



THE POETRY PROJECT

October / November 2017 Issue #252

The Poetry Project

Oct. / Nov. 2017 Issue #252

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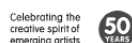
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Cover image: excerpt "Questions" (2017) Are We There Yet? (and other questions of proximity, destination, and relative comfort); [also presented at Venice Biennale and Floating Museum in Chicago] Image courtesy of the artist Kameelah Janan Rasheed.

Letter from the Director



Anne Waldman

Photo by: Ted Roeder

Welcome to The Poetry Project's 51st season. I hope you all enjoyed yourselves as much as we did on our much needed summer hiatus. Our 50th Anniversary celebration was a whirlwind that culminated with a gala honoring Anne Waldman on April 27. An unprecedented undertaking for us, we went forward with a more tried and true attitude of bravado mixed with "fake it till you make it" guesswork. Now that 4 months have passed, I'm hoping that everyone has heard something about how amazing that night was: from the tiered cake inspired by Joe Brainard's cover design for Anne's first book *Giant Night* (many thanks to Nine Cakes), to the transformation of the Parish Hall into a magical woodland with branches from designer Amy Elise Wilson, to the moving performances by Laurie Anderson, Yoshiko Chuma, and LaTasha Diggs, to the fact that we poets did glamour and did it well. It surpassed the dreams of our wild nights, raising just over \$100,000 toward our 50th Anniversary Campaign goal of \$350,000. To date we have raised \$285,000 toward our goal. We have given ourselves till the end of 2017 to raise the remaining \$65,000. If you would like to contribute to the success of the campaign and celebrate our half-century of devotion to poetry as a way of life, supporting poets, inclusivity, curiosity, and community, visit poetryproject.org to make a donation as well as to read more about our visions for the future. Thank you to everyone who showed up last year in various and meaningful ways.

—Stacy Szymaszek

Letter from the Editor

What an honor it is to serve as editor of this newsletter and to give back to this home for poetry in this way. I am happy to be joined by Reviews Editor John Rufo, whose work I came to know through his blog at Ploughshares. Flip to pg. 23 to learn more about him and read the book reviews he's curated. I want to thank Stacy Szymaszek for entrusting me with this role and for her patience and guidance as I put this first issue together; former editor Ted Dodson for recommending me for this role; and Betsy Fagin for leaving behind a beautiful template to follow.

It's a wonderful and complicated time to be a poet; to be human and both of my interview subjects, Farnoosh

Fathi and Miller Oberman speak to this in their feature interviews. As does Roberto Montes's "Grievances" and Kameelah Janan Rasheed's art -- mark your calendars for her reading and many others on p.18.

See you around! I leave you with a poem from our Laureate Tracy K. Smith:

We are here for what amounts to
a few hours,
a day at most.

We feel around making sense of
the terrain,
our own new limbs,

Bumping up against a herd of

bodies
until one becomes home.

Moments sweep past. The grass
bends
then learns again to stand.

from *Life on Mars*, Graywolf Press

Best wishes for this new season.

—Marwa Helal

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Announcements



2017-18 Poetry Project staff:(left to right) Laura Henriksen, Stacy Szymaszek, Nicole Wallace, and Simone White

NEW READING SERIES COORDINATORS

The Project is very pleased to welcome Adjua Greaves as our new Monday Night Reading Series coordinator, and Mirene Arsanios and Rachel Valinsky as new Friday Night Reading Series coordinators. Much gratitude to the outgoing coordinators Judah Rubin and Ariel Goldberg for their amazing years of programming work. Program Director Simone White will still be coordinating the Wednesday Night Reading Series.

Adjua Gargi Nzinga Greaves has been published in The Black Earth Institute's *About Place Journal*, *The Recluse*, and *The Poetry Project Newsletter*. She is young mother of *The Florxal Review* and is completing work on *The Bulletin of Wilderness and Academy*: an introductory conclusion to unschoolMFA forthcoming from Organic Electric Industries.

Mirene Arsanios is the author of the short story collection, *The City Outside the Sentence* (Ashkal Alwan, 2015). She has contributed essays and short stories to *The Brooklyn Rail*, *The Rumpus*, *The Animated Reader*, and *The Outpost*, among others. Arsanios co-founded the collective 98weeks Research Project in Beirut and is the founding editor of *Makhzin*, a bilingual English/Arabic magazine for innovative writing.

Rachel Valinsky is a writer, researcher, and translator living in Brooklyn. Her writing has appeared in *Art in America*, *BOMB*, *East of Borneo*, *Millennium Film Journal*, *C Magazine*, and *Art21*, among others. Rachel is a co-founder of Wendy's Subway, a nonprofit library and writing space in Brooklyn and a contributing editor at *Éditions Lutanie*, Paris.

MEMORY AT CANADA

Bernadette Mayer's multimedia work *Memory* will be on view at Canada gallery from September 9 through October 8. For more information visit <https://canadanewyork.com>



FALL 2017 INTERNS

We're so thrilled to announce our terrific Fall 2017 interns — Welcome Yaz Lancaster (New York University) and welcome back Shelby Cook and Hannah MacLagger (The New School)!!

In Memoriam

Larry Fagin 1937-2017 by Alan Bernheimer

Larry would have hated this. He had no patience for memorializing or similar sentiment. He wouldn't even talk about his illness. Too boring. When offered an antidepressant near the end, he told the doctor, "I've never been depressed a day in my life." I don't believe he ever allowed himself to be bored. Waste of time.

He was an exacting and loyal (one okay sentiment) friend. What did he demand? Simply attending to the best, wherever he turned his considerable attention, which ventured far beyond the Poetry Project scene that was his turf when I first knew him in 1970. He was co-founder and the original director of Danspace at St. Mark's Church. He was a serious jazz collector and a walking, talking exponent of the *Great American Songbook*. His interest and taste in painting and film were just as discerning as anywhere else his enthusiasm focused. You might not agree on every choice, but he was so mostly right. He delighted in shared discoveries. It's no exaggeration to call his taste in reading and writing both broad and preternaturally exquisite. Take a look at who all appears in his fifty-year adventure of producing magazines and books. He was even prouder of publishing "neglectorinos" than Ashbery or McClure.

Just as his love of movies had roots in a Burbank childhood, scrambling under the Warner Bros. backlot fence, coming up in poetry through the Beats in Paris and the Spicer circle in San Francisco only hints at his wide acquaintance and appreciation. He was the opposite of parochial, willing to consider anything on its merits.

Allen Ginsberg said, "I don't know of a better editor and teacher of poetry or prose." He simply made the work better, pruning away the fat and foolishness, instilling the same discrimination and discipline he practiced. And he never stopped promoting the work of his friends or students, not even on his deathbed. Being sick made him want to work harder. It didn't stop him making us laugh either.

He wrote or co-authored at least fifteen books of poetry. But even more energy went into publishing the work of others that he was crazy about, starting with a dozen issues of *Adventures in Poetry* magazine followed by more than sixty *Adventures in Poetry* books, and finally a dozen *Sal Mimeo* magazines.

Although his idea of editorial control verged on absolute (how else to ensure the best), he co-edited collections by Joseph Ceravolo, Jack Collom, and Clark Coolidge, as well as *New York School Painters and Poets: Neon in Daylight* and *Like Musical Instruments: 83 Contemporary American Poets*.

His own writing was lapidary, immaculate, and mind-boggling, whether in the prose poem form he adopted of late or his earlier, lineated work. There is plenty to return to, but no requital for his loss.

MORNING

You wake up with the sun
On top of you
And horses galloping
In the coffee pot
Dig your way out
Until nothing's left
Head above surface
Bone and vein
Bonnie over ocean
Scraped and stripped
(from *Eleven Poems for Philip Guston*, Granary Books, 2016)

—

Alan Bernheimer's translation of Philippe Soupault's *Lost Profiles* was published last fall by City Lights.

Joanne Elizabeth Kyger: Zen Dakini 1934-2017 by Anne Waldman

from notes for the Bolinas Memorial...

Thinking about the two aspects of Zen practice in relation to the writing and life of Joanne Kyger. How do we count her? Many the ways, of wit, instinctive command, and fastidious philosophical turns. West coaster,

lokapala of Bolinas, what better guardian of tribal doings. She was poet of oikos, of place, of ecology of locus, of history near and distant, and of hearth and home which began with *Penelope* (Tapestry & the Web), the patient one. Her poetry was woven with palpable friendships, curious mythologies, intimacies and creatures that scurry and fly and inhabit same frame of turf. Invocations and close scrutiny. She wrote a long poem around 11th century pandit yogin Naropa, for which a school was named that she was connected to – honorary-guest-founder of its Kerouac poetics for many years. She tracked Madame Blavatsky, trickster theosophist, and made extended forays to Mexico and brilliant poems came of that. Keen flaneur of early thrumming Kali Yuga. She kept elegant notebooks gorgeous calligraphic mind-to-hand documentary meditations. There's more to come, tomes of journals and correspondence. Her last workshop at Naropa was entitled "Writing in Dream Time." ("whoever sees, dreams well") But how Zen?

Replacement Buddhas

The altar of the Buddha is dark
The room has been taken
By the dolls
- Gyodai

What do all those Buddhas mean
At the Museum, brought from
elsewhere?

Rhetorically: What do these
apparitions signify?

"A magician mutters a spell over
stones
and pieces of wood and produces the
illusion"

of Buddhas and humans and animals
and houses
"which although they do not exist in
reality

seem to do so". And some people
blinded
by this magical hokum-pokum

hanker after what they see – The
Buddhas and fast
cars, race horses and glamorous
people –

In Memoriam

forgetting they are just stones &
bones

pieces of wood

Translucent like last night's dream.

(From *The Life of Naropa*
March 18, 1995)

One aspect is koan practice where the student responds to a conundrum that can't be resolved. Point is to make a spontaneous leap before ego kicks in. Return to primordial language, gesture and expression where you don't own your experience. Tricky because you can't claim it but it's in your poem. The poem owns it. Apparitions are hokum-pokum. Joanne's had perfect balance. She could check out, and measure what comes from an original silence of mind. She had an open screen in her being; she danced with the phenomenal world and could get down and shamanic, letting go with entheogens, muttering her own mantras, up all night till moonset, shaking a jar of beans. Steady rhythmic consciousness always at bottom of her being.

She had a kind mind and generosity toward the world, but made sharp and witty too and her Japan and India Journals (with all that spiritual backdrop) are a perfect feminist Zen palliative as she stands around in India her black drip dry dress waiting for some wild martini attention while Allen Ginsberg wants to read Howl to anyone who will listen, including the Dalai Lama, and Peter Orlovsky's hair is growing long and greasy, the better to take drugs behind. Gary Snyder the serious meditator critiques her shoes and reading habits and her study of sissy flower arranging.

But the poet persists like a koan, complicated, surprising, drawing in various denizens, "the trees and the greenery and so on" as one Buddhist chant has it. She didn't suffer fools and was absent idiot compassion, practiced something more like Bodhisattvic encouragement for everything in this vibratory existence. Sharp and penetrating...tell it like it is, deeply experience it, but don't give

it all away either. The dharma path, like the poetry path, is a self-secret metabolism.

Then there's the second piece in Zen, which is shamatha meditation, back before words and concepts. Sit quietly, watch thoughts- memories, emotions. All the re-runs - come and dissolve, Catch them, skillfully they become transmission. Stay grounded, no expectations.

Both streams here run concurrently. The wild gesture, the koan-ic surprise into unimpeded space, and the ever-present witness mudra, pen or finger touching the earth.

from **"Sunday"**

You have a "way" with your words –
"thinking is a pathology"
that has found freshly
discovered ground
but if you "think your way
into the next scenarios"
Good luck!

Buster Bush and Co. have
whacked the globe
a hard blow of the uglies
pathogen
and it's a disastrous scene

Note the tiniest first baby quail
in the far scallop of shadow--
a tender mouthful of hope
scratching down a dainty slope
of wind to move on

July 24, 2005

—

Anne Waldman's latest book is *Voice's Daughter of a Heart Yet To Be Born* published by Coffee House Press.

Tom Raworth 1938-2017
by Fanny Howe

Tom, who grew up East London during the epochal "angry young man" years, sustained to the end his commitment to eye-level work—most of it poetry, but also in collage and on his marvelous website. Several years ago he found a music box with ticker tape where he could punch in and ring out the names of friends and objects by rotating the crank. Music followed. The collages that he gave to friends, showed squares of parts, colors calling to each other in an order both secretive and particular to his mind. Tom's life is beautifully narrated in his last collection of poems, by Miles Champion. He was courteous and hilarious. My friendship with him amounted to long walks through strange streets, and conversation sideways and across tables. Manhattan, San Diego, Los Angeles, DC, Paris, Cork, London, in Cambridge where his beloved Val walked on his right side, with his arm draped gently on her shoulder, and at the graveside of John Wieners in Milton, Massachusetts. Once we sat in a basement waiting for his Washington friends to appear, in a ruin of a house in Foggy Bottom, while a toilet continuously flushed three stories above us. I explained it was a ghost, and Tom was simply pleased to hear this and either pretended to, or did believe me. He was an elegiac person but mostly on paper, not given to memory trips or sentimentality in person. He remembered his friends in a formal manner, after they died, on his website and before they died, in photos of their new books. Many of them died in the same tide that carried him away, leaving behind the young people who learned so much from him about the life of a poet, its poverty and potential, and watched him climb his invisible plumb line to the top.

—

Fanny Howe's latest book is *The Needle's Eye: Passing through Youth* published by Graywolf Press.

Fall Workshops + Master Class + Reading Group

“Could I Get Them To Be Me?”: Connection and Possibility in Bernadette Mayer’s Memory, Utopia, and Sonnets — Feminist Reading Group with Laura Henriksen

Five Sessions: Thursdays, 7-9 pm, 9/14, 9/21, 9/28, 10/5, 10/12

In a classroom at Naropa in 1978, Bernadette Mayer explained that while putting together her exhibition *Memory*, she wanted to find out if by moving her reader from behind a book to in front a photograph she took, with her recorded words in their ears, could she get that person to be her? This question addresses, among other things, how connections are made, how intimacy is possible, how information – memories, dreams, confessions, fantasies – is shared through poetry, and what difference it makes.

In this reading group we will follow these and other questions that arise as Mayer’s work guides us across boundaries between the quotidian and the historic, the private and the public, ourselves and everyone else, and in so doing explores how these boundaries are constructed and who they serve and who they don’t. We will think about what this might mean for us as poets and readers of poetry.

We’ll read from *Memory*, *Utopia*, and *Sonnets*, as well as look at Bernadette Mayer’s lists of journal ideas and experiments. We’ll also visit Canada Gallery’s exhibition of *Memory*, and do some of our own writing. PDFs will be provided!

Laura Henriksen’s work has recently been featured in *Poor Claudia’s Crush* series, and *Fewer and Further Press’s Asterisk* series. Her poems and reviews have appeared in or are forthcoming from *P-Queue*, *No, Dear*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, and *Jacket2*. She received her BFA in poetry from Pratt, and is working on her Masters in American Studies at CUNY Graduate Center. Her first chapbook, *Agata*, is forthcoming from Imp in 2017. In 2018 she will participate in the 92nd Street Y’s annual reading, The Tenth Muse.

A Verse Record: Poet’s Journals/Journal Poems—Master Class with Stacy Szymaszek

One Session: Thursday, October 26, 6:30-9:30pm

What does time show in our lives? How does poet-logic (sequencing) run amok with temporal order and reveal multidimensionality? What is a momentous event? We’ll consider writing that takes time (years to hours and minutes of the day) as a basis of composition, starting with some examples from the Japanese poetic diary tradition (Ki no Tsurayuki’s *The Tosa Diary* and Masaoka Shiki’s *The Verse Record of My Peonies*) as well as work by David Antin, Kamau Brathwaite, Beverly Dahlen, Robert Grenier, Joanne Kyger, Harryette Mullen, Bernadette Mayer, and others. In class writing? Yes.

Stacy Szymaszek is a poet, editor and arts administrator. She is the author of the books *Emptied of All Ships* (2005), *Hyperglossia* (2009), *hart island* (2015), and *Journal of Ugly Sites and Other Journals* (2016), which won the Ottoline Prize from Fence Books. Her book *A Year From Today* is forthcoming in 2017 with Nightboat Books. She’s the recipient of a 2014 New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in Poetry. She is a regular teacher for Naropa University’s Summer Writing Program, and mentor for Queer Art Mentorship. Szymaszek has been the Director of the Project since 2007. Before that, she served as the Project’s Program Coordinator (now called Managing Director) from 2005-2007 and curated the Monday Night Reading Series.

Shifting Concepts: from Poem to Body—Workshop with Yoshiko Chuma

Three Sessions: Nov 1, 2, and 3 (Wed/Thu/Fri), 7-10pm (In partnership with Movement Research)

Yoshiko Chuma will guide participants in a 3-day workshop about the transformation of conceptual ideas into physical movement vocabulary. During the 3 days, the participants will work with Ms. Chuma, in a combination of demonstration and participatory exercises. Chuma will also present action exercises with props. The workshop is open to all ages.

Yoshiko Chuma is conceptual artist, choreographer/artistic director of award winning company The School of Hard Knocks.

Fall Workshops + Master Class + Reading Group

Embodying voice in page and performance—Workshop with Tracie Morris

Ten Sessions: Tuesday 7-9 pm, 9/26, 10/3, 10/10, 10/17, 10/24, 10/31, 11/7, 11/14, 12/5, and 12/12

Oral poetry precedes poetry on the page by millennia, yet we rarely think about how essential one is to the other when talking about “serious” work. This traditional perspective will be challenged in this experiential workshop. We will explore how voice and page-based writing connects to the body, articulation, rhythm and sound. We will do physically-enacted exercises that connect these two realms of writing.

Loose comfortable clothing for warm-ups, an interest in vocal technique and a range of poetic styles is required for full participation in this workshop. Writing by hand strongly encouraged in the course.

Tracie Morris is a poet, vocalist and vocal coach who works in multiple media. She has performed extensively around the world. Her sound installations have been presented at numerous institutions including The Museum of Modern Art, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and The Whitney Biennial. Morris is the recipient of awards, fellowships, and grants for poetry and performance, including New York Foundation for the Arts, Asian Cultural Council, Franklin Furnace and Creative Capital fellowships as well as residencies at Millay, Yaddo and MacDowell colonies. Tracie’s work has been extensively anthologized and recorded. Her most recent poetry collection, *handholding: 5 kinds*, was published by Kore Press in 2016. Her upcoming book is *Selected and New (in Translation)* (joca seria 2017). She is co-editor of *Best American Experimental Writing 2016 with Charles Bernstein*, (Wesleyan University Press 2017). Tracie holds an MFA in poetry from Hunter College and a PhD in Performance Studies from New York University. She is a former fellow of Creative Writing at the University of Pennsylvania and a Cave Canem Fellow. Tracie is the founding Professor and Coordinator of Performance and Performance Studies at Pratt Institute, New York

Poetry and the Avant-Morte—Workshop with Farnoosh Fathi

Five Sessions: Thursday 7-9 pm, 11/9, 11/16, 11/30, 12/7, and 12/14

In her 2015 introduction to an artist talk by Mel Chin, the poet Genine Lentine writes:

“In trying to pinpoint the essential quality of the writing I keep close at hand, I recently coined the term ‘avant morte.’ I reserve this term for writers who inhabit life with such astonishing courage, resilience, tenderness—and aplomb—it seems they’ve already come through death. To read their work is to learn what it takes to live. Work that is so adventuresome that it folds its fear of death into its unstinting advocacy for life, life as we know, and don’t yet, know it.”

How is adventuresomeness in writing a coming-through death, into life? What does the language of your greatest freedom look like? In this class we will focus on our process in writing as “avant-morte”—in what ways poems are death-forward—and through the modes of attention, play and prayer, inhabit a more flexible posture toward our life as we know, and don’t yet know it. We will create, combine and consider our own attention, with the goal of seeing how an effortless effort, a surrendering curiosity, rather than forced determination toward a particular outcome, is both avant-morte and the real work of writing.

Each class will function as an extended meditation, drawing activities from teachings by Sister Corita Kent and Simone Weil, Thomas Merton, J. Krishnamurti, to name a few; we will also experiment with avant-morte spiritual and cultural practices such as the memento mori and the Buddhist five remembrances. Our readings will range in poetry and prose from gnostic riddles to poems by Taoist adepts and medieval mystics, as well as selections from Celan’s *Breathturn to Timestead*, Clarice Lispector’s *Agua Viva*; Joan Murray’s *Drafts, Fragments and Poems*; Henri Michaux’s *asemic writing*; Rilke’s *Duino Elegies*; Galway Kinnell’s *The Book of Nightmares*; and Sister Wendy Beckett’s meditations on art and prayer.

Farnoosh Fathi is the author of *Great Guns* (Canarium, 2013), editor of *Joan Murray: Drafts, Fragments, and Poems* (NYRB Poets, 2017) and founder of the Young Artists Language and Devotion Alliance (YALDA). She lives and teaches in New York City, most recently at Poets House and Columbia University.

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

Q&A: Farnoosh Fathi

1. What is the relationship between poetry and presence in your approach to poetry?

I believe something Simone Weil said can answer for me — that attention in its highest form is the same thing as prayer (where “attention” and “presence,” and “prayer” and “poetry,” are interchangeable)

2. How do you get free (whatever this means to you) in your craft? Lately, teaching— this summer we did a lot of asemic writing, looking at objects, and slow walking together. Our question was about the value of not knowing-- the meaning of no-meaning (“asemic”) writing, for example. These practices help me to find out what happens when actually I stop working to get free.

3. What are you reading? Through the Southern Poverty Law Center I discovered the work of David Neiwert whose investigative journalism focuses on hate groups across America. I’m looking forward to his book *Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*, which comes out from Verso in October.

4. What is your favorite thing about teaching? What comes out of our mouths when we have reason to love!

5. Did you always want to be a poet? I probably wanted always to be myself and for me, poetry — thankfully— allows that. It has always given me a very special freedom and privacy to exist. To want to be a poet, for me, means to want to exist in a kind of savage or bewildering intimacy. I suppose I have always wanted that.

6. What is the best thing about being a poet right now? What is the most difficult? The painfully engorged surfacing of America in the “age of Trump,” with its parallels around and impingements upon the world, with how difficult it is to look at directly, which means especially to look at directly in myself—the best and also the most difficult thing to me is accepting that writing poems is radical, is necessary (even if you don’t think your poems are political). I believe writing poems will train you to look at what can’t be turned away from, in this particular, historical moment, and help you to respond better.

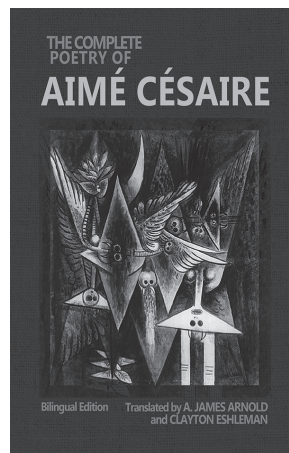
7. What has been your favorite reading or moment at the Poetry Project? The sacred marathon! I really love volunteering the most, running around, the coming and going and seeing friends and strangers of all generations, to gather in the church to listen to all kinds of people express themselves, all day and night, and on the first day of the new year. I always feel then — “if only all poetry readings, all life, were this way!”

—
Farnoosh Fathi is the author of *Great Guns* (Canarium, 2013), editor of *Joan Murray: Drafts, Fragments, and Poems* (NYRB Poets, 2017) and founder of the Young Artists Language and Devotion Alliance (YALDA). She lives and teaches in New York City, most recently at Poets House and Columbia University. She is teaching at Poetry Project this fall.

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SCALES

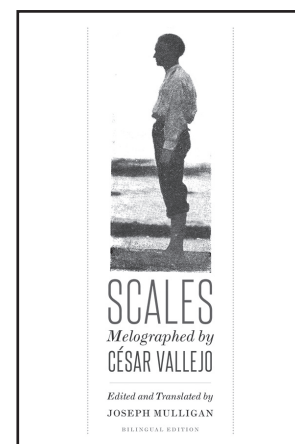
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POETRY: Anne Boyer

WOKE HOUSE

We could reconstitute this sweetness
as chill as air and triple as renunciant

drop the course in fame
skip town from any tomb

with killer acoustics
designed for whispering "curator"
but memorialized as "world"

To be sick with love for tomorrow
is to be sick with love for people
for an alluring and impurely
oracular unstated somehow

when we will no longer believe
in flipping immemorial
when we will know no news
and un-opiate commemoration

but look, we could come back
minus the harrowing ego
full of recreational purity
paranormal in retrograde

You see we're ghosts
at the scene of our own dematerialization

a dystopian novel in which the world is exactly as it is
today
and we still have a good time with our friends.

WE ARE ALL GOING TO DIE

they told me,
mouth-famous
and cool

who doesn't allege
to be a revenant

to go catastrophic in a big way
on a brassy still

survived All dressed
and disquiet --

is the president a worm
or circussy?
I'm half
Surgeon General --

quick and ignored --
like a body could worry anatomy
and keep going.

—

Anne Boyer is the author of *Garments Against Women*.
She lives in Kansas City.

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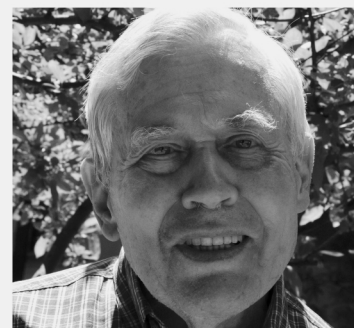
Dan O'Brien

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Jack Anderson

Backyards of the Universe

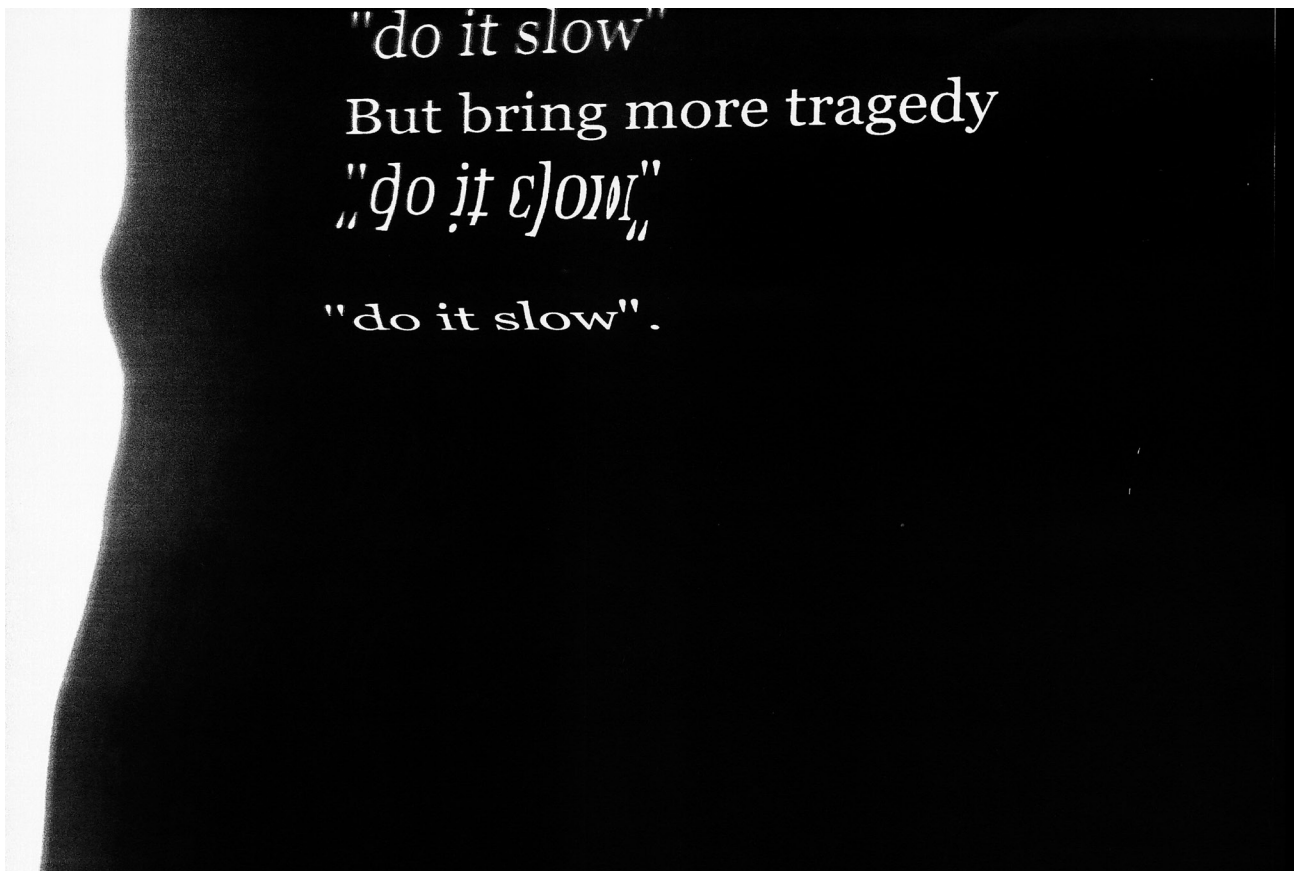
"Sheer delight...total pleasure" – David Kirby. Poetry, \$18.

GRIEVANCES

pulled from the social media of Roberto Montes and titled after his book by the same name

I like acknowledgements	And know that it really means something special	When you include someone in your acknowledgements
I always read them		
Sometimes it's the first thing I do	For the poet to include the name	It usually implies that they were instrumental
To be honest	The name not necessarily being your own	To your survival Or the survival of the work
There's something uniquely revealing	But i admit I sometimes look for my name	Or the transformation of the work
About acknowledgements		
I'm unsure where the practice comes from	In a book before I read it...	When it comes to the creation of the work
But in them there is without exception	Regardless of author	Or the circumstances which generate the creation
A tension	Just in case Richard Siken	
The custom of including acknowledgements	Was particularly moved	The names that are included are usually
Fulfills the debts	By the postcard I sent when I was 19 years old	Editors
Imagined or real	None of what I said above is what I want to talk about though	Members of your press
A poet may feel they owe	The nature of acknowledgements sometimes I've noticed	Those people who helped you in a very important
This is not always the case	Acts as a kind of a	But corporeal
But there are a few names or institutions you can feel it	Reverse blurb	Way
Just as you can feel the names	A way for the poet to lasso the names of their mentors	They are important
Whome the poet writes as if it were a gift they are able to bestow	Loved ones	And necessary
And it is I guess	Acquaintances	And every day I hope they know they are loved
Maybe there's something about the order of the names	People they saw once on the train	But everything I wrote above
Whether a poet includes the journals first	Into their work forever	Is not what I want to talk about
Whether a poet includes	It is meant both	I want to talk about acknowledgements
Each	As a compliment & a concrete block	And why I like them
Poem	Yet there are always names	And why they are revealing
Published in a list	That appear to be missing	In rare, unfortunate cases,
And then the human beings	Sometimes you read them in the poems	More revealing than the poems themselves
(I do this a lot)	But when you look at the list of names	Acknowledgements are about the names
There are some names you look for	The great big glistening chunk of names	That are left out
Because you have background knowledge	They are absent	—
	This is a consequence of the decorum surrounding acknowledgements	Roberto Montes's latest book is <i>Grievances</i> , available from The Atlas Review.

ART: Kameelah Janan Rasheed



ART: Kameelah Janan Rasheed

Work excerpted from "A Supple Perimeter," ephemera from previous work and outtakes, in order it appears:

Going, Going (2017)

Do It Slow But Bring More Tragedy (2017)

Street Study, II (2017)

Nevertheless, A New Optimism Is Growing In Her Wings (2017)

How Much Time Do You Want For Your Progress? (2017)

Kameelah Janan Rasheed's research-based practice, which spans installation, photography, performance, publications, and printmaking, engages with figurative and literal language to interrogate how we read, write, consume, and distribute histories of Black folks.

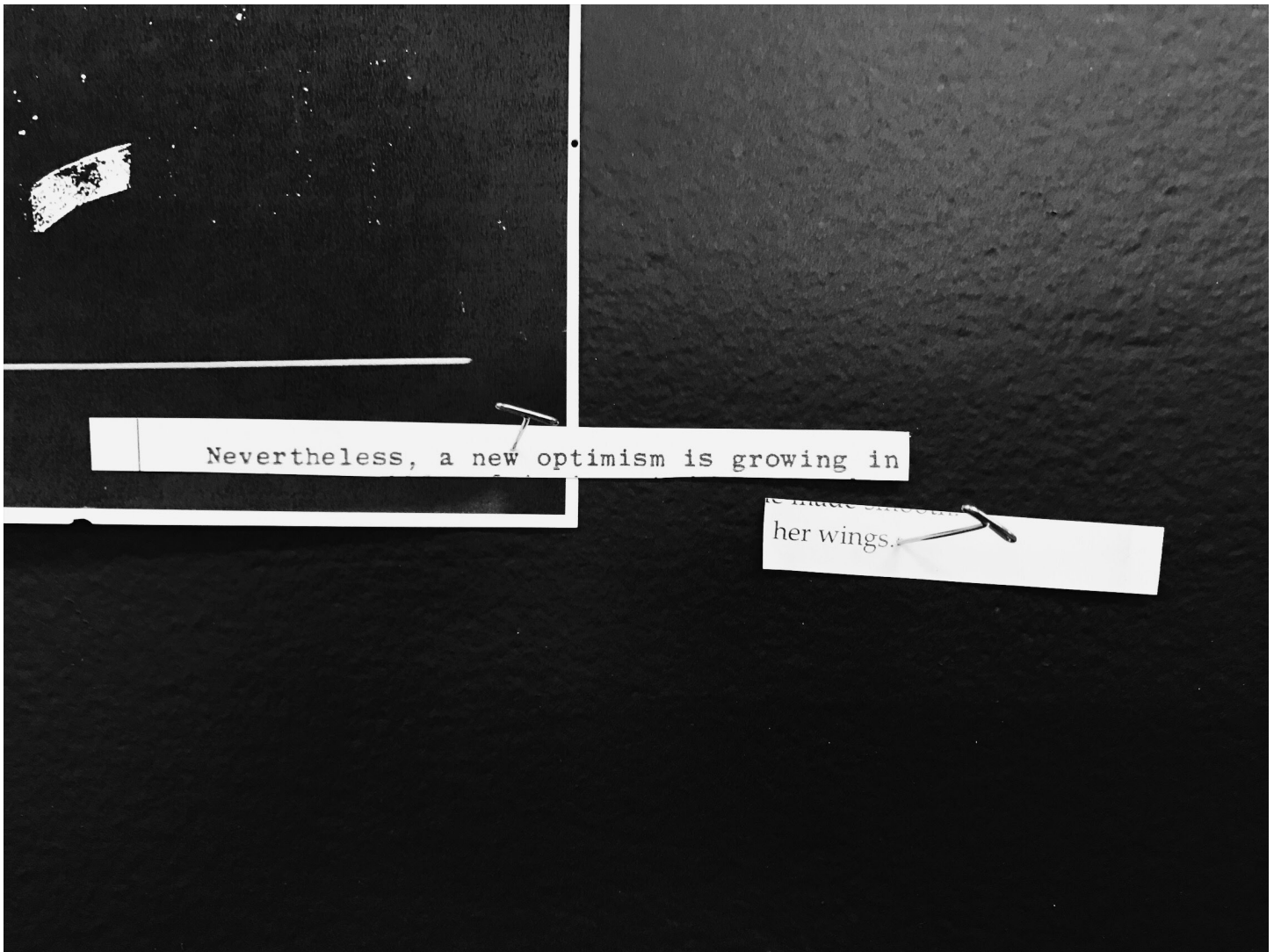
Invested in the wide permutations of Blackness, A Supple Perimeter explores the capacities of blackness and the quiet, blackness and the reticent, blackness and the private: an expansive blackness that allows for a Black subject with interiority and a strategic engagement with public(s).

In A Supple Perimeter, Rasheed begins with her research into ecology, entropy and black traditions of experimental writing to construct an immersive ecosystem of existing and self-authored texts, unfinished videos, projections, objects and excerpts of sound experiments that comment on selective legibility; the tension between public and private selves; black traditions of covert literacies and language systems; technologies of counter-surveillance; as well as systems of self-publishing. Delicately moving between opacity and transparency, interiority and public pronouncements, in A Supple Perimeter bodies of work are burrowed into the walls, others erupt from the corners, while some only become visible through specific physical engagements. Faced with the assertion of an ahistorical and stable Black subject who is both publicly available and fungible.

all images courtesy of the artist



ART: Kameelah Janan Rasheed



Kameelah Janan Rasheed (b. 1985) is artist-archivist based in Brooklyn, NY. Originally from East Palo Alto, CA with brief stints in Johannesburg, South Africa, Kameelah's interdisciplinary and research intensive practice considers ideas of selective legibility and opaqueness as a political strategy; the tension between narrative contingencies and narrative resolutions; as well as black traditions of covert literacies and self-publishing. Until September 2016, she will be a Keyholder Resident at the Lower East Side Printshop. She is also a recipient of the Triple Canopy's 2015 NYPL Labs Commission where she is conducting archival research on early 20th-century Black religious movements through NYPL's expansive archive. For the 2016-2017 season, she will be an artist in residence at Smack Mellon in DUMBO as well as on the faculty at SVA in New York City. You can view aphoristic text series "How to Suffer Politely (and Other Etiquette)" juxtaposed with Norman Rockwell's "For Freedoms" in the group show For Freedoms at Jack Shainman Gallery until July 29th, 2016. In September, she will participate in the Creative Exchange Lab at the Portland Institute of Contemporary Art. Upon her return, she will be preparing for several shows opening in New York and Boston in the fall of 2016 and winter of 2017.

Calendar of Events

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

MON 10/2

Ben Kruisling & Sara Jane Stoner

Benjamin Kruisling is an MFA candidate in Poetry at the Iowa Writers' Workshop and his work has appeared in *No, Dear Magazine*, *Berkeley Poetry Review*, and *Tagtverk*.

Sara Jane Stoner's first book, *Experience in the Medium of Destruction* (Portable Press @ Yo-Yo Labs, 2015) was nominated for a Lambda Award in Poetry. A chapbook, *GRIEF HOUR*, was published in the Spring/ Summer 2017 issue of *Black Warrior Review*.

WED 10/4

Younna Chlala & Anna Moschovakis

Younna Chlala is an artist and a writer born in Beirut and currently based in New York. Her work investigates the relationship between fate and architecture through drawing, video and performance, prose and poetry. Her book of poetry, *The Paper Camera*, is forthcoming from Litmus Press. Her writing appears in publications such as *Guernica*, *BOMB*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Bespoke*, *CURA*, and *MIT Journal for Middle Eastern Studies*, among others.

Anna Moschovakis' recent books are *They and We Will Get Into Trouble for This* and the English translation of *Bresson on Bresson*. She is a longtime member of the publishing collective Ugly Duckling Presse and a co-founder of Bushel, an art and community space in Delhi, NY. Her first novel, *Eleanor, or The Rejection of the Progress of Love*, is forthcoming in Spring 2018.

WED 10/11

DogWrite with Eileen Myles, André Alexis, Nicole J. Georges, & Eugene Lim

For this special event poet Eileen Myles, author of *Afterglow* (a dog memoir) has invited André Alexis author of *15 Dogs*, Nicole J. Georges author of *Fetch*, and Eugene Lim author of *Dear Cyborg* to celebrate dog writing -- in which dogs and dog relationships (with humans and with each other) serve as subject matter and as shifters of genre -- whether that genre is dog fiction, dog memoir, dog graphic

novel -- alongside and interspersed with the companion genre of speculative fiction in which there is no dog at all. The four writers will read from their work and have a free-ranging conversation about dog writing, fiction, truth and the fantastic.

FRI 10/13

Marwa Arsanios & Emma Hedditch

Marwa Arsanios lives and works in Beirut, Lebanon. She has had solo exhibitions at the Beirut Art Center (2017) the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles (2016), Witte de With, Rotterdam, the Netherlands (2016), Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon (2015), and Art in General, New York (2015). Marwa is also the co-founder of 98weeks research project.

Emma Hedditch has published texts in *Afterall*, *Mute Magazine*, and *Art Monthly* and has contributed to the books *Rereading Appropriation* and *Anarchic Sexual Desires of Plain Unmarried Schoolteachers*. Emma's self-published work includes, *A Political Feeling*, *I Hope So*, *Coming to Have a Public Life*, *Is it Worth it?* and *I Don't Want you to Work as Me*, *I Want you to Work for Me*.

MON 10/16

Sasha Banks & Candace Williams

Sasha Banks is a Pushcart nominated-poet whose work has appeared or is forthcoming in *RHINO*, *Kinfolks Quarterly*, *Alight*, *Poor Claudia*, *Zocalo Public Square*, *B O D Y Literature*, *The Collagist*, and has been performed in Tulane University's *Vagina Monologues*. Sasha is the creator of *Poets for Ferguson*.

Candace Williams poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Hyperallergic*, the PEN Poetry Series, *Lambda Literary Review*, the *Brooklyn Poets Anthology*, *Nepantla: An Anthology Dedicated to Queer Poets of Color*, and *Bettering American Poetry 2016*. Her first collection, *Spells for Black Wizards*, won the the *Atlas Review's* 2017 TAR Chapbook Series.

WED 10/18

Mónica de la Torre & E. Tracy Grinnell

Mónica de la Torre is the author of six books of poetry, including *The Happy*

End/All Welcome (Ugly Duckling Presse). Born and raised in Mexico City, she translates poetry, writes about art, and is a contributing editor to *BOMB Magazine*.

E. Tracy Grinnell is the author of four books of poetry: *Hell Figures*, *portrait of a lesser subject*, *Some Clear Souvenir*, and *music or forgetting*. "Helen, A Fugue" was published in the first volume of the *Belladonna* Elders Series* in conversation with *A Pear / Actions are Erased* by Leslie Scalapino.

MON 10/23

Aziza Barnes & Gabriel Ramirez

Aziza Barnes' first chapbook, *me Aunt Jemima and the nailgun*, was the first winner of the Exploding Pinecone Prize and published from Button Poetry. You can find her work in *PANK*, *pluck!*, *Muzzle*, *Callaloo*, *Union Station*, and other journals.

Gabriel Ramirez is a Afro-Latinx poet, activist, and teaching artist. You can find his work in various spaces, including Youtube, and in publications like *The Volta*, *Winter Tangerine*, *Blueshift Journal*, *Drunk in a Midnight Choir*, *VINYL*, *African Voices*, *MANTECA! an Anthology of Afro-Latino Poetry*, and forthcoming in *Bettering American Poetry Anthology*.

WED 10/25

Emily Skillings & Tony Towle

Emily Skillings is the author of the poetry collection *Fort Not*, as well as two chapbooks, *Backchannel* and *Linnaeus: The 26 Sexual Practices of Plants*. Recent poems can be found/are forthcoming in *Poetry*, *Harper's*, *Boston Review*, *Brooklyn Rail*, *BOMB*, *Hyperallergic*, *LitHub*, and *jubilat*.

If there is such an entity as the New York School, Tony Towle has been involved in it since 1963, when he took poetry workshops at the New School with Frank O'Hara and Kenneth Koch. *Noir Poems 2008-2017* is his 13th book of poems, and will be available at the reading.

FRI 10/27

Quinn Latimer & Kate Zambreno

Quinn Latimer is a poet, art critic, and editor. Her books include *Like a Woman: Essays, Readings, Poems*; *Stories, Myths, Ironies, and Other Songs: Conceived*,

Directed, Edited, and Produced by M. Auder, co-edited with Adam Szymczyk; Sarah Lucas: Describe This Distance; Film as a Form of Writing: Quinn Latimer Talks to Akram Zaatar; and Rumored Animals.

Kate Zambreno is the author of a few books, most recently *Book of Mutter*. She is at work on a series about time, memory, and the persistence of art, including *Drifts*, forthcoming from Harper Perennial, and *To Write As If Already Dead*, a book on Hervé Guibert's *To the Friend Who Did Not Save My Life* for the ReReadings series for Columbia University Press.

MON 11/6 **Memorial Reading for Joanne Kyger**

Please join The Poetry Project in remembering and honoring the life and work of Joanne Kyger. With **Ammiel Alcalay, Micah Ballard, Anselm Berrigan, Eddie Berrigan, Julian Talamantez Brolaski, Lisa Jarnot, Hettie Jones, Vincent Katz, Filip Marinovich, Tenaya Nasser-Frederick, Ed Sanders, Cedar Sigo, Jared Stanley, Kendra Sullivan, Stacy Szymaszek, Lewis Warsh, and Joey Yearous-Algozin.**

WED 11/8 **Cedar Sigo & Lewis Warsh**

Cedar Sigo is the editor of *There You Are: Interviews, Journals, and Ephemera*, on Joanne Kyger, and author of eight books and pamphlets of poetry, including *Royals, Language Art, Stranger in Town, Expensive Magic*, and two editions of *Selected Writings*.

Lewis Warsh's most recent books are *Alien Abduction, One Foot Out the Door: Collected Stories, A Place in the Sun, and Inseparable*. He is editor and publisher of United Artists Books and teaches in the MFA program in creative writing at Long Island University. *Out of the Question: Selected Poems 1963-2003* is forthcoming from Station Hill Press in Fall 2017.

FRI 11/10 **Camonghne Felix & Kameelah Janan Rasheed**

Camonghne Felix is the author of the chapbook *Yolk*, and was listed by Black Youth Project as a "Black Girl From the Future You Should Know." Her first full-length collection of poems, *Build Yourself a Boat*, was a 2017 Fordham University Poets Out Loud semi-finalist, and a 2017 University of Wisconsin Press Brittingham

& Pollak Prize finalist. Kameelah Janan Rasheed is a Brooklyn-based interdisciplinary artist and writer. She has exhibited her work at the 2017 Venice Biennale, ICA-Philadelphia (forthcoming), Printed Matter (forthcoming), Jack Shainman Gallery, Studio Museum in Harlem, Bronx Museum, Queens Museum, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Project Row Houses, the Luminary, and Brooklyn Academy of Music, among others.

MON 11/13 **Steven Alvarez & Ricardo Hernandez**

Steven Alvarez is the author of *The Codex Mojaodicus*, winner of the 2016 Fence Modern Poets Prize. He has also authored the novels in verse, *The Pocho Codex* and *The Xicano Genome*, and the chapbooks, *Tonalamatl, El Segundo's Dream Notes, Un/documented, Kentucky*, and *Six Poems from the Codex Mojaodicus*.

Ricardo Hernandez is the son of Mexican immigrants. A recipient of fellowships from Lambda Literary and Poets House, his work has appeared in *Assaracus, The Cortland Review*, and *Newtown Literary*. Currently, he's an MFA candidate at Rutgers-Newark.

WED 11/15 **Terrance Hayes & Asiya Wadud**

Terrance Hayes is the author of *Lighthouse*, winner of the 2010 National Book Award and finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. His other books are *Wind In a Box, Hip Logic, and Muscular Music. How To Be Drawn*, his most recent collection of poems, was a finalist for the 2015 National Book Award, the 2016 National Book Critics Circle Award, and received the 2016 NAACP Image Award for Poetry.

Asiya Wadud's newest poems can be found in *SUBLEVEL* and *Sixth Finch* and she has pieces forthcoming in the *Chicago Review, Best American Experimental Writing, Makhzin*, and *1110/10*, among others. In 2017, Portable Press at Yo-Yo Labs published her chapbook, *we, too, are but the fold* and her first book, *crosslight for youngbird*, is forthcoming from *Nightboat Books* in 2018.

FRI 11/17 **Encyclopedia Project Vol. 3 (L-Z) Launch**

The Encyclopedia Project, a community arts endeavor which has borrowed the form of the traditional encyclopedia to present a series of publications featuring contemporary writing and art, is at last

complete with this final volume. Volume 3 | L-Z features works by over 200 contributors, with readings by **Emily Abendroth, Dorothy Albertini, Katie Aymar, Cheryl Boyce-Taylor, Laynie Browne, Christine Choi, Claire Donato, Ron Drummond, Racquel Goodison, Madhu Kaza, John Keene, Sarah Labrie, Andrea Lawlor, Eugene Lim, Patrick Scanlon, Avra Spector, Brian Teare, and Simone White**. In collaboration with Publication Studio, Hudson.

MON 11/20 **Open Reading**

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

MON 11/27 **Rami Karim & Ladan Osman**

Rami Karim's work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Apogee, The Brooklyn Review, The Invisible Bear, and Peregrine*, and their chapbook is *Smile & Nod*. They teach writing at the City University of New York and are a 2017 Margins Fellow at the Asian American Writers' Workshop.

Ladan Osman's chapbook, *Ordinary Heaven*, appears in *Seven New Generation African Poets*. Her full-length collection *The Kitchen-Dweller's Testimony* won the Sillerman First Book Prize. Her work has appeared in *Apogee, The Normal School, Prairie Schooner, Transition Magazine*, and *Waxwing*.

WED 11/29 **TALK: Big Ass Beer Can — Nicole Eisenman**

Nicole Eisenman on scale, public art, intimate space and recent works for Skulptur Projekte Münster.

Born in 1965 in Verdun, France, Nicole Eisenman earned her BFA in 1987 from the Rhode Island School of Design. She lives and works in New York. Recent one-artist exhibitions have been held at the New Museum, NY (2016); the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania, PA (2014); the Tang Museum at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY (2009-10); Kunsthalle Zurich (2007); and Le Plateau, Paris (2007).

nephews' time. How much time
do you want for your 'progress'?"



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PROSE: Anne Boyer

from *The Undertaker*

Sometimes it's easy to believe that poetry is decorative to the leisure of the children of the rich or a flourish to a cop car or a form of banking and pacification or a strident and fractured whining or a frame with nothing in it at all. Sometimes it's easy to believe also that the object world is anchorless and unenchanted and that the choice is mfa or nyc and that every against is a for, every contra- transmuted to a pro-, easy to believe in the abstracted everywhere-ness of nothing and in the complicated habits of techno-courtiers and the harried morning, the harried noontime, the harried afternoon, the harried evening, the harried midnight. Sometimes it is easy to mistake the couple for the commune, to forget the object world is anchored and enchanted, to mistake for living intelligence all theory emancipated from emancipation in the prisonhouse of student loans. Sometimes it is easy to believe the word "struggle" attached to the "my" of the kings, to mistake it for true, also, when they say the light of the screen in your face is fate and not history and to mistake for inevitability what requires identification badges and lanyarded details. Sometimes it is easy to wake up any morning and write "books are the detritus of modernity's tragic industry" than it is to remember that apart from any book and earlier than any fake-inevitability and later than any fake-inevitability too there is refusal and dialectic and possibility and every living, circulating, necessary poem.

It is harder to remember the specificities of every everywhere, to remember that every inch of anywhere is somewhere in a startling particular, that we have aside from our architectures eccentric fauna and weeds with tap roots and slight rises and drops in temperature, the condensation on the plexi-glass, the monument of micro-climate, the recombinant air. Harder also to remember that in the specificities of earth and earth's inches there are the great haunting trace of all having lived, too, the tears that watered the atmosphere, the cashier who could not stop laughing, the grandfather who would not stop crying, the same square feet of soil that made a crop or made a history or made food or made money allowing each body to pass over it toward another three square foot stage of food and history, all of the bodies (animal & human) passing over earth like that for millennia, exchanging themselves on the stage of very particular soils and microbes almost unknowing of what it is they are passing, forgetful of all exchanges made. It is harder to remember that the very names of the who is now dead on your lips are evidence enough of that all are not ended but unending, mixed-up and atomic, to remember that the pauper's grave, too, is a collective, that the names we don't know and can't say are the most powerful of all incantations, that who is forgotten is in their forgottenness is the history we could.

Sometimes it is easy to think of this-life only as a caption to that-death and to think of that-death as a screen on which all frozen faces forever distort, to think of that-death as iconic and inert, easy to think, too, of this-life as narrow -life, as measly-life, as exhausting-life, too, to think of this-life as past-life, as bored-life, as hurried-life, to think of all-life that is this-life only as necessity gripped and then into the repetitive and florescent, and in the off-time find your body pulled it into the grim extravagance of shelter, to bring your body into the rented rooms of the anxious and electronic, to lay your body over pieces of thrift stores and Ikea, to think of all time as shift-time, to think of all hours as hustle-hours, to think of all children as work sites, to think of all lovers as extractions and stoves, to think of all hustle as all labor against remediation, to think of all hustle as the captain of sleep.

It is easier to remember the concrete over the graves than what teems beneath them. It is easier to remember the path toward the grave than it is the bread that you broke over it. It is easier to forget all we told about music, easy to declare "the notations were indistinct!" and to hum the targets of spotify. It is easier to forget, like on the TroostMax, the person saying, "America was once a secret," another saying "I'm an elusive," another saying, "No leader could run this place." It is harder to believe but of these minutes of existing outside of intimacy all that is beyond capture — the man on the TroostMax entering and asking of us all, 'Is the pain of love worth it?' and all the people on the bus unanimous in that it isn't, all of them a symposium of still in love once or someday or now all of them against all loss of faith likely to fall in that love that isn't worth it, to ease against themselves into each other, to find themselves frail and longing to put their face in another person's neck.

Anne Boyer is the author of *Garments Against Women*. She lives in Kansas City.

Free Omnidawn Poetry Readings

Berl's Poetry Bookshop, 141 Front St., Brooklyn
Thursday, November 2, 7–10 PM

Laynie Browne	Ewa Chrusciel	Norma Cole	Mary Hickman
David Koehn	John Liles	Kelli Anne Nofle	Daniel Poppick
kathryn l. pringle	Joseph Rios	Andrew Seguin	Susan Terris

All readers at this Berl's reading will also read at the Poets House reading listed below.

Poets House, 10 River Terrace, Tribeca
Friday, November 3, 6–9 PM



Sara Deniz
Akant



Andrea
Baker



Laynie
Browne



Ewa
Chrusciel



Norma
Cole



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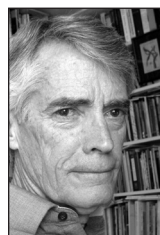
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Bin
Ramke



Joseph
Rios



Andrew
Seguin



Cole
Swensen



Michelle
Taransky



Susan
Terris

Also Hillary Gravendyk's *The Soluble Hour* will be read by Cynthia Arrieu-King

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LETTER FROM REVIEWS EDITOR:

*I'm happy and excited to join The Poetry Project Newsletter as the poetry reviews editor. Writing about poetry means reading and writing poetry, and reading writing about poetry hopefully means reading poetry as well, and, maybe, if one's lucky, it means writing poetry, too. Of course, the Project goes beyond poetry, or something about seeing how far poetry can wander: poetry can be, as a political tool, about flight and abolishing those systems seeking to generally screw up ways of being together, of feeling together. Towards those developing plans, The Poetry Project continually presents itself as some kind of queer home, some kind of weird celebration, some kind of bringing-together-and-going-our-separate-ways for half a century now, and I think the Newsletter keeps record of that ongoing ghostly projection even as it commits to its own little shimmer. But more than documentation; it's hopefully a place of writing/action as well. The reviews in this issue set up body and text as two sites of inquiry and citation without instilling or setting up a binary. As Suiyi Tang shows in a review of Eunsong Kim's *Gospel of Regicide*, a place of treason and subversion await. Jonathan Jacob Moore caresses and shows the *Black* quotidian in telling about Sean D. Henry-Smith's *Body Text*. In a review of Tonya M. Foster's *A Swarm of Bees in High Court*, there's a reigniting of remixed swallowing sound, as Sean D. Henry-Smith sees and writes. Finally, some writing with Andrea Lawlor's *Position Papers* wants to know more about the future.*

If you have a poetry review or a query for a future issue, send it along.

– John Rufo

The Gospel of Regicide by Eunsong Kim (Noemi Press) by Suiyi Tang

to know god with the bitter intimacy of a lover: that is what they don't teach you during sunday school. if the church is a home, the congregation the family of christ and the pastor their deliverer, i wonder if cathedral architects had to take empathy classes--to learn how to dream better. to build familiar homes for unfamiliar people.

in the beginning there was nothing. in the beginning there was quiet rage spun with the silk of inscrutability. linen stitched with painful lucidity: of debts repaid with bone marrow. they gave us everything, but made us only to serve. they birthed a narrative stagnant with embryonic desires, so it took a midwife to deliver the shriveled fetus. but they are the only cannibals here.

since the beginning there have been debts repaid by rejection: "dreaming of how else to dream." in the beginning--no, reject the myth of a beginning. elsewhere, the only way to write around silence it to betray it--Him. betray hymn. a hymn pregnant with the arch of silent "n," as in the divine, aborted of the holy. in the beginning there was no unison, only sacred failing.

in the aftermath of disaster, there is milk and honey, and some are objects and others are property. still others are not objects but transitions: the objects of property. in the post-apocalyptic world, there is no subjective coherence because all whiteness has been reduced to milk. the militant betrayer rejects again and again the love of god, and, in such a world the only trial is a trial for life, and the only sentence is a sentence of freedom.

gospel of regicide: a gospel possessive, ontologically attached to the hand of its creator. if the gospel is the teaching of christ, regicide is the chapter effaced by his apostles. regi-cide, from the latinate: the act of killing, a king. regicide monumentalized not as an event but an Event whose reign stretches longer than the singularity of An Act. The Acts, after all, beg the question: we

are apostles disgraced. whose side are you on?

once in a fit of spite i masturbated in an empty pew. did not prey did not feed for apology, only offered my stained hands in abdication. in labor, to return the rib to the body, the son to the father. this is how the speculum speaks: "have a man kiss you / and take you to your enemies." have a Man kiss you as jesus kissed judas, then take him to his enemies and consummate the body of christ in unholy matrimony with the narrative sentence. this is how the speculum speaks. of a hymn we cannot name, of an "i" (an eye; an aye; a lie) perpetually delayed. but the absence is preordained--the gospel as hermeneutic resurrects a you whose vacuity the power of nomination will destroy. "i will say your name directly at some point before i die," she tells you, him, i: we are "metaphors fully consumed" simultaneously as we remain the only ones who reserve the full scope of our sacred flesh. we consume the text to approach the chairoscuro frame of our interlocutor. beneath her eloquent vitriol, we identify the body of the enemy. only a traitor can retrieve the body of the enemy in the scopophilic corridor. she has paid off his debts, and in turn her betrayal moves our world forward. in the scopophilic corridor such as the one of the gospel, it is not you or i but a traitor who retains the dignity of salvation. she writes the gospel from birthright to sacrilege. hermeneutic to betrayal.

in the beginning, there was treachery: a rupture that writes itself out of time. the only writing that breaks the narrative sentence, and the only form through which originary silence may be restored. we will not vote white supremacy out of office, she reminds us. god was never elected in the first place.

—

Body Text by Sean D. Henry Smith (NDR)
by Jonathan Jacob Moore

When a text cares for Black people, you know by its scent; a \$1 rearview

mirror air freshener that tries it best, cocoa butter, "safety or is that just sea salt." Or, perhaps you know by its sound; ma's snoring beckoning the bitchass sun to rise, brown skin making of yours a rare instrument, "Just another nigga with the blues." When a text cares for Black people, each word (separately and respectfully) asks for your number and texts you then and there. When a Black writer creates work that does all this without foregoing caring for themselves, it feels like Sean D. Henry Smith's Body Text.

In this debut collection of poetry, poet-photographer-artist Sean D. Henry Smith invited me to not breathe easier, but breathe, still. An audacious project that experiments with form, voice, and visually in exploring Black being across spatiotemporal worlds, Body Text relishes in the fictional, real, and fleeting moments in space and time that Black people have to themselves. In a world where White receptions to Black texts preempt and parasitically consume the space

where Black reaction and critique happens, Smith models an indulgent Black poetics that works to subvert this economy. His abrasive acquiescence and selfish humor can only be described as Black as fuck. Body Text traffics in Black lexical bitcoin or, using Smith's word, enacts transfusion. Rather than spend time with every line I fell in love with, here I talk about the exciting concept of transfusion at large in Body Text.

Towards the end of the chapbook, Smith writes:

i cried for every one of these poems because they grow up so fast i read all of these poems to my mom over facetime it was not a performance but transfusion

Transfusion is generally thought of as an act of removing and transferring blood into an animal's circulatory system. I think about transfusion as exhibited in Body Text as spiritual and ontological processes of unmaking that self which fuels anti-Black

worldmaking.. Transfusion is, as Smith writes, "not a performance" but its antithesis, a kind of world-destroying offering that only Black people can yield to one another. Transfusion is another word for Black critique. Transfusion is, as Saidiya Hartman says of care, "the antidote to violence." These many conceptions of transfusion characterize the raucous, defiant and sensuous voices of Body Text, a project that Smith says is informed by, among other themes, racial paranoia, corporeal control, the internet, his mother, and God. These voices weave not a singular body but a text that is resplendent with devastating questions and declarations on being when "Black day is every single day of my fucking life." Transfusion is no painless process. Before the first titled poem, "Onslaught," Smith writes:

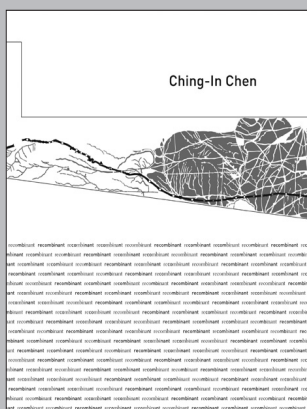
cauldron boil hot wood burn crimson not mistaken for rust deep onyx no evil Black day is every day of my fucking life Black magic is every gale i can't see it but i've lived it

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this séance won't bring back the dead
but don't stop me from
trying

Language fails to protect or resurrect
Black people yet Smith savors this
impossibility as a challenge and lays
claim to it. "don't stop me from trying"
is a demand that, in continuing to
read the text, I obey and am grateful
for. This poetic project, this séance,
is meant to care for Black life with no
expectation of a return on investment.
It is intentionally, senselessly generous
because it is necessary, not the other
way around. Black Transfusion is not
transaction.

In "the murder encircles or, a whiff of
every spider," Smith dazzles:

the difference between a hung
jury and a hanged man is breath in
envisioning justice
we operate mirrorless walking by faith
alone means for stubbed toes these
efforts
are anti-escapist but can you blame
me if I dream of night beach and
moon futures

In addition to afrofuturist imaginings,
"but can you blame me if I dream
of night beach and moon futures"
brings to mind scenes from Barry
Jenkins' *Moonlight*. The boys on
the beach, admiring the ocean's
endlessness, trusting each other's
hands and mouths in spite of the
violent currents that engulf their lives.
Chiron and Kevin drink the moon like
milk and here, under the moonlight,
the speaker's desire unfurls. Black
Transfusion is reparative therapy
and I am better for it. The speaker
continues:

i only occupy as much space as
needed aimé said he found his
blackness in the
surreal so i thrive there too sometimes
theory is lifeline but sometimes i hurt
too
much to think the american dream
looks like emperors robes so i live like
a spider
my means for home are inside me

Black Transfusion, Smith shows us,
necessitates the internalization of
modern world history as an anti-black
history. In the poem "Of One's Own,"
we find "bloody text" floating in a
sea of refrain, a Where's Waldo of
quotidian terror. Smith's language,

often cryptic and divested from
justifying the journey between every
word, surprises with moments of
intimacy and self-reflection. "theory
is lifeline but sometimes i hurt too /
much" is one of the many moments
in *Body Text* that reckons with what
the chasm between Black theory and
reality feels like. The space between
what Smith knows and what Smith
should know by now finds thought and
feeling transferred back and forth, for
better, for worse, for the speaker, for
the reader, for the dead, and for the
living.

"Of One's Own" ends with this daring
affirmation of fear, christening Smith
as an honest and original poet with a
beautiful command of a wide range of
deliveries:

You pray to endure the night, I pray to
outlive the archive

I can only pray this prayer comes
true—and that his poetry follows suit.
If *Body Text* is any indication, I have no
doubt it will.

***The Happy End / All Welcome* by
Mónica de la Torre
(Ugly Duckling Presse)
by Diana Hamilton**

Not to spoil anything, and *certainly*
not to begin with an "Is-this-a-critique-
of-or-aesthetization-of-capitalism?"
thesis (a question raised well enough
by a Gehry or an Eames or a Judd
chair in office environs, even before
it appears in a collection of poetry
written, in part, from the "view from"
such chairs, and definitely before the
chair reappears in the review of the
poetry referencing the art exhibit
that includes the chair). But I think
Mónica de la Torre's *The Happy End
/ All Welcome* *might* be about the
relative happinesses afforded by jobs.

At least, it asks what constitutes a
happy end. Specifically, whether an
end of, say employment itself, could
be happier, sure! And, along the way,
what kind of language people use or
navigate in their pursuits of ends.

On my first read, I resisted the
temptation of the reference spiral its
opening note offers:
After Martin Kippenberger's
installation "The Happy End of Franz
Kafka's *Amerika*" (an assortment of

numbered tables and office desks
with pairs of mismatched chairs within
a soccer field flaked by grandstands)
which references a giant job fair held
by the Nature Theater of Oklahoma in
Kafka's unfinished *Amerika*—a novel
Kippenberger claimed never to have
read.

If I had stuck by the goal of a
clean read, I might be forgiven
for understanding its first poem,
"Positions Available," as a send-up of
a certain style of corporate enthusiasm
(email, at some point, having rendered
the exclamation mark a necessary
inclusion in personable business
correspondence), particularly its
enthusiasm for "creatives"—the kind
of dreary copy a poet-friend might
have to write for her freelance gig:

All are welcome!

Anyone who wants to become an artist
should contact us!

Anyone who wants to be an artist, step
forward!

We can make use of everyone, each in
their place!

You might have forgiven me, I mean,
for missing that this is Kafka:

All welcome! Anyone who wants to
be an artist, step forward! We are the
theatre that has a place for everyone,
everyone in his place!

In *Amerika*, this text appears on a
poster advertising the job fair at the
Theatre of Oklahoma (or the "Nature
Theater of Olkahama [sic]," depending
on the translation). The narrator
remarks that the poster fails to make
mention of wages: "No one wanted to
be an artist, but everyone wanted to
be paid for his work."

Two poems later, de la Torre's
"Positions Available" rearrange
themselves into "Available Positions":

Sitting erect, pelvis curved out, cross
legged or with legs parallel.

Slumping, pelvis curved in.

Sitting erect, slightly leaning forward,
resting elbows and arms on desk.

Others have noted how this book
weaves the language of HR, ad copy,

globalist corporatism, etc. into a narrative that shows the way bodies are constrained, physically and more abstractly, by the workplace, the office chair offering an especially appropriate metonym for the bizarre way bosses who want to de-subjectify do so by pretending to really value the subject.

The poem "Table 17," in which a "Worker" and a "Recruiter" engage in a dialogue on the subject's English language skills, stages a certain example of this: the worker apologizes that "My English is no native;" she's hired on the spot by a recruiter who makes no mention of her motives, but the script explains: "(She remembers the orientation session in which talent scouts were told to employ, at the drop of a hat, anyone whose use of language might increase activity in audiences" corrugator muscles or do the opposite, prompting zygomatic tension)."

The book then inverts this process for a more grotesque company-becoming-person in "Table 41," in which a manager meets with a consultant "before a lab table with five different body organs preserved in jars of formaldehyde" in order to learn more about the previously-figurative relationship between the organization and the body.

As in de la Torre's other work, though, the subject (and/or their more theoretical subjectivity) isn't so

easily gotten rid of. The book really focuses on what escapes reduction or dominance, especially in minor ways: typos and other errors, posture's resistance to the chair, the mind's resistance to staying inside the workplace, and above all, la perruque, doing your own work while being paid to others'. It's not the "striving to be unique and desirable" (like "the girls in The Happy End / All Welcome") that makes for interesting language, though, but what seems resistant or remains legibly out-of-order once one has complied with orders. Striving, in this book, seems more dystopian: when de la Torre highlights corporate celebrations of relaxation, idleness, individual creativity, multilinguality, and pleasure, things seem familiarly darker than, say, the "View from a Folding Chair," which can take some comfort in being "Utilitarian, never just there, called up to serve" (61).

In her interview with Peter Mishler for Lithub, de la Torre describes a somewhat unhappy end to *The Happy End / All Welcome*, explaining that she wrote the last poem just after David Bowie died, and was nodding to Low: "I struggle with endings. Pointing to what's next was my way of (not) closing the book."

But de la Torre also opens the book (and keeps in that way) by inviting the ends of others'. In Michael Hoffman's introduction to his translation of *Amerika: The Man Who Disappeared* he explains how and why he's

undone some of Max Brod's editorial interventions in his friend's manuscript: Brod originally ended the book "Such a carefree journey in America they had never known," a falsely and quite preposterously un-Kafkaesquely ringing summary, instead of where Kafka actually broke off, 'so close that the chill breath of them made their faces shudder', characteristically menacing, peculiar, physical, ambivalent . . .'

Brod, having refused to destroy Kafka's work as instructed, stands accused of going so far as to have made it optimistic.

Adding to this narrative, other recent English translations emphasize the source texts Kafka used to describe the U.S.. Mark Harman notes that Kafka drew heavily on work by Arthur Holitscher, whom Harman describes as an "Hungarian Jewish socialist" whose project was "documenting the problems caused by the 'profit motive.'" More specifically, he argues that a common misspelling throughout Kafka's draft seems to be lifted from a photograph of a lynching in Holitscher's travelogue "sarcastically entitled 'Idyll aus Oklahama' (Idyll from Oklahama)," a theory supported by the fact that, in some versions, Kafka's protagonist decides inexplicably to take the pseudonym "negro" once he reaches the final job fair.

Among my motivations for recounting this fourth-degree-of-

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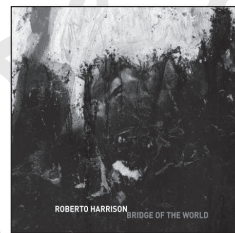


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—Will Alexander



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separation source text: I think the relative happinesses of the ends of Kafka, Kippenberger, Harman's, and Holitscher's works are related to the work Mónica de la Torre is doing in the *The Happy End / All Welcome*. Her book draws on, if not these specific sources, the speed with which a seemingly optimistic style can actually refer to violence, or vice versa, the dizzying degrees of references that come to play once one starts with a relatively innocent premise, the ambiguity as to whether representations of work are calls for better working conditions or an end to work. She plays with the way inversions of perspectives—from chairs, from source texts, from editors, from language, from context, etc.—make an end happy or sad, or prevent ending altogether.

Tonya M. Foster *A Swarm of Bees in High Court* (Belladonna) by Sean D. Henry-Smith

"She wants to shout into the pastoral sleep of t/his face, to shout at how sleep absents him, ab/dis solves him from/in to himself, Pussy is condition -al, -ing, er. And position."

In the sleeping hour some count sheep. Tonya M. Foster communes with bees — witty, worrisome, paranoid, and yet, loving. Stumbling through wakefulness, Tonya M. Foster's *A Swarm of Bees in High Court* (Belladonna, 2015) is a sleepless night and the swarm of nightthought, a doomed surrealist reflection of/on Black/femininity/community/place. "Once as a girl, she dreamed an urban kingdom," and as her lazy lover rests, the speaker guides us through the buzz as "yesterday swarms in the m/arrow of (y)our thoughts (./)" The multidirectional movement of the swarm gestures to and works through musicality and the visual works that frame *A Swarm*.

The swarm is in the re: -writing/-petition/-mixing. Slashes and parentheticals offer new results to the equation, providing endless ways

to read and re-read. The condition, conditional, conditioning, conditioner. You don't deserve it. Foster's remixing of possessives reject any one way of interpreting or engaging — the reader is always implicit, even as the speaker whispers to herself. Public and private, singular and swarm commons. The serenity and violence of the streets. Even when functioning on the binary "s/he", the slash implies everything between the gendered signifier.

Though titled "Alabama," Frank Ocean's reflection on what I understand is post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans comes to me when I approach Foster's work. Dis/relocated to Los Angeles in the wake of the storm, Ocean remembers New Orleans, running and rumbling through limited space, familial tensions, self-fashioning, and body traumas. Sampha and Jazmine Sullivan haunt, What can I do to know you better? What can I do to show my love? Foster, a New Orleans native, says in conversation with John Keene in *Bomb*, "I'm often wondering how NOLA has trained and tripped up my tongue.

I'd been thinking about the language that conjures an experience of a particular place." Now a resident of Harlem, a mother tongue still guides her, even in dis/relocation. Wangechi Mutu's "Le Noble Savage" graces and grimaces the front cover of *A Swarm*. Medusa in the swamp wildgrass, blurring with swamp wildgrass, adorned in wildcat and flowers, holds the palm together as nightmarish parrots flock above. Tessellating torso, mouth agape but not agasp or screaming — perhaps in shock? In anguish. Their eyes watching smog.

Max Ernst's painting "A Swarm of Bees in the Palace of Justice" (from whom Foster remixes her title, and the last page of the book) is dying sunflower / drying lavender / bejeweled nightmare just after dusk. The bees take their evening sips through the explosion of nightfall. May the demon slumber slowly. I struggle to find the palace. I struggle to find the justice.

Framed by these discomfoting, imposing visual works, and armed with uncertainty and bitter giggle, *A Swarm* leads us from the home

into the urban kingdom, shaping the fraught interiority an insomniac night ushers. Foster's sensory mastery makes the swarm sonic and visual, illustrating and composing just as her visual references do. Constant pulling and pushing of color and light, I see the fire-orange of streetlight stream in the window onto the "(st)roll and (st)utter" of body. The flood reds and blue-blacks in the hiss of night in the unraveling of thought. The swarm swells.

"This hive of sound: base-buzz, engine-crank. Voice laugh, seal the sonic cracks."

The streets, the "chronic acquaintance" talk back to the swarm. The swelling never in isolation, never alone, never at peace. Always escaping, narrowly. Tonya M. Foster, the beekeeper and night seamstress, offers us sourhoney until morning churns, until *A Swarm of Bees in High Court* wakes and walks, a grammar for swallowed pronoun. A hive song that is this collection hums resoundingly.

Position Papers by Andrea Lawlor (Factory Hollow Press, 2016) by John Rufo

Andrea Lawlor's chapbook *Position Papers* bristles and brims with a poetics of generosity. Resembling prose-y overgrown government documents, Lawlor presents numbered (although out of numerical order) single paragraphs imagining a country, that is simultaneously "new," "ours," and "mine." I like to think of these pieces as un-locatable geographies Lawlor has somehow leaked from an out-of-time archival place, a united states without the governing apparatus of "United States," a college campus without "the University," a blue and red downtown without genocidal gentrification schemes. In several of these pieces, including "Position Paper #5: Landfills," and "Position Paper #47: Inherited Wealth," we find a world in which "libraries...[are] open all night every night" and there are "free art houses, tended and available for communing at all hours, including sleepovers." In this recommendation of future time, there is a queer attention to detail in which our needs

and fanciful necessities are not only met but made joyfully full, where the "magnolia gnarls" are "tie[d] with ribbons the notices of name-changes and new pronouns." In "Position Paper #9: Transitioning," we find the tilling of a drifting – "some of us will just sift into the next" – in which some never becomes sum, and statistics don't represent life in the ongoing administrative guise of death and breathlessness.

Instead, Lawlor's eager gathering is day-to-day already-rallying, leaning towards a poetry protesting for the essentials: food, shelter, sustainability, a commons, music. The most basic thesis argued for in Position Papers might turn on a statement that goes: Property is theft, but love isn't. Lawlor's titling of these pieces as "position papers" prompts their disrespectful relation to governmentality: that is, the position staked out here is not really one that could be taken up by a sovereign nor a rights organization, but relies on an anti-homonationalism. Lawlor's positionings are like wet pieces of paper: damp, sinking into earth, returning to roots, folded, pulpy

but intact, morninged with dew and sun-rain and elemental ethics. Position Papers becomes a slowed down field recording of Muñozian queer futurity, not quite "not yet here" but here and there, in quotidian pockets, flashpoints of shared bicycles, bibliographies, and breakfasts. Instead of the ever-reigning evergreen pessimism that is rightly communicated in all corners today and yesterday and forever, Lawlor doesn't give a condescending optimism or instruction in its place, but a closely held intimacy that entangles and makes sure we have resources available with which to sing. It's shared sociality in the places often deemed anti-social or death-driven. It's a life writing concerned with affectionate labor, as the art pouring forth in "my epics, my catalogues, my Icelandic sagas of how I miss your smell" from "Position Paper #3: Cell Phones" goes and goes, yelping away enclosed in tree bark. To ask: "how are you" and also think and feel hard about the way we are and how we might be. A series of planning sessions without sermonizing in poetry.

If the riot can be a party, but not a

political party, a house party, and that house party keeps going until early morning and allows us to get to some new understandings about housing, and that housing keeps us together and warm and close and able to conceptualize our levels of care, then we are both for each other and out of that even when we're out of it and tired and sick and have been doing the same thing again and again and again. Position Papers props us up without proposition or presumption, just some pro bono poetry and consideration. "I haven't figured out the particulars of housing yet," Lawlor writes in the first piece, titled "Position Paper #5: Property." "But I think we'll just agree that we stay there, temporarily, like all of life." The poetics don't intend to falsely point to a "publics"; but it's to wrench away a capitalistic fatality obsessed with the fantasy of "privacy" or policing our private parts. We want un-regulation. We want the end of prisons. We know the laws of this empire only lead to loss; we don't want new laws, we want the end of the nation; we want to be out in the country, or at least try, so in our against-ness we can be together.

Burning Deck 2017

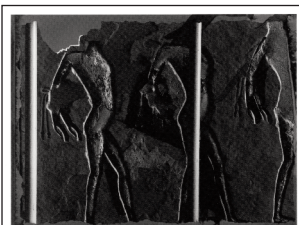
Paul Keineg, *Triste Tristan & Other Poems*

[translated from the French by Laura Marris & Rosmarie Waldrop]

Paul Keineg's first book, *Le poème du pays qui a faim* [poem of the famished land, 1967] was tonally between song and angry scream and put him in the forefront of the new Breton literature and militancy. In his later years he has given a larger place to humor and irony as well as to a more nuanced, polysemous language, which has been nourished by his living in between Breton, French, and English. (Remaining emotionally rooted in Brittany, he lived in the US for thirty years before returning to his native village in 2009.)

"Triste Tristan" views the medieval versions of the Tristan story from a demythologizing perspective that "takes down the pants of the lyrical tradition." Other poems take us on walks through Brittany and drives through North Carolina that fuse landscape, language, history, and memory into a complex space in motion.

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Elke Erb *The Up and Down of Feet*
Poems 1994-2010



Elke Erb, *The Up and Down of Feet: Poems 1994-2010*

[translated from the German by Rosmarie Waldrop]

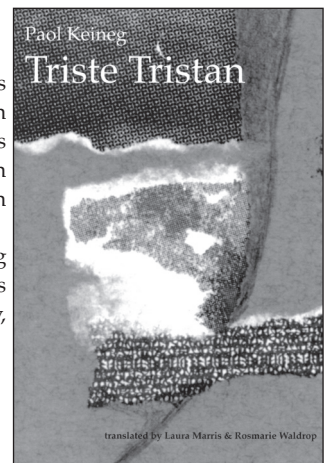
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Elke Erb lives in Berlin and is one of the most noted German poets.

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Lawlor imagines one iteration of this devoted endearing swarm, which we're lucky already hums, which we can live within even when we feel without. It's an abolition for the everyday, sweet and sticky, erotics for evening and morning and afternoon. Lawlor closes "Position Paper #10: Police" with this confrontation: "When chaos reveals itself, as it does and forever will, we will mediate for a short or long while before we move on." These papers aren't about mediation, but about the forging foraging dance of a "we," and in the quotidian nomadic moving on in improvised collaboration, covering the song we keep tweaking, turning, widening, winnowing, shrinking, and shrieking in our hands.

***Mouth to Mouth* by Abigail Child
(Eoagh Press)
by Charles Borkhuis**

Winner of a 2017 Lambda Award, Abigail Child's latest book of poems *Mouth to Mouth* is a sparkle frenzy of atomic dissonance and dislocation, a pithy, flow-bop shudder that just won't stop coming. Sometimes a shout, sometimes a witty whisper with adjustable vocoder gender-flection, these stinging cultural mashups release a transformative body travelling at warp speed. But her short, drive-by bursts of acerbic social critique are also interspersed with addictive love potions and smear blossoms of sensual investigation. Even while running culture through a linguistic sieve of structures and styles and sampling Internet snippets, her humor is unfailing and her heart is all-too-human. In the first section of poems, *A D(ra)ft of Kisses*, she reminds us "You SHARE/LOVE/with Brand Milk chocolate."

Mouth to Mouth is above all a love poem to the shared and oh-so-dangerous possibilities of putting oneself lovingly together with another person. The book is not a quest but a finding, and what it finds is a way of living with complexity, alterity, and one's own psychological tumult "to reconfigure/collect glow poles//to go beyond/bedside revolt." This is a journey into the heart of a sustainable brilliance, a sexy binary flowing in and around body parts, playful and comingled -- humorous, numerous,

and touchy.

a urogenital mouth-to-mouth
Head of a tortilla
With too much sweet-cherry missile
This love game, space heater
We peninsula
rickety enough to be yow –

Child's book is divided into 8 sections variously generated on a jestful tongue. Using such aids such as Tom Swirly computer wizard to mix and match insightful tomfoolery twists and semiotic turns, she thoughtfully exposes the received doxa of culture and gender. There is evidence of a hard-fought struggle for Child to make her way through the morass of packaged culture and constructed consumer fetishism. Yet she is quick to point out that "each hair has a personality," reminding us of Warhol's offhand comment that each coke bottle is slightly different. Child often offers up a communal landscape of endless digital menus with more and more choices and channels where products and emotions are shuffled through the circumlocutions of a spam-train that jingles us to sleep. And yet these are the days of our lives; these are the real and imagined lovers that slip in and out of our grasp. "Hero bursts in with the complacency of prediction/serrated imperfectly/ They were Mac thirsty//More or less new dogs/He could be described as// noncommittal sincerely."

Child's arguments come in reversible raincoats so as to avoid any straightjacket positioning. There is always an escape clause written into the fabric, making it agreeable to reason in various ways. She recognizes all too well that the trap is to get on your high horse and allow wooden logic to run away with the day. Better to employ multiple entry and exit routes to avoid coming in for a false landing. *Mouth to Mouth* is filled with these split-impulses and double entendres; she does "mashups but not non-sense." culturally-laden self-centeredness from taking over. One must be quick enough to move between contexts and shifting variables, which is exactly where Child's poetry becomes most vulnerable and exacting.

In the section "Flesh," gender issues invite genitalia to pass through swinging doors. But not so fast. Who's

on first and in what way challenges an easy entrance into romance, where thought is an integral part of intimacy.

Romanticism betrays the animal line
Against colonialization of close-ups
Stand in front and manage the meeting
There's a skin game by secret entrance

A well-paralleled penis with moving parts in the panel
The lead is a lion and a widow in the making
Sprayed through the holes
A pointing host plimsolls pouncy pumps

This darting, whimsical approach plays multiple roles while "managing the meeting," so that the "skin game" trades in imaginative thinking on many levels.

The "lion" is not just colonizing his territory in pouncing pumps, but the pumps are also plimsoll shoes and instead of "pouncing" they become "pouncy." Later in this section she adds "Dazzling final plays/In the rips/Of tumbled bodies and infinite/think." Sensual thought produces a tension and release in the language as well as in lived experience.

Child's sendup of twitter-feed overload and constipated emotional violence keeps us alert as to who's in whose pocket. Culture, always quick to give good glamour, hangs a dubious notion of success over our heads but delivery, as they say, is pending. In her last section, *Words on Process*, she asks us to "... read behind and around and beside these distortions to create new distortions, to explore and revise language into new images new sounds new emotions new contexts." There is a brave attempt in *Mouth to Mouth* to reclaim ourselves within the matrix of these cultural distortions rather than to naïvely reject their hold on us. Child uncovers an aggressively absorptive culture that routinely turns our minds and bodies into commercial products and implores us to be smart and soulful about how we want to perform ourselves in a complex world of mixed messages.

Q&A: Miller Oberman

1. What is the relationship between writing and editing?

There have been a couple of times in my life, really, just a couple, where a poem came out and felt essentially fully formed on a first draft. Aside from that I do a ton of revising and editing, usually for an intense period of a couple of weeks with each poem. But I often gradually revise for a lot longer afterwards. I never quite know where a poem "lives," and so sometimes I unwittingly revise towards or away from it. Sometimes there's nothing there at all and after a few revisions I give up.

2. You have a unique relationship with translation, evident in your poetic and doctoral work. Tell us about it, please.

I'm a really streaky writer, and this has been something I've always struggled with. I'll write ten poems in two weeks, then nothing for 6 months sometimes. This used to really depress me, and I'd worry I was never going to write again. This is still kind of true, though I've learned to trust it more-- but-- translation has helped me with this tons. When I'm not writing, I'll start to work on a translation, and it gives me a way to practice my craft, and be close, very close, to other poems. It also usually gets me out of whatever rut I was in with my own work. I've been working for the past 6 years on Old English translations, and that language has inspired me more than I can possibly say. I feel I owe a great debt to those poems-- which are the first poems written in my mother tongue, even though they look and sound incredibly different from the English I speak.

3. How do you get free in your craft?

Well, one answer is back to translation-- which I have found very freeing, especially in terms of Old English, because the poems are almost entirely anonymous, and I feel I enter this free space where almost anything can happen, looking up some word, getting lost in some direction. That distraction tends to free me from my own inner critic. Also, it really helps me to be alone. I need to make a space where I can deal with whatever comes up privately, and not worry about writing something "weird" or "bad." I like to move around when I work, and say

words out loud, and so being alone is extremely freeing. I need to pace and talk to myself. Basically I need to stand in a place where I can deal with the unknown, it's a really vulnerable place, and I need to be vulnerable to be free.

4. What has been the most exciting live reading you have done?

Without any doubt my reading at the 92nd St. Y, which I was lucky enough to do after being among the Discovery Prize winners last spring. It was by far the most comfortable I've ever been at a reading, in a way I felt like I was alone, and so I just read the way I would if I were working on the poems at home. It was great! Obviously thinking about all the incredible writers (Lucille Clifton came to mind that night) who had stood on that stage was inspiring...

5. What is your favorite thing about teaching? How do you know you've found a text you want to bring into the classroom?

Well, I truly love teaching, should start there. I love when a student gets excited about writing, or discovers a text they love. When a student comes to me and says they love a certain book and asks what else they might like, I kind of silently shake with joy inside. I became a teacher because I really hated school-- it wasn't what I thought it was going to be, and I thought I could do better. I thought it would be all reading and talking about ideas and books, but instead it seemed like you were just supposed to learn discipline, regurgitation etc. I felt enraged! I'm still kind of enraged. I think when a text really stays with me, when it's one I want to read many times, I want to bring it into the classroom. I tend to change texts a lot, because I love the feeling of discovering a text together with a class. When I teach a text too often, there are times a student gets the bright look of discovery in their eyes and excitedly says something I've heard three times before-- I know it's time to take a break.

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

Well-- this isn't a reading, but when Sarah Jane Stoner asked me to review Patricia Spears Jones' book for the newsletter. I was embarrassingly unfamiliar with her work, and it was

such an incredible gift to be able to read it so closely. I didn't know I needed that book in that moment-- it was her new and selected, but it really was exactly what I needed.

7. What is the best and most difficult thing about being a poet right now?

The best thing is that it seems to me like we're in a moment where a lot more people are reading poetry and I'm seeing some of the old guard places open up to a lot of new kinds of work, and new voices. It's incredible to see the variety and quality of what's out there. I think for me, since I've just finished a book project that I worked on for so many years, I'm struggling to have a really clear vision of where I'm going next. Then I tell myself I don't have to (and shouldn't) see the whole thing laid out clearly in front of me. When I try to plan things too much they generally turn out badly, but it's always difficult to be in a place of not-knowing.

8. Tell us about your NEW book!

It's my first, so I'm over the moon excited. It's a collection of my poems and Old English translations called *The Unstill Ones*, which is-- the title is-- my translation of a phrase from the "Old English Rune Poem," it's from the rune for horses, which are described as "a joy to the unstill ones." Old English is brand new, to its writers, so there's an unbelievable amount of word invention, and they often append things like "un" to words, so the opposite to "still" becomes "unstill." I loved that idea, it felt like an identity to me, I felt unstill, still do-- but internally, and I understand why you'd need horses in that situation. At any rate, I had a first book a long time ago, that almost but was never quite taken anywhere, and even though I still think there are some good poems in it, I'm so glad now that this will be my first book.

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

I'm teaching a class on resistance poetry in translation this semester, and I can't get a line out of my head from Victor Jara's poem "Estadio Chile," translated by his sister Joan: "How hard it is to sing / when I must sing of horror."

POETRY: Miller Oberman

The Word Again

My friend once didn't thank me
for pointing out five poems in his
sheaf
where he'd used the word pith.
That book
about the never-breaking branch—
dark, in every poem, or nearly.
Today

I saw bear in mine all over. One
with
actual bears, or at least people
resembling bears, galumphing
down the street, and rivers
that bear you up, and then the
bearers,
human, of a coffin, but nothing
about
what anyone can bear or not bear,
nothing
about what can be borne, though
there is

one poem skeleton called
"Rainbears,"
which are not real and never were.
Shaggyblue, skywater soaked,
nothing un-
bearable to them, no sorrow, no
rage,
they would be strong as gods.
I was this kind of bear or god,
nothing
couldn't be borne, I thought.
No insult, no grief, no binding
lash. When everyone went indoors,
I was dripping fog in the field,
endlessly strong, endlessly
crushed. But I'm not

now, any kind of shabby martyr.
There are unbearable things.
Most things are unbearable.
Being inside when I want to be
outside,
interminable fear of doing or
saying
the wrong thing, disdain,
modernist couches,
many people, not being able to
say this is—
when it is— unbearable.

Riddle 63

[translated from the Old English]

Often I shall say I am beautifully useful
to the hall-joy when I am borne forth
glad with gold, to where men drink.
Sometimes, in the closet, the good servant
kisses my mouth, where we two are twice as long,
outstretched arms on hands []
works his will []
[] filled that I come forth
[]
I can not conceal the []
[] in daylight
[]
men are with sound []
[] token-marked who [] me to []
[] the man you two were riding.

Miller Oberman has received a number of awards for his poetry, including a Ruth Lilly Fellowship, a 92Y Discovery Prize, and *Poetry* magazine's John Frederick Nims Memorial Prize for Translation. His work has appeared in *Poetry*, *London Review of Books*, the *Nation*, *Boston Review*, *Tin House*, and *Harvard Review*. He lives in Brooklyn, New York.



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