



# THE POETRY PROJECT

April/May 2018

Issue #255

# The Poetry Project

## April / May 2018 Issue #255

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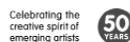
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**Cover image:** courtesy of GANZEER.

# New Omnidawn Spring Poetry



**Ewa Chrusciel** *Strata* (reprint of Emergency Press edition)

\$17.95 80 pages 978-1-63243-056-4

"Chrusciel creates a gorgeous weave of experience, informed by both narrative and lyric by always returning to previous pieces, creating a mosaic-like or symphonic effect....A powerful, multivalenced work, it deserves closer and sustained study."

—Kazim Ali, *Field*



**Richard Greenfield** *Subterranean*

\$17.95 96 pages 978-1-63243-050-2

★★★ *Publishers Weekly* Starred Review ★★★

"Ostensibly an elegiac musing on the death of a father, the collection exerts itself through strange contorted language to account for every thought a death might affect. The result is an intricate and engrossing journey in search of precision, even when the results are lengthy, or dense, or ugly....Readers willing to travel with Greenfield into the root system he unearths will be rewarded by the sensory reorientation his works offer."



**Diana Khoi Nguyen** *Ghost Of*

\$17.95 88 pages 978-1-63243-052-6

"*Ghost Of*...wrestles with what remains in the wake of a death in the family. Nguyen's work is neither an ancient exorcism nor an unhaunting, but a mourning song that reaches across time, space, and distance towards loved ones, ancestors, and strangers."—*Publishers Weekly*



**Bin Ramke** *Light Wind Light Light*

\$17.95 96 pages 978-1-63243-053-3

"Engaging a childhood among rivers, Ramke takes steps into the riverlike world at large, and then turns to (or hopes for) metamorphosis. Ramke's latest deals with memory as fluid, transitory, and illuminating."—*Publishers Weekly*



**LM Rivera** *The Drunkards*

\$17.95 144 pages 978-1-63243-054-0

"This is a book of traditional knowledge...What gives it such a sharp impression of strangeness? There is another, esoteric dimension of dialogue in this book that has no name and is best represented by the bizarre figure of drunkenness."—Aaron Kunin



**Claire Marie Stancek** *Oil Spell*

\$17.95 104 pages 978-1-63243-055-7

"This collection of poems weaves a contemporary word-hex. *Oil Spell* offers poems as spell, as art, poem as spell-bound, as orthographically arranged perception, paradox, and reportage. Sonically and visually shaped, the work is haunted—and haunts us—by what it discloses."—Hoa Nguyen



For sample poems, reviews, contests & more visit [www.omnidawn.com](http://www.omnidawn.com)

OMNIDAWN

# Letter from the Director

*Be strong Bernadette  
Nobody will ever know  
I came here for a reason  
Perhaps there is a life here  
Of not being afraid of your own heart beating  
Do not be afraid of your own heart beating*

from Bernadette Mayer's "The Way to Keep Going in Antarctica"

I'm writing this dispatch on my laptop with my feet up, sipping a blended scotch in an oversized white sweater that I found at a thrift store for \$1. The forecast calls for snow tonight. In a private apartment in the East Village, the search committee charged with hiring the next Executive Director of The Poetry Project conducted their first round of interviews. One hundred people have asked me who is going to take over and what will I do next. I repeat the above lines in my head, with one edit – "Be strong Stacy." Sometimes I was afraid of my own heart beating, but I rarely acted a fool. And if I suffered what else could I do. I loved the room with all of my might, and here we are. I sip my drink and talk with, as I always have, my future self.

- SS

## Announcements

### MEMORIAL FOR LARRY FAGIN

Please save the date of Thursday, April 19, 2018 for Larry Fagin's memorial. It will be held at Douglas Dunn's space in NYC at 541 Broadway between Prince and Spring, buzzer 19.

### SPRING 2018 INTERNS

We're so thrilled welcome The Poetry Project's Spring 2018 interns, Ivana Montalvo and Kallie Quist — as well as welcome back Fall 2017 intern, Yaz Lancaster!

Ivana Montalvo is a sophomore at Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts (The New School). Her major/minor is currently undecided, but by the end of this semester she will have declared a Writing major with a concentration in poetry and a contemporary music minor. She is 20 years old and lives in the East Village and is originally from Clearwater, FL.

Yaz Lancaster is a violinist, poet, composer & steel pannist studying at New York University.

Kallie Quist is a creative writing major at Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts at The New School. She is from Minnesota and loves to read, write, bike and do film photography. Kallie is also interested in book-making and has self-published a poetry chapbook and a zine.

## NEW FROM LITMUS PRESS

### THE SUPPOSIUM EDITED BY JOAN RETALLACK

#### *Thought Experiments & Poetical Play in Difficult Times*

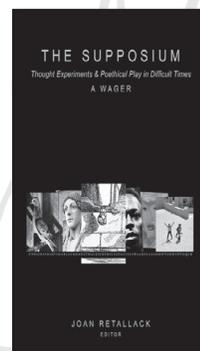
Imagine you could suppose or perhaps better to say suppose you could imagine. The ever-swinging Joan Retallack teams up with the vibrantly inventive Adam Pendleton to explore not just the possibilities for poethics, but the possibilities of possibility.

—Charles Bernstein

Joan Retallack is a master teacher of the thought-experiment. With magically generative aplomb (it is not magic—it is thoughtful attunement to the method of questioning and long experience in it), her prompts nestle in the mind and things flow out. In this loose, beautiful and unlikely collection of writings, conversations and exuberances, we find more evidence of how much more work there is to do on the question Adam Pendleton asks: "How can we have productive public conversations and exchanges?" So simple. Impossible? *The Supposium* is, therefore, an optimistic accumulation of successes at the one-second-of-attention-at-a-time level. I think this is the level at which the true future can be glimpsed and made.

—Simone White

2018 | \$24 | ISBN: 978-1-933959-31-3



WWW.LITMUSPRESS.ORG

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# Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

Is it spring yet?? Grateful to be able to share the following with you:

1. Below, on this same page, prose by John Paul Infante: whether you buy cocaine or not--don't be mad if you see yourself in this piece.
2. Allyson Paty blesses us with an excerpt from her ACE Hotel Residency project on page 11--work that's both fun to read and look at.
3. Roberto Montes comes through again with what most of us in the po-biz don't want to believe or care to admit to ourselves on page 12.
4. Ganzeer, who graces our cover is an artist whose work I've followed since my time working as a journalist in Cairo, Egypt. I was amazed when this quiet graphic designer took over the Egyptian streets with his incendiary graffiti during the revolution. On

page 15 he shares work from his forthcoming graphic novel.

5. Reviews on page 22! John Rufo didn't have to write them all this time! But don't miss their gorgeous intro.

And finally, an interview with Solmaz Sharif -- I can't wait until she writes about Palestine, this interview gives us a glimpse of what she has to say on page 31.

Thank you to our contributors and our advertisers!

Stacy, we will miss you dearly but look forward to featuring your work in our pages. So grateful to you for all you've done for this community, the team you've built at this institution, and the space you've made for so many emerging artists like myself. We are lucky to have had a leader like you. Deepest gratitude and best wishes.

Until the next.  
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

## PROSE: John Paul Infante

### BUYING COCAINE

1. Bring a Latino or Black friend with you.

Don't confuse your Latino friends with your Spanish friends. Your dealer has never been to Spain and will pretend he doesn't know English if two white guys approach him. Your dealer thinks white is white the same way you think black is black. Your dealer won't overcharge you if you're with a non-white person.

2. I'm lying. This isn't about you.

Your dealer will overcharge you not because you're white, but

because you can afford it. This neighborhood is no different than that resort you went to in the Caribbean. Your dealer is more American than you think. He's an aspiring capitalist just like those third-world resort workers.

Platanos with Salami.  
Brugal with Coca-Cola.  
That light purple juicy warm hole inside that dark pitch-black woman.  
You were overcharged there.  
You will be overcharged here.

3. Focus on the Coke.  
When you get off the George Washington Bridge you'll be on 178th Street and Fort Washington by the bus terminal. It will look like

the U.N. You'll see brown, white and black junkies from all over the world. This ain't *Bright Lights, Big City*. This is real cosmopolitanism. The neighborhood is made up of Americans, including law abiding undocumented citizens. Forget them.

4. Drive down 178th street and make a left on Wadsworth Avenue. Ignore the merengue spilling out of windows and reggaeton left over from cars flying by. Ignore the people on plastic chairs in front of tenement buildings, drinking and celebrating God knows what on St. Nicholas Avenue.

Throw your 50 Cent CD out the

# PROSE: John Paul Infante

car window. Ironically playing a 50 Cent CD you actually paid for proves your whiteness, and does not camouflage you celebrating God knows what on St. Nicholas Avenue. Throw your 50 Cent CD out the car window. Ironically playing a 50 Cent CD you actually paid for proves your whiteness, and does not camouflage you.

5. Be yourself. Be white. Don't be like those dealers on the corner. It won't help in any way. The truth is that these dealers love whiteness more than you or they could ever understand. Read *Black Skin, White Mask* by Frantz Fanon or Wilhelm Von Schadow's chapter summaries at *Liberator Magazine*.

6. Avoid walking by the church. If you pass by on foot the church-goers will notice when you forget to cross yourself. Plus, they'll know you weren't there last Sunday. For them it's about community and charity and you are an outsider that hasn't donated.

7. While looking for parking you'll discover a university for a specific group of people is a block away from your dealer. Park your car in front of George Washington high school. The dropout rate is as high as the property tax money going into the school is low.

8. Don't be surprised if you see people you identify with. Rent is more expensive than ever so a lot of us are moving out. Rent is cheap. Consider moving to the area.

9. Mayor Giuliani cleaned the city but his hands ain't clean. His soldiers used a plunger on a Haitian immigrant while they protected and served. Fortunately, you're far from a dark skin Haitian so you're safe.

10. Don't badmouth the last dealer who sold you the flour that ain't numb your tongue. Most of these dealers have dealt with each other and if they haven't they will. A few of them are more industrious than you, investing in laundromats until the dryer stops spinning, the money's clean, and the laundromat becomes a local business like an actual laundromat. Most of the corner dealers are already in jail. Some of these blocks are traps, smaller than small towns. Read Sherwood Anderson's *Winesberg, Ohio* and James Joyce, *The Dubliners*.

11. When you get to your dealer's block avoid Terrence. He's around your age. He can tell you're white and not eastern European and he holds this against you. He read *A Small Place* by Jamaica Kincaid and is still angry. He's in that prestigious school that didn't accept you even though both of you had identical grades. You'll roll your eyes and blame Affirmative Action. Terrence will suck his teeth and counter with Legacy Preferences.

12. Don't smile at Josefina. She'll be waiting in front of your dealer's building for her father to pick her up. Josephina's father, the taxi driver, does nothing except work, read the newspaper and drive his daughter around. He only knows baseball. He's never played golf and thinks Tiger Woods is a place in upstate New York, and yet owns a four iron. Stay away from his daughter. He's old school and was oppressed in the days when blatant oppression was in style. He'll hack you with his golf club as if St. Nicholas Avenue was that puddle of a river dividing Hispaniola and you've mispronounced a Spanish word. Read Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones*.

13. You'll find the dealer waiting for you on the third floor. When you tell him I sent you, he'll take out the coke. Do not tell him how you know me or ask him how he knows me. He counts the money over and over again and you grow anxious. You fear he'll rob you like the last dealer from the hood you last scored at. He won't small talk. He won't tell you he's dealt to my mother behind my back, but this story isn't about that.

When he finally gives you the stuff you'll feel relieved and jokingly ask how much cut is in it? The dealer will remind you that nothing is pure.

---

**infanteJP** currently teaches high school in Manhattan. He has taught creative writing at Lehman College of the City University of New York. He's earned an MFA in fiction from the New School for General Studies. He's worked as tutor and director at an after-school program, lotions and perfume factory, Starbucks, Barnes & Noble, pharmacy- delivery-boy, selling door to door Kirby home cleaning systems AKA overpriced vacuum cleaners, and sold academic essays to undergrads.

The Poetry Project, Howl! Arts, and Allen Ginsberg Estate Present

## THE ALLEN GINSBERG SYMPOSIUM

MAY 3-5, 2018

From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, The Poetry Project held an annual symposium that featured readings, talks, panels and workshops. This spring, we are thrilled to reinvent this 3-day event and expand our mission to provide a forum and network for our literary community. Allen Ginsberg saw the Project as a place where people could articulate their relationship to the most important national and global problems of the time, and believed that the planet needed imagination and the avant-garde spirit of poetry to survive. After the thrill of the 50th Anniversary celebration last year and another energetic New Year's Day Marathon, we're looking forward to making the symposium an annual opportunity to bring poets together at the church.

### THURSDAY, MAY 3

**2-5pm: WORKSHOP: "Out of Place with Samuel Delany: A Prose Workshop"**  
Samuel Delany

### 8pm - GROUP READING

Patricia Spears Jones  
Sam Sax  
Lara Mimoso Montes  
and others TBA

### FRIDAY, MAY 4

**2-5pm: WORKSHOP: "Investigate Poetry and the Spirit of Allen Ginsberg"**  
Ed Sanders

### 8pm: PANEL: "Out of Place"

Anne Waldman  
Rachel Zucker  
and more TBA

### SATURDAY, MAY 5

**2-5pm: WORKSHOP: "Antediluvian Energies: Practices"**  
Anne Waldman

### 8pm: SHORT READINGS AND KEYNOTE TALK

Filip Marinovich  
Adjua Gargi Nzinga Greaves  
Alice Notley, talk: "Allen Ginsberg: An International Poetry, Its Genius & Particles"

### CLOSING RECEPTION

*All events take place at St. Mark's Church. Readings and panel are free. Workshops are sliding scale \$20-\$50. Pre-registration required. Space is limited. Visit [poetryproject.org](http://poetryproject.org) or call 212-674-0910 to register.*

### **Lost & Found: The CUNY Poetics Document Initiative**

publishes unexpected genre-bending works by 20th century writers.



#### **SERIES 7 NOW AVAILABLE**

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

**THE GRADUATE CENTER**  
CITY UNIVERSITY  
OF NEW YORK

**The Center  
for the  
Humanities**

**LOSTANDFOUNDBOOKS.ORG**

# April/May Master Class + Workshop

## Tuning In And Talking Back

Master Class with Ed Roberson

1 Session | Tue 4/3, 6-9PM

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

Sometimes we talk about a poet finding his or her own voice, but the voice in any given poem is often multiple. Who is speaking in the poem's voice, and how do we know? In this master class, Ed Roberson discusses examples from his own poetry in which the text seems to be talking back or responding to the writing of other contemporary poets of his generation, such as Lyn Hejinian and Nathaniel Mackey. The class will be structured as a conversation: he invites students to bring poems of their own along with examples from other poets who influenced them.

**Ed Roberson** is the author of ten books of poetry, including the chapbook *Closer Pronunciation* (Northwestern University Press, 2013) and the collection *To See the Earth before the End of the World* (Wesleyan University Press, 2010). An earlier collection, *Atmosphere Conditions* (Green Integer, 2000), was selected for the National Poetry Series and nominated for the Lenore Marshall Award from the Academy of American Poets. He is the recipient of the 2016 Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize from the Poetry Foundation and the 2008 Shelley Memorial Award from the Poetry Society of America.

Roberson lives in Chicago, where he has taught classes and workshops at the University of Chicago, Columbia College, and Northwestern University. He has served as an instructor at the Cave Canem Retreat for Black Writers and as the Holloway Visiting Professor at the University of California, Berkeley. He is Distinguished Lecturer Emeritus at Northwestern University.

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## Poet Talkings-To: The Aesthetics and Ethics of Dialogue

Workshop with Andy Fitch

3 Sessions | Mon 5/7, Tue 5/8, Thur 5/10, 6:30-8:30PM

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

The genre of the "poet talk" long has encouraged authors to dazzle audiences with extensive exuberant riffs. But how and when today might poets most constructively talk to, hear out, learn from, think with the widest possible range of interlocutors—from fellow poets and artists, to scholars, to philosophers, to political leaders, and beyond? This course will position you to conduct and publish informed exploratory conversations far beyond your immediate social circles. Readings will include dialogues with variously loquacious and/or reticent poets (Etel Adnan, Wayne Koestenbaum, Srikanth Reddy, Lisa Robertson), as well as poetically attuned philosophers (Anthony Appiah, Jill Frank), journalists (Emily Bazelon, David Plotz), literary critics (Daniel Kane, Simone White), political organizers (Michael Hardt, Liz Theoharis), and policy advocates (Danielle Allen, James Forman).

**Andy Fitch** has a weekly interview column for the *Los Angeles Review of Books*. His most recent books are *Sixty Morning Talks*, *Sixty Morning Walks*, and (with Amaranth Borsuk) *As We Know*. With Cristiana Baik, he recently assembled the *Letter Machine Book of Interviews*. He has dialogic books forthcoming from 1913 Press and Nightboat Books. He is a founding editor of *The Conversant* and edits *Essay Press*.

**The Poetry Project's workshops** have a reputation for being both rigorous, accessible, and affordable. Teachers, experienced writers, and new writers work together with a shared dedication to creating exciting poetry and exploring a wide range of literary genres, styles, and traditions. Due to a cap of 15 seats per workshop (unless otherwise noted), reservations are required and payment must be received in advance. Tuition for one 10-session workshop is \$275 and for one 5-session workshop is \$150 for the 2017 season. Tuition for one Master Class is \$95, or \$75 for students and seniors. If you are a student or senior, email [lh@poetryproject.org](mailto:lh@poetryproject.org) with a scan of your Student ID for a discount code. For more information or to learn about scholarships, visit [poetryproject.org/events/category](http://poetryproject.org/events/category).

# Nightboat

NEW AND FORTHCOMING TITLES

**ETEL ADNAN**

SURGE

**ANDREW DURBIN**

MACARTHUR PARK

**JASMINE GIBSON**

DON'T LET THEM SEE ME LIKE THIS

**FRÉDÉRIQUE GUÉTAT-LIVIANI**

(TRANSLATED BY NATHANAËL)

BUT IT'S A LONG WAY

**WAYNE KOESTENBAUM**

CAMP MARMALADE

**ADITI MACHADO**

SOME BEHEADINGS

**DOUGLAS A. MARTIN**

ACKER

**ELY SHIPLEY**

PLAYING DEAD

**CHRISTOPHER SOTO** (EDITOR)

NEPANTLA: AN ANTHOLOGY DEDICATED TO QUEER POETS OF COLOR

**STACY SZYMASZEK**

A YEAR FROM TODAY

**CHRISTINA VEGA-WESTHOFF**

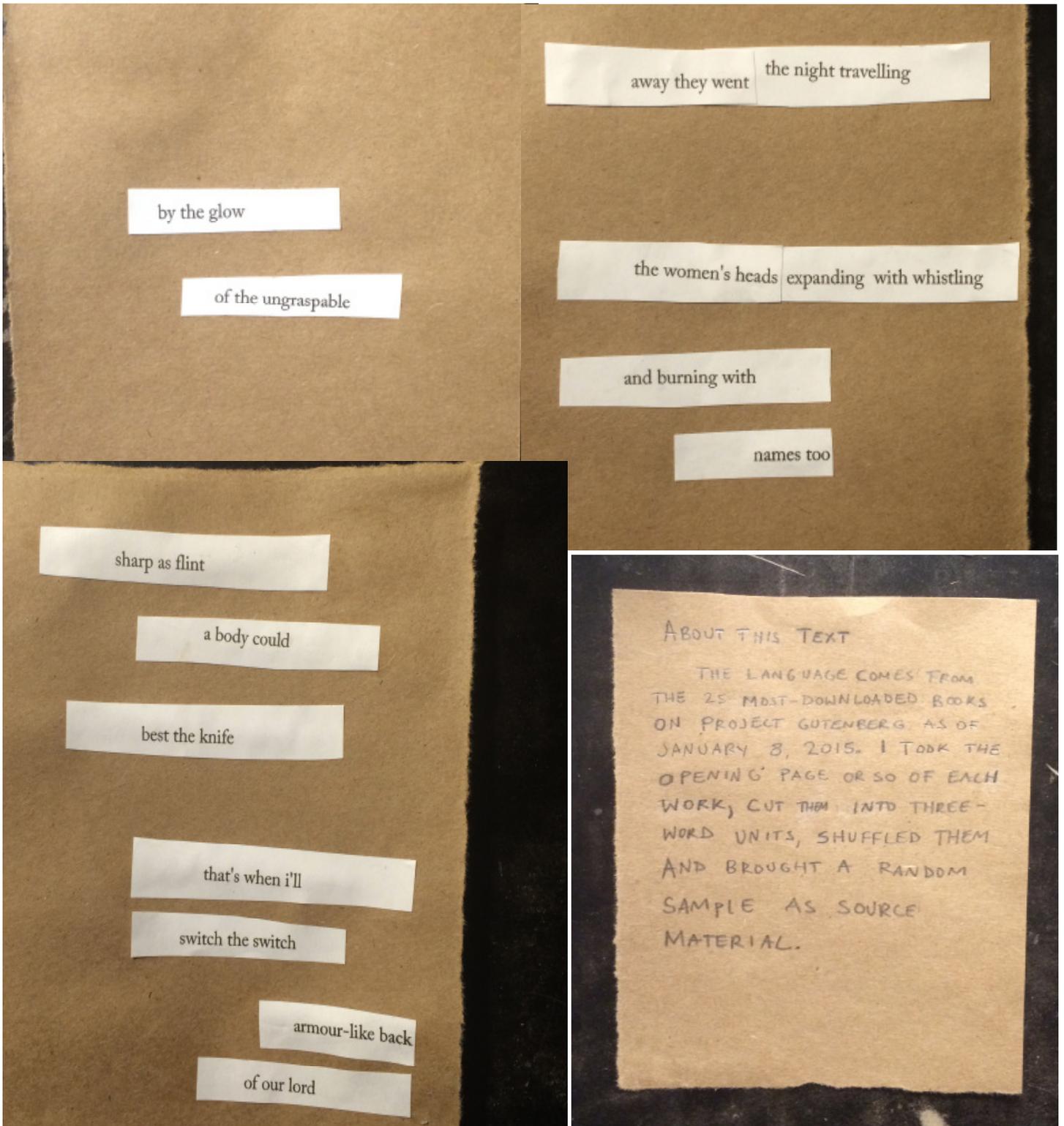
SUELO TIDE CEMENT

**HAZEL WHITE**

VIGILANCE IS NO ORCHARD

Nightboat.org

# POETRY: Allyson Paty



Allyson Paty's poems can be found in *Boston Review*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *jubilat*, *Kenyon Review Online*, *The Literary Review*, *Tin House*, the *PEN Poetry Series*, and elsewhere. She is a 2017 NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellow in Poetry and a 2017-2018 participant in the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Workspace program. With Norah Maki, she is co-founding editor of *Singing Saw Press*.

# GRIEVANCES

compiled from the social media of Roberto Montes

ONE THING WE KNOW IS TRUE  
BUT PRETEND IS NOT

The Business of Poetry rides its own  
meltings

I was talking to someone who works as  
an editor of a NYC magazine

And they said something that was  
obviously true

Yet surprising

Surprising not for the merit of the claim

But because they were saying it aloud

They had discovered by talking

With many editors/contributors to  
journals/magazines

That they all disliked a particular book

Dislike may be a strong word

They all didn't feel warmly about a  
particular book

However, they were also all writing  
glowing reviews

And promoting the book in their  
magazines/journals

This person was both amazed and  
amazed

By their amazement

Upon realizing this

*Oh you all don't actually like the work  
either*

This is something that is widely known

And underreported

But saying it out loud was

I'm somewhat embarrassed to admit

Very helpful to me

The world of reviews and publication is a  
strange one

It distorts value

By claiming value

The difficulty lies in the fact

Publication is both outside of poetry

And necessary for its proliferation

( Some people may object

By saying that the proliferation of poetry

Should not even be the aim

So the whole insistence on publication

Is a bit counterproductive )

I've been thinking about this insistence

And how it can be damaging

In subtle but powerful ways

The idea that Publication Affirms Value

I remember talking to a poet

Who was discussing the work of  
someone they admired

They were kind of getting worked up

Expressing their hope that this person  
receives an award

They feel they deserve

Worked up because there is always a  
fear

And a frustration

In these kinds of conversations

The notion that awards

Affirm the value of the work

And so good work is rewarded and

recognized

We know this is not accurate

A lot of bad work is awarded

And a lot of good work goes ignored

I remember affecting a kind of smug  
advisor voice

And expressed my belief

That good work has a way of being  
found

Even if it does not get recognition from  
the industry

What interested me about this  
conversation

Was the young poet's response

Which was an immediate rejection of  
what I said

And a counter assertion

That there are many poets of color who  
never get awards or published

So the idea that good work is eventually  
found

Is incorrect, whitewashed, misleading

This is I think is

Where many people are at conceptually  
In the community

In terms of how people view publication

At least it's a common refrain I see

However it makes a quiet assertion

That I think is somewhat dangerous

And potentially toxic

The assertion is that

Publication Affirms Value

# GRIEVANCES

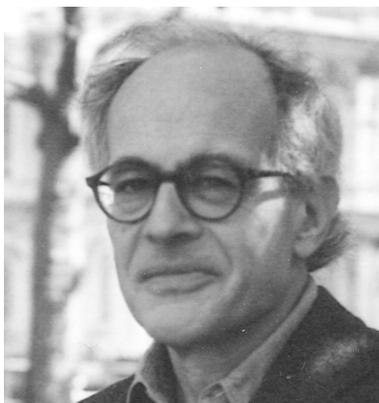
compiled from the social media of Roberto Montes

We know this is untrue  
We know it so implicitly that I think  
We sometimes forget it  
A lot of the culture and community of writing  
Monomaniacally orbits the idea of publication  
That is what a poem is for  
There is nothing more terrifying to a MFA student  
Than the poem  
Just  
Existing  
Outside of publication  
The very idea of a MFA program  
Pivots on the importance of publication  
But how strange it is  
With all the obsession of publication  
That there is no community support  
No workshop, no guide  
To what you're supposed to do after publication  
*What the fuck are you supposed to do after publication?*  
(I would be very interested in a workshop with that title)  
The poet I was speaking to  
Was frustrated by the unbearable whiteness of publication  
Understandably  
But also asserting that Publication Asserts Value

Because they assumed that when I said "Good work is eventually found"  
I meant "Good work is eventually published, accepted, and awarded"  
There is also the implicit assertion  
That all marginalized poets  
Are & always have been  
Pursuing publication and awards  
It strikes me as somewhat  
Infantilizing  
The way the narrative paints our ancestors  
Helpless and rejected from the literary center  
It cannot imagine the possibility  
That perhaps some people  
Have no interest in the center  
Perhaps some poets on the outside  
Write for the outside  
Perhaps there can be autonomy  
Of course  
This divorces the money from the equation  
A complication that is difficult to disentangle  
Although I am unsure if pursuing funding  
Ever gives someone the freedom  
That we like to pretend  
Just like being published  
Does not free you from the insistence of publication  
But we need money

And some need it more than others  
So the whole raffle of publication  
Can be particularly frustrating  
We know publication does not actually affirm value  
But we are forced to pretend that it does  
Because acting as if you are too good for publication  
Seems like an easy way to not get published  
And talking openly about this stuff  
Is about as useful  
As writing a poem and then burning it  
Which is to say  
Very useful  
But not in the way you think you need  
Just like the conversation with the editor  
Was incredibly regenerative for me  
Hype and promotion and publication  
Often has little to do with the work itself  
And the gears grind in such a way  
That we feel compelled to go with it  
I get it  
But pretending at something  
We know is untrue  
Is exhausting  
But I won't belabor the point  
Because I am only paid as far as this line  
—  
**Roberto Montes** is the author of *GRIEVANCES* (The Atlas Review)

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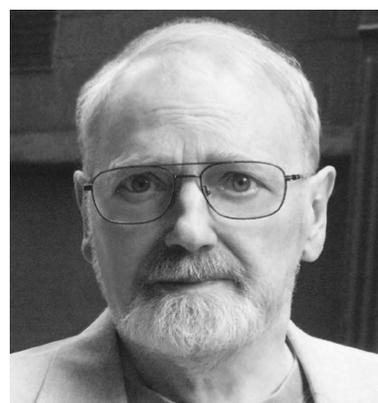
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## About GANZEER:

Ganzeer is a maker of Concept Pop, a kind of cultural insurgency that can be seen in his wide-ranging output, be it installations, prints, paintings, videos, objects, guerrilla actions in public space, writing, and also comix. *Art in America* has referred to his practice as "New Realism," while the *New York Times* called him a "chameleon" and the *Huffington Post* placed him on a list of "25 Street Artists from Around the World who are Shaking Up Public Art." He has lived in Cairo, New York, Los Angeles, and now Denver.

Ganzeer's current project is a sci-fi graphic novel titled *THE SOLAR GRID*, which has awarded him a Global Thinker Award from Foreign Policy in 2016.

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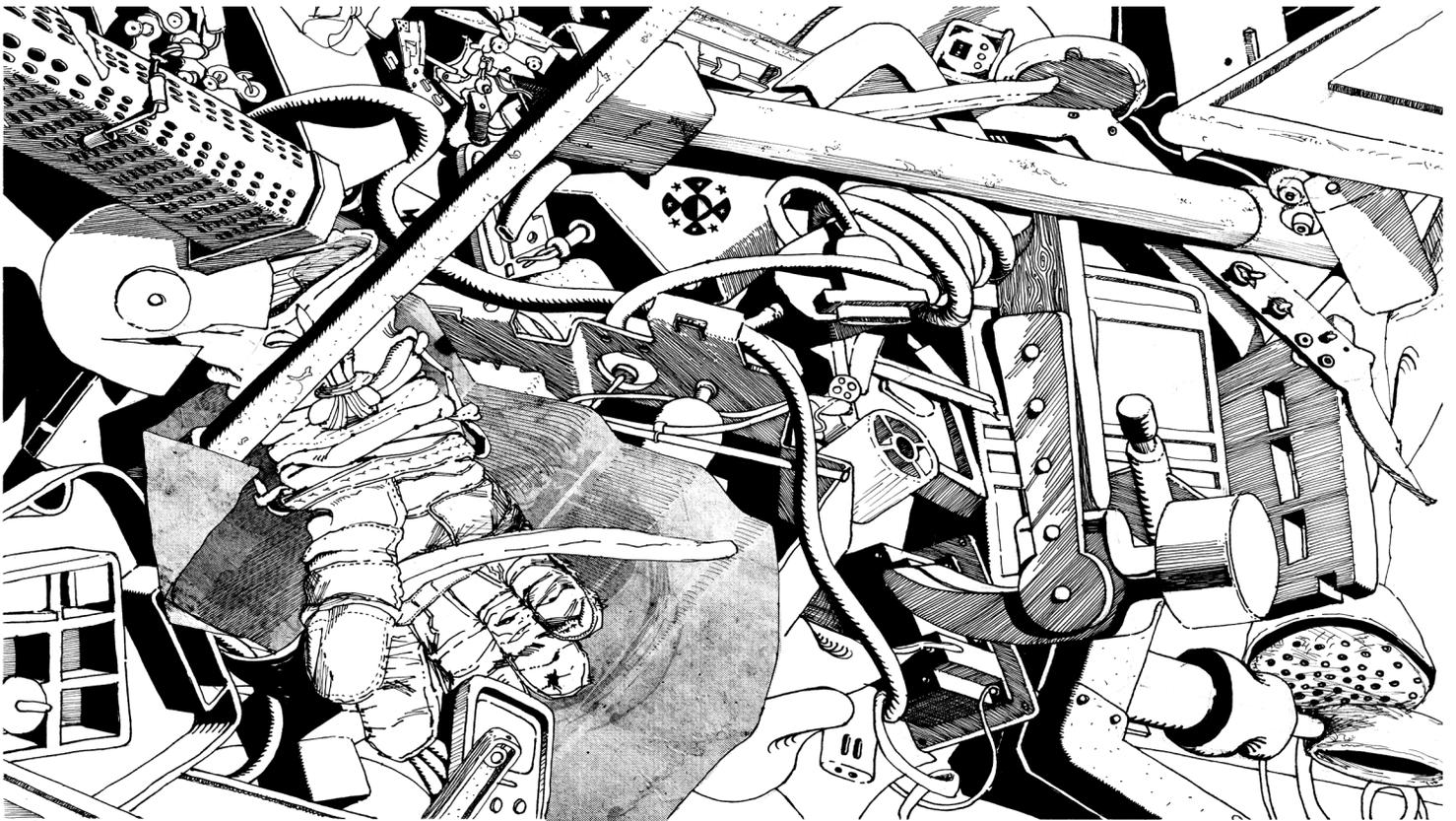
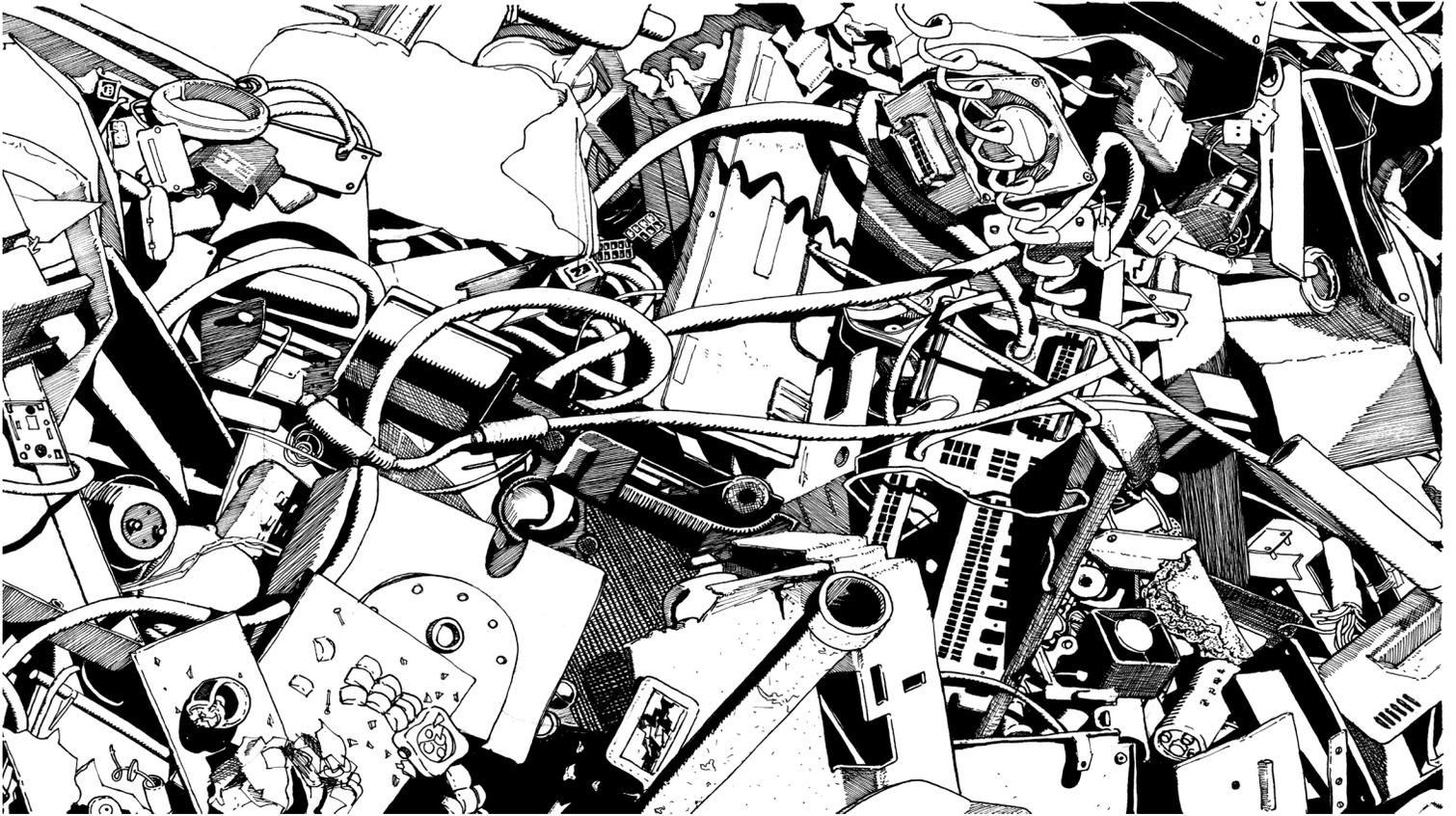
## Free Creative Writing Workshops

March 24-- *Memoir Writing Workshop with Lise Funderburg*

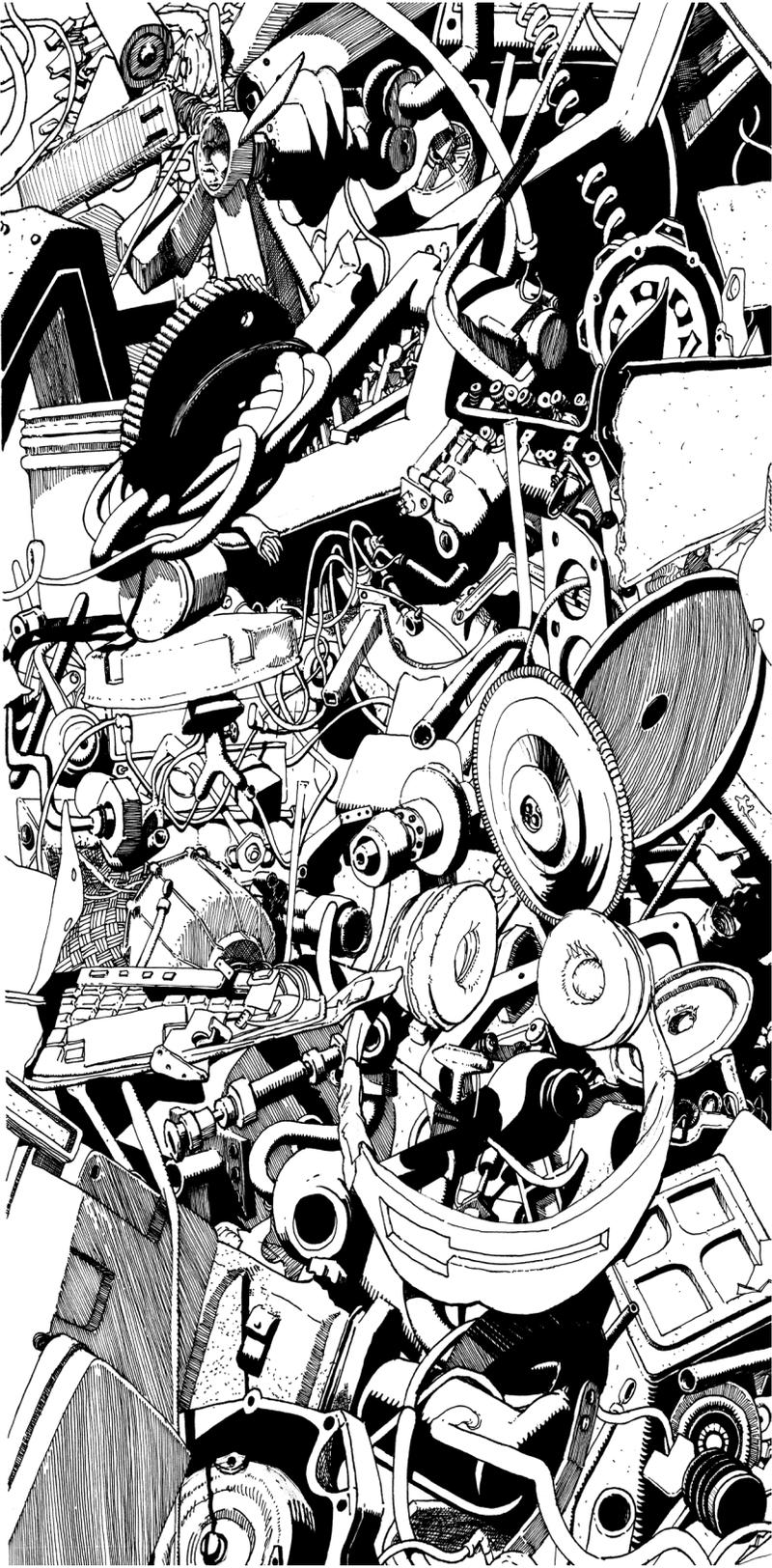
April 21-- *Fiction Workshop with Hirsh Sawhney*

April 28-- *Poetry Workshop with Anne Waldman*

June 9-- *Translation Institute with Susan Bernofsky, Gregory Racz, and Christopher Winks*



# ART: Ganzeer





# 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.

## WED 4/4

### Geoffrey O'Brien & Ed Roberson

**Geoffrey G. O'Brien's** 5th book, *Experience in Groups*, will be out from Wave Books in April 2018. He is the author most recently of *People on Sunday* and the coauthor (with John Ashbery and Timothy Donnelly) of *Three Poets*. O'Brien is an Associate Professor in the English Department at UC Berkeley and also teaches for the Prison University Project at San Quentin State Prison.

**Ed Roberson** is the author of ten books of poetry, including the chapbook *Closer Pronunciation* and the collection *To See the Earth before the End of the World*. An earlier collection, *Atmosphere Conditions*, was selected for the National Poetry Series and nominated for the Lenore Marshall Award from the Academy of American Poets.

## MON 4/9

### Open Reading

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

## WED 4/11

### Hettie Jones & Carley Moore

Best known for *How I Became Hettie Jones*, her memoir of the Beat Scene, **Hettie Jones** has published 26 books for children and adults, the first in 1971 and the most recent in 2016. *Drive*, her first poetry collection, won the Poetry Society of America's Norma Farber Award and was followed by *All Told and Doing 70*.

**Carley Moore** is an essayist, novelist, and poet. Dancing Girl Press published her debut poetry chapbook, *Portal Poem*, in 2017. Her debut essay collection, *16 Pills*, is forthcoming from Tinderbox Editions in 2018.

## FRI 4/13

### Nana Adusei-Poku & Christian Nyampeta

**Nana Adusei-Poku** is an independent scholar, writer, and educator as well as guest lecturer in Media Arts and Master Fine Arts at the University of the Arts, Zurich. She received her Ph.D. from Humboldt University Berlin for her thesis on post-black art as part of the "Gender as a category of Knowledge" graduate program. She has been a visiting scholar at the University of Ghana, Legon; the London School of Economics; and Columbia University, New York.

**Christian Nyampeta** is a Rwandan-born, Dutch artist. His recent work includes the exhibition *Words after the World* (2017), Camden Arts Centre in London, a contribution to *TOXIC ASSETS: Frontier Imaginaries Ed. No 3* at e-flux and Columbia University in New York, and the exhibition and study programme *Penser l'Afrique* (2018) at Slought in Philadelphia. Forthcoming exhibitions include the Biennial of Contemporary African Art Dak'art (2018), Senegal.

## WED 4/18

### Rob Fitterman & Ann Lauterbach

**Robert Fitterman** is the author of 14 books of poetry including *Nevermind*, *Rob's Word Shop*, *No Wait, Yep. Definitely Still Hate Myself*, *Holocaust Museum, now we are friends*, *Rob the Plagiarist*, *war, the musical*, and *Metropolis*—a long poem in four separate volumes. He teaches writing and poetry at New York University and at the Bard College, Milton Avery School of Graduate Studies.

Poet and essayist **Ann Lauterbach** is the author of nine books of poetry, most recently *Under the Sign* and three books of essays; her 2009 poetry collection *Or to Begin Again* was nominated for a National Book Award. Her tenth collection, *Spell*, is forthcoming from Penguin in fall of 2018. She is Ruth and David Schwab Professor of Languages and Literature at Bard College, where she is also co-Chair of Writing, with Anselm Berrigan, in the Bard MFA.

## MON 4/23

### TALK — HOLDING FORGOTTEN READERS

#### CLOSE: Four Black Women Reflect on African-American Literary Community.

Black Scholar-Librarians on Elizabeth McHenry's *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies* (Duke University Press, 2002).

**Olaronke Akinmowo** is a Bed-Stuy born visual artist, cultural scholar, yoga teacher, set decorator, and mom. In 2015 she started The Free Black Women's Library, an interactive roving biblio-installation that holds a collection of 900 books written by Black women. This social art project also features performances, workshops, readings, film screenings, and critical conversations.

**Adjua Gargi Nzinga Greaves** is an artist chiefly concerned with postcolonial ethnobotany working in mediums of scholarship, performance, corporeal wisdom,

and language. Greaves has been published in *The Black Earth Institute's About Place Journal*, *The Recluse*, *The Poetry Project Newsletter*, and *No, Dear*. In 2017 *Belladonna\** published her first chaplet — *Close Reading As Forestry*.

**Lyric Hunter** is a writer from New York City. Her chapbooks include *Motherwort and Swallow*. Her work has also appeared in *Pelt Vol. 4: Feminist Temporalities*, *The Felt*, *Poems by Sunday*, *Belleville Park Pages*, and *Arava Review*.

**Jhani Miller** is an award winning scholar hailing from the University of Illinois School of Information Science. Her work relates to black femme identity, emotional health, and social influence. When she isn't advocating for historically marginalized groups in libraries, she's an aerial performer, lo-fi photographer, and geek culture researcher. You can find her at the Brooklyn Public Library where she is the Library Information Supervisor.

## WED 4/25

### Gabrielle Civil & Miguel Gutierrez

**Gabrielle Civil** is a black feminist performance artist, poet, and writer, originally from Detroit MI. Her writing and translations can be found in the anthologies *Kitchen Table Translation*, *Walk Towards It*, and *Writing through the Visual and the Virtual*. Her forthcoming book *Experiments in Joy* engages race, performance, and collaboration. The aim of her work is to open up space.

**Miguel Gutierrez's** current fascination is thinking about how being a queer Latin-American dance artist relates to the legacy of (predominantly white) abstraction. This will be the conceptual framework for a new group piece for Latinx performers called *This Bridge Called My Ass*. [www.miguelgutierrez.org](http://www.miguelgutierrez.org).

## FRI 4/27

### Tyler Coburn & Lawrence Abu Hamdan

**Tyler Coburn** is an artist and writer based in New York. His work has been presented at South London Gallery; Kunsthalle Wien; CCA Glasgow; Western Front, Vancouver; Grazer Kunstverein; UCCA, Beijing; and Sculpture Center, New York. His writing has appeared in *e-flux journal*, *Frieze*, *Dis*, *Mousse*, and *Rhizome*.

**Lawrence Abu Hamdan** is an artist and audio investigator currently living in Berlin as guest of DAAD. Abu Hamdan's interest with sound and its intersection with politics originate from his background as a touring musician and facilitator of DIY music. The artist's forensic audio investigations are conducted as part of his research for *Forensic Architecture* at Goldsmiths College London where he received his PhD in 2017.

## 5/3 — 5/5

### THE ALLEN GINSBERG SYMPOSIUM

See Calendar on page 8.

**MON 5/7****MC Hyland & Anna Gurton-Wachter**

**MC Hyland** is a PhD candidate in English Literature at New York University, and holds MFAs in Poetry and Book Arts from the University of Alabama. She is the founding editor of DoubleCross Press, a poetry micropress, as well as the author of several poetry chapbooks (most recently *THE END PART ONE* from Magic Helicopter Press) and the poetry collection *Neveragainland*.

**Anna Gurton-Wachter** is a writer, editor, and archivist. Her first full length book, *Utopia Pipe Dream Memory*, is forthcoming from Ugly Duckling Presse in 2019. Chapbooks include *Mother of All*, *The Abundance Chamber Works Alone*, *Blank Blank Blues*, and *CYRUS*. Anna edits and makes books with DoubleCross Press.

**WED 5/9****Douglas Crase & Michael Lally**

**Douglas Crase** is the author of *The Revisionist*. His recent chapbook *The Astropastorals* was named a 2017 Book of the Year in the *Times Literary Supplement*. A collection of his essays and lectures, *Lines from London Terrace*, was published in February by Pressed Wafer.

**Michael Lally** was born in Orange, NJ 1942. He has published 30 books since 1970 and has been a Civil Rights, anti-war, feminist, and LGBT activist since 1966. He writes the blog "Lally's Alley" and contributor to "The Best American Poetry Blog."

**FRI 5/11****Amina Cain & Madhu H. Kaza**

**Amina Cain** is the author most recently of the short story collection *Creature*, out with Dorothy, a publishing project, and a forthcoming novel from FSG in 2019. She is also working on a book of essays on the space of reading and writing fiction. Essays and short stories have appeared in *The Paris Review Daily*, *BOMB*, *n+1*, *Full Stop*, *Vice*, *the Believer* *Logger*, and other places.

Born in Andhra Pradesh, India, **Madhu H. Kaza** is a writer, translator, artist and educator based in New York City. She is the co-editor of an anthology, *What We Love*, and the editor of *Kitchen Table Translation*. She directs the Bard Microcollege at Brooklyn Public Library and teaches in the MFA program at Columbia University.

**WED 5/16****Marcella Durand & Eugene Lim**

**Marcella Durand's** recent publications include *Rays of the Shadow* and *Le Jardin de M.*, with French translations by Olivier Brossard. Other books include a collaboration with Tina Darragh, *Deep Eco Pré*; *AREA*; and *Traffic & Weather*, written during a residency at the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council. She lives in New York City, where she is working on two long pieces: *Mirror Lines* and *The Prospect*.

**Eugene Lim** is the author of the novels *Fog & Car*, *The Strangers*, and *Dear Cyborgs*. He works as a high school librarian, runs Ellipsis Press, and lives in Queens, NY.

**MON 5/21****April Gibson & Nikki Wallschlaeger**

**April Gibson** is a poet, essayist, and educator whose work has appeared in *Pluck!*, *Valley Voices*, *Tidal Basin*, *Literary Mama*, and elsewhere. Her chapbook, *Automation*, was published by Willow Books as part of their emerging writer series. Her current project is a full-length poetry collection titled *The Black Woman Press Conference*.

**Nikki Wallschlaeger** is the author of the full-length collections *Crawlpace* and *Houses*, as well as the graphic chapbook *I Hate Telling You How I Really Feel* from Bloof Books. She was an editor for *Bettering American Poetry Anthology 2015*, a project promoting the work of marginalized writers. She lives in Wisconsin.

**WED 5/23****Anne Boyer & Gail Scott**

**Anne Boyer's** most recent book is *A Handbook of Disappointed Fate*, a collection of essays and fables. Boyer's other books include *The Romance of Happy Workers*, *My Common Heart*, and *Garments Against Women*. Boyer is now in the final stages of a book called *The Undying*, forthcoming from FSG in August 2019. She lives in Kansas City, where she is a professor at the Kansas City Art Institute.

**Gail Scott** is an experimental prose writer. Her goal is to write sentences which have the function of poetry. She is the author of the novels *The Obituary* and *My Paris*, among others. She is completing a work called *Furniture Music*, in part an ode to the downtown Manhattan poetry scene. She has taught Creative Writing for a decade at Université de Montreal and has also worked as a literary translator.

**FRI 5/25****Toni Jensen & Daisy Atterbury**

**Toni Jensen's** first story collection is *From the Hilltop*. Her stories and essays have been published in journals such as *Orion*, *Catapult*, and *Ecotone*. She teaches in the Programs in Creative Writing and Translation at the University of Arkansas and in the low residency MFA Program at the Institute of American Indian Arts. She is Métis.

**Daisy Atterbury** is a writer based in Santa Fe and New York. She's currently working on a project that considers U.S. settler colonial dynamics, soundscapes, and the built environment in New Mexico (which includes Outer Space). She co-directs an annual seminar program founded in 2010 to support conversation around aesthetics and politics in northern NM.

**WED 5/30****Brendan Lorber & John Yau**

Over two decades in the making, **Brendan Lorber's** first full-length book is coming out this spring. It's called *If this is paradise why are we still driving?* He's also written several chapbooks, most recently *Unfixed Elegy and Other Poems*. Since 1995 he has published and edited *Lungfull! Magazine*.

**John Yau** is a poet, fiction writer, critic, and publisher. His most recent book of poems is *Bijoux in the Dark*. In 2017, Autonomedia published a selection of essays, *The Wild Children of William Blake*. His recent monographs include *Catherine Murphy*, *Thomas Nozkowski*, and *Philip Taaffe*. He is a Professor of Critical Studies in the Visual Arts Department at Mason Gross School of the Arts (Rutgers University) and lives in New York.

**FRI 6/1****Intern/Volunteer Reading & Potluck**

The Poetry Project relies on the generous work and dedication of all of our amazing volunteers and interns — most of whom are poets, writers, artists, and/or activists. To festively round out the 2017-18 season, please join us as we listen to their poems, enjoy jello salad, punch, and cookies, and — most importantly — show our immense appreciation for their time, energy, and work. FREE.

**MON 6/4****Spring 2018 Workshop Reading**

Participants of The Poetry Project's Spring 2018 writing workshops, led by **Jacqueline Waters**, **Robert Kocik**, and **Andy Fitch** will gather to read work they produced.

**WED 6/6****Recluse #14 Launch Reading**

Join us for a launch reading celebrating issue #14 of our online poetry magazine, *The Recluse*. Readers TBA. 2018 Editors of *The Recluse* are: Laura Henriksen, Stacy Szymaszek, and Nicole Wallace.

**FRI 6/8****Special Event: Release Reading for Scattered Shards: Ed Askew Poems and Drawings**

Join us for the book launch of *Scattered Shards: Ed Askew Poems and Drawings* (June 2018, Flying Moonlight), the first-ever published book of drawings and poetry by acclaimed psychedelic folk artist **Ed Askew**. Askew is best known for his psych folk masterpiece *Ask the Unicorn*. His most recent albums are *Art and Life* and *For the World*. Askew was born in 1940 in Stamford, Connecticut. He holds an M.F.A. in Painting from Yale.

# Reviews

## LETTER FROM REVIEWS EDITOR JOHN RUFO:

The five reviews in this issue of the Poetry Project Newsletter present a wide range of poetic entrances and exits. Beginning with erica kaufman's take on *From Our Hearts to Yours: New Narrative as Contemporary Practice*, edited by Rob Halpern and Robin Tremblay-McGaw, a historical continuity opens up around questions of social practice vis-à-vis poetic creation. kaufman leads us through this enormous anthology, while noting that taking on such an undertaking is "scary." Luckily, our reviewers for this issue continue to "generously invite" us into these spaces, asking us to come when we want and leave when we feel most comfortable. In a corresponding space and time, Timothy Otte compels us to read Craig Santos Perez's multi-volume from unincorporated territory, again forming a sort of portal through which we might enter a momentous and lengthy set of works without delineating that this might be the only way in. Joshua Escobar follows suit in reading Lauren Russell's *What's Hanging on the Hush*, noting a similar subversive "sampling" of documentary material (with many guest and musical appearances) in creating lyric. The lyric reappears in Laura Henriksen's musical registering (via Frank Ocean) and acknowledgement of "self-control" by way of reading Jacqueline Waters's *Commodore*. Finally, M. Ryan Murphy examines Caroline Crumpacker's question in *Astrobolism*: "What do we look like outside....controls?" The following reviews relinquish full control without losing attention and close listening, the sounds of participating in the non-sovereignty of everyday practice, coming, going, staying for a while.

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

John Rufo

John Rufo's materials have been published, or are forthcoming, on *Poets [dog] org*, *Ploughshares*, *The Capilano Review*, *The Offing*, *the Journal Petra*, *Tagvverk*, *Dreginald*, and elsewhere. More information and contact: johnspringrufo.tumblr.com

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**Eds. Rob Halpern & Robin Tremblay-McGaw, *From Our Hearts to Yours: New Narrative as Contemporary Practice* (ON Contemporary Practice, 2017)**

### Review by erica kaufman

Editors Rob Halpern and Robin Tremblay-McGaw open *From Our Hearts to Yours: New Narrative as Contemporary Practice* with a reflective and informative introductory essay, "A Generosity of Response": *New Narrative as Contemporary Practice*. Rather than labeling this entryway an introduction, Halpern and Tremblay-McGaw set a generous and inclusive tone, as readers are welcomed into this volume, "the first comprehensive anthology of essays regarding New Narrative writing and community practices by a younger generation of practitioners and scholars." My own exposure to New Narrative writing came via moments like hearing Camille Roy at an early *Belladonna\** event or listening to Gail Scott read from *My Paris* at The Poetry Project. These readings led to conversations that led to my own voracious reading, which then led to more conversations, and

the cycle continues to continue. This ethos of text as an occasion to connect and correspond is one of the many things that *From Our Hearts to Yours* foregrounds. Rather than define New Narrative, Halpern and Tremblay-McGaw curate a space for readers to interact, asking ourselves, "Why New Narrative now? Or, What are the stakes of New Narrative for our contemporary moment?" (8)

The essays included in this volume approach these questions through various lenses, many beginning with the kind of "storytelling" that is central to any understanding of New Narrative past or present—what Halpern and Tremblay-McGaw refer to as "the critical and imaginative values of identity and storytelling for a formally innovative and activist writing" (7). Cathy Wagner's contribution comes in the form of "A Letter to the New Narrator," making use of the epistolary form to explore "what you are trying to do when you name names" (17). Arnold J. Kemp's "Situations" offers a lyric essay approach to Kathy Acker's influence, as well as a reflection on "the 1991 exhibition *Situation: perspectives on work by lesbian and gay artists*" (49). Kemp describes his own experience of these "bridges between artists and writers and sensibilities and concerns that were queer, local, and rooted in narratives that probed collective fictions of persons, personality, and sexual politics" (51). Through the sharing of these experiences, the reader gets a sense of New Narrative both experientially and theoretically. Kemp's recounting of first meeting Acker evolves into a "hope to convene a studio-based seminar" that would involve "collectively author[ing] a character who is both an artist and a passionate *aficionado* of Acker"—this is kind of plot

# Reviews

that reverberates with the vital collaborative and communal power of New Narrative. Instead of writing about Acker, Kemp follows the influence and associative threads his own experience with this work sparked in him, ultimately situating an ongoing engagement with the work in the present tense of a classroom/studio.

Out of the twenty-four essays included in *From Our Hearts to Yours*, nineteen include the first person pronoun, “I,” within the first few sentences of the piece. Stephanie Young’s “My Bad Education” begins, “I heard Camille Roy read from *An Alien View* at a 2015 release event for Amy Berkowitz’s *Tender Points*” (85). Amanda Davidson’s “My Walk With Pussy” begins, “I am interested in the moment, or a series of moments, around which a life, or a narrative, or a culture, pivots and changes course...” (97). Kathy Lou Schultz’s “Gender and Genre in Dodie Bellamy’s *Academonia*” begins, “To tell the truth, I momentarily considered calling this essay: ‘I rode in the back of a pickup truck with Barrett Watten!’” (167) This first person litany could continue—these excerpts are only a small sampling of “I”-driven “sutured subjects” (to borrow Gail Scott’s term) that create the rare book of “criticism” that actually enacts the ethos of the subject/topic/movement it engages.

In “Steve Abbott’s *Lives of the Poets*,” Brandon Brown presents a lyrical and nuanced reading of Abbott’s text while continuing to foreground the relational importance of how narrative forges connections. Brown writes, “While the non-hierarchical structure of *Lives* brings the world famous into direct relation with the anonymous stranger, adjacent lives are often connected by a shared experience or imagined sympathy” (45).

This close reading of Abbott’s text is almost a close reading of close readings of the *Lives of Poets*—an essayistic form that, again, enacts an opening up of the normative subject. Brown also points importantly to the political, radical, maybe even democratizing impact of New Narrative—it is “non-hierarchical”—collapsing the boundaries between real and imaged, famous and unknown, sentence and fragment.

Tremblay-McGaw’s “New Narrative Remix” continues to probe and push at the boundaries of what prose makes possible through a focus on “New Narrative practices” by way of a window-like essay—each section vividly engages a specific inquiry, opening the reader’s eyes again and again. Her text is transparently framed:

I want to explore some New Narrative practices—the insistent attention to social location, the practice of open appropriation, self-reflexive narrative and exegetical framing, a commitment to witnessing and to action *in* the world. I want to suggest these practices are a *means* (a “how” in Stengel’s terms) for an ethical, critical inquiry into one’s own and others’ entanglements in identity, community, privilege, racism, sexism, desire. At the same time, I want to honor the fragments, gaps, inconsistencies, missed arrivals, uncertainties, and failures with which this essay is riven. (112)

Tremblay-McGaw continues by weaving together readings of her own autobiography, Robert Glück’s work, Pamela Lu’s *Pamela*, and many others—as the essay progresses, the rigorous readings of other texts proliferate and build on one another in unexpected ways. I’m reminded of a quote from an interview with Glück cited by Tremblay-McGaw—“Experience

itself is a collaborative effort” (117).

In keeping with the social nature of experience, just as *From Our Hearts to Yours* begins with a letter from Cathy Wagner, the last piece in the book is another letter, “This is a Letter About Noise, Distinctions, Names, and Language, with Notes on *The Obituary* by Gail Scott,” written by Carla Harryman and addressed to the editors, Rob Halpern and Robin Tremblay-McGaw. She writes, “My commentary about Scott’s work will *not* be about New Narrative, even as we note certain ploys in my letter that one might associate with New Narrative already enacted...” (311). Harryman is at once interrogating the practice of New Narrative while also sharing a piece of the origin story of their friendship and a glimpse into Harryman’s own process writing about Scott’s work. It is “the sentence itself that gives access to a ‘more democratic’ experience of the novel,” Harryman writes of *The Obituary* (317). And, in many ways, it is this commitment to thinking carefully, queerly, experimentally about the work a sentence does that helps me to think about how *From Our Hearts to Yours* works as a collection.

What I’m trying to say is that reviewing an anthology, let alone an anthology of essays/essais is scary. It feels like there is so much to say in such a small number of words, but *From Our Hearts to Yours* shifts this dynamic. Instead of being overwhelmed, the reader feels genuinely invited into an ongoing conversation, one that is eager to embrace new interlocutors. Of course, there is no denying the fact that this review barely scratches the surface of the myriad of texts collected in this volume, let alone mentions the stellar online compendium that includes interviews and archival materials. Instead, my hope is that

# Reviews

you will feel compelled to join the community of readers this book extends its arms toward.

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**erica kaufman** is the author of *INSTANT CLASSIC* (Roof Books 2013) and is currently finishing *POST CLASSIC*.

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**Craig Santos Perez's** *from unincorporated territory* [*hacha*], (Tinfish Press, 2008 Omnidawn, 2017 [reissue], *from unincorporated territory* [*saina*], (Omnidawn, 2010), *from unincorporated territory* [*guma'*], (Omnidawn, 2014) and *from unincorporated territory* [*lukao*], (Omnidawn, 2017)

## Review by Timothy Otte

Each of Craig Santos Perez's four full-length books uses the same title—*from unincorporated territory*—with an additional subtitle distinguishing each of them. While each can be read without the context of the others, the shared title positions them within the same project, so reading them together compounds the scale of the project Perez has undertaken. They reference, reframe, and revise one another, in a postmodern project with a sense of history—poetic and otherwise. The recent reissue of the first book, *from unincorporated territory* [*hacha*] alongside the newest, *from unincorporated territory* [*lukao*], it is possible to begin assessing them together, along with [*saina*] and [*guma'*], a decade after the project began. (This review will use the bracketed subtitle when referring to individual volumes.)

Perez's project is complex, layered, and shifting. It's a work of activism, history and archiving, and through it all, a carefully composed work sensitive to a poetic history. Just as each book is positioned as part of a

larger work, so too is each poem. In [*hacha*], every poem is titled "from": "from tidelands," "from aerial roots;" "from ta(la)ya." Like the books themselves, the poems are excerpts from longer works, even if they can stand on their own. In the second book, [*saina*], Perez introduces a new word, "ginen," which functions in the same way. By [*guma'*] and [*lukao*], "ginen" is used in every poem, with the exception of a prose series called "from the legends of Juan Malo (a malologue)." This shift feels typical of Perez's project: a word, phrase, image, or fact, or story is introduced and then returns later in new contexts until it's simply a given.

Perez's work with typography and layout further compounds his postmodernist leanings. Employing everything from struck-through text, footnotes, gray (rather than black) text, bold text, italics, and unconventional punctuation, these poems are explosive on the page, surprising the reader at every turn. Open to almost any page of these books to find an example, but the opening of the series, the first poem in [*hacha*] works well:

"goaam" ~  
"goam" ~  
"islas de las velas Latinas" (of lateen sails ~  
"guan" "guana" ~  
"islas de los ladrones" (of the thieves ~  
—"from lisiensan ga'lago"

From this opening, Perez signals to the reader that there is unlikely to be a tidy narrative. Or rather, the narrative will operate in a different way, dispersed it throughout the books, avoiding the tidy beginning-middle-end construction of the

dominant canon.

But Perez isn't simply attuned to the page as space; he is attuned to language itself and to the "traditional" formal elements of lyric poetry. Take the following from [*guma'*]:

*remember just  
at dinner*

*the power  
goes out—*

*a length of  
rope—plummet—*

*mom lights  
candles—*

—"ginen sounding lines [date: 8/8/93][epicenter: 12.982° n 144.801° e][depth: 59km][strength: 8.2]"

The poem tumbles down the page, no more than three syllables per line, words breaking to accommodate the form: "dad care / -fully por- // tions fish." The poem's central theme is memory ("remember just") and the final image is of fish scales and broken picture frame glass shimmering in the light when the power returns after an earthquake. It's a poem in which the form enacts the image and the earthquake that precedes it, syllables and broken words mirroring the fish scales and broken glass.

From *unincorporated territory* is an archival history project and a postmodern poetic project, but it also builds on Perez's activism. While recording the history, language, and stories of a colonized people is a form of activism in itself, Perez has also participated in more traditional activism. The standout series in [*saina*] is "from tidelands" which includes a brief poem set in the middle of the page (the first section is four words long), with a footnote at the bottom of the page with its

text struck through. A note in the acknowledgements explains that the struck through text is Perez's testimony given in front of the United Nations Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), given in October 2008. The move to recycle his own testimony into a poem is a postmodern one, and the choice to strike through the testimony perhaps a nod to the futility of bodies like the United Nations and the importance of speaking to them anyway.

Throughout the series, these formal experiments become more ambitious and more deftly rendered. Reading all four books in order is akin to watching Perez discover a form (the tentative [*hacha*]), experiment within that form ([*saina*], which is, at times, too loose), perfect the form (the taut, furious [*guma'*]), and then transcend it ([*lukao*], fierce, but introducing an element of joy). The Omnidawn edition of [*hacha*] includes a new preface by Perez, situating and introducing the project. It's not necessary—the book stands on its own—but it is welcome. Perez's extrication of the word "from" in the titles of the books and poems is particularly enlightening:

"I" am "from unincorporated territory." *From* indicates a particular time or place as a starting point; *from* refers to a specific location as the first of two limits; *from* imagines a source, a cause, an agent, or an instrument; *from* marks separation, removal, or exclusion; *from* differentiates borders.

The poems consider, enact, and deconstruct all of these meanings and more.

[*lukao*] begins a shift in Perez's project, moving into the future

and, perhaps, some hope in a way that the previous books haven't. The birth of his daughter Kaikainali'i (addressed, throughout, as "[neni]" is certainly a factor, and her birth and Perez's wedding factor heavily in this new volume. The series "*ginen* Ka Lāhui o ka Pō Interview" is the project's most overt example of docupoetry, telling the story of Kaikainali'i's birth as well as the births of Perez's siblings and Perez himself in the words of Perez's wife and parents. At the end of "*ginen* Ka Lāhui o ka Pō Interview" there is this telling moment:

**[neni]:** (gurgling/baby talk). **[me]:** (Speaking for daughter)  
"Now, let me tell you what really happened" (laughter)

There's a gesture toward a future in which Perez doesn't have to speak on behalf of his family, which begins in the interview form of the piece and ends with. The laughter, too, moves toward a kind of hope.

The final piece in [*lukao*] is the first time in all four books that a poem isn't broken up into multiple sections. "*ginen* Mahalo Circle, 2013-2015 (for Brandy)" is nine pages long and features a litany of thanks ("mahalo"): for food, for the earth, for people. The piece is not without its sadness and anger ("Mahalo *saina* and *kūpuna* for planting as many trees as you could while everyone around you was dying"), but at its heart the piece is jubilant. That joy and turning, if only slightly, toward the future, give [*lukao*] and this whole project a new sense of urgency and weight. As always with an ongoing project like this there is the danger of gimmick, the danger of sameness, the danger of the project turning shapeless or falling apart. Perez seems to have embraced these risks and is now

moving full-tilt into the unknown with them. As readers, we should hope his momentum takes us off the map, too.

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**Lauren Russell's *What's Hanging on the Hush* (Ahsakta, 2017)**

**Review by Joshua Escobar**

Lauren Russell's new collection emerges from lived brutalities and fading disillusionment, and it samples material from contemporary documentaries, first-hand accounts of the Spanish Inquisition, Victorian literature, Post-Modern philosophy, and vegetarian cookbooks. One query of *What's Hanging on the Hush* seems to be, *What does it mean to seduce in a society so ready to coerce?*

The opening section deals with her treatment as "mentally insane" patient, and it presents consciousness as ample and acute, and the world as shifting and malleable. The opening stanza ends "Honesty's / underexposed, a dim photograph / of one identifiable ear or half / a bird bath and a telltale tail". "The cat shifts in his sleep," the last poem begins, "back paw grazing the edge / of this page, and moans without waking, like the point in a dream / when I realize I'm in bed with someone seven years dead, so I must wake / up but feel so strangely tinglingly that I lunge deeper and so what?" Sure understandings of the present (such as those of my current environment, *late capitalism, hyper-competitive, global, mania*) sound hollow next

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to these poems; like after-school kids blowing into dirty bottles. Definition, itself, seems grand. While the opening section is full of over-riding energy, it is also totally criminal. "Regulator, I Married Him—" "Unit" and "Of Mice and Monsters" stage inhumanity vis-à-vis a tenebrific musical about the marriage of two infamous murderers. It takes place in the middle of a rat's maze, the whole affair produced by Doctors of Accused Crimes Against Lab Rats. The pre-game is attended by Franz Kafka, Jane Austen, and Charlotte Brontë, packs of dead lab rats in professional attire, and someone with a gun! Enlightenment and existential fictions, clippings from medical journals, notices from landlords, pop references, new patient questionnaires make up the opening section, and they present the absurdity of the carceral psychiatric care while dating such practices. They strip down these crude, modern forms of necromancy to a rattle. In the middle of it all, wearing a "lead gown thread gown", the poet emerges: "The day they let me go ... I stood in the hallway speechless / between the men and a painting called *The Chess Players* / with nothing in it but a mattress in a plastic pack." One of the men is Sol, who leaves his cell only for electroshock therapy and pills. With an almost pained expression, Russell then relates the madness of the mental asylum to our own society where LGBT folk have to come out; beauty belongs to a highly revered pantheon; a middle-class upbringing, like any sort of canonical knowledge, has serious flaws.

In the second section of *What's Hanging on the Hush*, poetry is a way to deal with life without being belittled or tacky. Her lyricism moves through a well-varnished lecture hall, a predatory roadside inn, the headspaces of

certain novelists, the crannies of a Victorian mansion somewhere in Pittsburg, feisty and intricate Sun Tzu thought experiments. "Those who attack with fire must have perspicacity, / while those who attack with water must have strength," she writes, "The wall flower sitting alone at the bar is secretly consolidating her forces." Russell's poetry also investigates social trauma: the cruel courtrooms of segregated South Carolina and the Spanish Inquisition. Russell seems interested in the anthropomorphic conditions that render a hunting ground: *What hope is there for the unicorn?* She remarks on how little it takes: "For large wood....55 sols, 6 deniers. / For vine-branches...21 sols, 3 deniers. / For straw...2 sols, 6 deniers...". In addition to this hellish and worldly terrain, Russell explores abstract, untethered, and ephemeral expanses. "Once I fell in love with an Absence," she says in "Dream-Clung, Gone", "...Three winters now and the Absence is restless. It's blown across the river, arrives late when it meets me for beer. The Absence is singing..."

If the majority of Russell's collection explores torment—hush as a suture, hush as intensity—then the final section is made up of a different set of resonances. Her self-portrait, "Begotten, Not Made", strung together with slow, quivering "I" statements starting with "I do not believe in astrology, despite my appearance", ultimately leads to somebody else, the other "across a continent". Erotic and elegiac "10/4/09" documents a sudden, senseless death. Another poem tells of the subjugating of subjugation, itself—profoundly cataclysmic without the profound hangover of epic stories, enigma. In these later poems, humor operates not just as relief. The poems about Gregor Samsa and Jacques

Derrida in their moments of delirium and nakedness speak to over-determined masculinity as well as the sun-cycling powers of a feline. I hear something beyond tenderness and companionship in the poem about her and her cat Neruda on a boat in the night: "cigar print: / catnip ash clawed-up mast". Elsewhere she writes, "She has always covered her trail. / She has only jostled the rattle", tracing her pleasures back to ancestral thirst for freedom.

One poem touched on a particular impulse of my own. Liza Minnelli is on in the background at a party when Russell kisses an "extremely tall" nameless mystery, a mystery that could be an exoskeleton, Satan or, as someone suggests, Osama Bin Laden. After living in Brooklyn for about two years, I moved back to my hometown in southern California's Inland Empire. My queer existence feels altogether different here. I find myself listening not to disco or 80's pop, but to the Cure's *Disintegration*, remixes of Freddie Mercury's "Love Kills" and "Living on My Own", and SZA's *Ctrl*. I'm happy here even though I miss all my friends. Our bodies change and involve us in electrifying and unfathomable love. It is disorienting but not half as crazy as the various squadrons of war-nations. Our moments of ecstasy overshadow all the bad breath and anxiety. All this to say that the final poem of *What's Hanging on the Hush* is about sexual satisfaction and cake, and it's so beautiful. I'm so grateful for Lauren Russell's new work and her hermeneutic technique. In her debut, she finds ground

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**Joshua Escobar** (DJ Ashtrae) was the Dean's Fellow in Writing at the MFA Program at Bard College (Class of 2017). He was a Merit Fellow at the Graduate School of Journalism at the University

of California at Berkeley (Class of 2016). His first chapbook *Califorkya Voltage* was published by No, Dear/Small Anchor Press. DoubleCross Press will be publishing his next chapbook, *XXOX FM* in the spring of 2019.

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## Jacqueline Waters's *Commodore* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2017)

### Review by Laura Henriksen

You know the one where you're afraid of what you want? Afraid of what will happen if you get it, but also afraid of what will happen if you don't? Because of the way your desire renders you vulnerable to disappointment, pity, and powerlessness generally, such that your new desire is to hide or disguise your true desire? Or how about the one where you don't know what you want, you just want to want what everyone else wants, something you hope you can have and make do with, a way to live with the contradictions of living and desiring in a world that doesn't appear to care about you or what you want, pretending not only to have things under control, but under your own control, guided by an agency, which is your agency, in pursuit of desires that are your own, authored by you? Master of your own destiny, commodore of your own fleet.

Jacqueline Waters's *Commodore* is, to me, a book about power and control and desire and vulnerability at their most intertwined. I read from it one morning while eating breakfast, and suddenly I feel concerned that in this private pleasure I'm already exposing myself to disappointment, licking the top of the yogurt container, a sure display that I desire too much, and so nothing will be sufficient and I will be left a perpetually desiring vacuum, pitiable and

failed, when if only I could want nothing, escape longing, then I could never be controlled. Waters writes both, "It isn't easy to eat / at a table where no one / is eating or seems ever / to have needed to eat" (68) and "People of the future, I resemble you. // Like you, I wear in my heart what I read. / Like you, I didn't eat it because / I was hungry, I ate it / because other people were hungry" (81). In these lines Waters shows how something we are asked to perceive and perform back as uncomplicated — eating, since everyone needs to eat to sustain their bodies — becomes a maze of perceptions, desires, and other people, wanting to please them, or at the least, not wanting to draw their attention and with it their potential judgment or pity as you eat in the vacant, fluorescent office kitchen or the bleak "grab-and-go" style cafeteria across the street, willing yourself in either instance to a privacy like a type of invisibility, hiding any pleasure you might take, until that pleasure is hidden even from yourself, until there is no relief to be found in a lunch break, and you'd just as soon get back to laboring. As Waters writes in "Don't Be Upset If You Don't Hear from Me," "You like this cake I'll cut you a slice / A sliver / It's just a worthless sliver / If it were me I would be more circumspect about it / I would be less going on about it / I'd tear its branches off and act like I hadn't thought about it / Decorate the tree half and shove it out there to sit" (38). These poems unveil that impulse to hide your care and hope so that they can't be used to hurt you, a move that provides the illusion of having things under control, while actually making you all the more pliable to being controlled by power beyond you, the power that is always already using your care and hope against you.

To move through a world as

mediated by expectations around what is an acceptable way to move around the world takes not only the illusion of self-control, but a constant maintenance of self-control, your body like your pet. Does that make you your own commodore then, master of your own fleet? That seems like a stretch — the ability to perform what is demanded is not the same as the ability to make your own demands. Is Waters the commodore? She is, after all, the architect of these poems we are currently inhabiting, she is the one building the frame and breaking the line, in a way that reminds me of the insistent flow of a logical argument — *If A, then B, if B, then C* — and so on into a promised certainty, into proof. But the feeling of control in the movement of the poems, the accumulation from line to line, is challenged both by the conceptual exploration of vulnerability in the poems, and the moments of vulnerability in the poems. From "Candor:" "Why do I strike things out / I think will reveal too much — / I mean in my other poems, not / this one where I am sort of / letting it all lie. / Well I say it's because / it's a distraction / from the interpersonal standoff I am / aiming for, which is true, but also / I'm afraid to 'stand revealed,' although / when I think about others I think / we are all revealed all the time, I mean / let's face it there's self-disclosure / and the author's attitude toward self-disclosure / that are always right there disclosed" (33). But is this self-disclosure creating a connection between us, the readers and Waters, or the illusion of connection, thereby illuminating our longing for connection even as it is thwarted near-constantly? Is this really a rupture through the written text, bringing us together through the medium of the page, the poem it houses? I think of the most beautiful song of 2016, "Self

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Control" by Frank Ocean, the way his voice sometimes cracks as he sings "You made me lose my self control." But you know his voice cracks because he chooses for it to — it's part of the performance of longing and frustration, and maybe hope, but I'm not sure. These poems ask, when do we stop performing ourselves, our desires, our fears, and when do we become them. Is the answer always or never? What is revealed when we stand revealed? A deeper truth, or its absence, its impossibility?

And then, can we really use self-control to protect ourselves from the ocean of our longing? No, longing remains. In "Horsing Around With Your Boyfriend," Waters writes, "You replied coldly / so as to disguise / a greater range of feeling" (55). But that greater range of feeling doesn't disappear; it has nowhere to disappear to, as Waters writes in this poem's neighbor poem across the spine, "American Songbook," "So much goodness surrounded you / You sang through the songbook / Deaf to its warnings / Hearing only its beauty / Believing that beauty / Regulated you" (54). All of the beauty in music, and poetry, all the beauty in the world, is no mere outlet to regulate your overflowing feelings, but rather the eruption of those overflowing feelings mirroring themselves back to you, whether or not you will look. The illusion of containment points always to what cannot be contained. Is this uncontainability a possible liberatory project? I hope so.

Reading *Commodore* makes me turn again to Lauren Berlant's "Cruel Optimism," in which she explains, "[...] where cruel optimism operates, the very vitalizing or animating potency of an object or scene of desire contributes to the attrition of the

very thriving that is supposed to be made possible in the work of attachment in the first place," where what we desire, or are persuaded to desire, because we are persuaded it will be what makes us happy, in fact stands counter to our best chance at happiness or being free, slowly degrading not only that chance but our very survival. Waters's poems explore this cruel optimism, this self-policing to prove one's worth and worthiness. In the same breath — in their ruptures and their beauty and grace and self-disclosure — even as they explore the impossibility of connection, they do connect, even as they turn in on isolation, they themselves are the evidence of all that is shared. As Berlant explains, "It is always a risk to let someone in, to insist on a pacing different from the productivist pacing, say, of capitalist normativity." These poems choose to risk it, and in exploring desire they disrupt the system of control that would both attempt to construct our desires and use our desires against us. Or, as Waters writes in "All Ears:"

Friendships form as each person finds the courage to memorize the alliance. Its risks, its contours, the flaky ways you earn and lose faith in each other adding up, over time, into a grace: familiarity.

Suppose you use a line like, "I love you, but I don't really know you."

Or, "Town is that way."

Like moving the head a millimeter to see what the bars have been obscuring all along  
Two millimeters  
and the next bar will obscure it. One millimeter. (77)

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Laura Henriksen's writing has appeared in or is forthcoming from *P-Queue*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Jacket2*, and *Foundry*, among other places. Her first chapbook, *Agata*, was just released by Imp. In April she will participate in the 92nd Street Y's annual reading, *The Tenth Muse*.

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**Caroline Crumpacker's  
*Astrobolism* (Belladonna\*, 2016)**

**Review by M. Ryan Murphy**

In the frontmatter of Caroline Crumpacker's debut full-length book, *Astrobolism*, the title is defined as: "The result of being struck by a star. The blasting of the sun during high summer... (hence the 'dog days'), in which the air is bad, dogs go a bit mad, and people and plants get sunstroke."

The definition induces a conditioned maddening then — a loosening of the norm and spotlighting of the structure of things. It also makes linguistic play on, thus critique of, the feminine body under constant scrutiny — historically hysteric, politically sunstroke-d.

And opening further, gaps appear in corporeality, in government, in fashion, in motherhood, in love, in architecture, in femininity, in nature, and more. Is this what happens when struck by the height of the sun?

The answer throughout *Astrobolism*, which appears in many iterations and incorporates everything, is at once a mimicry of our modern structure and its undoing. It is entry. From "Introduction to My Work":

"This is the story of        One day there was  
   and then blank.  
This is the story of        'Blank brought me here.'"

This poem appears in the middle of the book as defiance. A lighthouse spotlighting the spotlight-er saying: I too critique and change constantly, despite the strict boundaries of modernity. We arrive at a nothingness because the norm brought us to it. But this isn't destruction or finality. A point made clear at the end of the poem:

"Let us then again begin:"

The colon here is a coupling that opens rather than close. Opening is what makes Astrobolism so pertinent to political climate. It's in the language and conceptual framework. It abounds in the formal construct. Each poem bleeds with breaks and caesurae. Offering entrance into reprieve, a private space in the public eye; and also spilling over with the possibilities and knowledge of a world beyond today's binary.

In a Habermasian sense, Astrobolism anchors and widens "the intimate sphere of the conjugal family... [which] created...its own public" (The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, 29). Crumpacker forces space in language for a family-created-public-sphere to remain. This, "...a public sphere in apolitical form." Not unconcerned with politics but beyond it. A trench opposing today's public authority. A poetics of ruin and regeneration that interrogate, break down, and rebuild the intentionally too-perfect terrain of a modern city.

The city in "Post-Habitation Design" is luring and entrapping, with dubious blue waters, but it's all superficial.

"When I saw the way they lived,  
   I said,  
   I could have wept.

There is a strange silence    wherein we contemplate  
the impact of                  could have.

And in "We Embrace Imprecision as a Side Effect of Distance":

"we contrive silence    as a    lack of attention    ."

One understands existence then as today's overstimulation. We are beings full of inattention. We feel empty because of this. We then imagine what

else could be had but often find it impossible to escape the city and scrutiny. It's a cycle of negation with no answer. A consumption and desire and consumption of desire, constantly.

"Is it an act or a lack of action    ?

I would like to exist within that question for a while."

To exist in this question is to resist and live briefly in the Habermasian public-private space away from the raging Anthropocene. It's about construction and the position one inhabits during particular moments of corporeality. It's about fashion and femininity, private kin versus public authority, "[t]rains vivisect[ing] the country."

And in the journey, a Butler-esque inquiry of kinship over state unfolds. Like Antigone, Crumpacker "... cannot make her claim outside the language of the state, but neither can the claim she wants to make be fully assimilated by the state" (Antigone's Claim, 28).

There's power in this heterogeneity. There's spheres widening constantly; Crumpacker writing of motherhood, daughter-ship, and marriage. For being and having a mother is to exist in:

"A space not public, no,  
   immensely private  
   but shared."

This Butler-Habermasian space is laid bare in "Charm Detection" when a child is born as the mother's mother passes.

"The impulse    to repetition increases  
   as    the sense of purpose  
diminishes."

Public authority, sucking up our purpose, imposes a private authoritarian limit through Mother. Mother is all-knowing, never to be crossed, a space of clarity/suffocation, where care often verges codependence. This is what the State wants from the nuclear family; Mother as reproduced version of societal structure but also a blessing. So, a great place to explore boundaries.

"When my mother died,  
   the world loosened."

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And later:

"One woman asks me if it's OK to talk this way. I have no sides or delineation. Like a rock."

All spheres loosen when Mother passes but still the need to be a rock lingers. To be solid and whole. This amplified when a child enters, but different. A new mother's chance to undo boundaries for her young. To shift the limits set by her mother. To allow kinship to reign over state. To encourage gaps and a breaking of the rock, the architecture of a city, the popular fashion that carries oppression, the false momentum train rides provide. A chance to turn inattention into a uniquely private action that multiplies to dismantle the public.

A hope, answering the question posed in "Body Property":

"What do we look like outside controls?"

To Crumpacker, we look porous, parts hollow and full. Naked and at times clothed. Lush and bare in this

growing extinction. Subjectively familial. Private and public. Attempting balance. But is this truly possible? After all:

"it is misleading to claim

that the time before collapse is not in itself collapse."

— Born in Mississippi, **M. Ryan Murphy** lives in Brooklyn, NY and attends Pratt Institute. Some of their work exists in *Entropy* and *The Felt*.



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# Q&A: Solmaz Sharif

## 1. Did you always want to be a poet?

I wanted to be a firefighter first. Otherwise yes. Ever since I knew such a thing existed, which is as long as I can remember.

## 2. Do you love one language more than the other?

There is the language I can argue myself in, the one I cannot. There is the language of the brain, and the language of the mind. In both I feel inadequate. Both languages, English and Farsi, have been whittled down, in my home, to essentials, as if tourists. This needs more salt. I am fine, thank you. I can't say I love either more, but it's the crisis that makes me write.

## 3. What has been inspiring you lately?

Emahoy Tsegué-Maryam Guèbrou. Aimé Césaire. Conversations with Ari Baniyas, Natalie Diaz, Jenny Johnson, Rickey Laurentiis, Roger Reeves, Safiya Sinclair, and Brandon Som. You, Marwa. My students. Touchstone texts forever: Foucault's *parrhesia lectures*; Edward Said's *Representations of the Intellectual*; Plato's *Apology*.

## 4. The occupation of Palestine is in and out of the news, now more so with T—p's statement about making Jerusalem the capital of I—. I was happy when I saw you were participating in the PalFest Literary Conference but also realize it must have been a nerve-wracking experience [as it was fulfilling]. Can you tell us some of what stood out to you.

I haven't written about Palestine yet, which is a failure on my part, since so much of the PalFest was geared toward, well, bearing witness. And that's what has given me pause. So many tours move through Palestine. So many patient Palestinian people—I mean, patient is an understatement; we really need a new word to describe the absolute patience that seventy

years of such nonstop needling, such cruelty requires; and I will give an example of a single needling I hadn't considered in full before I saw it, for example: at Qalandia checkpoint, though not unique to this particular checkpoint, those tall, toothed metal turnstiles that allow one person to pass at a time, would be controlled by a fidget-spinner spinning pubescent and pissed Israeli soldier, a light flashing green above to let a few people at a time into yet another caged area where the metal detector and x-ray machine would be; the number of people allowed in would be random, sometimes one, sometimes three, and as the green light would turn on, Palestinians who can be waiting for hours to be allowed through, would push, in camaraderie in fact, to get as many of themselves through as possible; one younger Palestinian man, for example, handsome and tall, holding back a crowd for a mother with a young child; and how this turnstile controlled by the pissed and pimply fidget-spinning soldier would shut at random, often with someone inside, caught there, sandwiched between the teeth of the turnstile, unable to sit or exit or turn much, sometimes with a limb or a bag caught outside, sometimes with a child caught on one end or the other, sometimes elderly and requiring a cane and not able to stand for long, but there they would be stuck at the soldiers whim for however long, in whatever weather—have had to patiently explain to foreign and thereby powerful guests their predicaments. So many guests have passed through Palestine hungry for the most gruesome details—and then what? We writers want to talk about the problems of writing the other, of witness, to remain in the negative capability of these questions, but the answer to these problems is not another travelogue or essay on the problematics of spectatorship, but action. Boycott. That is our one possible exit as writers and actors. I called the above needling, but every ingeniously

designed—ingenious in its cruelty, I mean—theatrical gesture could end in death. One soldier had decorated his checkpoint booth window at another checkpoint with neon pink Christmas lights—why do I remember this? The glee with which the soldiers will order one to lift a shirt, or to enter a room, or to go down the other line, and how each and every of these directions can end in death, can end in denial—patience is an inadequate word. Needling is inadequate. Occupation, turnstile, nation, all language requires a better language there. I haven't found it yet, but I am working on it.

## 5. What is the best thing about being a poet right now? What is the most difficult?

The best is being able to talk beyond right now. The most difficult is knowing what of right now to listen to.

## 6. A passage from something you've read recently that has resonated:

I'm reading *The Bell Jar* for the first time since high school. How had I forgotten that first sentence:

"It was a queer, sultry summer, the summer they executed the Rosenbergs, and I didn't know what I was doing in New York."

## 7. What has been your favorite reading or moment at the Poetry Project?

2004. A marathon reading as the Republican National Convention was in full swing. Favorite because it was, too, a great irritant. How few of the poems actually spoke of the wars, directly, specifically. How few spoke directly, specifically of the incarnation of power we were protesting. I knew then more of us had to.

--  
Solmaz Sharif is the author of *Look* (Graywolf Press).



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