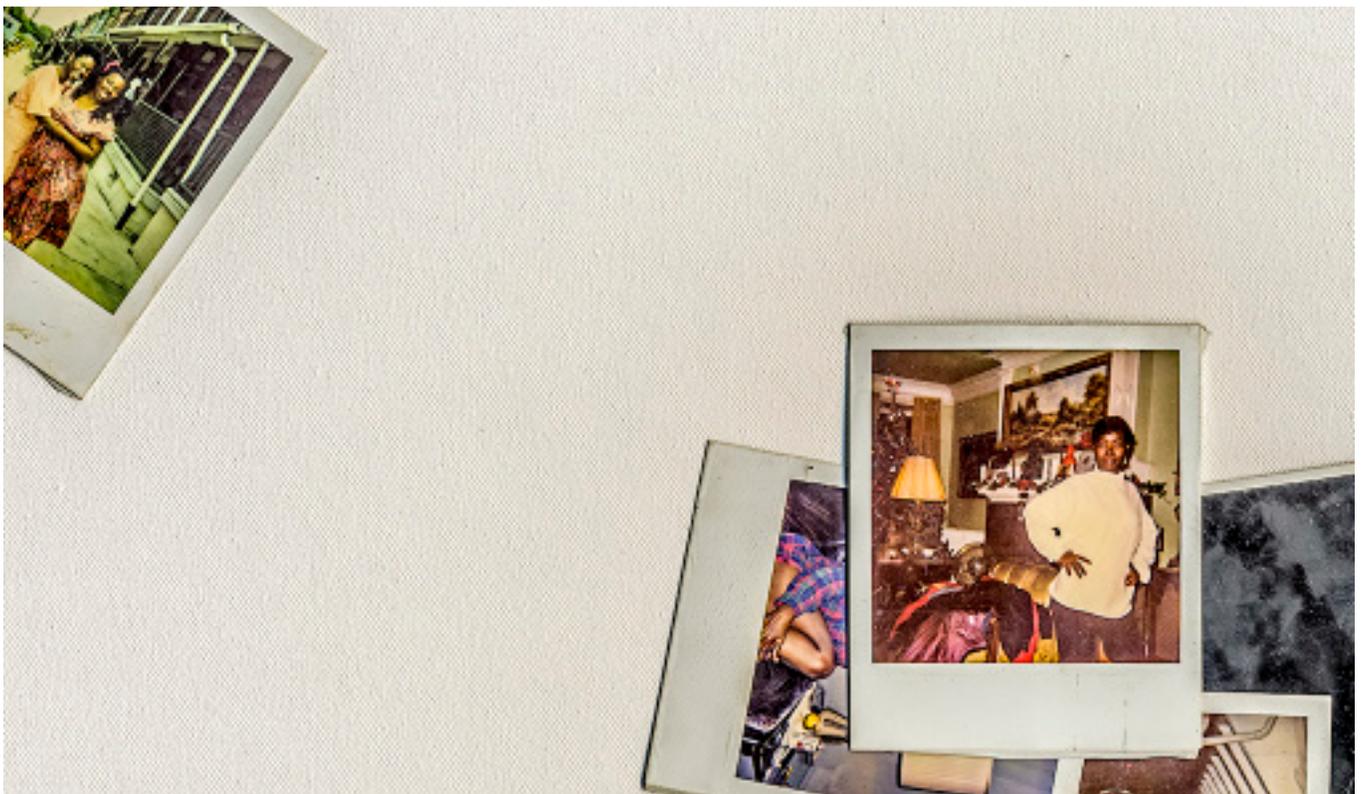
## **ARTIST STATEMENT**

**Andre Bradley's *Dark Archives*** is a provocative exploration of one black man's memories of childhood. It interweaves Bradley's writing and photographs with pictures from his family archive. Part story, part lyrical investigation, *Dark Archives* aims to upset the linguistic and visual constrictions placed on black males. Bradley powerfully combines image and text in this deeply moving meditation on narrative agency, on the family as archive, on being a young black man, and on being Andre Bradley. Currently, Bradley's work in progress *Soprano* (2016-Ongoing) uses autobiographical and fragmented text combined with appropriated or photographic images taken by the artist. Appropriated, and archival photographs work as surrogates to ambiguously support and point to stages, characters or family members outside of the text. The text itself, a series of elusive retellings and observations by a narrator recalling childhood, family, wealth, religion and income. In both color and black and white the images expand, restrict and complicate Bradley's narrative. By seizing their quality of veracity, Bradley exploits their representation to create personal counter-narratives of a childhood lived or desired. A conceptual blackness shifts its white counterpart, engaging notions of success, failure, class, masculinity, beauty, and intelligence.

*all images courtesy of the artist*



# ART: Andre Bradley



# 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](http://poetryproject.org) or call 212.674.0910.

## MON 12/4

### Ian Dreiblatt & Judah Rubin

**Ian Dreiblatt** is a poet, translator, and musician. His writing has appeared in *Bomb!*, *The Agriculture Reader*, *Elderly*, *Entropy*, *Asymptote*, *Web Conjunctions*, *Sink Review*, *The Quarterly Conversation*, *Pallaksch*. *Pallaksch.*, and in chapbooks from Metambesen and DoubleCross Press.

**Judah Rubin** is a poet living in Queens. He is the former Monday night coordinator at The Poetry Project and used to/might still publish *Well Greased Press*. Judah is currently working on texts concerning necropolitics, corruption, and all-you-can-eat buffets, some of which can or will be found in *The Brooklyn Rail* and *Open House*.

## WED 12/6

### Launch of The Racial Imaginary Institute's Whiteness Issue

**The Racial Imaginary Institute**, founded by **Claudia Rankine**, launched its website in September with a journal's worth of expanding content inside a url with the *The Whiteness Issue*, declaring:

"We begin here in order to make visible that which has been intentionally presented as inevitable so that we can move forward into more revelatory conversations about race. Our first project questions what can be made when we investigate, evade, beset and call out bloc-whiteness."

Please join contributors to *The Whiteness Issue* (who will read from their work) and The Poetry Project in celebrating the Racial Imaginary Institute's first publication.

## FRI 12/8

### Christina Olivares & Mina Zohal

**Christina Olivares** is the author of *No Map of the Earth Includes Stars* (2015), winner of the 2014 Marsh Hawk Press Book Prize, and of the chaplet *Interrupt* (2015), published by Belladonna\* Collaborative. Her chapbook *DSM/Partial Manual*, winner of the 2014 Vinyl 45s Chapbook Contest, is forthcoming.

**Mina Zohal** is currently living and writing in the United States.

## WED 12/13

### BETTER READ THAN DEAD: booksellers read from their shelves \*\*attention collectors!\*\*

Booksellers are unsung heroes of the poetry universe. Purveyors of out-of-print, hand-stapled or sewn, barely printed materials that circulate among us keep works alive outside the interest and view of regular commerce. **Jen Fisher of Vortexity Books**, **Hadley Gitto of Book Disorder** and **Dave Morse of Book Row (others TBA)** read from their collections and offer some rare finds for sale.

## FRI 12/15

### Barbara Browning & Malik Gaines

**Barbara Browning** teaches in the Department of Performance Studies at NYU. In addition to her scholarly publications, she is the author of the novels *The Correspondence Artist* (winner of a Lambda Literary Award), *I'm Trying to Reach You* (short-listed for The Believer Book Award), and, most recently, *The Gift* (or, Techniques of the Body).

**Malik Gaines** is an artist and writer based in New York. His essays have appeared in *Art Journal*, *Women & Performance*, and in numerous exhibition catalogues and arts publications. His book, *Black Performance on the Outskirts of the Left* (NYU Press, 2017), traces a circulation of political ideas in performances of the 1960s and beyond.

## MON 12/18

### Tyree Daye & Diamond Janese Sharp

**Tyree Daye** is a poet from Youngsville, North Carolina. He is winner of the 2017 APR/Honickman First Book Prize for his book *River Hymns*. Daye's work has been published in *Prairie Schooner*, *Nashville Review*, and has poems in *Four Way Review* and forthcoming in *Ploughshares*.

**Diamond Janese Sharp** is a poet and essayist from Chicago. She has performed at Chicago's Stage 773 and her work has been featured on Chicago Public Radio. She has been published in *Vice*, *Pitchfork*, *Lenny*, *PANK*, *The Offing*, *Fjords*, *Winter*

*Tangerine*, *JoINT Literary*, *Wellesley Review*, *Beltway Poetry Quarterly*, *BLACKBERRY* and others.

## MON 1/1 2pm—2am

### The 44th Annual New Year's Day Marathon Benefit Reading

The New Year's Day Marathon is the Project's largest fundraiser and provides support for what we do best — serve as a public venue for the substantial presentation of innovative writing:

**Featuring: Adjua Greaves, Alan Felsenthal, Andrei Codrescu, Andrew Durbin, Anne Tardos, Anne Waldman and Fast Speaking Music, Anselm Berrigan, Arlo Quint, Ben Fama, Bob Holman, Bob Rosenthal, Brenda Coultas, Brendan Lorber, Bruce Andrews & Sally Silvers, Candace Williams, Cat Tyc, Charity Coleman, Chavisa Woods, Chia-Lun Chang, Christine Elmo, Dave Morse, David Henderson, David Kirchenbaum, Dia Felix, DJ Ashtrae, Ed Askew Band, Edgar Oliver, Ernie Brooks & Co., Farnoosh Fathi, Filip Marinovich, Foamola, Francesca DeMusz, Gillian McCain, Grey Vild, Hanif Willis Abdurraqib, Harry Burke, Jameson Fitzpatrick, Jen Rosenblit, Jennifer Bartlett, Jennifer Monson, Jim Behrle, Joan La Barbara, John Giorno, Jonas Mekas, Joseph Keckler, Judah Rubin, Katy Lederer, Khalil Huffman, Laura Henriksen, Leila Ortiz, Lewis Warsh, Lisa Jarnot, Lucy Ives and Laura Mimosa Montes, Lydia Cortes, Marcella Durand, Martha Wilson, Matt Longabucco, Mike Lala, Nicole Sealey, Nicole Wallace, Olivia Greyson, Pamela Sneed, Patricia Spears Jones, Pierre Joris, Precious Okoyomon, Purvi Shah, Rachel Valinsky, Rami Karim, Sarah Schulman, Simone White, Stephanie Grey, Steve Cannon, Steven Taylor & Douglas Dunn, Ted Dodson, The Double Yews, Todd Colby, Tom Savage, Tommy Pico, Tony Towle, Trace Peterson, Tracie Morris, Washington Squares, Wo Chan, Yoshiko Chuma, Yvonne Rainer, and more TBA.**

## FRI 1/5

### No, Dear 10 Year Anniversary Reading Featuring Amber Atiya, Mike Lala, Legacy Russell, & Bianca Stone

*No, Dear*, publisher of chapbooks by emerging writers and a hand-bound journal, marks ten years of publishing New

York City's finest poets. To celebrate, three interdisciplinary poets/artists published by No, Dear (Issues 7, 9, 11 & 15) present new works, followed by a brief discussion. **Featuring Amber Atiya, Mike Lala, Legacy Russell, and Bianca Stone.**

#### MON 1/8

**TALK: Adjuja Gargi Nzinga Greaves presents And (finally) Introductions: A Short History Of Introductory Remarks with Rijard Bergeron, Niall Jones, & Robert Ouyang Rusli**

**Adjuja Gargi Nzinga Greaves** will emcee an elegant evening celebrating the brief history and subtle art of the curators' intro, with poet **Rijard Bergeron** and choreographer **Niall Jones** reading beloved and noteworthy introductory remarks culled from our community of curators and readers and audience over the past twenty years or so, accompanied by composer **Robert Ouyang Rusli**. A limited edition publication of this talk will be available for purchase at and after the event.

#### WED 1/10

**Andrew Durbin & Andrew Maxwell**

**Andrew Durbin** is the author of *Mature Themes* (2014) and *MacArthur Park* (2017), both from Nightboat Books. A monograph on the work of Raymond Pettibon is forthcoming from David Zwirner Books in April 2018. He is the U.S. Editor of *frieze* and lives in New York.

**Andrew Maxwell's** recent collections include *Conversion Table* (Mindmade Books, 2016), featuring small remarks without propositional attitudes, *Candor is the Brightest Shield* (Ugly Duckling, 2015), and *Peeping Mot* (Apogee, 2013).

#### WED 1/17

**Kendra Sullivan & Will Rawls**

**Kendra Sullivan** is an artist, writer, boatmaker, and curator whose work centers the study of ecosystems and the ocean. Her writing has appeared in *BOMB*, *F.R. DAVID*, and *C* magazine, among others. With Dylan Gauthier, she is a current artist in residence at the National Park Service and the Cape Cod Modern House Trust, in Wellfleet, MA.

**Will Rawls** is an artist and writer based in Brooklyn, NY. Working with dance, objects, sound and language, Will creates

performances that unravel and reconfigure around ideas of becoming. Will has presented work at The Whitney Museum of American Art, Danspace Project, The Chocolate Factory Theater, Performa 15, Tanzquartier Wien and MoMA PS1.

#### FRI 1/19

**Basel Abbas + Ruanne Abou-Rahme & Elizabeth A. Povinelli**

**Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme** (b. 1983) work together across a range of sound, image, text, installation and performance practices. Abbas and Abou-Rahme were fellows at Akademie der Kunst der Welt in Cologne in 2013 and artists and recipients of the Sharjah Biennale Prize in 2015. Their publication, *And Yet My Mask is Powerful*, was recently released from Printed Matter.

**Elizabeth A. Povinelli** is an anthropologist and filmmaker. She is Franz Boas Professor of Anthropology at Columbia University, New York and one of the founding members of the Karrabing Film Collective. Recent publications include *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism* (2016). Povinelli lives and works in New York and Darwin.

#### MON 1/22

**Rijard Bergeron & Precious Okoyomon**

**Rijard Bergeron** (b.1990, H.H.I, South Carolina) is a poet. His work has been published in *The Poetry Project Newsletter*, *The Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism's Poetry Portal*, *This Image Journal*, and elsewhere. Rijard also makes collage and has most recently published two pieces in collaboration with Sara Jane Stoner, for her book *Experience in the Medium of Destruction*.

**Precious Okoyomon** is a Brooklyn based poet and artist. She is the author of *Ajebota* (Bottlecap Press, 2016). Her writing has been performed and exhibited at the Baltic Triennial in Lithuania, the Contemporary Art Center in Cincinnati, Exo Exo in Paris and MoMA PS1 in New York. Her writing has been published in *Hobart*, *Fanzine*, *New York Tyrant* and elsewhere.

#### WED 1/24

**TALK: Jibade-Khalil Huffman: "Defending Kanye West"**

A lecture performance in which I go in on Kanye West, Zadie Smith, boring paintings that supposedly edify black people, etc.

**Jibade-Khalil Huffman** is the author three books of poems, including, most recently, *Sleeper Hold* (Fence, 2015). Huffman was an artist-in-residence at The Studio Museum in Harlem in 2015-16 and was included in the 2014 Made in L.A. Biennial at the Hammer Museum.

#### MON 1/29

**Carly Dashiell & Andrea Talarico**

**Carly Dashiell** is a poet who lives in Brooklyn. Formerly the art book buyer at McNally Jackson Books, and now Managing Editor for *Futurepoem*, a non-profit publisher of experimental and hybrid-genre work. A short digital work, "5 4", can be found on Gauss PDF. Other poems are forthcoming in the next issue of *Prelude*.

**Andi Talarico** is a Brooklyn-based writer and reader. She's the curator and host of At the Inkwell NYC, an international reading series whose New York branch meets at KGB Bar. In 2003, Paperkite Press published her chapbook, *Spinning with the Tornado*, and Swandive Publishing included her in the 2014 anthology, *Everyday Escape Poems*.

#### WED 1/31

**Lynn Melnick & Genya Turovskaya**

**Lynn Melnick** is the author of the poetry collections *Landscape with Sex and Violence* (2017) and *If I Should Say I Have Hope* (2012), both with YesYes Books, and the co-editor of *Please Excuse This Poem: 100 Poets for the Next Generation* (Viking, 2015). Her poetry has appeared in *APR*, *The New Republic*, *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, *A Public Space*, and elsewhere.

**Genya Turovskaya** is a poet, translator, and psychotherapist. She was born in Kiev, Ukraine, and grew up in New York City. She is the author of the chapbooks *Calendar* (Ugly Duckling Presse), *The Tides* (Octopus Books), *New Year's Day* (Octopus Books), and *Dear Jenny* (Supermachine).

# POETRY: Jay Deshpande

## MITHRIDATISM

That it was still early. That in the room inside the room  
people came quickly. That dark glasses were inevitable,  
unvarying. That the highway draws in two lines down to Texas  
and in two lines to the arms. That a certain time had come  
for great release. That unities  
were a thing of the past and the body is not a unity.  
That the veil of civilization covers us and beneath it we are cool.  
That there are no coincidences and the name of Huntsville  
since 1836 to get our teeth wet. That we did it for his own good.  
For an ethics. For it was a new century but reminded us  
oddly a taste in the mouth like the old. That at the exit  
stood people and beyond them more but it's important  
we could not see them. History loves a good interior.  
That we were advancing at a glacial pace  
but a glacial pace began to cause concern. That one hand  
signs the waiver while the other performs the verb. That look  
you give to trust your weight in someone's hands. That justice  
is departure and we have our tickets, though we do not know  
where the boat makes land. That weeks on end my reflection  
was less a door to purpose, where ranging in eyes closed we came  
in pursuit of the poem of excellence. (Hint: blood, without.) If it starts  
frequently in scratch and marrow, that part of being American  
is the wary glut of things. That when we launch a forgotten king  
on waters we expect acknowledgement, from the gods  
or each other. That yes on forms I document  
as "pliable" and "male." But still I come back clean. That reverie  
is behind us; an alcohol to swab the fields; that someone had  
sworn an oath and she was not here. That who was here  
kept his eyes distinctly on the time. That bone is never warm  
to touch—that and other salves—that we  
look alone and then we are alone, and then we start to hear.

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Jay Deshpande is the author of the poetry collection *Love the Stranger* (YesYes Books), named one of the top debuts of 2015 by *Poets & Writers*, and the chapbook *The Rest of the Body*. He has received fellowships or support from Kundiman, Civitella Ranieri, Saltonstall Arts Colony, and the Key West Literary Seminar. Poems have recently appeared in *Boston Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *LARB Quarterly Journal*, and *Horsethief*. He teaches at Columbia University and lives in Brooklyn.

# Reviews

## LETTER FROM REVIEWS EDITOR:

The reviews in this issue of The Poetry Project Newsletter begin with a letter from Sean D. Henry-Smith to Nikki Wallschlaeger. For the winter quarter, we're eager to correspond: to reconsider what the "poetry review" does or can do by way of the connecting message, the communication corridor. To set up games of telephone where we focus on the pathways between poets reading each other with love and care, where we call just to say, just to make the call. The purpose of the call is not to avoid all the things that do us harm (or try to do us harm), but to amalgamate all we've got in the face of such injury. When LA Warman, writing on Tatiana Luboviski-Acosta, states, "I don't often identify as my gender but I am walking," we're witness to that wearing down of categories through the performative dance of being-together. Surreal confessions play into the ongoing (auto)bog Annie Berman opens up through Joe Rupprecht's poems. It's

the "complicated calls to love" we're dealing with and through, as Maxe Crandall reminds us via Alli Warren's *I Love It Though*. These complications go micro in Edmund Berrigan's buzzing voyage among Simon Pettet's *As a Bee*. Finally, Dave Morse contributes to Arlo Quint's macro-poetic gestures by offering: "Quint sees that the whole world is contained in everything and possesses that same fire." We want to talk with one another, not to be singularly possessing fire or each other, but to be possessed by that fiery spirit, a sermon for service. We stay warm in this context: the consolation of poetry, which has always meant to consult our friends.

If you would like to send a review for a future issue, please query: reviews.ppnl@poetryproject.org

- John Rufo

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John Rufo is the poetry reviews editor for The Poetry Project Newsletter. Materials have been published, or

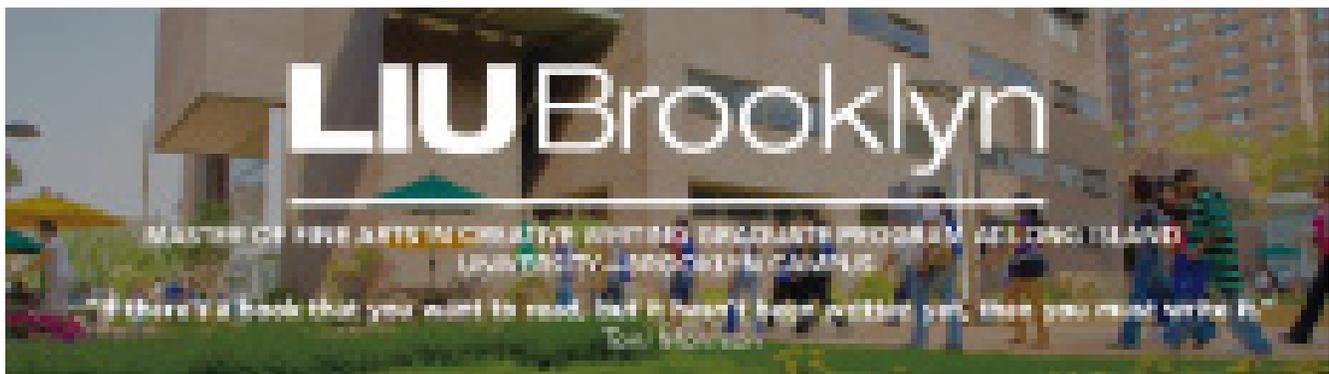
are forthcoming, on the Academy of American Poets website, *Ploughshares*, *The Capilano Review*, *The Offing*, the *Journal Petra*, *Tagwerk*, *Dreginald*, and elsewhere. More information and contact: [johnspringrufo.tumblr.com](http://johnspringrufo.tumblr.com)

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**Crawlspace by Nikki Wallschlaeger (Bloof Books, 2017)**

**Reviewed by Sean D. Henry-Smith**

Big Sister, I want to write a letter to you, in public. I'm writing this and it's September still: our month for being born over and over again, a little New Year's just for us. I'm surprised every time it comes around [it's not that I don't anticipate the passing of time, but that I've made it, we've made it again. So many things threaten that likelihood every day he is still being killed a diversity / of ways we are killed in a diversity of ways / I am killed in a diversity of ways & now / newspapers have started to write poems you said and I stand and agree, I touch and



## Fall 2017 One-Day Master Class Workshops in Poetry and Fiction

November 18

Gregory Pardlo, poet  
Hrish Sawhney, novelist

December 2

Anne Waldman, poet  
Lynne Tillman, novelist

TO LEARN MORE AND REGISTER FOR OUR MASTER CLASS WORKSHOPS, VISIT [BEAM.TO/MASTERCCLASS](http://BEAM.TO/MASTERCCLASS)

In addition to our Fall 2017 Master Class Workshops, look out for Spring 2018 with a new guest. Please send inquiries to [masterclass@liu.edu](mailto:masterclass@liu.edu).

# New Omnidawn Fall Poetry



**Laynie Browne** *You Envelop Me*

6" x 9" 112 pages 978-1-63243-038-0 \$17.95

"We read these poems & see Browne's brilliant mind at work—the song & the psalm of thought, of mourning, of living, of divination, of figuring out."—Pattie McCarthy



**Ewa Chruciel** *Of Annunciations*

6" x 9" 104 pages 978-1-63243-039-7 \$17.95

"Chruciel...considers notions of exile, migration, and spiritual devastation....Readers are reminded that we are like the dispossessed refugees (and their oppressors)...The effectiveness of Chruciel's poetics of witness is impossible to deny."—*Publishers Weekly*



**Hillary Gravendyk** *The Soluble Hour*

5.5" x 7" Pocket Series 88 pages 978-1-63243-045-8 \$11.95

"These poems are...energized by an abiding interest in the special kind of presence, of the embodied phenomenology that illness makes possible."—Joseph Jeon



**Henry Wei Leung** *Goddess of Democracy*

6" x 9" 104 pages 978-1-63243-040-3 \$17.95

"required reading for anyone who's ever been devoted to the promise of democracy—or the disobedience it so often demands. An explosive, exquisite revolt of a book"—*Booklist*

"What makes this collection magnetic is the measured way that Leung unpacks his own roles—witness, outsider, American, and translator—in the Hong Kong protests."—*Publishers Weekly*



**Laura Neuman** *Risk :: Nonchalance*

5.5" x 7" Pocket Series 72 pages 978-1-63243-046-5 \$11.95

"the writing has the breadth of vision to see the whole moving vibratory insane social structure we over-populate and the humor to refuse its feints of distillation."—Anselm Berrigan



**Craig Santos Perez** *from unincorporated territory [lukao]*

6" x 9" 88 pages 978-1-63243-041-0 \$17.95

"Centered on the birth of his daughter, this collection is first and foremost a family story and creation tale, albeit one in which the details of Guam's ecological and cultural degradation, American militarism and capitalism, and the diaspora of the Chamorro people and language continue to play an important part."—*Publishers Weekly*



**kathryn i. pringle** *Obscenity for the Advancement of Poetry*

6" x 9" 104 pages 978-1-63243-042-7 \$17.95

"Pringle...argues that systemic oppression is written onto the body, that people are born into violence and otherness through language."—*Publishers Weekly*



**Joseph Rios** *Shadowboxing*

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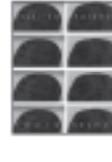
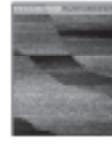
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OMNIDAWN

...we've made it again. So many things threaten that likelihood every day *he is still being killed a diversity / of ways we are killed in a diversity of ways / I am killed in a diversity of ways & now / newspapers have started to write poems* you said and I stand and agree, I touch and agree.

Big Sister, this is meant to be a review of your book, *Crawlspace*, released earlier this year (I bought it at the Bloof Books table at AWP with — at the time — my last dollars because I knew I needed a bible and you gave that to me. Big Sister, reviews aren't my business, but I'm using this dedicated space to tell you *Crawlspace* — where I come through Dara Cerv's granite garnet hand grapple shake weight doorknob, cherry nails clasp at smoke to wash it down — is beautiful in ways most people aren't accustomed to, or comfortable with. It has changed a world for me, and has added an articulation to a pain I know, and to pains I don't want to perpetuate and will choke out any motherfucker that does. I just want to talk about what you've done here, this thing you've built. This sculpture this space that is *actual* and uninvolved with the popularity contest poetry can be but knows its worth; *I want the recognition that I deserve / but I won't crab-barrel over you too get it.* I'm thinking of Kathleen Collins often and right now, but also of the infinite many Black women, who didn't/don't get the respect she/they deserve. We know the story, we know these women. You mourn them and commune with them: *We, as marked women transform / ourselves. We are the wood violets & roses stretching in the rain.* I hate what people have done with "self-care as resistance", but handed lemons, you slice them and squeeze the sourjuice on your tongue; *I will grow herbs and tomatoes in my yard in the city and feel temporarily satisfied with my life.*

Your sonnets are biting as they are loving. Your sonnets don't give a fuck about rules, and operate beyond the form; they look you dead in the eye and give you the business.

Your sonnets know who they're talking to, and the reader trembles. I want to hide here in this parenthesis just to tell you I'm thankful for you, and proud of you, but not in that accomplishment or labor are necessary or fair systems of value at all, just in that you remain so committed to being real, resisting dreariness. I've been exhausted my entire life / I hate telling you / how I really feel you said and even when writing under the constraints of your oppressors, you do the work, tirelessly. You will not suffer in silence. Children, it's time to scream for as long as loud as you can.]]

I've been thinking of you a lot this summer, as I've been thinking about a lot of little bits of "home" and homeness and awaysness and wandering and wondering. I think of where you live and your mission of knowing every plant in proximity, and the many ways you Mother: your children, your love-eyed dogs and kittens, your work.

I want you to know how thankful I am for you.

Big Sister, it wasn't long ago, but I **know** I will forever remember, in painstaking visual and sonic detail, your reading at Poetry Project last year with Eunsong, and I can hear Sonnet (11), clear as a bell, in your voice. Every time I read it (which is often, sometimes reciting lines to Derica because something sparks the memory), I feel this exact way, I know where the finger points, I want to cry because I'm hungry and perpetually un-actualized by antiblack capitalist standards which I want to break but tie me tight, but I hear you Big Sister you said *I think when you get older / your heart doesn't work the way it should* but yours does yours does and it's your ability to still care that lets you see so clearly.

—  
**Sean D. Henry-Smith** is a photographer and writer. His writing and photography have appeared in *Apogee Journal*, *Contact Sheet*, *The Offing*, *FACT*, *Fanzine*, and *The New York Times*.

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**Luboviski-Acosta, Tatiana. *The Easy Body. Timeless, Infinite Light*, 2017. Review by LA Warman**

*Bodies that are borders, hiding.  
Never have I ever*

*Possessed the pleasures  
of having the easy body.*

It ends with an abortion. The violence of this fact compounds on the violence throughout Tatiana Luboviski-Acosta's book of poetry *The Easy Body* (The violence of the world, of colonialism, of the category "woman.") I am reading the book on the train and children are screaming. The world of Luboviski-Acosta's poetry is a scattered scream. (Who gets an out of body experience?) Sometimes sentences, sometimes paragraphs, lines rarely broken, sometimes sometimes often violence the violence is an opening is a presence is a constant presence is life always with colonialism. I think the book is one poem but how would I know what is beginning and what is end.

There is disturbance in not having an "easy body." An easy body: white, able, cis. An easy body is one that is born a woman and stays a woman and is seen as a woman, For Luboviski-Acosta this is more complicated. When they say "I, the most impure of any sort of woman" it makes me think sort of woman as in sort of as in almost but not enough, not enough woman in this body almost there but not quite.

Luboviski-Acosta calls for the end of the world over and over: "I sit on your/ face, calling for the// end of the world." The end is ignited by Luboviski-Acosta. This world is now & future & past. The point is simply stated but perhaps not. There is humor and there is dissociation. (What does it mean to decolonize through writing?) The simple is the declaration: "I resolve to put pleasure before any labor that facilitates anything that puts any capital towards incarceration."

# Reviews

There is sex but there is not orgasm.

Alongside the poems are collages that appear perhaps to separate sections of the extended poem. The images work alongside the text and disjoint it. They are collages containing violence: a bad blister, guns, skulls. They are cut from images. (The violence of the cut.) The cutting, the taking away the making image the making image unrecognizable. The text mentions photos like an unfulfilled promise, for these photos are cut ups.

The multiplicity of the Latinx experience is contrasted with the unified voice of whiteness. The Latinx experience is "hidden under/ five hundred and twenty-four years of mattresses." Whiteness is a tomb, steady. "My tongue fell out of my mouth in seven layers of skin, each remarking their own claim to my accent." The collage is Luboviski-Acosta, "Words formed by colonizers,

from a body collaged by them, too." (What falls out of the body? The tongue, the fetus.)

Is this book conjuring the end of the world? "I set the fire myself." This book, the fire, and they lit it already. Is fire a placenta? The war discussed in the text is very real, there are bombs made out of tampons and many guns. The women present as somewhat unified in this war while also "Working towards the destruction/ of the idea/belief that women are a natural group." Luboviski-Acosta will not be happy until the world is destroyed. I wonder what to make of this destruction and to what end but I realize that here I am, white woman, seeking linearity, seeking an end, a resolution. The chaos is the goal, the violence is not new, the violence is us.

The poet in the time of upheaval is upheaval. Even the book in my hands is not solid, it is on fire,

it is moving. The chaos is the way towards a polyvocal future. The steady should be our fear.

The book ends with an abortion, but it is false to say it is an end because the abortion was the book. The book opens with:

*OK, let's take a poll:*

*how many of us grew up praying for*

*the end of the world? Is it so bad to desire*

*the end of the world?*

This beginning too is false, for the beginning is the end. Luboviski-Acosta skillfully turns and circles reforming an identity as a means to a future.

Thinking of ways to tie this

## Who needs poetry.

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review together as I walk down the street in my neighborhood in Sunset Park thinking of the ways my body is easy. I don't often identify as my gender but I am walking, without thinking of my body through the neighborhood I am gentrifying and it is clear, we are lucky to have The Easy Body. The book approaches chaos and seeks value for all bodies that is past capitalism and colonialism.

--

**LA Warman** is a poet and performer. She is the founder of GLASS PRESS, a publisher of art and poetry on flash drives. Warman has had work in shows at MOCA Cleveland, Time-Based Art Festival, General Public Collective, Flying Object, and Open Engagement. She has recent chapbooks from Inpatient Press and After Hours Ltd. Warman is also the author of *Whore Foods*, a serialized erotic novella. LAWarman.com

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**faggy bird poems by Joe Rupprecht**  
**review by Annie Berman**  
**Ghost City Press 2017**

Joe Rupprecht's first chapbook *faggy bird poems* is not afraid to be messy, wet, vulnerable, amateur, and queer. It explores coming of age, as well as coming into queerness which, for Rupprecht, happens in nature. Throughout the chapbook, he gives his body over to the earth, to revel in the dirtiness of a forest or the sloppiness of a bog. In countless metaphors he lends queerness a physicality, which is constantly in flux. There is both the sense of finding, as well as a dare to get lost. In "the stars are just a place my tongue has been already," the title itself suggests an intersection, lines blur between sex and sky. Rupprecht writes, "carry my body to the edge of a field" and the earth envelops him, melding nature with the queer body. Boundaries set up in "*faggy bird poems*" never remain intact for long. The first poem, "plucking feathers from a somewhere bird's dead body," presents an eleven year old from Syracuse who comes across a bird, "all black and from somewhere" which immediately sets

up the relationship between self and animal, of belonging and the quest for identity. We know the facts of a boy, who wonders about the bird, whose story contains so much mystery. The boy, a figure who conjures Anne Carson's Geryon in *Autobiography of Red*, desires to become like the bird and sprouts wings. But unlike Geryon, the speaker is not the bird, he wants to be like the bird, and so he makes a costume. In this performance, there is nostalgia for childhood play and the boundaryless imagination of youth. However, this nostalgia is tinged with darkness, like "worms crawling," and a "strange dead eye." For Rupprecht, childhood means dressing up in homemade bird costumes, but one that is made from feathers plucked off of roadkill. Identity is free and rapidly changing through mutation. The speaker shifts from bird, to "fish trapped in a aquarium," to getting "wet like a frog" ("the stars are just a place my tongue has been already"). The textual anthropomorphisms are complemented by the visual art interspersed throughout the collection. Rupprecht includes rendered, blue-gray biomorphic abstractions which reinforces the idea that bodies, animals, and nature can easily (d)evolve into one another.

Much of the chapbook centers on autonomy in relation to these volatile identities. Sometimes the speaker is possessed and desires to be so, he commands "hunt me down," "get me wet," "drive me," "fill me," but other moments demand reclamation. Some poems thoughtfully wonder, while others aren't afraid to call somebody out. They can be apologetic, but they can be angry. Certain lines feel rhetorical, as though retroactively suffused with innocence, musings on how the world works, or why it works. But the speaker maintains his edge, he knows better now, though his naïve days are not long behind, or are at least fresh in his memory. Rupprecht avoids formal punctuation, though the few, emphatic question marks signal two types of query: curious and accusatory. The first question mark appears in "PRELUDE TO FLOCK (p.

i)" and wonders "the place of where a bird goes/ do you know the song?" The question is like a warm welcome as though he is open to suggestion, or that we may all sing along, provided you know the tune or where birds end up in the first place. Surrounding the question, in all directions on the page, phrases frame the question, in almost familiar syntactic formats. Nearby, "here come I'm losing you" echoes the sort of bargaining that arises from heartbreak, "here come" shadows the more familiar "how come." Rupprecht teaches us his words are fluid, we have to be open to homophones ("here you calling"), we have to be open to doubt. Maybe he just wants us to be open. Not all questions in his poems are direct, though certainly they are all deliberate. Some waver with delicate self-doubt while others are steadfast, yelling, "[THE FUCK do YOU KNOW ABOUT SONG MY FLOCK OF BIRDS?]" from "PRELUDE TO FLOCK (p. ii)." The questions range, moving from how, to how dare you. Rupprecht riles us up in these accusations, what do we know about the speaker, what do we know about these birds? Perhaps nothing, or only as much as the slippery portrait he presents us with, though we get the sense that the anger is justified. The poem "autobog" may provide a key to the irritant. "autobog" consists solely of the phrase "he drank from my autobog/autobog/ autobog," and the word autobog repeats until the text fades into a foamy white and blue background, as though spiraling down a drain. The whole poem is in constant motion, spinning, sucking, and expelling. The word "autobog" alone sets forth a heady set of questions on abjection, sex, and liminal bodies. There is a definition of "bog" that feels just tender enough to make sense in Rupprecht's context of an autobog: "wet muddy ground too soft to support a heavy body." The poem so readily conjures fluids, sex, (think autoerotic), intimacy (think autobiography). If "he" is

# Reviews

drinking from “my,” whether that is spit, or semen, or something more metaphorical, the act is like a drain of self-stores. If so, “he” may be sucking the life out of the speaker, or maybe he is drinking him in. The lover in “autobog,” like the lover in “Prelude to flock p. i,” like all of the lovers, is a “semen seep.” He leaves the speaker “empty of all wet,” a phrase set in playful word art distortion (not to be taken too seriously), shaped like warped wood, damp, malleable, buckling. Is it twisting into a compression or full of holes and leaking? The speaker addresses his lover “you fucking water seep” and we get the sense he’s draining him physically and emotionally. A quote from Julia Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* comes to mind on the topic of abjection and the dissolution of boundaries, “[the abject] is simply a frontier, a repulsive gift that the Other, having become alter ego, drops so that the “I” does not disappear in it but finds, in that sublime alienation, a forfeited existence.” The tangle of self and lover, like the transmission of fluids or distinction between sexuality and nature, at least for Rupprecht, is messy. It can be beautiful and it can create tension, and much of the tension in the chapbook

comes from the duality of intimacy. Perhaps it is also in the duality of “fuck,” think of “I fucked” vs. “you fucking water seep” (“PRELUDE TO FLOCK (p. ii)”). Despite moments of tenderness, of wetness, of pink, Rupprecht can turn a lover into a succubus. *faggy bird poems* allows us to ponder the ways in which we struggle to support the weight of another individual in our intimacies. Rupprecht admits that sometimes, we are too soft to support them. He can cohesively intertwine selfhood and sex and weakness and wetness again and again. He puts the wetness in sex, and humbly, he presents us with an autobog. Using confessional and surreal modes, he manages to turn nature from a childhood play-space into an erotic playscape. Rupprecht kneels down in the dirt beside us like little kids, to play around with the growing pains of boyhood, queerness, and intimacy, and to help us make a mess of it. --

**Annie Berman** is a senior Literature major at Hamilton College where she co-edits the literary journal *Red Weather*. She was a 2017 intern at A Public Space and tweets @annieberman

\*\*\*

Alli Warren, *I Love It Though*

## Nightboat Books Review by Maxe Crandall

In Alli Warren’s second collection, friendship figures as intimate politics, and the public is a site for coming together, for figuring out what to do and undo. Envisioning alternatives through scrutiny of the immediate, *I Love It Though* wants to share the love while interrogating the structures that organize experience.

The first poem’s first line serves up a provocation that situates the personal-casual within the vast immediacy of ecological destruction aka the end of the world:

Where were you when the West Antarctic Ice Sheet began to collapse?

Thus, the book’s ambition: to find occasion for poetry where we might not traditionally expect it and then to rely on the lyric as a place for resistance. The poems act as a method for addressing the great urgency under which we live, for talking, together, in public about political emergency. These strategies percolate again and again in the book, as in “On the Levelers Everyday”:

Dear casual moment  
dear inflated object  
Who can live, who gets to  
eat

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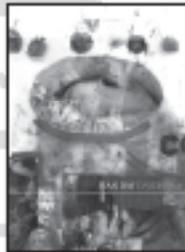
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—Alli Warren

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—Will Alexander

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# Reviews

what's a sidewalk, what's a street  
Let's loot the establishments  
I mean feed each other

How do questions like Warren's demand we alter our language, our positioning and postures, our relation to one another? In friendship, we can and do have other languages; we already talk outside in secret:

When I say us  
I speak as a member  
in the billfold of our feeling  
("What Gathers Us Here Tonight")

Warren's book meditates on love and justice with great attention to surrounding landscapes, which themselves seem inevitably linked to poetic genre. *I Love It Though* offers studied meditations in the love poem, the nature poem, the political poem, the poem of urban streets. Most attest to this place where identity grounds itself through collective experience, establishing Oakland as a kind of reflexive looking glass whereby the personal is political becomes a loop of lived resistance, where that mad thing within the self, well, "once it touches air / every cop goes poof" ("*A Date with the Cages*").

I like how the book politicizes the trope of the poet walking, even as Warren can't help but give in occasionally to the romance of the Baudelairean speaker. I haven't mentioned Warren's humor but here you can see how she undoes Greatness often through the language of the myth itself. In "*Tunics, Trousers, and Cloaks*," Warren disrobes the male poet through mimicry that makes homo-codes explicit. The opening proclamation "I sing of something that cannot speak its name / though its signature is everywhere" spirals out into "I make a hole / for glory wherever / In alehouses and down laneways / in gross profusion / and self-pollution." Through the provocative rearrangement of familiar tropes (the love that dare not speak

its name and the public-private space of the glory hole), Warren makes new meaning through disruption and the resurrection of overlaying contexts.

As with cruising in the previous example, Warren winds through the act of walking's many histories and connotations—walk meaning to work, to "turn over; in the mind," walking as waves, the water, the sea—with an awareness too of who can walk, and where. The speakers embed in the commons through this poetic of the walk/work/waves. Often the walk is weird, as in the opening of "*Calling Convergence*":

properly ensconced  
begloved I walk  
an egret  
without regret

The way of looking when we walk;  
what's that gaze about?

Her lines are charged through agitated proclamation, built of an ever-present tension wound around popsicles of vowels and more grounded night prophesies that help me trip across the difference between utopia and dystopia:

Nature never made no merchant

Sabotage is sister to system, that's  
what eating is, that self same  
momentum

Give me bumpers of burgundy and  
the purring whir of jasmine ("*To the Fledglings*")

The walk takes us across fields of inquiry and language; natural realms and their unnatural disasters raise questions of scale. The inventive nature poem, "*To The Fledglings*" works as a kind of hypothetical process poem that is as much about bread (or bread as a symbol) and the 99% even as the form teeters on the brink of late capitalist nonsense languages rooted in the promise of productivity. Through the repetition of "I could" and "I want," the

speaker insists "I could cultivate a work-centered identity" and "I could be revitalized basin, I could be steel upturning the earth," before ultimately finding an ethical stance in the language:

So while I could be an  
accomplice to the flood

or insist on property  
as my right to white life

or saunter out into the  
surf of the street with the gaze and  
the beard and the  
bread and the get called genius and  
heir

better to ladle  
in the brothy endurance of  
subsistence and resistance

The remix of communist sentiment with corporate improvement lingo in this long poem shows Warren at her most dexterous, most exhilarating heights, where she undoes and undoes through effortless constructions.

In neoliberal friendship, we are buried, together, within social networks. *I Love It Though* walks back toward, digs up, and commemorates other ways of relating through bodies, language, and metaphor.

In the end, what organizes us to action? Love, friendship, oppression, the commons. Complicated calls to love throughout *I Love It Though* demonstrate the truths in this, as if to suggest that poetry, too, organizes from the ground up. Warren's poems want to help us learn to witness patterns of responsibility and patterns of intimacy, to appreciate bodies interacting with other sometimes human, sometimes non-human bodies:

Or the courage or not  
of me and my friends

# Reviews

orbital in lilt, directive in  
drink  
while container ships brim  
and caps and bergs  
slope across the slog  
I want to be able to

continue

to love and stay alive  
the epigraph belongs to  
Gloria Gaynor  
the green pervades, it's a  
diamond, we all are

--

**Maxe Crandall's** book about  
AIDS, archives, and cultural trauma  
The Nancy Reagan Collection is  
forthcoming from Futurepoem.

\*\*\*

**As A Bee** by Simon Pettet  
**Talisman House**  
Reviewed by Edmund Berrigan

"The maximum compassion  
The minimum number of syllables"  
"Precise" is too imperfect a  
word as it betrays calculation.  
"Imperfect" is a better strand  
of honor, and the reduction of  
words in the poetry of Simon  
Pettet serves to open possibility  
as much as is beyond possible  
before landing, improbably, on  
what is conveyed in the balance.  
"As A Bee" operates as such, with  
nature (wild life), with cosmos, with  
historical specificity (a lone painter  
in the 18th century, with fictional  
person (Dashwood Brooks?), and  
with the ghosts of friends ('Franco'  
taken to be the late poet Franco  
Beltrametti).

As a reader I have to be careful not  
to damage the delicate words, in  
the manner of the wise one in the  
titular poem, and anything beyond  
total concentration may muddy  
my read. "As a bee collects nectar  
and departs without harming the  
flower or its color or scent, so let  
the sage live in a village."

My mind wants to change "a  
village" to "the East Village,"  
Pettet's longtime residence. Yet

the density of population in New  
York does not show through the  
seams of these poems, quite the  
opposite. There is a care he places  
in craft that often is overlooked in  
the need to compete.

"Fortune has a place for you  
An abode in the stars  
A habitation among the galaxies  
A seat or a placement in the dust"

The lines are so tight they are  
practically ink strokes, and there is  
a sense of the ancient lyric here.  
Occasionally a modern reference  
slips, such as in the poems to  
Franco, but even those moments  
call a certain sense of occasion.  
Pettet's usage of "e mail" retains  
as much a sense of wonder as  
potentially any novel technology:

"You would have flipped over e  
mail"

And what a perfect yet imperfect  
and large and little moment  
we have here. "Flipped" is  
presumably a mental gymnastic,  
but still conjures the physical  
action. Yet to physically flip  
over an electronic mail item is  
somewhat impossible in that  
though it may be housed in a  
hardware, the spark and access  
exist in multiple places at once.  
Much like the spirit of Franco  
Beltrametti in the memories of his  
friends. And somehow, also, I think  
of a person's eyes, because that's  
where the gesture of a mental flip  
is most visibly housed.

In Poem ("can't get enough  
of that"), an instance of kora  
music becomes the scene itself,  
with personalities in multiple  
perspectives, then tumbles onto  
the page, turns into dust and  
light, and becomes the counter  
perspective. It is up to the reader  
to locate their identification point.  
One can choose to be any of it,  
all of it, or none of it. The fragility  
of composition is kind and does  
not desire or request intellectual  
subservience, or even to take up

too much of one's time.

Poem ("As long as she had  
lived...")

As long as she lived, I was not  
sensible  
Of the misfortunes of being blind  
Scales falling from my eyes  
I still had my looks.  
It was for that reason that I adored her  
image  
Embodied in amber  
Trapped, we would, perhaps, live  
forever.

This poem is one I had overlooked  
when I first read this book two years  
ago. Now I feel like it resembles my  
life in a way that is too personal to  
explain, and all I can do is show it to  
you. Were I trying to write a poem  
like this, I would either obfuscate or  
mourn. The poem becomes more  
valuable, the "perhaps" is where  
the heart is broken. As put in "Some  
Musings in the Solarium", "lizard is  
not disturbed by this".

--

**Edmund Berrigan** is the author of  
*Can It!* from Letter Machine Editions  
and *We'll All Go Together* from Fewer  
and Further.

\*\*\*

**Wires and Lights** by Arlo Quint  
Review by Dave Morse

"This just might do nobody any  
good" is how journalist Edward  
Murrow, acting like a sort of Frankfurt  
School Mr. Rogers, began his "wires  
and lights in a box" speech in 1958.  
The speech implored the American  
media to use its platforms responsibly  
and warned against the tranquilizing  
and socially damaging effects of  
unchecked corporate shilldom. Arlo  
Quint's strange and exhilarating  
triptych *Wires and Lights* is itself a  
sort of responsible newscasting, an  
attempt by the poet to apply his tools  
towards something reflective and  
complex--a fluid restatement of the  
forces of the world through Quint's  
interior terrain. This book captures  
and enlightens reality, it does not

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—FRED MOTEN,  
author of  
*The Little Edges*

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stultify, and it is not easily digested. Quint employs Murrow's presupposition of perhaps not doing anybody any good as a liberating tool, allowing him to play at a more extreme pitch than simply talking the straight dope. This is a postscript, a live update ("today is not the day we've been waiting for for years today is reality") where Murrow's canary lies dead on the floor of the coal mine but it's still bustling down there anyway, working at full tilt and lit up like Times Square:

the invention of daily life time passes and chances get slimmer nice wheels,  
zenmaster the church bank and hate art introduce nostalgia for layaway  
defensive panic driving agents of late stage long-form McRib marketing

The reader of *Wires and Lights* is not underestimated—in fact, Quint doesn't reserve estimation so much as immediately endear the reader to himself and his ultimate trust that he has secrets to say and our active participation is key. It reads cryptic ("crushed light seasonal freight bearing days something like what happened / here happened there"), but the language is scented of sage, using constant enjambment as an illuminative tool to bend thoughts around each other into frankensteined aphorisms: "and as the sea is not known for / being shallow we must not be too elated after all we are completely free / to go". It comes out screaming in an unrelenting stream of collaged fragments (Book one, thirty-five pages) that darts around so quick that you will find narrative, lose it; find philosophies, lose them; find the author and lose him, all before the last line's apocalyptic sigh.

A claustrophobic and dense layer of reference quite literally riddles the book, allowing the text to extrapolate itself thousandfold. William Blake, the Rolling Stones, Hannah Weiner's *The Magritte Poems* might all be found living in the same line, a line nevertheless always shaped like Quint's peculiar tongue. These allusive keyholes peek into larger ideas (take the title: three short words which drape a historically pivotal manifesto against corporate interests overriding social welfare around the entire book), and with the placement of a true marksman Quint shakes them out fast and loose until the possible rhizomatic suggestions become staggering. The effect has something of the Aleph to it—a sensation deemed unrelatable by Borges' narrator, who, upon glimpsing said Aleph in his friend's basement (a spot under the stairs which allows the viewer a simultaneous vision of every sight in the world), finds himself completely overwhelmed ("I come now to the ineffable center of my tale; it is here that a writer's hopelessness begins. Every language is an alphabet of symbols the employment of which assumes a past shared by its interlocutors.

(cont. on pg. 31)

# Q&A: Cathy Park Hong

**1. I've been thinking a lot (due to your prompting) about what an intersectional poetics looks like, but can we first define what we mean when use that term?**

The literary imagination is even more racially segregated than this country. There's commercial and ethical pressure to "stay in your lane" and write only about your ethnic experience. There are absolutely valid reasons why it should be this way. Throughout history, whiteness has onerously commoditized and appropriated nonwhite experience from Dana Schutz to Ezra Pound. Nathaniel Mackey, for instance, talks about the phenomenon of whites profiting from black culture as turning a "verb" to "noun." So for instance, "swing" was a verb, which meant dancing in the black community, before white music producers came in and made it commercial, turning "swing" to "Swing." So this segregation is a safeguard against that nouncing.

But at the same time, this ethnic silification is what publisher wants, what the general audience wants—it's easier to brand, easier to package. They want to sell the "black experience" or the "Vietnamese experience" or the "Muslim experience". It's also a product of MFA mantra of "Write What You Know." But I don't live in a Korean American gerbil ball. I grew up in LA and my racial reality is frankly much messier and conflicting than what's expected of me as an Asian American writer.

Intersectional poetics is writing through the overlapping social identities we have and the "system of nuance" (to use Wayne Koestenbaum's term) that emerges from those overlapping social identities. A lot of poets right now are writing from these intersections—Evie Shockely's new book *Semi-automatic* is a brilliant re-linguaging on black womanhood and anti-black violence. Also *Black Took*, Danez Smith, Rosa Alcalá and Joseph Legaspi.

Intersectional poetics is also what Donna Haraway calls an "affinity politics." How can minoritized poets dislodge whiteness or heteronormativity or patriarchy through finding affinities between

each other's histories, politics, aesthetic, and languages? And can a coalitional aesthetic be created without cultural appropriation nor it flattening to the fangless multiculturalism of the 90's? Can it allow room for agonistic discussions on the racial tensions between minoritized groups, where we work on the anti-black racism in our respective communities, but also acknowledge—as one example—that "model minority" is engineered by whites to pit us against each other? And can it do this without multiculturalism's false sincerity nor an aggression to shut each other down? And what forms would affinity politics take? In that same essay, Mackey talks about turning the "noun" back into the verb" by "othering" language. Intersectional poetics is refusing the container given to you and "othering" that container, "othering" the English language which may or may not come from those syncretic affinities. Myung Mi Kim does that as well as LaTasha Nevada Diggs and Solmaz Sharif.

**2. Am I right in seeing a prose block as an intersectional form: something that is inclusive to all identities and defies genre?** Sure, the prose block definitely can be intersectional. It's an egalitarian form, a form that allows for the many, and because of that, it's very American. The prose block has always been a platform for a coalition of genres. I've noticed that many poets have returned to the personal lyric, which is especially attractive in this age of social media, because a short lyric poem gets more shares. The viral personal lyric poem is all about the ending. It's a gymnast style of poem: you got to stick that landing. No stumbling, no uncertainty. I'm more drawn to poems that, to use Lyn Hejinian's term, "rejects closure." All forms are inherited but the personal lyric, like the coming-of-age novel, is so inherited that the form has its own ideas about identity and will write it for you.

**3. What has been inspiring you lately?** Since I'm working on essays, I've been more inspired by scholars-- Frank Wilderson is a scholar who I've been thinking a lot about. His Afro-pessimist ideas have been circulating among a lot of young activists and

scholars. His totalizing perspective on global anti-blackness challenges and troubles and interests me greatly.

Sara Ahmed: phenomenology on whiteness is really incredible. We tend to think of whiteness as a person, or people, but it affects how we move our bodies in space. I've been thinking how her ideas can help us rethink how we teach and study the poetic tradition since poetry is a phenomenological project (in that it looks at what's been overlooked) but it's phenomenological from a white vantage point.

**4. I hope you don't mind my saying: you are known for your well researched takedowns of so-called gatekeepers in the literary world, what is your advice for young poets or those in academia? How can we keep ourselves and these institutions accountable to students; people?** Don't rely on the traditional institutional structures to fulfill your egos. It's tempting for poets to write for judges and hiring committees. And it's tempting to celebrate the fact, that now, institutions are making real efforts to diversify and that there are more poets of color, women, and queers who are getting the prizes and getting the teaching jobs. This is progress. But it shouldn't compensate for institutional reform since the award system upholds racial exceptionalism over group solidarity, careerism over social practice, establishing not only a quota but a house style that tends towards respectability politics.

Work from the outside and not just achieve to get inside. Even when you are inside, work from the outside. Form groups outside it. In this way, though they are institutions, *Cave Canem*, *Kundiman*, *Canto Mundo* and *Vida* have been instrumental, providing alternative communities that traditional MFA programs refuse to provide; we have to keep replenishing renegade communities and publications that keep the center in check.

**5. Did you always want to be a poet?** No, I wanted to be a visual artist. But I was not very good so I became a poet.

# Q&A: Cathy Park Hong

**6. What is the best thing about being a poet right now? What is the most difficult?** Poetry is having a renaissance. A lot of people are reading poetry, seeking in it the truth, or rage, or empathy that is utterly lacking in the Trump era; poetry is the antidote to what Hannah Arendt calls “the negative solidarity” of enraged white Americans who feel like they’re not getting their slice of the pie, or want to hoard their pie from others. Part of it is the pithiness of the poetic form, its compression of feeling, that readers, overwhelmed by the onslaught of horrible news, can turn to for spiritual refueling.

Its difficulty hasn’t changed from any other moment. Despite its resurgence, people still don’t take poetry seriously because it’s not

marketable. Because of that, it requires superhuman inner-strength to overcome your doubt and believe that what you do matters.

**7. A passage from something you’ve read that has resonated:** I’ll end with a passage by Fred Moten from Undercommons:

The hold here is the hold in the slave ship but it is also the hold that we have on reality and fantasy, the hold they have on us and the hold we decide to forego on the other, preferring instead to touch, to be with, to love. If there is no church in the wild, if there is study rather than knowledge production, if there is a way of being together in brokenness, if there is an undercommons, then we must all find our way to it. And it will not be there where the wild things

are, it will be a place where refuge is not necessary and you will find that you were already in it all along.

—  
Cathy Park Hong’s latest poetry collection, *Engine Empire*, was published in 2012 by W.W. Norton. Her other collections include *Dance Dance Revolution*, chosen by Adrienne Rich for the Barnard Women Poets Prize, and *Translating Mo’um*. Hong is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship and the New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship. Her poems have been published in *Poetry*, *A Public Space*, *Paris Review*, *McSweeney’s*, *Baffler*, *Boston Review*, *The Nation*, and other journals. She is the poetry editor of *The New Republic* and is an Associate Professor at Sarah Lawrence College.

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## REVIEWS cont. from pg. 29

How can one transmit to others the infinite Aleph, which my timorous memory can scarcely contain?”. The common denomination of the effect of witnessing the Aleph--on both Borges’ narrator and his guide, Carlos Argentino Daneri--is that they are both driven to write about it, to relay its phenomenon in poem or as tale, despite the inherent futility of the attempt. Quint sees that the whole world is contained in everything and possesses that same fire. Anchoring himself with a few fixed points of reference (the films of Masaki Kobayashi being the largest and most present) he straps on his kaleidoscope and wheels around the Aleph as his intake ticker-tapes out into the poem. If Quint plays this book like an accordion, books two and three are where he pulls it in tight again after the expansive opening crescendo and starts playing the smaller notes, the bellow shakes. Little chirps and rustles of thought are brought into sharp focus. It is the springtime that runs throughout the book, alternately as mood, setting, and metaphor. In spring the world explodes in its consequence--decisions invisible for seasons show their hands, the bush you trimmed back last year

yields different life than its previously identical untouched neighbor. It’s when we see the bed we made, despite earlier warnings and foresight (“just wires and lights early hymn to alien takeover”). Whether you are addressing the broadcasting community or directing a deeply pacifistic samurai movie, the one thing that you can’t do is stay silent. It’s just not in the bones, even if “the basic facts start over are endlessly available and finally unhelpful”. Quint is a poet, and this book is his own instinctive, inevitable addition (a contextualizing reference to Ted Berrigan’s poetic response to John Wieners: “stupidly repeating only this”), a book that smartly plays on his own considerable strengths as a collagist of thought and moral suspicion, which recognizes the power of taking “a walk before the weather changes” because the future holds great but potentially disastrous chapters: we live in a world where “the heaviest rain on record” is “converted to flowers” but also where:

robots began exploring Mars in the 70s  
is the inventor of teleportation alive today?  
if only we could hope so

It almost goes without saying that Quint, and this book, hold quite a lot of hope for such a fantastic reality.

--  
For the past four years **Dave Morse** has co-run the Bushwick used bookstore Book Row as well as authored a number of chapbooks and one full-length collection of poetry, published in 2016 by Molasses Books.



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