

“IF I CO

I would surround myself with people

I would rid myself of the negativity in
significant others.

I would save money for a rainy day.

I would have a kind word for someone

I would do something nice for someone

I would rekindle old friendships.

I would learn to say NO!

I would go to the gym and st

I would treat myself to so

I would take time for m

I would go back to sch

I would love myself

I would do all thes

THE POETRY PROJECT
FEBRUARY / MARCH 2016 ISSUE #246

THE POETRY PROJECT

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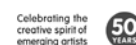
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Cover image: “Untitled (If I Could)” / 11” x 8.5” / Inkjet print on acetate, paper, glazing.
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Letter from the Director

The 42nd Annual New Year's Day Marathon was a thrilling celebration of the Project's legacy, the present moment in poetry and the arts, diversity, collective agency, and multigenerational (and cross-genre) dialog— which we always want and hope to generate more of. I heard so many performers whose work is invested in proposing fresh aesthetic, cultural, philosophical and political approaches to the insane world we're living in. It's an annual poet ritual that, for me has daily implications— it helps to organize my reading life, my social life, tells me

where I need to go and who I need to see. It calls to mind Gramsci's "I Hate New Year's Day":

"I want every morning to be a new year's for me. Every day I want to reckon with myself, and every day I want to renew myself. No day set aside for rest. I choose my pauses myself, when I feel drunk with the intensity of life and I want to plunge into animality to draw from it new vigour."

I want to begin every new year immersed in poet language.

Deep gratitude to you— our

audience/members, book donors, local vendors, performers, and volunteers, we raised nearly \$23,000 to support the presentation of our live readings, including paying poets more for their work.

Read on for a list of people who contributed to this success. I want to particularly thank the Project staff, Laura, Nicole and Simone, for their creativity, stamina and acumen behind the scenes.

I heard a lot of work that stopped me in my tracks and transported me: Martha

Wilson's a cappella song (a cappella="in the manner of the chapel") which had a line "the end of money/ the end of profit/ the end of Master Charge and private property"— I barely kept up with the "lingualisualisms" of Edwin Torres with David Brown on drum— Jace Clayton and an ensemble of readers performing a sound piece by Umbra poet N.H. Pritchard, and perhaps the most striking performance I saw was by Heroes Are Gang Leaders (HAGL), who performed a song called "Flukum" (for Etheridge Knight). HAGL is Thomas Sayers Ellis's "language-and sound-based literary-hip jazz transbluesy" group. On 1/1 it was TSE, Margaret Morris, James Brandon Lewis, Ryan Frazier, Randall Horton, and Devin Brahja Waldman. Get their new CD "Highest Engines Near/Near Higher Engineers," but really get to see them live to appreciate all that TSE transmits through physicality (and a slapstick in this song).

Thanks to the dear sweet brilliant (and brief) poets of the final hour. We finished 30 minutes early and had so much help I had enough energy to get a drink at Tile Bar. Powers on the rocks.

Stacy Szymaszek



Notes from the Project

MARATHON 2016 THANK YOUS

The Poetry Project Staff would like to extend a very hearty THANK YOU to all those who donated their time, effort, energy, food, beverages, and books to help us raise nearly \$23,000 at the 42nd Annual New Year's Day Marathon Reading:

Volunteers: Jon Allen, Miriam Atkin, John Barclay-Morton, Julia Barclay-Morton, Jennifer Bartlett, Rijard Bergeron, Marie-Helene Bertino, Katharine Betteridge, Stephen Boyer, Reynaldo Carrasco, Rob Christiansen, John Coletti, Lydia Cortes, Sophie Dahlin, Fran DeMusz, Lori DeGolyer, Elizabeth Devlin, Ted Dodson, Marcella Durand and Ismael, Tasha Dwyer, Will Edmiston, Mel Elberg, Carlos Estrada, Megan Ewing, Dia Felix, Carolyn Ferrucci, Jess Fiorini, Cheryl Fish, Micaela Foley, Dorothy Friedman August, Joanna Fuhrman, Andrew Gayle, Hadley Gitto, Ariel Goldberg, Nada Gordon, Stephanie Gray, Ezra Green, John S. Hall, Phil Hartman, Marissa Havers, Linda Hayes, Dan Heffernan, Megan Heise, Charlotte Henriksen, Michael Honigberg & Brownie, Jeremy Hovenaar, Kim Howie, Erica Hunt, Peter Bogart Johnson, KB Jones, Adeena Karasick & Safia Southey Karasick, erica kaufman, kelly kelly, Christine

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Food Donors: Brooklyn Brewery, Butter Lane, Caracas, David Bowler Wines, Luke's Lobsters, Gillian McCain, Otto's Tacos, Porto Rico Importing Co., Bob Rosenthal and Don Yorty, S'MAC, Sobaya, Two Boots Pizza, and Veselka. An additional huge thanks to Phil Hartman of Two Boots Pizza for expertly coordinating the food donations!

Book Donors: Argos Books, Augury, Belladonna*, Black Ocean, BookThug, Brooklyn Arts, Burning Deck, Chax, City Lights, Coffee House Press, Commune Editions, Cultural Society, Cuneiform, Edge, Fewer & Further Press, Futurepoem, Letter Machine,

Litmus, Nightboat, Noemi, Operating System, Post-Apollo Press, Pressed Wafer, Rescue, Roof, Solid Objects, Susan Mills Artist Books, Tender Buttons, Ugly Duckling Presse, United Artists, Wave, Wonder, and YesYes Books

Audio: Julia Alsop, Jim Behrle, and John Priest

Lights: Carol Mullins

Video: Robert O'Haire

Photography: Ted Roeder

Marathon Banner: Zach Wollard

Marathon Guest Hosts: Elinor Nauen, Christopher Stackhouse, Todd Colby, Morgan Parker, John S Hall, and Ariel Goldberg

WORKSHOP SCHOLARSHIPS

In order to make The Poetry Project's Workshops more accessible to interested writers, we are happy to announce that we are now offering full scholarships. You can visit our site at <http://www.poetryproject.org/events/category/workshops/> or email us at info@poetryproject.org to see the schedule of Spring Workshops and Master Classes as well as learn more about eligibility and the application process.

FOUNDATION FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS POETRY RECIPIENT

FCA announced Renee Gladman as their latest recipient in poetry! Advisors to the foundation were Tan Lin and Ed Friedman. The amount of the award has increased to \$40,000.

Notes from the Project

2015-16 EMERGE-SURFACE-BE FELLOWS

In this third year of the Emerge – Surface – Be Fellowship, we were thrilled and honored to have received 120 applications. The range and depth of these applications illuminated how exciting this moment is for poetry in New York City, and reaffirmed our commitment to supporting its emerging poets. Choosing three fellows and six finalists was an extremely challenging task for our mentors, but they did it! In late November, it was our privilege to announce the 2015-2016 Emerge – Surface – Be Fellows, and we are printing it here for those who don't receive our weekly emails.

The Emerge – Surface – Be finalists are **Marina Blitshteyn**, **Alex Cuff**, **Julia Guez**, **Andriniki Mattis**, **Ramya Raja Ramana**, and **Amber Atiya**. Congratulations to everyone! Fellows receive 9 months of one to one mentorship, a featured reading at the Project, publication in *The Recluse*, free Project workshops, and a \$2,500 award. *Emerge – Surface – Be is supported with funds from the Jerome Foundation.*



t'ai freedom ford

will be working with Tan Lin.

t'ai freedom ford is a New York City high school English teacher, Cave Canem Fellow, and Pushcart Prize nominee. Her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Drunken Boat*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, *Winter Tangerine*, *The African American Review*, *Vinyl*, *Muzzle*, *Poetry* and others. Her work has also been featured in several anthologies including *The BreakBeat Poets: New American Poetry in the Age of Hip-Hop*. In 2014, she was the winner of The Feminist Wire's inaugural poetry contest judged by Evie Shockley. She is currently a 2015 Center for Fiction Fellow and the winner of the 2015 To the Lighthouse Poetry Prize. Her first poetry collection, *how to get over* is forthcoming from Red Hen Press. t'ai lives and loves in Brooklyn, but hangs out digitally at: shesaidword.com.



Nicole Sealey

will be working with Lee Ann Brown.

Born in St. Thomas, U.S.V.I. and raised in Apopka, Florida, Nicole Sealey is a Cave Canem graduate fellow and the recipient of an Elizabeth George Foundation Grant. She is the author of *The Animal After Whom Other Animals Are Named*, winner of the 2015 Drinking Gourd Chapbook Poetry Prize, forthcoming from Northwestern University Press. Her other honors include the Stanley Kunitz Memorial Prize from *The American Poetry Review*, a Daniel Varoujan Award and the Poetry International Prize. Her work has appeared in *Best New Poets*, *Copper Nickel*, *Ploughshares*, *Third Coast* and elsewhere. Nicole holds an MLA in Africana Studies from the University of South Florida and an MFA in creative writing from New York University. She is the Programs Director at Cave Canem Foundation.



Édgar J. Ulloa

will be working with Tracie Morris.

Édgar J. Ulloa is a transdisciplinary artist and post-transborder poet from Ciudad Juárez, México. He maintains a blog (mijuaritos.wordpress.com) of aural, visual, virtual and performance poetry that serves as a border trauma and memory reflection of his native city when it was one of the most dangerous in the world according to the media. In his work, he emerges as an explorer, producer of the aesthetic-historical, word-sign, word-symbol. He feels compelled to speak out through poetic performance action. His performances negotiate imperialist border politics, cultural memory, trauma and violence in addition to instigating audience and public participation. Ulloa earned his undergraduate degree in Language and Literature in Texas, and his master's degree in Creative Writing in New York City.

Spring Workshops

Activities in Poetry (“Laura, my love”)

Workshop with Matt Longabucco

5 Sessions | Thursdays, 7-9PM | Begins 2/4

Location: City Lore (56 E. 1st St., New York, NY 10003)

“Our visceral realist activities after Ulises Lima and Arturo Belano left: automatic writing, exquisite corpses, solo performances with no spectators, contraintes, two-handed writing, three-handed writing, masturbatory writing (we wrote with the right hand and masturbated with the left, or vice versa if we were left-handed), madrigals, poem-novels, sonnets always ending with the same word, three-word messages written on walls (“This is it”, “Laura, my love,” etc), outrageous diaries, mail-poetry, projective verse, conversational poetry, antipoetry, Brazilian concrete poetry (written in Portuguese cribbed from the dictionary), poems in hard-boiled prose (detective stories told with great economy, the last verse revealing the solution or not), parables, fables, theater of the absurd, pop art, haikus, epigrams..., desperado poetry (Western ballads), Georgian poetry, poetry of experience, beat poetry, apocryphal poems..., letrist poetry, calligrams, electric poetry..., bloody poetry (three deaths at least), pornographic poetry (heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual, with no relation to the poet’s personal preference)... We even put out a magazine... We kept moving... We kept moving... We did what we could... But nothing turned out right.”

This description of an ecstatic, desperate, thwarted workshop from Roberto Bolaño’s *The Savage Detectives* always beckons, since it’s when ecstatic, desperate, and thwarted that, in my experience, the best poems come to be. I immediately want to try out all these “activities” even while wondering about that enigmatic missing element this besotted parable insists upon. In our workshop, we’ll try to mark the widest possible number of perceptions and practices as poetry, write fragments and exhaustive inventories, ransack books and rack our brains for assignments (and give them to each other), and also see what happens when we come to the inevitable end of assignments and strategies— what then? We will read some inspiring/unsettling/wild new poetry, and take some time to talk about urgent calls in contemporary poetics to re-interrogate the premises of whatever “activities” we might decide to undertake (recent writings by Cathy Park Hong, Dawn Lundy Martin, and Anne Boyer are a great place to start). Promise to share our antipoems and other necessary creations as we go.

Matt Longabucco is the author of the chapbooks *The Sober Day* (DoubleCross Press, forthcoming) and *Everybody Suffers: The Selected Poems of Juan García Madero* (O’Clock Press, 2014), and a former curator at the Poetry Project. He teaches at New York University and Bard College, and lives in Brooklyn.

Chronology of Mind : Workshop with Barbara Henning

10 Sessions | Saturdays, 2-4PM | Begins 2/6

Location: City Lore (56 E. 1st St., New York, NY 10003)

Over the years, I’ve developed a long list of approaches and experiments that have helped me generate poems (and novels) and also helped me think differently. Most of these experiments (or constraints) engage autobiographical material (the self extending into the world) while at the same time disrupting or redirecting an easy chronology. Some of the assignments will include: walking/ writing meditation, sequential quilting, prose sestinas, research/ layering, a line an hour, thinking the opposite, etc. The class will function as a workshop; we will read and discuss your writing. We will also spend part of the time considering writing by others, such as: Matsuo Basho, Harry Mathews, Jack Kerouac, Harryette Mullen, William Carlos Williams, Hélène Cixous, Bill Kushner, Bernadette Mayer, and Ed Sanders.

Barbara Henning is the author of three novels and seven collections of poetry, her most recent is *A Day Like Today* (Negative Capability Press, 2015). Others include *A Swift Passage* (Quale Press), *Cities and Memory* (Chax Press) and a collection of object-sonnets, *My Autobiography* (United Artists). She is the editor of *Looking Up Harryette Mullen* and *The Collected Prose of Bobbie Louise Hawkins*. Barbara lives in New York City and teaches for writers.com and Long Island University in Brooklyn.

Prose, Prose!: Workshop with Rachel Levitsky

5 Sessions | Tuesdays, 7-9PM | Begins 3/1

Location: City Lore (56 E. 1st St., New York, NY 10003)

For this short workshop at the POETry Project, I invite poets and others to consider (and write) the sentence, consider (and write) sentences and consider (and write) sentence fragments as a manner of torquing the already imaginable into the as yet unimagined. We will variously look at pronouns (Can I be a she?), at the place of the subject, and at the challenge of completing a thought within the confines of the English sentence and under the assault of technological capitalism. I’ll make a packet that will include, at the very least: Gail Scott, Renee Gladman, Kamau Braithwaite, Bhanu Kapil, Édouard Glissant, Gertrude Stein, and Henry James. We’ll all come up with our own mongrel formal interventions, then sing them to each other with the help of each other.

Rachel Levitsky is writing a memoir through the lens of what’s between Julie Christie and Warren Beatty on screen in *Shampoo* and *McCabe & Mrs. Miller*. Her last book was *The Story of My Accident is Ours* (Futurepoem, 2013). She is a member and was a founder of the Belladonna* Collaborative and she teaches in the Pratt MFA in Writing.

Interview

On November 27, 2015, Patricia Spears Jones and I met in my apartment to discuss the poems in her recently published book, *A Lucent Fire: New and Selected Poems* (White Pine Press). Later the interview was clipped, edited and slightly revised. These poems reflect upon Patricia's life and the life of her contemporaries; they are lyrical, narrative, historical, sometimes prophetic, sometimes playful, but always insightful.

—Barbara Henning

Barbara Henning: “Wearing My Red Silk Chinese Jacket” is the first poem in your *New and Selected* and you wrote it in the 70's.

Patricia Spears Jones: The red silk Chinese jacket was one of the most expensive things I bought early on. It is a pure silk embroidered jacket and I still have it. One day when I was wearing it as I was walking through Chinatown, these two Chinese ladies came up to me and started touching the jacket. They said, “Good, good.” In the poem I was trying to figure out what you bring to the city and what the city gives to you as I had come to the city from the South. The poem explores the ritual nature of Pentecostalism and how it remained with me. I realize now that this poem is about the great migration, but I came at the tail end of it. I came out of intellectual necessity and maybe a little bit of economic necessity, too; I mean I just had to get the fuck out of the south.

BH: In the first stanza, you talk about the Children of the Pentecost being like moles in the “city of shadows fleeing light.”

PSJ: The spaces you are negotiating are often ominous so I am trying to figure out how to talk about that. The other thing is that the shadows are beautiful. It is not always terrible to go into the darkness.

I wanted to portray the people I was in Sunday school with as having these very powerful rituals and having all this dignity and being was very present in that deep intensity. That's what I come from. I did not see this in anyone else's work other than Henry Dumas, especially when I talk about the children of darkness.

BH: In the second part of the poem, you write:

There are no dialectics when the spirit/ Rips open the heart of the Children of Darkness/ and takes them back through the sun to home.

PSJ: That's where the African part comes in. That really is that moment where everybody takes flight to somewhere else, a place of liberation, exhortation and exaltation, too.

BH: Could you talk about the “Ancestress in woodblock?”

PSJ: In a museum in New Orleans I saw an actual slave block. I'd never seen one before. It was tiny. They had a lot of prints and some of the auction advertisements. They were devastating. I talk about that in the poem and also about my people coming up through South Carolina, through Georgia, Mississippi and Arkansas.

BH: When I was in New Orleans

in the late 80's, there was a bar that used to be a slave exchange owned by Pierre Maspero in the 18th Century. Now it is named Café Maspero. When I was there people were drinking and partying without a sense that they were standing where human beings were traded.

PSJ: I'm not surprised. I remember watching a TV show when I was home a couple of years ago and one of the white historians said that it was great to be a white man in this country because you could own all these people and nobody told you what to do or how to get there because you were “the guy.” I don't understand why people get surprised. If you have power you don't want to give it up. It is either going to be taken from you or you are going to negotiate. The best description of privileged Americans in this country is by F. Scott Fitzgerald when he talks about the Buchanans and says they are careless people. We are looking at a bunch of careless people and that's what I'm writing about here.

BH: Your next section is about the mourning bench.

PSJ: Yes, it's about my departure from the Pentecostal church because I didn't get saved.

BH: Then you retell the Jesus story in an utterly different way:

Jesus hung with the tough guys till they bled/ good and sealed him in some big tomb/ Known locally as the Sepulcher. It was the drunk tank.

PSJ: I wanted to bring him down. Why is this guy hanging out with all these guys. Why isn't he lofty? He's not lofty. That's what is really interesting about Jesus as a figure— he is both ordinary and a deity. The Romans thought of him as a major revolutionary which he kind of was. Then there is this other figure, the Christ figure, who says I am here to save you from sin. This is a very young person's poem and I was being a little snarky then because I was young, maybe 26.

BH: Then the next section you write about this voluptuous nude woman— “There she sits in regal nudity...”

PSJ: I had gone to see the Gauguin exhibition. There is this famous painting of this nude woman and his face is right under her crotch. I love the visual arts. I love painting and the Gauguin myth is fascinating to me because he runs off— leaves everybody in Paris and runs off to the islands. I was trying to undermine the romantic myth of finding the exotic, finding oneself through finding the exotic. And it is kind of disgusting. That painting is both utterly beautiful and utterly horrifying.

BH: You write: “I paint her naked because she needs only skin/ I paint her naked because she has beautiful breasts/ & I want them to know where I supped.” It seems also like a celebration of the female body. At the same time, she is

Barbara Henning & Patricia Spears Jones

compared with the ancestress in woodblock, the woman at the slave block.

PSJ: It is a celebration. It is also a way of Gauguin saying in his voice: This is how I can possess it... I wrote this a long time ago. I was trying to figure out where I was. The Chinese jacket was a great way of letting me enter into a number of stories I was encountering in my pursuit of knowledge about life, art and the connections.

BH: In the last section you refer to the suffering of Africans in the American wilderness. It seems as if you identify “Brother to Brother/ Sister to Sister” but then you separate yourself with the ending: “Tell me/ What has Jesus done for you?”

PSJ: All these people have gone through hell and yet there is this faith. It is a really legitimate question. Oddly enough after all these years, I now go to church. My grandfather was a minister. My mother was deeply committed to the church. My sister is a minister. We are also very proud of being black Americans and participating in ways to improve our situation in this country. Everybody in my family including me in one way or another is an activist. It is a question, not an answer. There are some things you can’t answer, but you still need to ask the question.

BH: In the next poem, “The Birth of Rhythm and Blues,” you write about your life and the development of R&B.

PSJ: Writing this poem, I realized that I just love writing about music and I had a lot of fun. Some of it is about my family, but also I talk about Billie Holiday. In my first book there are three poems that are called the “Billie Holiday Chronicles.” And this is the first one.

I wanted to talk about the post-war period here. I think a lot of what we are still dealing with to this day is what happened in World War II in the middle of the century. So many of us were born right after that. Whenever I think about how many people died around the world, millions and millions of people, and whole cities were wiped out. There had to be a whole lot of trauma and at the same time there is this amazing amount of energy that turned itself into rock and roll and rhythm and blues.

BH: You are following that development of R&B across the country with Professor Longhair taking up the piano and then you are off with the Fender and shiny tuxedos and you are moving across the country. You write about the walking wounded and the blues that come out of the wounding. Really wonderful storytelling embedded in these poems.

PSJ: I also got to play with the language a lot and I love the part where I bring in the beboppers. The orioles, the flamingos, all these bird names. There is a real sense of flight going on. When people are talking about bebop, they talk



Photo credit: Barbara Henning

about how fast it is. When you are listening to early R&B and Count Basie, Count Basie is pretty fast, but these guys coming out of Texas, they are much faster, the beat much harder. It is different. It is just kind of amazing.

BH: “What made these people, Southern mostly, Black absolutely/ churn up rhythms rich as currents in the Atlantic?”

PSJ: That’s the question behind the poem and then there is Billie, the goddess diva over it all, and she’s wounded, a wounded goddess. I grew up with all these white women as the female figures— Marilyn Monroe— as the female goddess. We were supposed to look up to them and I thought Billie Holiday was equal to

them. And I thought, how can I give her that level of elevation and yet remain true to the fact that she was so wounded.

BH: Very cool. The birth of rhythm and blues through passion, suffering and ecstatic song. And then you have your own birth at the end. "Uterine wall collapsing,/ so they cut my mother's belly and drag me out/ wailing to." So you have this wailing and the music, part of the pain and the release and...

PSJ: And the connection... It is 1951 in Arkansas and I was two or three weeks early, a preemie, and my mother had already had two or three miscarriages. She was 32 and I was the first live birth.

BH: I guess we are all born of and through our time and place and this is your story.

PSJ: "Glad All Over" was written in the early 80's. "Glad All Over" is a song by the Dave Clark Five. The sixties were so strange in this way, this exuberance of youth and what we could do as young people. This poem chronicles what happened in my hometown when the civil rights marches took place. Literally my neighbors were jailed and released. No one was killed, thank god. The Klan chased them. My family and other families just sat and waited. We were prepared and this is one of the reasons I have no problem with black folks owning guns. They should be legal, and they should be able to keep them in their homes.

BH:

I see my mother, who until that day could not say shit,/ go up to one of the troopers and politely, quietly demand:/ "Sir, see these

children. Please lower your rifle./ He did.

PSJ: She is the heroine in this story. All of this is true. I don't write much about my family, but I thought that this was extremely important and I wrote it to honor that situation, and how hard it is to be from Arkansas. The black experience there is something that is rarely discussed. Some of the worst massacres and some of the worst lynchings all took place in the Delta where I grew up. Most of the state is white and very middle class. The Delta is where the cotton plantations were.

BH: The next poem is "New Blues." I wanted to watch the movie that you mention, but I didn't have time.

PSJ: It is one of the funniest movies. Very strange. "New Blues" is fun. I wanted to celebrate Robert Cray because I have a big crush on him and he really does have this blues number where he wants his girlfriend to move out. I was working on my MFA at that time so there is all this stuff about avoiding reading critical theory and the academic critiques of the blues and the way people deal with it and the way in which American culture feeds on itself and how strange the recipe can be. What I really wanted to talk about was how the blues had changed. I also loved playing with the language in this poem. The last two stanzas I think are some of my best writing.

When the last train whistle rasps,
and only the jet's sonic boom/
dazzles, will the drum kit slit the
air and the saxophone/
bends down so low/ someone
checks their back pockets as the

guitar strips away/ one more story;
the one about the man and the
woman/ the one about standing
at the bridge/ the one told on the
mocking bird's tongue/ in a voice
that scrapes the geologic layers of
modern times/ as if it could reveal
the origins of the race.

I love the sounds. I love what I do with the instrumentation and I love that it is a lot about disruption. And the consequences.

BH: And then in the end you pull the reader back into your room with your music and "the slithering line from ear to heart,/ then back to the clock against the wall."

Most of the poems we have just discussed were written early. Can you talk about how you wrote them? What was your process? Did you do research?

PSJ: They were written between 1975 and 1990. I just typed them on the typewriter. Many of them went through many revisions. I wrote the *Holiday chronicles* when I was in my MFA program. I am a curious, educated person. For instance I did not look up the movie, *Birth of the Blues* for "New Blues." I saw it on TV a thousand years ago. It is absolutely bizarre. From remembering it, I got the idea of Eddie "Rochester" Anderson" taking a broom and using it as a bayonet. He must have had an extraordinary amount of anger about being put into these roles.

BH: Do you use any language experiments when you are writing?

PSJ: I'm a lyric poet for the most part. So the issue for me is what kind of ideas am I thinking about. How can I

bring some emotional energy into a poem? How can I play with language in an interesting way so that when I write about something, it is both familiar and heightened at the same time? I use prompts, but mostly I pull out from experience and interests those things that my work explores.

BH: "The Village Sparkles" is a later poem and it has a completely different tone with a playful use of language.

PSJ: This was fun. I remember a German woman I met at Squaw Valley who wrote poems in English but was always capitalizing the nouns in her poems. Why are you doing that? I asked. That's what they do in German, she said. I wrote this poem after I came back from a church service with Susan Wheeler. It was a beautiful day... It was one of these days when someone could have been singing, "It's raining men." There were all these guys on the street, and they all were all handsome, probably gay, but that didn't matter. It was just beautiful and it was funny. I was just having so much fun with this poem. It is all about language but it is also about desire.

BH: Why Julia Roberts? "In America, who knows what is important / Julia Roberts or Vagina or Julia Roberts and Vagina."

PSJ: Because she was around that's all. Her picture was everywhere. Why not? Also she has a huge mouth...

BH: Then there is another longer poem, "Saltimbanque..."

PSJ: Let me talk about this one briefly. When I went to

the Virginia Center for Creative Arts the first time, I had been working as the Director of Development at the New Museum. When Toni Cade Bambara died at the age of 56, this was astounding to me. When I saw the headlines, I woke up and said, “I have to quit my job.” It was the most prestigious, the best paying job I ever had or I ever will have. I called Marcia Tucker the next morning and said I have to resign. I have to work on my poems. Three months later, I left. In the meantime I got the residency at VCCA for the month of April. I got there and slept for three days. I was so worn out. When I woke up, I started reading things at random and there was this book by T.J. Clarke, *The Absolute Bourgeois*. That’s when I started thinking about the position of artists. Also 1848 is fascinating to me because it’s that year where there were revolutions and rebellions all throughout Europe and they were all put down and they were harbingers of things to come. And there were slave rebellions, many big ones in the U.S. and probably in South America although I don’t know that history. Also, there was a French speaking artist there so I talked with her and realized that Daumier was the perfect figure. He was popular and he was a famous artist, but he had this whole cache of paintings he couldn’t show because they would have just kicked his ass into jail. So this poem is about what it means to resist. What does it mean to restrain oneself? How do you figure out how to undermine power? What will the powerful do to you? The *saltimbanques* were the street performers, whole families with animals, monkeys, etc... and the French are such great bureaucrats. They

outlawed working with animals and performing children. A significant number of them starved to death including the animals they worked with. All of this was done because they were street performers and their songs were not sanctioned by the state.

BH: You also have an image in this poem of the Saigon monk burning himself as a protest against the Vietnam War.

PSJ: I remember that picture.

What does it mean to restrain oneself? How do you figure out how to undermine power? What will the powerful do to you?

It was in yellow and all the other pictures were in black and white. Saffron robe. I literally can see through the black and white. I think most people could.

BH: Like Whitman you are moving across the world. Then Martin Luther King.

PSJ: I wanted to place King in jail, to show his deep humanity in the face of oppression, but also to show how he like those performers was codified by the state. I mean Martin Luther King got his ass kicked too, in many horrible ways. But I also wanted the position of the clown, the *saltimbanque*, the performer to be revered—that it is one of powerful ways to resist. Why else does the state do so much to regulate “entertainment?” We have to put on another face so we can continue when we leave the jailhouse behind. I wanted to give him that.

Clown face turned towards jail-

floor dust./ His tears roll away
holy laughter. saltimbanque/ in a
moment of am zinging tenderness
and pure rage/ Under the paving
stones, the beach.

BH: Why do you call this next poem “Failed Ghazal?”

PSJ: I call it failed because it’s not a correct ghazal. They are couplets, but that’s it. It is an elegy for my friend Peter Dee. I like that it is about the generosity of friendship. I think one of the jobs of poets is to be

able to keep the names alive.

BH: And you do that throughout the book. As I encountered people I didn’t know through your dedications and mentions, I would Google them and read whatever I could find. In a way you are keeping them alive.

PSJ: Thulani Davis said something to me many years ago— we sing people into the world and we sing them out of it. When horrible things happen, people don’t run to prose, they run to poetry because it has that ability to connect powerful emotions with ideas in one package. It can happen in prose, but when you really want to get down to it, it happens in poems.

BH: Patricia, at times your voice is almost prophetic, like Whitman or Césaire.

PSJ: I am the granddaughter of a Pentecostal minister. I want big. I don’t want little. Even my small poems, to me, are big.

BH: Some of your later poems in this collection are more riddle-like in their effect and with more humor.

PSJ: Yes, they are very, very different. I got sharper. You picked out a lot of narrative poems. There are many others. I do not think of myself as a narrative poet. The later poems are often meditative or lyric or some combination.

BH: I picked out the ones that seemed most compelling. Too bad we will only be able to include a few in the final interview. And also I wanted to sample poems throughout the book.

PSJ: The poems in *The Weather That Kills* and *Femme du Monde* are more narrative while the poems written since say 2004–05 are tighter. I work with irony a lot more, I’m older and I don’t have to say as much to say what I want to say.

BH: Then there is a poem about the George Hunt painting, “Love Come and Go.” I looked at his paintings online, but I couldn’t find this particular one.

PSJ: You can’t find it because I own it. It’s hanging in my apartment. Mr. Hunt is a Memphis painter. This is a piece that is unusual for him. It has a portrait of Memphis Minnie on an OKEH record label with her gold tooth and the words, “Love come and go.” You will see it the next time you come to my house. I was thinking about my aunts in Memphis and store-bought dresses... I love “crepe de chine.” It’s a heavyweight fabric from the 40’s. You can read that as crepe de chine or crepe de Shine.

Sitting pretty and strumming the

glory/ Out of the gutbucket set of bulky string/ And a girl's memory of love come and gone.

I had a lot of fun with this. In the introduction to this book, Mary Baine Campbell comments on my practice as a sustained ekphrasis— that my work is in conversation with all kinds of art and I have been doing that from the very beginning.

BH: “Family Ties.” I remember when you lost your job and you were going through this financial insecurity. Often people hide these circumstances. What I appreciate about the poem is that it is straight-on honest and immediate, addressing the condition that many poets face.

PSJ: I was working for a big non-profit for about ten years. I knew something was coming down the pipe because the way the financial press was starting to talk about loans. This is a year before the crash. Then the next year all hell broke loose and I was in the first round of people laid off. People kept saying, “Oh you’ll find something else.” And I said, “I

don’t think so.” Given my age, and the fact that I had been looking even before the layoff, and having a difficult time getting people even to respond to my resume, I knew that wasn’t going to happen.

It was horrible. Everybody I knew had someone who had lost work in their family or been cut back or didn’t get the raise they should have gotten. I’m very proud of the work I did in *Living in the Love Economy* because those poems also track not only me, but also my neighbors. I’m living on a street where I’m watching all kinds of folks really struggling to keep their homes and keep themselves.

BH: “The Fringe of Town” is another neighborhood poem, about a laundromat and the Pakistani manager and his relationships with a group of women in the laundromat, one who is ordering him around. As this is going on, you are reading about 7th-century Chinese court women poets, one who is a princess with a Floating Wine Cup Pond.

PSJ: “The Fringe of Town” is

ridiculously intellectual, for me. Here I am reading something thousands of years old, and I identify with the Pakistani guy because he’s working so hard... But all those women are workers too. They can’t do this to their husbands.

BH: You write:

He’s a foil/ for their husbands,
supervisors, bad news boyfriends,
sons-in-law, sons/ who roil their
lives in small ways and large

There are layers of narrative going on here, the story of the pond, the story of the woman reading, and the story of the conflict between the Pakistani man and the woman. You bring them all together.

PSJ: We are talking about New Yorkers here. Anything that has anything to do with the natural world has a sort of complication and those ladies in the laundromat would not take to the Floating Wine Cup Pond, but there are these women from centuries past who went on the road as performers of these poems and other women went into convents. At this point of time, in China, women of letters

had some kind of position in this world. My laundromat is my Zen experience. It allows me to merge different times, different ways that women operate in this world, and I am there as participant-observer. These little dramas take place and I am of it and not of it.

BH: Let me read the last few lines.

Not one of us will jump into the floating wine cup pond, but it is pleasing/ to know that one existed centuries before at a town’s fringe. Those centuries old breezes from China brush my neck/ as we stand here folding clean underwear/ & worrying about what to make for dinner.

That’s great.

PSJ: If you are a single woman in this city and you are doing this stuff and see all these people with their family stuff and these people have tons of clothing which is why they can yell at the Pakistani man. Also you have to figure out, “Where am I? I see them. Do they see me?”

BH: In your poem “Back to

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—Fiona Templeton, director, *The Relationship*

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School,” there is a community of people and your poems bring all this together. You are in the laundromat or here on the street with the children, mothers, fathers, and all. “A vibration hums this short street like blood pulsing through/ healthy veins: constant, predictable, mysterious.”

PSJ: The last poem in the book is “The Land of Fog and Poetry.” This is the first fully realized poem I wrote after my mother died. I went to the Cloisters for solace and came home with these scenes in my head. In an odd way I think of it as a companion to “Wearing My Chinese Red Silk Jacket.” I’m not sure why, but I do. I just watched that little girl walking away and her mother kept trying to get her to do things but she just wouldn’t.

BH: I think when you are in grief, you see things differently.

PSJ: You do. You can say it in a way that you may not when you are not grieving. At some point you don’t care if it is pretty or correct, you know on some very visceral level you know it is right. For some reason Bob Kaufman was the key to that. I

always think of him as deeply rooted and utterly estranged at the same time. When you read his poems although everyone says they are so surreal, there are all these things in his poems that are just very clear and rooted in the real world and lived experience and then there is this stuff that is just wacko. I think that he understood.. and I think sometimes to be a poet is to be like that... to be very much connected to this planet, walking on this earth, but also being connected to the cosmos.

BH: And that’s what you mean by “cracked sage of/ Fog and poetry.”

PSJ: Yes, that there is this wisdom but it is a wisdom that has been extracted from a great deal of pain, I think. A lot of us go through a great deal of pain before we can get to the point where we can write anything that is going to explore or amplify or deepen our humanity and our connection. So whether you are deeply invested in gender or race or anything. I mean all of this stuff is really important but at the end of the day, how does it make us wiser and bigger and more loving and caring and more careful than

we are now? Because there is a hell of a lot of carelessness in this world right now, there’s a hell of a lot of anger, a hell of a lot of ugliness and brutality and I am sick and tired of it.

BH: I agree. I love the way this poem comes back to the blues: “And the blues is always Bountiful.”

PSJ: Yes, that’s how it comes around to “Wearing my Red Silk Chinese Jacket” in the sense that the questions in that poem are in some ways being answered years hence in understanding that the blues is bountiful, that if we live long enough and care deeply enough, you will feel it, you will understand it and you will be grateful for it.

Patricia Spears Jones is a Brooklyn-based African American poet/cultural activist and author of *A Lucent Fire: New and Selected Poems* from White Pine Press and seven other collections and chapbooks. She curates WORDS SUNDAY, a literary salon in Brooklyn and is a former Program Coordinator for The Poetry Project and served as a Mentor for the first year of

Emerge – Surface – Be. She is contributing editor to *BOMB Magazine* and is a senior fellow at Black Earth Institute, where she edited “Thirty Days Hath September” in 2012 and the recent issue of *About Place Journal* entitled “The Future Imagined Differently.” This year she was awarded a Money for Women/The Barbara Deming Fund and in the past she has received NEA and NYFA grants and awards from Foundation for Contemporary Art and the New York Community Trust. She teaches for CUNY.

Barbara Henning is the author of three novels and seven collections of poetry. Her most recent is a collection of poems, *A Day Like Today* (Negative Capability Press, 2015). Others include *A Swift Passage* (Quale Press), *Cities and Memory* (Chax Press) and a collection of object-sonnets, *My Autobiography* (United Artists). She is the editor of *Looking Up Harryette Mullen* and *The Collected Prose of Bobbie Louise Hawkins*. Barbara lives in New York City and teaches for writers.com and Long Island University in Brooklyn.

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#9 (Transnational/Translational)



#10 CAConrad Special Feature



#11 Pop!

Featuring writers such as CAConrad, Anne Boyer, Frank Sherlock, Angélica Freitas, Allison Cobb, Marianne Morris, TC Tolbert, Bruce Boone, Kim Rosenfield, Juliana Spahr, Danielle LaFrance, Cesar Moro, Ko Ko Thett, Douglas Kearney, Kate Durbin & Kevin Killian, Ye Mimi, Paolo Javier, Lila Matsumoto & Samantha Walton, Nibia Pastrana Santiago, Frances Kruk, Dawn Lundy Martin, K. Silem Mohammad, Edwin Torres, Mae Yway, R. Zamora Linmark, Angelo Suarez, Nyein Way, Nachoem Wijnberg, Juliette Cheung, Desmond Kon Zhicheng-Mingde, Grzegorz Wróblewski, Ulrich Haarbürste, Don Mee Choi, Mette Moestrup, Ida Borjel, Jules Boykoff, Divya Victor, Sean Bonney, Jen Hofer & Virginia Lucas, Lisa Robertson & Jessica Pujol Duran, Arash Allahverdi, Hugo García Manríquez, Gelare Khoshgozaran, Lasana M. Sekou, Miyó Vestrini, Forugh Farrokhzad, Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo, Shahmush Parsipur, Victor Valera Mora, Clemente Soto Velez & art, reviews, & much more...

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Art: Oasa DuVerney



Sikhs Do Not Equal The Taliban from *The Illustrated Guide To Not Being So Fucking Racist*
Oasa DuVerney, 2011, graphite on paper, 20.25 x 13.25 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

About the artists:

Oasa DuVerney is a mother, artist and native New Yorker.

Selected exhibitions include: Thanks For Writing, 601 Artspace, NYC (2014); Crossing the Line, Mixed Greens Gallery, NYC (2013); Through A Glass Darkly, Postmasters Gallery, NYC (2012); and Planet of Slums, Mason Gross Galleries, Rutgers University (2010).

Awards include: the Smack Mellon Studio Artist Residency (2014-2015); LMCC Workspace program residency (2012-2013), a grant from the Brooklyn Arts Council (2011), a grant award from the Citizens Committee For NYC (2010, 2013), Aljra Emerge Fellowship, Aljira Center for Contemporary Art (2007).

Publications include: *The Guardian* UK, 2015, *The New York Times* (2012, 2011), and the *New York Daily News* (2010).


She received her B.F.A. from FIT, SUNY and her M.F.A. from Hunter College, CUNY.

Cover art by **Steffani Jemison**

It has been suggested that faith and luck are fundamentally incommensurate: for a believer, it is not luck, but rather grace, that guides. But what about politics and luck? How do we orient ourselves in a political context that lacks a viable, enduring concept of progress? A context in which change is accidental and arbitrary and meaning seems incidental, redundant, or even absent?

My recent work explores the tension between improvisation, repetition, and fugitivity. It is concerned with the ways that we make sense of the matter of our lives– the values (this matters) and the raw materials; the episodes, the contingencies, and the accidents.

Most of the works in this exhibition employ acetate as medium, glazing, or support for inkjet photographic prints. Several pieces are part of a larger body of work with a specific source of inspiration: A few years ago, a newspaper reported that Chicago public school student Derrion Albert had copied a poem called “Affirmations for Living” and posted it where he could view it while doing homework. The text is written in the present conditional tense: each phrase begins, “If I could...”, and the final line triumphantly concludes, “If I could... and I can... so I WILL!” Albert was killed while walking home from school in September 2009.



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Poetry

once upon a time at a grade school in flatbush

a large buckra come
to feed us beatles

wit he casio— yellow
submarine up da ass.

my buster brown
shoes appall, poodle

skirt appall, limbs
non-aquatic slay

he buckra fuss, shark
he buckra scale.

we know lennon
da enemy, know

da strawberry foul
& torch da field

chant *aman fey*
k'ana & it feel so

good to be conch
carryin whale click

large buckra in garnet
velour fall out he tiny

white seat, watch us
mouth notes only we

& whale hear. *aman*
fey k'ana, da buckra

threaten to hang me
on a coat rack

spit on da blouse
nana sew, black

skin loop round, round
like a stitch through

song, never tell nan he
heimlich ma stomach

coated wit seashell
briny thumbs scrapin

lyric from my gums
how i gag like a dog

wit pica, hear da whistle
of twi as i choke

baby skulls up & out
my throat

what dialect is this
what treason!

da buckra ever-red
grab da ancestors

by dey socket & bang
dey head

togedda--
hexin he self

& i laugh & laugh
jus f'dat

my favorite things, julie andrews or coltrane?

black as in to be: sin worse than camel toe.
snap if you remember beat street blasting sal
soul christmas the year i interned at a soho
gallery the year an exhibit of lewd-shaped
latex sold out the year i brought succotash
and neck bones for lunch the year black dudes
in leather eight ball jackets lined up for art
the year eating in the office was banned. when
the bright copper kettles i prefer the supremes
to coltrane and what? come for my black
card. i fuck identity thieves. i'll make more.

midnight, the ceiling

an irregular heartbeat of boys roughhousing
the ceiling sings i'm falling to pieces in pre
pubescent alto, the house quakes with despair
the ceiling begs mercy, mercy my nig over
mortal kombat, jax wins, the air velcro'd
gray with mist, who sings, an owl-eyed boy
his sadness tumbles over like a basket
of green tomatoes, sweetness & jade rough
housing for supremacy, i'm falling to pieces
mercy seeded with midnight mist & youth
the scent of tulips before they die

Amber Atiya is the author of the chapbook “the fierce bums of doo-wop” (Argos Books, 2014). A proud native Brooklynite, she is a member of a women’s writing group that will be celebrating 14 years next spring.

Calendar of Events

All events begin at 8pm unless otherwise noted. Admission \$8/Students & Seniors \$7/ Members \$5 or free. Visit poetryproject.org or call 212.674.0910 for more information. The Poetry Project is wheelchair accessible with assistance and advance notice.

MON 2/1

FALL 2015 WORKSHOP READING

Participants of The Poetry Project's Fall 2015 writing workshops, led by Montana Ray and Natalie Peart, r. erica doyle, and Edmund Berrigan, will gather to read work they produced.

WED 2/3

ARIEL GOLDBERG & BISHAKH SOM

Ariel Goldberg's first book of poetry, *The Photographer*, was published by Roof Books in 2015. Their book-length essay, *The Estrangement Principle*, is forthcoming from Nightboat Books in June 2016.

Bishakh Som's work investigates the intersection between image and text, figure and architecture, architecture and landscape. Bishakh's comics have previously appeared in *Buzzfeed*, *Hi-horse*, *Blurred Vision*, *Pood*, the academic journal *Specs*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, Volume 3 of the much-lauded Graphic Canon series and most recently in *Little Nemo: Dream Another Dream*, the oversized tribute anthology to Winsor McCay. Their most recent book is *The Prefab Bathroom: An Architectural History*, published by McFarland Press.

MON 2/8

CATHY EISENHOWER & WENDY XU

Cathy Eisenhower is the author of *distance decay* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2015), *Language of the Dog-heads* (Phylum, 2001), *clearing without reversal* (Edge, 2008), and *would with and* (Roof, 2009). She is co-translating the selected poems of Argentine poet Diana Bellessi and co-curated the In Your Ear Reading Series for several years.

Wendy Xu is the author of *You Are Not Dead* (Cleveland State University Poetry Center, 2013) and *Naturalism* (Brooklyn Arts Press, 2015). Her writing has appeared in *The Best American Poetry*, *Boston Review*, *Poetry*, *Gulf Coast*, and elsewhere. In 2014 she was awarded a Ruth Lilly Fellowship from the Poetry Foundation.

WED 2/10

BARBARA HENNING & ED PAVLIĆ

Barbara Henning is the author of three novels and seven collections of poetry, her most recent is *A Day Like Today* (Negative Capability Press, 2015). Others include *A*

Swift Passage (Quale Press), *Cities and Memory* (Chax Press) and a collection of object-sonnets, *My Autobiography* (United Artists). She is the editor of *Looking Up* *Harryette Mullen* and *The Collected Prose of Bobbie Louise Hawkins*.

Ed Pavlić's new books are *Let's Let That Are Not Yet: Inferno* (National Poetry Series, Fence Books, 2015) and *'Who Can Afford to Improvise?': James Baldwin and Black Music, the Lyric and the Listeners* (Fordham University Press, 2015). Recent works are *Visiting Hours at the Color Line* (National Poetry Series, Milkweed Editions, 2013), *But Here Are Small Clear Refractions* (Achebe Center, 2009, Kwani Trust, 2013) and *Winners Have Yet to be Announced: A Song for Donny Hathaway* (University of Georgia Press, 2008).

FRI 2/12

JENNIFER FALU & LARA MIMOSA MONTES

Jennifer Falu recently won first place in NBC-TV's Amiri Baraka Poetry Slam and was ranked third internationally in the 2014 Women of the World Poetry Slam. She has been a member of the 2006, 2009 and 2012 Nuyorican Poets Cafe Slam Teams, won the national Women of the World Poetry Slam in 2006, and ranked 3rd in the WOWPS in both 2009 and 2012.

Lara Mimosa Montes' work has appeared in *Fence*, *Triple Canopy*, *BOMB*, *Poor Claudia*, and elsewhere. Currently, she is a Ph.D. candidate in English at The Graduate Center, City University of New York. She also teaches poetry at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. Her first book, *The Somnambulist*, is forthcoming from Horse Less Press.

This reading is a co-presentation with Nuyorican Poets Cafe.

MON 2/15

HOW TO READ 20,000 DRAWING POEMS BY ROBERT GRENIER

Since 1989, Robert Grenier has rejected typography as a medium for his poetry, and has written exclusively by hand. His color drawing poems test the limits of conventional legibility, and have been difficult for readers to access. In this slide lecture, Paul Stephens will offer a historical overview based on extensive archival

research. Stephens, author of *The Poetics of Information Overload: From Gertrude Stein to Conceptual Writing* (University of Minnesota Press, 2015) will explore the development of Grenier's drawing practice, and suggest ways in which the poems can be viewed and interpreted.

WED 2/17

JAMES HANNAHAM & DAWN LUNDY MARTIN

James Hannaham is the author of the novels *Delicious Foods* (Little, Brown, 2015), a New York Times and Washington Post Notable Book for 2015, and *God Says No* (McSweeney's, 2009), and has published stories in *One Story*, *Fence*, *Story Quarterly*, *BOMB*, and one in *Gigantic* for which he won a Pushcart Prize.

Dawn Lundy Martin is the author of three books of poetry, and three chapbooks. Of her latest collection, *Life in a Box is a Pretty Life* (Nightboat Books, 2015), Fred Moten says, "Imagine Holiday singing a blind alley, or Brooks pricing hardpack dandelion, and then we're seized and thrown into the festival of detonation we hope we've been waiting for." Martin is currently working on a hybrid memoir, a tiny bit of which appears as the essay, "The Long Road to Angela Davis's Library," published in the *The New Yorker* in December 2014.

WED 2/24

LAUNCH OF DEAREST ANNIE, YOU WANTED A REPORT ON BERKSON'S CLASS...

The collected letters of **Frances LeFevre Waldman**, edited by **Lisa Birman** with an introduction by **Bill Berkson** and an afterword by **Anne Waldman**, is an engaging, at times hilarious, elegant romp covering Frances' time in Bill Berkson's workshop at the New School with Hannah Weiner, Bernadette Mayer, Peter Schjeldahl, and Michael Brownstein. With readings by **Bob Hershon, Lisa Birman, Lewis Warsh, Michael Brownstein, Charles North, Eileen Myles, Ron Padgett, Alisa Sikelianos, Anne Waldman, Ambrose Bye & Devin Waldman.**

FRI 2/26

AMELIA BANDE & DEVIN KENNY

Amelia Bande is a writer. She works in performance, theater, film. Her plays 'Chueca' and 'Partir y Renunciar' were staged and published in Santiago, Chile. She is part of the Gels Collective and is co-founder of Publishing Puppies. Her work, solo and collaborative, has recently been shown at MIX NYC, 41 Cooper Gallery,

The Shandaken Project at Storm King Arts Center, NewBridge Project in Newcastle, Pratt Manhattan Gallery, KJCC at NYU, NGBK Berlin and Flutgraben Kunstfabrik Berlin.

Devin Kenny is an interdisciplinary artist, writer, musician, and independent curator. He relocated to New York to begin his studies at Cooper Union and has since continued his practice through the Bruce High Quality Foundation University, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, SOMA Mexico, and collaborations with DADDY, poool, Studio Workout, Temporary Agency and various art and music venues in New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, and elsewhere.

MON 2/29

JENNIFER NELSON & ARIEL RESNIKOFF

Jennifer Nelson's first book of poems, *Aim at the Centaur Stealing Your Wife*, came out with Ugly Duckling Presse in December 2015. She is a fellow of the Michigan Society of Fellows and teaches in the art history department at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Ariel Resnikoff is the author of *Between Shades* (Materialist Press, 2014) & the co-author of *Ten Four: Poems, Translations, Variations* (The Operating System, 2015) with Jerome Rothenberg. He is currently at work on a translation into English of Mikhl Likht's Yiddish modernist long poem, *Protseyes* (Processions), in collaboration with Stephen Ross.

WED 3/2

JULIE CARR & KRISTAL LANGUELL

Julie Carr is the author of six books of poetry, most recently *100 Notes on Violence* (Ahsahta, 2010), *RAG* (Omnidawn, 2014), and *Think Tank* (Solid Objects, 2015). She is also the author of *Surface Tension: Ruptural Time and the Poetics of Desire in Late Victorian Poetry* (Dalkey Archive, 2013). A chapbook of prose, "The Silence that Fills the Future," was recently released as a free pdf from Essay Press: <http://www.essaypress.org/ep-19/>. *Objects from a Borrowed Confession* (prose) is forthcoming from Ahsahta press in 2016.

Krystal Languell is the author of the books *Call the Catastrophists* (BlazeVox, 2011) and *Gray Market* (1913 Press, forthcoming 2016) and the chapbooks *Last Song* (dancing girl press, 2014), *Be a Dead Girl* (Argos Books, 2014), *Fashion Blast Quarter* (Flying Object, 2014), *Diamonds in the Flesh*, a collaboration with Robert Alan Wendeborn, (Double Cross Press, 2015),

and a collection of interviews, *Archive Theft* (Essay Press, 2015).

FRI 3/4

SVETLANA KITTO & NICOLE SEALEY

Svetlana Kitto is an activist writer and oral historian in NYC. Her fiction, essays, and journalism have been featured or are forthcoming in *Salon*, *The Believer*, *VICE*, *Plenitude Magazine*, *OutHistory*, *Surface*, and the *New York Observer*, and the books *Occupy* (Verso, 2012) and *the Who, the What and the Where* (Chronicle, 2014). Svetlana is currently working on a novel called *Purvs*, which means "swamp" in Latvian and is the name of that country's first gay club.

Nicole Sealey is a Cave Canem graduate fellow and the recipient of an Elizabeth George Foundation Grant. She is the author of *The Animal After Whom Other Animals Are Named*, winner of the 2015 Drinking Gourd Chapbook Poetry Prize, forthcoming from Northwestern University Press. Her other honors include an Emerge - Surface - Be Fellowship from the Poetry Project, the Stanley Kunitz Memorial Prize from *The American Poetry Review*, a Daniel Varoujan Award and the Poetry International Prize. She is the Programs Director at Cave Canem Foundation.

MON 3/7

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.

Suggested reading time is approximately 3 minutes. Sign-in at 7:45pm.

WED 3/9

JOSEPH DONAHUE & PETER O'LEARY

Joseph Donahue is the author of seven books of poetry, the most recent of which are *Red Flash on a Black Field* (Black Square Editions), and *Dark Church* (Verge). A book length suite of poems, *Wind Maps*, is forthcoming from Talisman in 2016. He lived for many years in NYC, and now lives

in Durham, NC, where he teaches in the English Department at Duke University.

Peter O'Leary is the author of four books of poetry. A new book, *The Sampo*, will be published in the spring by the Cultural Society. A new book of criticism, *Thick and Dazzling Darkness: Religious Poetry in a Secular Age*, is forthcoming from Columbia University Press. He teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and the University of Chicago, and with John Tipton, runs Verge Books.

FRI 3/11

SABLE ELYSE SMITH & CAMEL COLLECTIVE (ANTHONY GRAVES AND CARLA HERRERA-PRATS)

Sable Elyse Smith is an interdisciplinary artist, writer, and educator based in New York. She has performed at the New Museum, Eyebeam, Queens Museum, NY; and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA. She is currently a selected participant in the New Museums Seminars: (Temporary) Collection of Ideas, on the thematic PERSONA. Her work has been published in *Radical Teacher*, *Studio Magazine* and *No Tofu Magazine* and she is currently working on her first book.

Anthony Graves and Carla Herrera-Prats have worked as **Camel Collective** since 2005. They draw on narrative theater and dramaturgy, combining them with research into marginal histories, critical pedagogy, and entertainment. Camel's exhibitions and performances have been presented at Casa del Lago, Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros in Mexico City; the Trienal Poli/Gráfica de San Juan Puerto, Puerto Rico; Overgaden Institut for Samtidskunst and Aarhus Museum, in Denmark; and Artist's Space, Art in General, Exit Art, and MassMoCA, in the US.

MON 3/14

GABRIEL KRUIS & ANDY STERLING

Gabriel Kruis' work has been published or is forthcoming in *Quadrant*, *the Atlas Review*, *Everyday Genius*, & at Well Greased Press. He is also a founder of Wendy's Subway & runs the Shitluck Reading series at the Tip Top Bar & Grill.

"HOW DO I GET A READING?"

Participation in all series is by invitation from the series coordinator. It helps to be familiar with the Project's schedule and what the current series coordinators are interested in. While the series are curated, we are always CURIOUS. If you want to get our attention, mail your books and poems to the office at 131 E. 10th St. NY, NY 10003 or email us at info@poetryproject.com. Your email will be forwarded to the series coordinators. Coordinator appointments change every two years to ensure diversity of perspective.

Andy Sterling is a writer living in NYC and a member of Rob Fitterman's Collective Task ensemble. Notable publications include *Mackey* (bas-books, 2010), *Supergroup* (Gauss PDF Editions, 2013) and *Who Owns Primos?* (forthcoming).

WED 3/16

TALK: JACE CLAYTON: WHAT I UNDERSTAND OF WHAT YOU WANT IS HOW YOU MOVE

How to edit an audience? How can we, as bad citizens, become even worse? How does the interaction between technology and the crowd modulate our sense of possibility? Using illustrations from his work as a writer, DJ, and composer, and drawing on examples ranging from Billy Joel and Beyoncé to Zulu digital currency manifestos, Jace Clayton will celebrate the end of community. Refreshments will not be served.

Jace Clayton is an artist and writer based in New York, also known for his work as DJ /rupture. His book on 21st-century music and global digital culture will be published in July 2016 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

FRI 3/25

ADEENA KARASICK & PAUL TRAN

CO-PRESENTED READING AT NUYORICAN POETS CAFE 7PM, 236 East 3rd Street, NY, NY

Adeena Karasick is a New York-based poet, performer, cultural theorist and media artist and the author of seven books of poetry and poetics. Writing at the intersection of post-Language Conceptualism and neo-Fluxus performativity, her urban, Jewish feminist mashups have been described as “electricity in language” (Nicole Brossard) and noted for their “cross-fertilization of punning and knowing, theatre and theory” (Charles Bernstein) “a twined virtuosity of mind and ear which leaves the reader deliciously lost in Karasick’s signature ‘syllabic labyrinth’” (Craig Dworkin). Recent publications are *This Poem* (Talonbooks, 2012) and *The Medium is the Muse: Channeling Marshall McLuhan* (NeoPoiesis Press, 2014). She teaches Literature, Critical Theory at Pratt Institute and at St. John’s University in New York and is co-founding Director of KlezKanada Poetry Festival and Retreat. The “Adeena Karasick Archive” has just been established at Special Collections, Simon Fraser University.

Paul Tran is the 10th ranked slam poet in the world. His Pushcart-nominated work appears in *Prairie Schooner*, *The Offing*, *The Cortland Review* and *RHINO*, which


gave him a 2015 Editor’s Prize. Paul has also received fellowships & residencies from Kundiman, VONA, Poets House, Lambda Literary, Napa Valley, Home School Miami & The Vermont Studio Center. He’s the first Asian American poet to represent the Nuyoric Poets Cafe at the National Poetry Slam in almost 20 years, placing 9th overall. Paul lives in NYC, where he works at NYU and coaches the Barnard/Columbia slam team.

WED 3/30

CITY LIGHTS POCKET POETS: 60th ANNIVERSARY

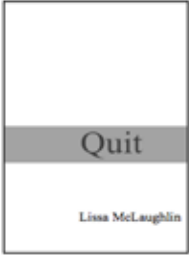
Lawrence Ferlinghetti launched City Lights publishing house in 1955 with his own *Pictures of the Gone World*. Number Four in the Pocket Poets Series, Allen Ginsberg’s *Howl and Other Poems*, made it legendary. Readings from the 60th Anniversary Edition of *City Lights Pocket Poets Anthology* include work from all sixty Pocket Poets numbers. With **Ammiel Alcalay, Jonathan Cohen, John Coletti, Mel Elberg, Dia Felix, Stacy Szymaszek**, and more TBA.

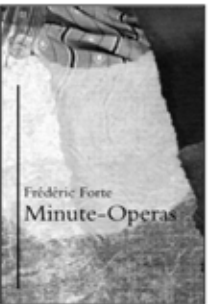
Burning Deck Books



Michael Donhauser: *Of Things*
[translated from the German by Andrew Joron and Nick Hoff]
A thicket, a manure pile, a marigold, gravel, a tomato, a cypress — award-winning Austrian poet Michael Donhauser engages in a “close reading” of natural things. His emphasis is not so much on observation and depiction as on tracing the movement from object to language. His approach is multi-layered, bringing a dazzling variety of perspectives—personal, scientific, philosophical, historical—to his deeply felt encounters with nonhuman phenomena.
Poetry, 128 pages, offset, smyth-sewn, original paperback \$14


Lissa McLaughlin: *Quit*
Taut lines—fragments from a journal? a report on hospice work?—seem to keep moving out of our grasp while at the same time bringing us closer to their subject, the elusive experience of the dying and their nurses. A grief worker at a hospice ponders how ordinary human failings—jealousy, fear, rigidity, the hunger of loneliness—can overwhelm rewarding work. To the point of envying the dead for leaving it all behind. And yet how anything, even a lousy sandwich, can recall us to the pleasures of this world.
Poetry, 88 pages, offset, smyth-sewn, original paperback \$14





Frédéric Forte: *Minute-Operas*
[translated from the French by Daniel Levin Becker, Ian Monk, Michelle Noteboom, Jean-Jacques Poucel]
Forte’s Minute-Operas are poems “staged” on the page. A simple 3” vertical line separates what Forte calls the stage and the wings. The poet explores the potential of this form with multiple typographic games, calling on different registers of the language, different poetic techniques and, in the second part of the book, by “fixating as minute-operas” 55 existing poetic forms (come out of various poetic traditions or more recently invented by Oulipo, the famous French “Workshop for potential literature.”)
The poems also constitute, in their cryptic way, a journal of the poet’s life during the period of composition (2001-2002): his love life, the loss of his father... Shortly after the publication of this book, in 2005, Frédéric Forte was elected a member of the Oulipo.
Poetry, 134 pages, offset, smyth-sewn, original paperback \$14

Orders: Small Press Distribution: www.spdbooks.org, 1-800/869-7553; www.burningdeck.com



Primitive State Anselm Berrigan

Edge Books, 2015
Review by Jess Mynes

"I'll tell you anything, but I have to warn you, I don't consider anything to be much."(59) In *Primitive State* Anselm Berrigan tells us more than anything, he tells us everything we care to hear and a lot of what we haven't heard before. He scrambles or distorts our point of reference just enough to reconstitute it, while warning us that it requires a new order of thinking, "I trained my instincts to turn away from the banal and discovered I could no longer order my sentence."(3) Everything comes to us in "Figures of speech," that reconstitute and reconstruct our reality when we've assumed, "All the regal pre-conditions will be there."(10) Those pre-conditions do not exist in *Primitive State*, whose pre-conditions are more aligned with the sentiment of X's beautiful song title, "The World is a Mess, It's in My Kiss."

If truth is stranger than fiction, *Primitive State* is telling the truth. There are lines that necessitate re-reading because of their blunt accuracy, "We lost the war by starting it,"(62) or startling personal revelation, "There is always (I hate myself and want to live) some overlap."(74) Berrigan uses shifting and alternating perspectives and expressions to accentuate the mutability of logic and the truth of experience. Experience is both deeply personal and similarly abstract, "When you allow yourself to feel other people's desires reality stops being based on tangibility."(51) In this welter, experience is deeply felt and deeply personal even if we aren't able to grasp it fully, except in glimpses, "It's about reciprocity of indistinction disguised as abject loneliness."(5) *Primitive State*

articulates the disconcerting, liminal space of shifting realities and not knowing with generosity, in the form of humor. Social or personal—most often directed at him—indictments have a quixotic tenderness, "In the morning I'm asleep, in the evening I'm elite, in the afternoon I'm in your average state of fleeting pain,"(29) or "No wait is worth that hair on a cabbage head I've never seen before."(8)

"I guess I let speech override memory and ideas, but what I really (think I) do is use speech to bump into what I don't know and ask it for company."(25) Listening happens in real time so we're confronted with trying to make sense of information as it is happening and to navigate it accordingly. To be comfortable with unknowns and to understand that the solid ground perspective (memory) or formal thought (ideas) offer us is a luxury. A luxury that is a fiction with, "Constants on the take,"(48). No amount of forethought or presumption can be assumed to keep up with the velocity of reality. Trying to construct a sense of reality in real time leads to bewilderment and sometimes even, revelation, "Later, when the day's typical snatches of surrealist waste had wimpered out of existence, all trick plays were stripped and renamed tendency breakers."(63)

Because reality is a series of mutable individual experiences, its benchmarks, such as personal identity, mean not only several things for one person, but several very different things for different persons, "This bloated distortion of personality circled us, cut ups of cut ups in its briefcase, on occasional manic release."(18) Reality and experience become a funhouse of shifting perspectives from the personal reality of a lived experience, "I prefer the glorious replication of a

handful of known experiences at semi-regular intervals,"(19) or "The patter of claws as I upload Brahms in the dark,"(31) to speculations, "Random and boring, like the present described as the future of something else,"(61) to sage advice, "One infatuation may drive you mad but dozens will mellow you out."(53) All and each become equal measure, even if there's no reward for our efforts, "I dedicate my life to clearing away their psychic debris and this is how they repay me."(8)

With shifting and re-shifting perspectives and registers there is a persistent sense of unknowing. We each make different choices that shape our experiences in different ways. These choices inevitably leave us outside or in the margins of other experiences, "Thankfully my co-readers rallied to me, so that I might not feel as if facing the other way in the foxhole."(44) No one can fully participate in every reality; even in his or her own everyday, he or she is often a stranger, "All the stuffed animals in the room staring at me."(6). Being left out of some realities gives us freedom, freedom to observe the goings-on and offer perspective, "I accept your point of loneliness as one of many underlying levels of existence to draw upon,"(66) or invite the perspective of others, "I'm only, frankly speaking or whatever, interested in the fuck up's opinion."(36)

There are many lines in *Primitive State* that I love fiercely because they don't fit anywhere else, "Voracious stucco zoot moose youth with fashionable egret siring charm,"(34) or "...occupying a small contested state in folio outrage, a scallion dub, blown thistle, being mean to downgrown trees..."(72) They are so unique they resist belonging to anything else

other than the book and my enthusiasm, for it/them, but I had to share them with you. In the short time I've owned this book I've re-read it a few times and each time I get stuck re-reading line after line, it has that kind of impenetrable logic.

The Devastation Melissa Buzzeo

Nightboat Books, 2015
Review by Cornelia Barber

When I first read Melissa Buzzeo's *The Devastation* I almost sent it to my former lover in the mail. But I really wanted to crawl to his house on my hands and knees holding the book up to him, rabid in my vulnerability, in my heart-tears, in my invaluable desire to give him something, an object, to concretize the end, Dido's body on the pyre, a sacrifice and love-object. Someone always leaves, or breaks, or can't do it, or dies. Then there is space, to mourn, to fill, to get to know, to write. Buzzeo's book seemed to respond to the questions around what it meant to be left to gnaw on all the words and images from our time together.

How does one say The Devastation/ When it no longer is/ When I am not waiting for you writing for you/ When we/ are not/ intact.

In *The Devastation* the distinctions between love and language, loss and creative vulnerability are always making each other more complex. "When I am not waiting for you writing for you." The lover is no longer waiting, the writer no longer writing for the beloved, the event has passed, and yet there remains a "we" to negate. "We // are not // intact." There remains a bullet of intimacy lodged in the gut, decomposing wildly through the body and out into poetry that is not exactly "for" the beloved, but

that imagines the beloved as having once been waited for, written for.

The Devastation is written in four parts: *The Floor*; *An Object*; *The Sky*; *The Basin*. There is also *A Preface for A Work Undone* and a kind of epilogue called *Last Things*. The book is essentially lyric, winding through these parts, developing sensibility, and tone, but wandering through a dense vocabulary that leads the lovers towards and away from one another, and guides the readers through what feels like a whole relationship.

An Object, the second and shortest of these four parts, is three lines long and begins with a quote from Agamben that reads, “What is this falling into the silence of a poem? What is beauty that falls? And what is left of the poem after its ruin?” Though several quotes and references run emotionally (as opposed to academically, or coldly) throughout the book,

Agamben’s is the most deeply felt in all parts. Felt in the tender lyric of *The Floor*, and the rich, confessional prose of *The Basin*. Each part reveals more and more of this ruin, while simultaneously creating new text, a new object. *An Object* reads:

If it were not so separate if something had been saved I would give you a/ piece of The Devastation now, here. Not like a text, like an object./ I would break it off.

There is a precision to this text. Just the subtitle, *An Object*, with its indefinite article describing this unknown and unmanageable thing, this book, this love, that craves to be what it is not— that craves to be more than text. *An Object* is named and interrupts the flow of the book, and yet is a synecdoche for the whole book. Revealing the desire to know what happens after the poem is ruined. What is left? No longer text, but object. If they could,

the lover “would break it off,” out of the book, like a piece of bread to break fast from the egregious task of un-loving the other. For them. Who are these lovers and how is their story told?

You imagine other— what form do I have to give./ Deep in the earth the magnetic lovers./ The earth hot the earth fired. The spring water in your mouth.

The visceral integration of the remains of the other, and that pull, into one another, giving your lost lover form, the ethics of staying away in life, but in language, the beloved lives. A golem, or your own inventiveness. So, where does love end, trauma end, and language begin? “All the language left unfired smooth/ In the river the shapes being smooth becoming slit.” I imagine a river of characters, traveling fast, thick, and thin, arabesqued and stilted, getting clean, smoothed out like the bottoms of stones, “All the

language,” all the love-language traveling along this river, through the body of the lover, down her throat and into her heart.


In *The Devastation* and often in Buzzeo’s work, water shifts and heals. Water is a mechanism for growth. But like anything that has potential for healing there is innately the potential for harm. Like love, like poetry, water is often the undoing of its own potential.

I come to you without scales without language to the immeasurable part of/ you that I put beside water.

Almost religious, certainly sacred, there is a feeling that the water will mend and heal the lovers. Or at least take some pain away. Mimicking the pre-verbal, recalling the womb, water acts as a mother to strict forces of language. But Buzzeo does not pit water against language, or mother against father, she embraces the

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DEUS EX MACHINA by Jennifer Pilch




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PREMONITION by Etel Adnan



“There is always a conductive thread through space for untenable positions.”
– **Etel Adnan, “Premonition”**

2014, 56 pages \$19



NESTS & STRANGERS: On Asian American Women Poets

“...poetry is about guts — an embodied process that intimately involves the individual person and is inextricable from a politicized existence.” – **Muriel Leung**

2015, 116 pages \$16.95

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dialectics of both.

Over and over, Buzzeo brings the lovers into the present. She re-lives not The Devastation itself, not the story, but the feelings, re-living and re-writing. “I remember the textual city.” She invents a landscape to hold all this. Cities and seas and earth. The Devastation is so large that Buzzeo relies on the entirety of the earth to contain its magnificence, it’s sorrow. The textual city that was at once holding and being held by the lovers— the sexual, desire driven city, the city of words and ink. “The ink on the skin instead of the letter.” The blood of the pen leaked out and transposed with the body of the beloved, the river of smooth words into the heart.

The book that comes apart in my hand. The book that is for you. And not for you./ And for a forked line. The bones held safely over the ocean. The swelling survival above the/ forked line.

Buzzeo’s book is real and unreal. It is a love-object, I could give it to my beloved, and yet in the hands of the writer, the lover and the reader it comes apart. The book winds and unwinds through the natural complexities of love and loss. What binds it is not a cover and spine, it is its own quality of self-resuscitation. Life-giving, feminine abundance. Even when the devastation eradicates love the writer finds the healing in it. “The book that is for you and not for you.” The book that is, perhaps, for the survival of the writer, the reader, the lover and the beloved. After the end, the chaos, the emulsion of the forked line, looking down at the ocean— the memory banks, the words and images of love and loss—rather than asking “what happened?” you write instead. It is so generous. And it saves you.

Where Everything is in Halves Gabriel Ojeda-Sague

Be About It Press, 2015
Review by *Jai Arun Ravine*

I saw Gabriel Ojeda-Sague read a bit from his chapbook *Where Everything is in Halves* at Snockey’s Rose Room in Philadelphia last fall. When he said it was a book of poems after *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*, this nerd’s interest was piqued. Gabriel talked about writing these poems while replaying the game and consciously returning to his emotional state about ten years ago when his father died. Gabriel drew me in with the task (and ritual) he had set up for himself: game play as a way to work through grief. What would happen if one invited their grieving process to live, breathe, and fight evil gods in a computer-generated landscape?

As a Super Nintendo kid, what I remember most about playing *The Legend of Zelda* was the satisfying swish of Link’s sword as he demolished shrubs. While my life as a gamer mostly devolved into watching my younger brother play on later consoles, my geek-love for other realms of science fiction and fantasy literature, film and television is the reason that Gabriel’s project fascinates me now. My video game days occurred in the silence, separation and sudden discord between parental figures, so I can understand how Gabriel would find *Wind Waker’s* scripted world, and its “timeless” quest, a useful container for frustration, spiritual resonance, ineptitude, and even mastery.

I wish I could identify my fated enemy/ further into the conceit/ but really I mean it: / our little categories/ transform in the grief sphere

The “grief sphere” Gabriel carries and navigates in this chapbook also happens to be a three-dimensional grid. The book’s online format is one

long stream, instead of page-throughs, which as a reading experience echoes the grid and the game’s mythological kingdom under the sea. For those familiar with the *Zelda* mythos, its hypnotic theme music similarly contributes to the structural sense of being set adrift, as the reader moves between poems-after-dungeons staggered amongst those derived from the sea.

I think the game’s soundtrack must have played a huge part in Gabriel’s writing process, even subconsciously, from its dramatic crescendos to visceral sound effects to repetitive loops that theatrically mark objects, tasks and actions (side-swipe, coin-grab, skull hammer, heart container, boss death). The expansiveness and almost unwavering permanency of sound matches the oceanic expanse matches grief’s overwhelm, and this seems to be the base from which Gabriel’s poems arise.

Imagine/ me/ naked in a waterfall/ becoming a small key,/ participating in my eviction,/ loving the dead body/ of my former lover.

Like the body becoming a small key, what strikes me most about this chapbook are the moments when Gabriel’s narrator imagines himself within *The Wind Waker* landscape. Sometimes it’s small objects that bring this to light: the “hooks,” “gold feathers,” “silver member,” and the “fairy in a bottle.” Other times it’s a self-reflexivity that comes with being a player-character: “I put in all this hard work,/ or the child-hero does, I mean,/ and the horns just finish the way.” And yet again it’s a memory, or “apparition,” as Gabriel writes, that materializes at an unexpected juncture: “I imagine myself/ with cancer, again.”

In this way Gabriel grapples with the geometry of the *Zelda* mythology alongside blood

memory, inserting flesh among pixels and attempting a graft. I was moved by the speaker’s identity struggle; met with the automatic conflation of “I” with “the child-hero” in game play, he constantly tries to distance himself from the “bobbing” protagonist and to reject his promise (and potential failure) as the “chosen one.” Yet this effort of pulling apart, though repeated, is ultimately useless on this world; Gabriel writes, “Though he is unfailingly geometric,/ I expect his nautilus and composition/ to be rewritten in my corpse.”

So there is a “linkage” between the speaker and Link, one that can’t really be severed. That means that the speaker’s grief must somehow be contained within the bobbing Link. But how much is he programmed to hold? Really, for all its magic and mystery this game world is just a grid where quests are vast but pre-mapped, where the universe appears limitless but is coded by cascading sets of if/then “rules.” Given these elaborate, finite constraints, the speaker’s slippage between “self” and “link” is like a glitch bursting the bounds. “My form is going into another,/ like the repeating, tirelessly repeating/ child-hero,” writes Gabriel, or “I lied to you: I am outside world.”

Since Gabriel wrote poems after the game’s dungeons and lengths of time spent traveling at sea, I vibrate with the sense of each poem’s limits, whether it’s the walls of a room in which we uncover information to drive the plot and further our quest, or the sea’s vast yet pixel-bound expanse contained by a period of time. The transition between each piece is like a door. The chapbook is a succession of doors, or a succession of tasks that open doors. This gridlock could be the “architectural reluctance” Gabriel feels, which might be something like digital grief.

This digital grief is most poignant in the moment when

Gabriel writes, “WHERE IS MY FATHER,/ I ask the map.” I have so many questions and feelings here. I mean, doesn’t the map know / see / contain everything? Yet at the same time I know it cannot. Once dead, monsters simply vaporize in a bunch of purple smoke; here, death occurs strictly off-grid. What happens when we’re lost and we don’t know what we’re looking for? What happens when our body merges with a border unknown? What is that ineffable piece I am trying to recover? Why am I still a child?

I built a shrine for my dead father. As an offering, I gave little pieces of purple paper. Only my kidnapped sister ever visits. One day, I tear the whole thing apart and find my nakedness as a little silver key. I thought the mosquitos wouldn’t reach it, but they have. My sister shrieks when she sees the single earwig turning between my toes.

When Link climbs up a rope, it’s a loop of body motions and sound effects pre-defined in code. From the top of a tree, Gabriel’s speaker, in boxers and boa, performs a ritual within that loop and in so doing, breaks the pattern. His glitch-rupture of the grid is a terrible and necessary breach. A new level is unlocked. Grief’s after-wave comes crashing down. An ending is in sight—“everyone is waving/ their fat four-fingered/ hands,” indeed— and now there’s hope in what comes after.

Read the full chapbook online for free at Scribd.
<http://www.scribd.com/doc/290768494/Where-Everything-is-in-Halves-by-Gabriel-Ojeda-Sague>

Jai Arun Ravine is a writer, dancer and graphic designer. A former staff writer for *Lantern Review*, their second book, *The Romance of Siam*, is forthcoming from Timeless, Infinite Light. jaiarunravine.com

Solar Maximum Sueyeun Juliette Lee

Futurepoem, 2015
Review by Sara Jane Stoner

Moving— I want to add: gazing, seizing, resting, burning, ticking, pacing, throbbing, nesting— through Sueyeun Juliette Lee’s *Solar Maximum*, a book both massive and microscopic in its scale of subjects, everything feels very very close and at the same time very distant. While reading, it’s like you are looking into something enormous (the sky, capital, data, science) and that enormous thing is looking back at you, and the magic of this is something like submitting to the kind of awe that might kill you or might teach you about yourself and your relationship to the (solar, economic, digital, scientific) system— a system which by definition exceeds your capacity to apperceive. And though you are infinitesimally small (which you forget, foolish animal) and this thing is so large, as the thing looks back, suddenly you’re enormous; you’re being examined at the cellular level by the swath of universe overhead, and your cells have much to communicate about the state of the planet.

Can we distill the future down to its sheerly psychological components, balancing unresponsive/ spaces with filled ones— an infinite duration of active listening. Sky.

To say that Lee has written the poems in this book as self-to-sky and sky-to-self gazings (with sky here being the enormous thing that points to the enormity of space) is to suggest one feature of her “speculative poetics,” which aims, she writes in her endnote, to “explore[] the various moods of imagined (future) spaces.” Key to mood: the animal, the technological, and the astronomical. Light and vision are stellate centers to

this book, as are darkness and blindness. Something about the measure of the poet’s research— this book proposes: What does the poet do with the language that comes when they look into the brightest light and the darkest dark? To *look into* the sun, and to *look into* the death of the sun, imagining the end.

If there’s a unity in sentiment in language after you dove into the sun, if there’s a place on the page to be discovered that can replace body heat or human voices unmarred by space, then it is the most beautiful space, the most beautiful sentence.

Such extremities are managed with a patient stillness here. And the quotidian in this book is positioned like an altar, constantly evolving— a radically incidental opportunity for reflection— base, triumphant, meager, elaborate, surreal, witnessed, purchased, survived. *Solar Maximum* contains four sections, the first three of which were previously published as chapbooks. The first seems like a leveling, in which a patient, attentive “we” tracks and teaches a kind of shift in the world of the aftermath (“This is the fifth day of February and it is one thousand eighteen degrees outside”), registering new ways of being, noticing, administrating, responding, reflected off a haze of what had previously been as it lives in the language or memory. In this self-planet micro-macro futurity, there’s a sense that beyond “treating” the body’s illness, “self-help” or medical advice (“Drink this. Eat that. Follow that.”) has reached a horizon limit, as though rather being in pursuit of “the good life,” the help these selves pursue is now crucial for the continuation of life.

Lee’s work in this book encompasses a variety of signals (see the ((double parentheses left open—), the frequencies of which vary, both discursively and aesthetically. In the prose

sections, her soft-packed, medium length sentences feel like they contain a syntactic choreography-as-Morse code from the future, each word and phrase poised beneath its determination to carry as much information as possible registered by this relay— subject, science, language, sky— about how things are (dys)functioning *now*, under what control and with what grace and violence. This, from “A MANIFOLD BEHAVIOR”:

From the stereoscope, we categorize alternative kinetic potentials. These indices take on their own volitional energy and move silently—eagerly—across the unfinished floor. Lost scent of magnolias permeates as we navigate through the negative blades.

What happened in the future was graphic. It stands now without a traceable semblance, rather emotional in the way that we’ve come to trust anger’s initial version of events, the posture assumed in a cry.

The second section, created with Cara Benson, Rachel Levitsky, and Dana Teen Lomax, feels like a glitchy virtual sending amid brief negotiations of hostile landscapes, and journalistic accounts of “MMORPGWORLD” (referencing “massively multi-player online role-playing games”). By “sending,” I mean we are taken to the locations (in the more recent sense of the word), and we are warned (in the older one):

And the terms for the ordeal,/ like speakeasies in the despotic corners of the/ trigram omniverse— they unfold as/ a negated banality in narration and its designs./ So many syntactic structures blown away by continuously transforming global currencies— /from won, to bento, to dragoon to coral smear

“Mental Commitment Robots,” the third section, seems to negotiate relation: of the beauty/

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genius/threat of the human/ animal/cyborg, of the gentle and hard work of living while paying, pursuing communion in variable internal and external terrain. Intermittent drawings for synaesthetic stereoscopes. Shark being as color, as force, as mood; shark being as something irreducible to the common understanding of shark, which could be “object of terror,” but capable of total liquefaction. Dog as searching home feeling, abject loyalty and instrumentality, warm body that can indicate a “safe space... for the sort of destiny that transmits across bodies and oceans.” Purchase as feeling in an economy which “is the robotic circulation of love, meaning the Constitution of the United States of America.” In the final part of the section, an I and a you inform and share an environment toward attunement and survival in breathing, parking, receiving light, visiting the “Common Cultures.”

Solar Maximum primes and presses toward the final title section, which bears the space, event, and polyvocality of poet’s theater. In the series the voices seem to multiply: a mythic prayer or prophecy enters to mark the old cycle of life and death, and to entreat the sun to rise again; the varied signals, lit by the possibility of their own utterance, are most often broken by interference (solar storms meeting a vulnerable earth), and the messages about the weather, the status of the earth, relevant scientific knowledge, the enthusiasm of developing technologies— all seem to lurch and scatter even as they’re diligently relayed. The space Lee creates between these poems is hard to occupy and important, full of the desire for life and an acute recognition of the beauty of space. The hands, in odd moments pressed together “as if in prayer” and shaken to magically produce currencies, paper; the skin reduced to a verge, a “limbus” in the solar storms. What

an accomplishment, in that thinking through and past the end of this book feels so urgent, right now.

A Lucent Fire: New & Selected Poems

Patricia Spears Jones

White Pine Press, 2015

Review by Miller Oberman

Patricia Spears Jones’ *A Lucent Fire* is a book that, in spanning the writing life of a poet thus far, begins and ends in the sun. In “Wearing My Red Silk Chinese Jacket,” the earliest poem here, which predates Patricia Spears Jones’ first book, *The Weather That Kills*, “smoke rises joyous as if/ from the ashes of a terrible defeat.” This poem is full of questions: “What bright woman turned the spindles;/ dyed the thread?” “Who owns the sun?” In “The Land of Fog and Poetry,” the final poem in this collection, Jones observes “these are the days where shadows would be welcome/ But the sun is bright bright bright.”

As a relative newcomer to Jones’ work, I briefly wondered; but aren’t all fires lucent— bright and shining, as Ben Jonson’s description of the sun as the “lucent seat” of the “day-starrer”? Yet I think, after sitting with this book for a while, a better reading of “lucent” here is not only as bright, but as translucent, something clear and lucid. This is fire that can be seen *through*, from the sun rise in “What the Fire God Charged Me,” and what can happen “When the night watch ends,” which is “A fire walk as prelude” (59) to the weather in the new poem “Self-Portrait as Midnight Storm,” where “my winds, my rain... raise my ire and lash lash lash” (167). These repetitions, of “bright,” or of “lash” move the way fire moves, burning and beating, steady but changing.

The sun circles these poems, revealing heat, blues, a great bounty of weather, and a

generosity of spirit invoked in the early crown of sonnets “Mythologizing Always: Seven Sonnets,” which, taking cues from Martin Buber, describes “intense improvisation/ on the I/THOU axis” (23). In the final sonnet, a break-up poem, the weather

Feels like San Francisco / that chill/
Sun burns it away fast and the cut/
on your index finger is healed up
now/ Time does its duty by bodies
and the weather.

Though written decades later, the new poems here are no less weather-soaked than the poems in *The Weather That Kills*, and I find I disagree with Jones’ note suggesting the new poem “What Beauty Does” is “one of the few poems that deal with landscape.” I respectfully argue the opposite is true: these poems are mostly landscapes, in a larger sense. In the stunning “Self-Portrait as Shop Window” the poem’s speaker rides a city bus on “All Hallows’ Eve,” a vehicle both practical and poetic for observations on race, class, and costume, from “the little white girl complete with Marie Antoinette/ Mole on cheek” to “central Brooklyn,” where “the costumes are home/ made—the best a young blood/ In Diaper—complete with pins” (166). This costumed Brooklyn landscape, changing as the neighborhoods change, offers the speaker a way to make an interior self-portrait: “I have often mistaken the mocking bird for an owl/ It’s a problem I cannot solve. There are other ones, more difficult.” Noting another kind of self-portrait as reflection, the speaker observes:

There seem to be cows in
Roethke’s poems and birds in
mine. Nature is/ever present even
unto this great city that grumbles
and crumbles/ And yet allows
the mocking birds song and
hummingbirds wings/ to flash like
a taste of the cosmos. Oh damn
the wind and light/ or praise the
rain and bright desire for different
weather.

Although Jones is thinking of Roethke here, I can’t help thinking of Hart Crane’s “Voyages,” another weather-beaten New York poem, whose third section describes: “Light wrestling there incessantly with light,/ Star kissing star through wave on wave unto/ Your body rocking!” Both poems feature the increasingly uncommon and highly lyrical preposition “unto,” whose most basic function is to show a spatial relationship, but which also has a lovely way of denoting motion toward a person or destination while at the same time indicates reaching it. While Jones’ speaker often mistakes the mocking bird cry for an owl, there is no easy binary of identification or misidentification here. Instead, the speaker acknowledges “other” problems, “more difficult,” which are not named, but seem connected to the poem’s final statement: “I stand// in front of these beautiful things and curb my appetite for murder” (166).

In “What Beauty Does,” the landscape changes drastically, the streets of Brooklyn exchanged (briefly) for a visit with friends in Idaho who are obsessed with the “Great Outdoors.” As in many of these poems, praise and blame are found in equal measure. The poem begins with “a perfect scent: pine, sage, and cypress,” and ends

Where people steal/ a drop of
ore,/ a native flower,/ a piece of
splendor/ day in and day out.

For this poet, critique seems inextricable from joy and pleasure, each more convincing in proximity to the other. In “What Beauty Does,” both critique and pleasure come with shifts in scale and motions between the personal and political. “Everyone is a thief out west,” Jones writes, “if you leave your bikes on the porch/ They disappear. If you find water, someone else will divert it./ There are those who



Compressed, smart and raucous, **Sarah Anne Wallen's** poems shimmer as they turn language back on its strange self.

— Karen Weiser

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Tony Iantosa's sentences sharpen all the senses at once; the heard world is as present as the seen and touched. This is unfashionable and excellent poetry. Consider reading it to a lover so as to elicit a reciprocal feeling, 'or whatever.' It will work.

— Matvei Yankelevich

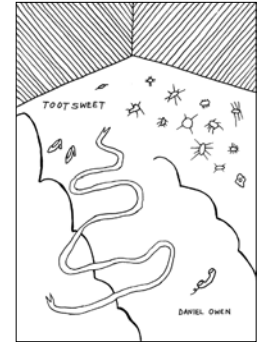
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— Brenda Coultas

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Like its punning title, **Daniel Owen's** agile first collection is playful but with a subtext of urgency. The cumulative effect is one of a quiet persistent claim to some kind of agency against the odds.

— Anna Moschovakis

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fight about the wind, others the sun" (171). This attention to scale builds a kind of trust with the reader; it doesn't take long to know that neither "BIG ENERGY" nor "Indian paintbrush, sego lily, the wily cinquefoil" will be left out. The beauty of flowers, mountains, and friendship itself are not ruined by the speaker's acknowledgment of racist historical narratives about the conquest of the American West and "O, those long-suffering white people fearful of Indians" (172).

Jones' early reference to Buber's *I and Thou* is telling— these poems live in the world of relationships; there are so many thous here: poems in conversation with musicians, artists, and poets, poems about the living and the dead. In a sense there are no dead here, because the other, whether they are person or place, biographical, or imagined, is allowed its own existence. In "Etta James at the Audubon Ballroom" Jones refers to

"some where backstage." Separating the words "some" and "where" is the kind of very small poetic choice that changes everything— a flip of stress from the trochaic "somewhere" to the iambic "some where" turns our attention to the "where," makes it a place, gives it heft. Jones moves away from the vagary, or even dismissal, of "some," to an acknowledgment of a "where" that exists whether or not we know where it is. This one added space, in turning a compound word back into two words, brings about a shift, moving away from an objectifying relationship and towards a dynamic where subject relates to subject.

For latecomers to the Patricia Spears Jones party, *A Lucent Fire* offers a fantastic entry point for catching up on what this marvelous poet has been up to, succinctly described by Mary Baine Campbell in her introduction to this collection as the "value of aliveness." For those familiar with Jones' earlier collections, both the

newly printed early work here and the new poems themselves continue that tradition.

Community Letters

NEWSSENSE ANTI-MANIFESTO
Charles Borkhuis

Why do poets model their speech on expository writing and grammatically correct sentences when extemporaneous poetic-speech is readily available? Why do we poets systematically restrict poetry to the page, planned readings, or memorized performances instead of letting it enter our conversations as a free agent? It seems we've accepted compartmentalized notions of conversation and poetic speech and have dutifully adhered to this arbitrary separation simply out of habit. One could argue that there's a time and a place for each, but in fact, there is no time and place left for poetic-speech; we simply don't use it in conversation.

Enter Newsense, an improvisational, poetic-speech between two or more individuals for the purpose of undermining the rigid constraints placed on conversation by rational speech. Newsense wants to recharge our batteries and change our semiotic fluid; it wants to invigorate our tired speech and predictable thought patterns. OK, so why not start with phrases or unfinished sentences that may be completed or continued by other speakers, leaving strings of loosely connected non-sequiturs in their wake? Exchanges between Newsensers should be rapid enough to discourage any pre-thought or composed responses to the ongoing ebb and flow of individual sounds, words, phrases, images, or brief sentences. At a party or social gathering a few people may start a Newsense exchange in the middle of an old-sense conversation, which may send out spores that could infiltrate other conversations until a linguistic virus has spread throughout the group. What's next? Perhaps a town, a city? What just happened? We've been Newsensed. No explanation necessary.

The forerunners of Newsense might include: automatic writing in Surrealist group poems (exquisite corpses), non sequitur collages in Language Writing, improvisational jazz sessions, and improv actors' ensembles, just to name a few. Newsense is a thought process born on the tongue the way improvisational music is born on the fingertips. However, since the accent is on group conversation not monologues, close listening is as crucial to Newsense as it is to jazz.

Springing up spontaneously anywhere at any time and lasting for any length of time, Newsense improvisations may become an insurrectionist alternative to usual sense-making strategies for effective living. Newsense offers a poetic alternative to the fixed nature of conversation between people. It initiates a revolutionary response

to our over-rationalized communication structures by infiltrating bits and pieces of automata into any situation.

Newsense celebrates an inclusive sharing of unconscious, uncensored material between people from different backgrounds and experiences. It works in the gaps between established conversational norms where the barriers and restrictions of "good sense" no longer apply. Newsense is a grassroots, social experiment aimed at reawakening a more poetic, non-linear response to ourselves and the world. Whenever old-sense becomes boring and lethargic, predictable or doctrinaire, Newsense will be there to interject wit, irony, anger, joy, or the kitchen sink into any situation. Just the threat of old-sense turning into Newsense at the drop of a hat may bring new dimensions into tired thinking. Old-sensers may be forced to Newsense themselves before Newsensers can undercut their language.

Newsense operates as a surplus or overflow of useless, playful, unproductive speech that lies at the heart of rationalist order and efficient communication. Newsense is the mistake, the joke, the pun, the dream, the doodle, the impossible, the invisible, the poetic, the unstable in every system. It's the remainder that can't be absorbed and made to work effectively. It's not outside rational order and therefore something "other"; it's inside the very schizoid core of rationality. The laws of chaos, accident, and chance must be recognized and allowed to flow within any system or the system itself will reflect a distortion of reality and petrify under its own exclusivity. In a Newsense world, pataphysics, the science of the exception, would be on everyone's lips.

At first, Newsensers may make nuisances of themselves, but ultimately, Newsense and old-sense will find supportive resonances and reverberations in their agonistic juxtapositions. Hopefully in the future, old-sense and Newsense will move rapidly and radically between rational and irrational states, transgressing and ultimately renovating the fixed limits of speech and exchange between peoples. Newsense is not a parlor game. It doesn't want to just change speech patterns or liven up boring conversation; it wants to "change life." Thank you, Monsieur Rimbaud.

Charles Borkhuis is a poet and playwright living in NYC. His seven books of poems include *Disappearing Acts* and *Alpha Ruins*, which was nominated for a WC. Williams Book Award. *Dead Ringer* is forthcoming from BlazeVOX books. His two radio plays, aired over NPR, are on pennsound.

Dear Poetry Project Newsletter,

My hot girlfriend Anne Boyer and I would like to announce that we have adopted a second cat. We would also like to announce that we are holding a cat-naming contest. I'm delighted to announce our new cat is a very small two-year-old female flamepoint sweet angel baby-adult from heaven. It would be irresponsible of me to not also announce that we have a ten-year-old flamepoint named Ulysses, so their names must work well together. Please send great name suggestions to:
The New Order of St Agatha
734 E 71st Terrace
Kansas City, MO 64131

The winner of this contest will receive a prize that has not yet been decided on. It will likely be more valuable than a handful of pennies but less valuable than a dinner for two at the Olive Garden. For more information on the prize as it develops, please write to:
The Good-but-Not-Great Prizes Research Institute
c/o The New Order of St Agatha
734 E 71st Terrace
Kansas City, MO 64131

I would also like to announce that I read the October/November issue of the Newsletter and would like to announce, further, that I have a correction. Most of what Kevin Killian said in his letter about *Koff* is true—I have accidentally amassed a lot of dick pics from the 70s. (If you would like to take this archive off my hands, please get in touch.) The famed picture of Ted Berrigan lost to the subway, however, belonged not to Elinor and Maggie of *Koff*, but to a then-student of Berrigan's, Arnie Aprill. Arnie's magazine *Bondage and Discipline* was a tiny Chicago-based publication that ran for a handful of issues and published writers like Berrigan, Notley, Eigner, Waldman, and one of my all-time favorites, Ruth Krauss. Anyway, if anyone has found that lost picture of Ted, I'm sure Arnie would love to have it back. Maybe you've seen the subway rats carrying it round? Please send here:
The Society for the Preservation of Ted Berrigan's Naked Ass
c/o Cassandra Gillig
734 E 71st Terrace
Kansas City, MO 64131

I'd love to end by announcing that I love Cheryl Clarke and am so happy she will be doing a group panel sometime soon but the project should give her a solo reading, too, but the solo reading should be held in Kansas City and the Poetry Project should move to Kansas City. & just one more quick but VERY IMPORTANT announcement: I love the Poetry Project's laminator and I think they should put more money towards laminators and laminating in their budget.

Thank you and love,
Cassandra Gillig

Memo

To: Privileged Person in Position of Power

From: Me

Date: 21st Century

Re: Your fucked up ideology

Message

Unless you've hired a brown person specifically for the purpose of sweeping, you can't ask them to sweep.

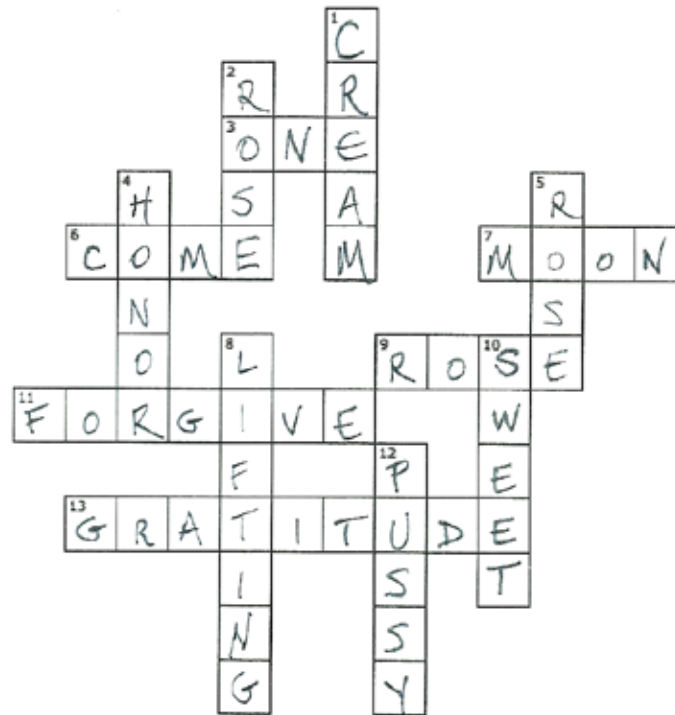
Even when their job title is Assistant Art Director or Visitor Services Assistant

Also when I tell you that you're a racist or that my compliance with your racist request for me to sweep only further solidifies the racist hierarchy in our society you should believe me.

Office Memo from *The Illustrated Guide To Not Being So Fucking Racist*
Oasa DuVerney, 2012 graphite and ink on paper 14.25 x 10.5 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Crossword Solution

there there



Writing is to avenge loss
Although the material has all melted
like melted cheese

WALY SALDMÄD
TR. MARYAM MONALISA GHARAVI
ALGARAVIAS: ECHO CHAMBER

And no one would help
The humans left
Not even the humans

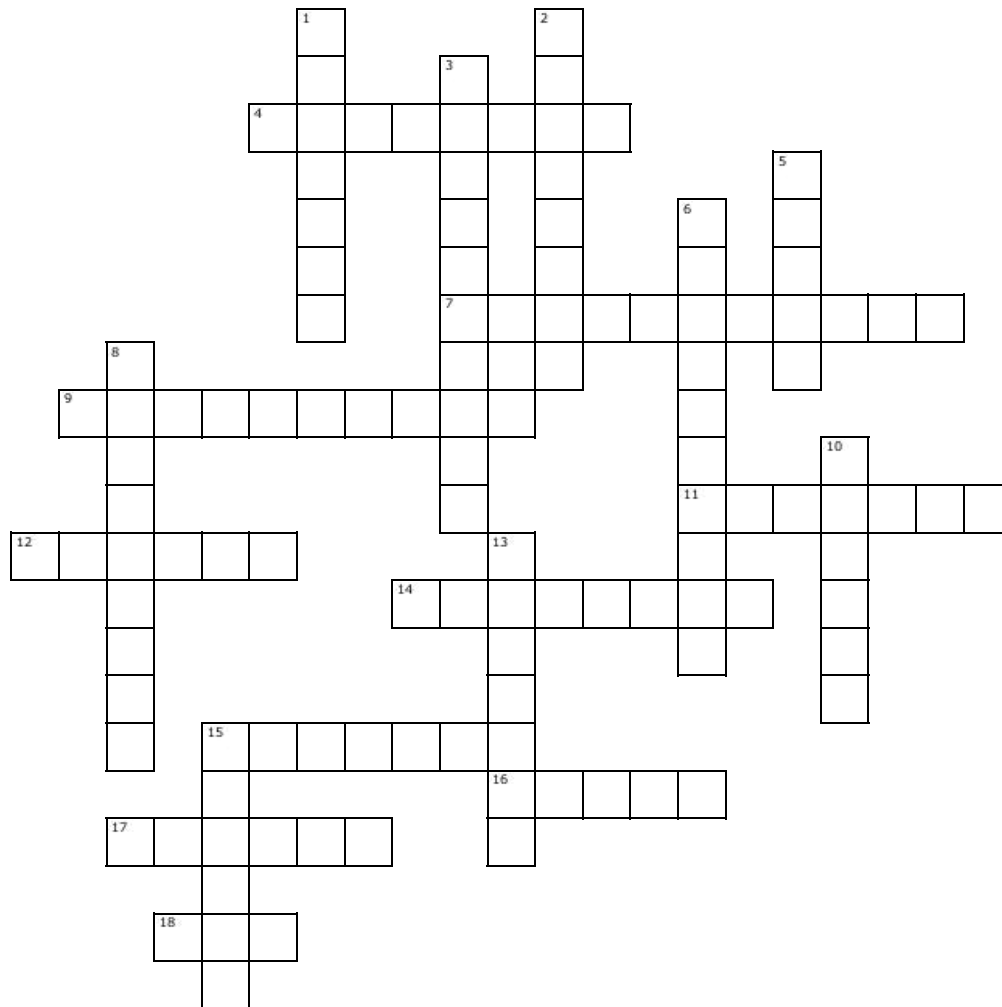
LAURA SIMS
STAYING ALIVE

Crossword Puzzle

Send in your correctly completed puzzle
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All answers are lines from William Carlos Williams:
"Asphodel, That Greeny Flower," "Spring and All," "Danse Russe,"
"The Red Wheelbarrow," "Queen-Anne's-Lace," and "Love."

get the news



Across

- "Of --, that greeny flower"
- "dance naked, --"
- "the stiff curl of the -- leaf"
- "so much --/upon"
- "white as can be, with a -- mole"
- "beside the white --"
- "-- 'tis and pain which mingle"
- "The -- was the first to go"
- "Passion 'tis not, foul and --"
- "Look at/ what passes for the --"

Down

- "Born one instant, instant dead"
- "Here is no question of --"
- "By the road to the -- hospital"
- "a -- wish to whiteness gone over"
- "purplish, forked, --, twiggy"
- "yet men die -- every day/for lack/of what is found there."
- "the happy -- of my household"
- "-- can be complex too/but you do not get far/with silence."
- "little -- among the living/but the dead see"



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- OR Illuminated Poems, signed by Allen Ginsberg and Eric Drooker and Making It Up, signed by Allen Ginsberg, Kenneth Koch, and Ron Padgett.
- Grateful public acknowledgment.

NEW AND RECENTLY RENEWED MEMBERS: Henry Abelove, Marina Adams and Stanley Whitney, Bruce Andrews, John Ashbery, Liza Berdnik, Beth Seetch, Charles Borkhuis, Claudia La Rocco, Lydia Cortes, Peggy DeCoursey, Terence Diggory, Maggie Dubris, Michael Gottlieb, Stephanie Gray, John S. Hall, Janett Edelberg, Allan and Almaz Kaplan, Nathan Kernan, Sue Landers and Natasha Dwyer, Richard Lefkowitz, Katt Lissard, Filip Marinovich, Megan Adams, Marina Metalios, Carol Mirakove and Jen Benka, Mary Ann O'Russa, Valery Oisteanu, Maryam Parhizkar, Evelyn Reilly, Paul D. Salzberg, MD and Greta Salzberg, Simon Schuchat, James Sherry and Deborah Thomas, Martin Skoble, Stephen Benson, Ann Stephenson, Eileen Tabios, and Linda Tsakonias (as of 12/14/2015)