The Anarchist Review
of Books

Issue #3 Winter/Spring 2022

Wolf's Cry II by Melora Kuhn. Oil on canvas 2016

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About the Cover

Oracle #12 (Triclops 1) by Doug Stapleton. Collage of pre-printed paper, india ink and graphite on paper, 11" x 8 ½" 2017

Doug Stapleton is fascinated by hybrids and monsters, the conglomeration of competing sensibilities that bear us witness, the unbridled—a restlessness that seethes in equal parts fear, exasperation, and desire to become something else. A change into something grotesque is welcome. Celebrated.

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Wolf's Cry by Melora Kuhn. Oil on canvas, 72" x 87" 2016

Melora Kuhn's work is an ongoing investigation of human experience within the self and within society. Drawing from history, fairy tales and mythology, Kuhn takes images and alters them in an effort to examine patterns of thinking and ways of being. Her interest lies in what is left out or forgotten, in the deterioration of form and known history, in something that appears to be one thing, but is quite another.

About This Issue

Welcome to the third issue of the *Anarchist Review of Books*, produced by a collective based in Atlanta, Austin, Chicago, Exarchia, New York, Oakland, and Seattle.

We bring you this issue at a time of new variants, mass resignations and strikes, of seemingly futile calls to open borders, close prisons, and lower emissions, of supply chain breakdowns, strategic chokepoints, and promises that a clean new germ-free world awaits in the metaverse—a concept first conceived in a dystopian novel, now the utopian dream of an American billionaire

In the metaverse, the billionaire's story goes, we will live through avatars.

But stories about avatars are nothing new. Think of Pythia at Delphi, high on the fumes of a decomposing serpent, perched on a tripod among the slave-built temples and treasuries, channeling Apollo. The Delphic Oracle persists in the collective imagination as a psychic who guided all who came to her. But the historical record shows that the fee to consult the oracle was steep, the questions the rich and powerful asked were nearly all about investing, real estate and war, and the answers were interpreted by a priest.

It still costs a fee to see the ruins at Delphi, a seat of power so symbolically significant the town that had been built over it thousands of years ago was razed and rebuilt nearby.

If the poor wanted advice during the classical period they went to a cave in the mountain above Delphi, where they divined the future by tossing dice made from the knucklebones of animals, communed directly with the Thriai, and left offerings to Pan. The vast interior of the Corycian cave, reachable today by a washed-out dirt road on the side of the mountain, smells like minerals and moss. The green walls and calcified formations resemble faces and figures and monsters. There are still offerings—bowls of honey and milk, oranges, flowers—left in a ring of stones in the cave's central chamber. While the cave has been the site of common ritual since before the classical period through today, there are few artifacts of interest to tourists—thirty thousand knucklebones don't capture the imagination like a statue of giant intertwined snakes.

A ruin is a glimpse of the future as well as the past. The remaining grid of a neighborhood, a cratered church or stadium—everyone sees what's coming. But the cave is not a ruin. The stories of what happened there are largely lost to time, but they are the foundations of human engagement with the imagination, and in the mountain above Delphi this ritual engagement is ongoing.

Narratives about wealth and poverty have been central concerns in art and literature throughout time. But the stories that have come to dominate contemporary American literature have, in less than century, grown narrower and narrower—focusing on the prosaic lives of those with money, on those who rise from poverty, or on trauma narratives which paint all people deprived of income as leading lives of grief, struggle, and ignorance.

Americans have long internalized the bootstrap story—the one in which hard work, virtue and luck pay off and an impoverished protagonist rises to wealth, fame, dominance. But in literature and life, the bootstraps story is a record of failure. The protagonist knows firsthand the cruelty of the system, yet success means to rise in that system. There is no greater failure than joining the ranks of those who held you down. To succeed under capitalism is to fail as a human being.

There has always been another way.

In this issue Toshio Meronek interviews the legendary Miss Major, Cynthia Cruz examines class and the death drive in the work of Marguerite Duras, Dean Spade shines a light on a new edition of Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid,* Glynis Hart and Ashlyn Mooney read the latest works on abolition, Brennan Vickery and Clementine Morrigan dish on cancelation, John Sims shows us how to hang the Confederate flag, Sam Hodge paints with coal from the Thames, and Sara Bennett reveals lives on the inside.

We invite you to open these pages, step away from the light of your screen and come toss some knucklebones by the fire.

All Power to the Imagination

Cara Hoffman
January, 2022

ARB brings you intelligent, subversive, non-dogmatic writing with an anti-authoritarian perspective. We are dedicated to transforming society through literature and through open, incisive critique of the media, politics, history, art and writing that shape our world.

The Anarchist Review of Books is collectively produced by Ananda Brutvan, Cara Hoffman, Carrie Laben, Charlie Hix, D.G. Gerard, Eli Arbor, Marc Lepson, Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore, N. Masani Landfair, Nick Mamatas, and Yasmin Nair.

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Sparks

Curated by Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore

"All we could hear was silence or sirens."
—Kate Agnes, quoted in "An Artist's Game of Telephone" by Adrienne Raphel, *Poets & Writers*, September/October 2021

"It was when people began to say they were 'on brand' that I lost the power to speak."
—Cara Hoffman, *Ruin* (PM Press, 2022)

"The whole purpose of the phrase 'war on terror' was a kind of social compromise amongst respectable elites in order to not say the thing that they were in fact building, which was an expansive war only against some people's kinds of terror, only against nonwhite people's kinds of terror, only against foreigners' kinds of terror, and not against the kind of terrorism that is the oldest, most resilient, most violent and most historically rooted in American history… The war on terror is kind of a zombie anti-Communism in a lot of its political cast of association. And never would any of this be visited upon white people. From the start, the war on terror showed you exactly who it was going to leave out from its carceral, from its surveillance, and from its violent gaze."
—Spencer Ackerman on *Democracy Now*, August 21, 2001

"How do we measure the pain of burying generations of those we love and those we never knew?"
—Eric A. Stanley, *Atmospheres of Violence: Structuring Antagonism and the Trans/Queer Ungovernable* (Duke University Press 2021)

"And not everyone's a physician
but sooner or later everyone
fails to heal."
—Fady Joudah, "Another Round," *Harper's Magazine*, August 2021

"When a right and just cause loses, men suffer. But men also suffer when a wrong cause loses. Suffering thus in itself does not prove the justice or injustice of a cause. It always, however, points a grave moral."
—W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (Harcourt, Brace 1935)

"There's no such thing as a dream job because you shouldn't want to work all the time."
—Kate Zambreno, in conversation with T Fleischmann at City Lights, June 30, 2021

"There's no such thing as going on vacation from domestic violence. The violence goes on vacation with you."
—Myriam Gurba, in conversation with Wendy C. Ortiz at the Poetry Project, September 27, 2021

"No movement that is unable to do justice amongst its own adherents is likely to accomplish any wider goals toward justice."
—Rafia Zakaria, *Against White Feminism* (WW Norton, 2021)

"What kind of future comes from having no more time for what you thought you wanted?"
—Jonathan Alexander, *Stroke Book: The Diary of a Blindspot* (Fordham University Press, 2021)

"Freedom doesn't mean being unburdened by the past. It means continuing into the future, *dreaming* all the time. A free body need not be whole or undamaged or unaugmented. It is always changing, changing, changing, a fluid form after all. Imagine, for a minute, what it would be like to inhabit a body without fear, without the need for fear. Just imagine what we could do. Just imagine the world that we could build."
—Olivia Laing, *Everybody: A Book About Freedom* (WW Norton 2021)

***Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore** is the author, most recently, of* The Freezer Door *and the editor of* Between Certain Death and a Possible Future: Queer Writing on Growing Up with the AIDS Crisis.

How Dare They

Toshio Meronek Talks with Miss Major

Miss Major Speaks (Verso Books) combines many, many hours of conversations over the ten years I've spent as assistant and mentee to Miss Major, an icon in Black, trans activist circles. At events, Miss Major is most often introduced as an actor in the week-long anti-police rebellion in New York City in late June of 1969: the Stonewall Riots. The Riots are popularly known as "the moment" that lit up the Queer Liberation Movement, and the moment she's asked to narrate over and over in public. In this book, we talk about Stonewall, but spend more time dealing with the problems of singular symbolic moments in movements, and the concept of role models, a role Major played for years before TIME magazine dubbed 2015 the year of the "Trans Tipping Point." She also speaks on the tokenization of Black, trans women in liberal politics—tokenization that has occasionally paid her bills, since trans people became what she often calls "the flavor of the month" in popular culture. The book is about how she and her community survive after the expiration of the trans trend, and also how she's survived in spite of it, because trans visibility has only had a positive effect and materially changed the lives of a very, very small number of trans and non-binary people.

Miss Major's activism preceded Stonewall, and she'd later go on to fill less-celebrated but possibly more significant roles as the driver of San Francisco's first mobile needle exchange van during the early days of the HIV/AIDS crisis, or her mentoring of her trans gurls inside California prisons, initially a reluctant return after spending years at Dannemora and Riker's and Bellevue in New York in the 1960s and '70s. She said yes to a book after, she tells me, I finally convinced her that she's one of a few trans activists with the notoriety, and the wisdom, and the way with words, and the survival instincts that have helped her and so many of her gurls and allies beat some of the obstacles between us and liberation.

Miss Major at home 2010

I'm going to start with the problems that still keep you up till three or four a.m. most nights of the week. The things that keep you from retiring.

How heavy is this book gonna be? My god.

As heavy as it needs to be. So, a question you get asked a lot is: "What's different about activism today, versus activism when you were coming up?"

As far as my gurls are concerned, we've made little progressions here and there, but things are not where they need to be. They're nowhere near where they should be. With all the visibility we've gotten—or I should say a few of us have gotten—over the past couple of years, it hasn't done shit for most of the community. The murders, they're still happening. The body count keeps going up. We weren't considered important enough to count before. Maybe that's changed. Now they have to budge a little, pass a law for the police to ignore, in order to keep us quiet, because one thing that has changed is that we have more allies now, and they know we have more people standing with us.

You gave testimony for the Supreme Court decision released in June, during Pride month. They line up these decisions in June—gay marriage, trans people in the military. Pride month 2020, it was this Supreme Court decision that makes it illegal to discriminate against trans people at work.

I did give testimony. But I'm sorry, because that decision, it's gonna change exactly nothing. Not for my gurls, at least. Most of my gurls don't have access to a college education to the get job in the first place. Say they let you come in for an interview. How do you prove that it's because you were trans that you didn't get the job? Or, OK, say the person interviewing you was actually honest for once and they tell you to your face, point-blank, that the reason you didn't get the job is because you're trans. And say you were recording it, and you have it on tape. OK, where are you supposed to get a lawyer? So they change a few laws that nobody followed in the first place, and that's supposed to make us safer?

When we were in New York and they were filming you for that series about how the sixties changed everything: the producer wanted you to tell the story of progress.

With me and that producer, it was like a game of chess. What she thought she needed for her show was a token Black trans woman, talking about the sixties and Stonewall—talking how much has changed for the community since then. How the government and this whole entire system has reoriented itself to care about trans people. And I could tell she was probably thinking, Oh, she's trans, she won't see through this shit I'm trying to pull." The nerve of that woman. I wasn't gonna just budge, and give her some story about how Stonewall changed everything and now everyone's fucking happy. No! People get so concerned about the details. I don't know about all the crap I've heard all these years. Sometimes its, …"Oh someone threw a high-heel shoe." Sometimes it's, "No gurl, it was a molotov cocktail," or "Somebody slugged a cop." All I know is for that night, they came in, and nobody budged. I guess we were just sick of their shit. And suddenly we were fighting; and we were kicking their ass. The cops had to back up into the bar. We had them cornered. Next thing you knew, the riot squad was there, and baby, it was on. "The night of Stonewall," is how people talk about it, but it was more like a week. People want to know the little details, but what I remember is being scared as hell. We were fighting for our lives. They're still killing us; they're still not giving us the respect we're due for putting up with their shit all these years. I'm giving you the facts about how shit's been from the beginning, and what's gone on, how the law was in our daily lives… The facts! And the whole time I just thought to myself, "There's gonna be so much of me on the cutting room floor." [She laughs.]

When a parade happened the next year, couldn't find us anywhere. Not one of my gurls. I didn't see Sylvia there, in the front, where she should've been. But it's not about me, or Sylvia. I don't give a shit whether they acknowledge or know about me, but those gays were ashamed to be seen with us, and they still want us erased. So for my gurls, it's as if Stonewall never happened because it didn't change anything for us.

I asked you when you started telling people to vote that I was surprised, because you'd said you've never wavered on your feelings toward politicians. That politicians today lie just like politicians did fifty years ago.

And what I told you was, "You have to give people who are new to this movement and to activism in general some way in." For some people, that's going to a protest, or seeing a documentary, or reading a book, that gets them thinking, "Maybe I can do something." And so no, I don't believe one person's vote amounts to shit. But if it can get people in the mindset of recognizing, they can fight back against the powers that be in some way. Maybe next time, that leads them down the path of, they'll join an organization or they'll talk to their friends about the murders, or that George Washington had slaves, and how this country only exists because of slavery.

So for you, voting is a place to start.

If you've never had a damn thought to actually do something political, sure, I think it can be. But these statues, or Pride… No. The parade became political and for-profit in a way that I never could have imagined. Insurance companies are there, the fire department is there, Mark Zuckerberg's ugly-ass face is there. I remember when it was Oakland Pride coming up, and I saw an ad for Clorox—

The bleach company?

That Clorox. I saw their logo on a damn Pride advertisement. When Guy [Vandenberg] and I used to drive the needle exchange van in the Tenderloin and HIV was killing us left and right, Clorox didn't want us using their products, because they didn't want to be associated with the trannies and fags. These are corporations who, when given the opportunity to serve and take care of my transgender community, have refused. Ambulances have not taken trans women to the hospital when they realized they were trans women. Just left them beaten up, battered, and in the streets. I remember one time in particular, there was a girl on Taylor and Turk [Streets, in the Tenderloin], she was living in the Dahlia Hotel. She was running from some kids who were chasing her, and they beat her up right in front of the [long-gone gay bar] Peter Pan. The ambulance drove up, and knew that she had been drinking, told her to take a couple aspirin, and drove off. Of course no one did anything, because the police were driving up and down the street. We couldn't just run over to her, you know what I mean? Because a lot of us have to be careful—any one of us would have been arrested if we tried to intervene. I've been there too many times when they harass girls who are trying to help. We tell 'em politely, "Well, she wasn't out hooking," and then they take everyone. And who do you tell? Report it to whom? The cop's buddy? "Oh I saw you suck his dick to get out of jail. Now you gotta do me too."

These conversations will come out after the election, but with Kamala Harris, her history on trans issues isn't well known outside the Bay. She got her start in politics as SF's District Attorney. How much do you think people can change?

Mmm. [Major's not convinced.]

[I laugh.] Maybe that's all that needs to be said on that.

I think that covers it. She threw trans women and basically anyone who was poor, under the bus and into a jail cell. "You've got condoms in your purse, you're a hooker." A cop catches you with condoms in your purse; that was enough for her to put sex workers in jail. And so with politics, just like everything else, it just goes back to: remember your history.

After the uprisings started up in 2020 around George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and many, many other Black people getting killed, and beaten, and locked up by police, instead of abolishing the cops, San Francisco settled on putting up Black Lives Matters posters in the police stations.

That is not gonna solve a damn thing. Nothing. How dare they. Remember your history. But that's what they do now. Blackface on a police department. That's bullshit; there's no other way to put it.

***Miss Major** is a veteran of the Stonewall Rebellion who was politicized while incarcerated alongside survivors of the Attica riots; a former sex worker; and a mother to three children and countless Black trans people across the world. Miss Major currently mentors her 'gurls' from the Little Rock, Arkansas-based House of GG, a network of Black trans and gender nonconforming leaders in the Southern U.S.*

***Toshio Meronek's** writing about housing and houselessness, generational wealth in the Bay Area, and the trans/queer nonprofit industrial complex appears in* In These Times, The Nation, *and* Truthout, *as well as the anthologies* Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex; Counterpoints: A San Francisco Bay Area Atlas of Displacement & Resistance; *and* Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility.

This is an adapted excerpt from *Miss Major Speaks*, reprinted with permission from Verso Press.

Carceral Creeps

Ashlyn Mooney

Abolition. Feminism. Now.
by Angela Y. Davis, Gina Dent, Erica Meiners & Beth Richie
272pp. Bertelsmann 2022

In 2020, domestic violence surged as calls to defund the police moved into the streets. Rich men served time for crimes against women as public criticisms of prisons grew louder. For many survivors of assaults and attacks, the state offers only policing and prisons as recourse—yet the inadequacies and injustices of state punishment are glaring. Put this way, the abolition movement appears to exist in tension with mainstream feminism, a tension that centers on one question: as we confront the problem of gender violence, what are our alternatives to incarceration?

The question isn't new—and neither is the abolition feminism that embraces it as an invitation to create a better world. A new book, *Abolition. Feminism. Now.*, collectively authored by Angela Davis, Gina Dent, Erica Meiners, and Beth E. Richie, unearths the feminist histories—often forgotten, ignored, or eclipsed—that undergird contemporary calls for abolition. And unlike mainstream, carceral feminism, the abolition feminism centers "both on building a world without prisons and policing and building a world free of gender and sexual violence."

The book follows the title's blueprint, and the first two chapters, "Abolition." and "Feminism.", offer partial critical histories of the two movements as they intertwine and overlap across space and time. Women abolitionists—including the authors of *Abolition. Feminism. Now.*, who are members of the abolitionist organizations Critical Resistance and INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence—have long identified prisons and police forces as institutions that do not prevent acts of gender-based violence. Instead of redressing harm, they reproduce it. Women survive

You Tell Me, I Tell Me, I Tell You Contraption by Tammie Rubin. Slip-cast and handbuilt porcelain, underglaze, glaze 2011

domestic violence only to be imprisoned for defending themselves against their abusers. Invasive strip searches and cavity searches are commonplace in jails; so is sexual assault. Even state programs of "care"—rehabs, shelters, foster care, welfare, schools—criminalize the vulnerable people they claim to serve.

Yet for much of the twentieth century, expansion of the US carceral system occured under the banner of feminism. The Violence Against Women Act, authored by Joe Biden in 1991, was heralded as a feminist triumph—and, in the name of "protecting women," the Act led to the incarceration of hundreds of thousands of people at an expense of eight billion dollars. The VAWA mode of feminism was, and is, a popular feminism that sees gender violence as a matter of individual criminals and individual punishments. According to its logic, capitalism, racism, and ableism have no relevance to violence against women, and state interventions have always been just. But within this period of carceral creep were veins of abolitionist resistance. The feminist Mari Katsuda was one of few vocal critics of the VAWA. "The challenge for feminists," she wrote in 1994, "is to fight the patriarchal model that spawns racism, police brutality, corruption, and a value system of property before people."

The challenge is ongoing—but, as *Abolition. Feminism. Now.* makes clear, it is a world "ready at hand, already underway." Still, the text isn't a guidebook. There are no checklists or rules or roadmaps. What emerges instead from snapshots of recent and present direct actions is a sense of abolition feminism as a living and dynamic constellation of interrelated thoughts and happenings—an "ecosystem."

Neither linear nor chronological, the ecosystem comprises the organizations and networks—often "small, hyperlocal, and sometimes fleeting"—that are abolition feminism in action. In the 1970s, women incarcerated in the Greenwich Village Women's House of Detention and their supporters organized grassroots bail funds by calling to each other from the windows and the street. In 2013, women with friends or family members incarcerated at the inhumane Tamms Supermax prison in Illinois successfully agitated to shut it down. In 2019, Berlin's Transformative Justice Kollectiv documented the ways ordinary people responded to interpersonal harm without involving the police, then offered workshops to share tactics and strategies. These groups responded to different exigencies; they used different strategies. But they recognized that state structures are not where relief from violence occurs. And they worked for freedom from both state and gender-based violence.

This "both/and" configuration proves key. "Both/and" answers the either/or thinking that pits abolition against feminism. *Abolition. Feminism. Now.* both describes collaborative praxis and enacts it. It is a detailed, researched history; it is an of-the-moment provocation, an "invitation to readers to write and organize." And the world its authors describe is both a utopian vision and a reality in progress... It is already unfolding, already underway. Now.

***Ashlyn Mooney** is a writer and teacher. She lives in New York City.*

All Together Now

Dean Spade

Mutual Aid: An Illuminated Factor of Evolution
by Peter Kropotkin, ill. N.O. Bonzo
336pp. PM Press 2021

Spending recent decades having conversations about abolition, capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy and the state with students and fellow organizers on various projects, I feel particularly grateful and relieved that N.O. Bonzo's illustrated version of Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* has arrived. Few people I organize with, even among those who think of themselves as anarchists, have read Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*. As David Graeber and Andrej Grubacic observe so beautifully in their introduction to the book, we have been living under the lies and illusions about "human nature" being warlike, competitive and greedy for so long that we miss the relentless evidence of human connection, generosity, and mutual support that is actually responsible for human evolution and for our ability to eek by under current arrangements.

In this edition of *Mutual Aid*, Bonzo surrounds Kropotkin's text with gorgeous illustrations of people doing the basic things people must do to reproduce life, such as weaving, sewing, cultivating and processing food, gathering wood, caring for children, conversing and organizing. The illustrations complement the text as Kropotkin walks us through various stages of the development of state power and its necessary efforts to co-opt and crush collaborative social relations in order to dominate and control. Kropotkin turns our attention to how people organize to support each other's survival, to take care of those made most vulnerable, to repair and forgive, even as state forces introduce private property relations, and individuate and separate people to consolidate elite power. Today, neoliberal non-profitized charity and policy reform work masquerades as resistance, and social media trains people to self-brand with hopes of social climbing. People imagine that joining movements means getting famous for making speeches, having social media-worthy protest photos, and getting a job at a non-profit. This neatly contains the horizons of liberation work, making it the professional domain of a small number of people, while most people are passive consumers of speeches, social media feeds, and printed tote bags and t-shirts. We are led to believe that liberation will be delivered by think tanks, courts and legislatures and to devalue and dismiss the reproductive labor that feminists have always insisted actually makes the world: feeding, clothing, sheltering and caring for each other. To put it simply, everyone wants to make the speech on the steps of the capitol, but most people don't want to make weekly visits to prisons and hospitals, carry groceries to elders, accompany people to benefits hearings, turn empty lots into gardens, change soiled bedsheets, prep the neighborhood for the next disaster, and help pack up the tents of people who are being evicted from the park again. The work of mutual aid—which is the work to create social relations that might reduce suffering and even, maybe, engender survival—is the mundane, ordinary, beautiful work depicted by Bonzo in the margins of Kropotkin's text, and Bonzo shows us how exquisite that work actually is.

Bonzo also peppers the text with illustrations of contemporary mutual aid projects, like needle exchange, eviction defense, community gardens and jail breaks. Bonzo weaves Kropotkin's narrative with these examples of how people are organizing community care, providing basic interventions that change the material conditions of those targeted for premature death. Seeing people in contemporary clothes and settings collaborating, alongside images of people from pre-industrial and industrial times, working together to sustain life, feels like an illustration of Kropokin's argument that the thread of mutual aid runs through all periods of human existence even as we face new and complex ways that current conditions seek to separate us to increase control and extraction.

I Will Trade You Bones For Scapes by Gla4. Acrylic on paper 2020

Reading this new version, I was struck again by Kropotkin's description of how people living with no wage labor, where everyone was working together to make life better for everyone, have undertaken massive, difficult projects like building roads and clearing land for agriculture. The idea that we are lazy, that we won't have infrastructure if we take away the state's capacity to extract (through taxation) and then redistribute to build it (despite all the evidence that most taxation goes to cops, cages, and war, and that infrastructure is built in ways that are insufficient, unequal, and crumbling) is pervasive, and particularly visible in the argument that we need the state in disasters. Kropotkin successfully demonstrates that people have built difficult, important infrastructure projects, again and again, motivated by the desire that everyone have access to these things. The idea that people will do hard work to create and sustain life together, without a system of wages to coerce us to work for others' profit by making it impossible to live if we do not, is a radical intervention in contemporary thinking. People are so used to feeling avoidant of their paid work, that we believe those work-avoidant feelings are inherent rather than an learned response to the conditions under which we currently work.

Kropotkin also describes how people have historically settled disputes, at times and in places where policing, militaries and other state apparatuses of punishment and violence did not exist. He argues that what we might call systems of justice or accountability have, in the past, been overwhelmingly orientated toward repair and reconnection, rather than revenge and punishment. Where people have engaged in even the worst wrongdoing, such as murder, community responses have oriented toward bringing harmdoers back into the fold, frequently integrating them into victim's families as a way to make amends. Communities have treated people who show up from outside with hospitality, and have cultivated deep practices of sharing necessities with anyone within the group who loses crops, housing or other means of survival, making truly life-endangering poverty impossible. Kropotkin further argues that, rather than being essentially warlike, ordinary people have always avoided war. Wars have been the business of small groups of elites, while most people have done whatever was possible to resolve conflicts without war. However, written histories tell the stories of those few war-making elites, whereas the ordinary cooperative survival of most people is generally unremarked, despite its much more significant prevalence and centrality to the sustaining of human existence. Bonzo's illustrations emphasize what being human has actually looked like—cooperation.

Kropotkin's argument that social life was not historically structured by the natal or marital family will be particularly interesting to those whose work has focused on gender and sexual liberation. The notion that the marital family is natural, a place where people make their most intimate bonds and exchange the most important care, remains a controlling fiction. In the 20th century, feminist, anti-colonial and anti-racist interventions eroded some of the legal significance of marriage by making it easier to divorce and attacking systemic exclusion of children born out of wedlock from public services. However, the backlash to these shifts included the articulation of a new framework of "family values" that combined a renewed campaign to cast poor women and women of color, especially Black women, as "over-reproductive" and to promote marriage as a solution to poverty. The family values backlash also included an increasing attack on abortion, contraception and sex work. It also framed a US-led global narrative that sexual liberation should now be understood as simply demanding that same-sex couples be allowed to legally marry. Kropotkin's framing of the emergence of the family, and the creation of individualism as vital ingredients needed for state control, brings another layer of depth to the ongoing but often erased feminist and queer contestation of these categories.

While conditions deteriorate in our daily lives with worsening climate crisis, skyrocketing rents, childcare costs, health costs, and still-growing carceral infrastructure, we are also experiencing a layer of isolation and individuation that makes all these things more dangerous. Being alone in our suffering, believing suffering is the fault of those in crisis rather than systems that put people in crisis, and having no faith that coming together with others could make it possible to live in a better way, is a significant threat to our slim chances of reducing suffering or surviving.

This new version of *Mutual Aid* is a beautiful tool for introducing organizers and students to Kropotkin's still-relevant interventions into the myths of human nature and individualism that continue to impede our capacities to mobilize. I hope this book will bring these ideas to life for the many people who have been in the struggle for a long time, and the many more who were stirred to action during the uprising of 2020 and the COVID pandemic. The new waves of disillusionment and mobilization that are happening right now may still be contained by narrow reformist "solutions." But perhaps sharpening conditions and brilliant organizing will allow people to push past the demobilization efforts of elites as they struggle to right their ship. It remains to be seen, but projects like N.O. Bonzo's and Kropotkin's before them are of inestimable service to our efforts to dismantle extractive systems and practice collective self-determination.

***Dean Spade** has been working in movements for queer and trans liberation and racial and economic justice for the past two decades. His latest book,* Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis (and the Next), *is soon to be published in Italian, Catalan, Korean, Spanish, Thai, Czech and German.*

In, Out, Iffy

A Conversation with Brennan Vickery

Cara Hoffman

In the summer of 2021, bright orange newspaper boxes began to appear all over New York City. Inside were stacks of thin tabloid newspapers called *The Iffy*. The paper's editorial vision might be best described as "over it" —An all-out assault on think pieces and pearl clutching, on polarized discourse and any sort of specialized language.

The Iffy is published by a fierce team of one—Brennan Vickery who funds the project with his wages from bartending. Raised in the evangelical church in Florida, one of six children cared for by a single mother, Vickery has worked construction and in the service industry, moving back and forth between Florida, rural Georgia, Atlanta, and New York City where he studied at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts and SVA, and found a place in experimental theater, selling out one-man shows. Last year, exhausted with clickbait, he began to wonder where he could read something truly interesting and honest. *The Iffy* has covered the history of gay bath houses, the digital delirium of online culture, and the lack of coherent political ideologies (and edible food) in contemporary America, delivering all of it in a snappy, joyful satirical style.

ARB: How did you start *The Iffy*?

BV: I wanted to have a tangible paper with a clear voice and different perspectives, instead of making online content that people have to sift through and I figured the best way was to do it myself. I thought "There's eight and a half million people in New York, let's get some papers out!"

ARB: Have you ever worked as a journalist?

BV: No. My first background is actually in chemistry, so I didn't have any connections or frames of reference other than what I read—I was not in the writing world, the publishing world, never touched it, don't know anybody in it.

ARB: I found *The Iffy* in its own newspaper box in my neighborhood. How did you fill New York City with newspaper boxes let alone newspapers?

BV: There are so many abandoned paper boxes in New York City; kicked over, graffitied, especially after COVID. I had some friends with cars, and we drove up Broadway and around Brooklyn underneath the elevated tracks, found paper boxes and threw them in the back of my friend's car. There was water leaking out of them, sand…we should've thrown a tarp down. I bought some spray paint from Blick, took them back to my apartment, just scrubbed them down, painted them, then dropped them off a month later on street corners. After the paper was printed, I drove around again with another friend filling the boxes. I was so invested at that point, and had spent way too much of my own money and I was afraid people wouldn't carry it in shops.

ARB: Do shops carry *The Iffy*?

BV: Corporate coffeeshops don't. One of our early issues had the word "faggot" on the front cover and Starbucks was like "it doesn't align with our brand." I said, "Honey, believe me—it aligns with your brand."

ARB: Is this an expensive project?

BV: Yes. People have asked me "How can you put so much money into this?" because I don't come from money, and there's no investment, there's not $20 from my parents. I do it because I believe in it. Not to be a moral elitist, but I am committed to sharing a subversive, indifferent perspective, outside of what is available in the media.

ARB: What do you mean by indifferent?

BV: Not scolding, not biased by class or elitism. Not exclusionary of ideas and perspectives. I think I'm printing what happens behind closed doors. My friends, many of us gay, black, trans are having conversations and using language that's now considered controversial—but none of us are perceiving or experiencing it as controversial in our private lives. It's only when it's in public, or in print, or on social media that people are having this outrage, having this faux concern.

ARB: Why do you think that is?

Americans are never honest. With media there's no nuance. But you see more and more this is changing—content on the Red Scare podcast, or the Drunken Canal, or any of these new publications where words like "faggot" or other forbidden words come up and are contextualized or decontextualized and understood and it's no big deal. People say these words privately with their friends. Their panties are not in a bunch as much as they pretend they are. Let's be honest. You know? Let's be honest.

ARB: Why is it important that people are able to use that language? I'm reluctant to give any more ink to the idea of "cancel culture." What are you working towards here?

BV: I don't understand what scolding someone does. I don't see that it makes society better, makes society kinder. I would ask the people who are so dead set on canceling someone "What does that do?" And I would assume their response would be "Well now there's no hateful speech from this person!" But there's always going to be hateful speech because humans hate sometimes. And I'm not making an excuse for that, but as far as human expression it is vital, it is extremely important to be able to express yourself fully and freely. The bar keeps moving as far as what hate speech is. Like, saying someone's an idiot or stupid is hate speech! I don't know what robots they want walking around, but as an artist, or a writer, even as maybe a curator, I would think you want the fullness of human expression because it's tethered to curiosity. It's tethered to lived experience, to nuance, to love, even to hate. And that's super important: to understand yourself, to understand other people, to understand what it means to be human. It's vital. And I do not understand people who are creators or artists tying themselves to that culture, trying to cancel thoughts or feelings or being reactionary. I'll leave it as this: It's a cognitive distortion. If you justify your distortions and then integrate that into human expression via art, that's going to make people dumber.

as an artist, or a writer…I would think you want the fullness of human expression because it's tethered to curiosity. It's tethered to lived experience, to nuance, to love, even to hate.

ARB: People like who?

BV: Americans. And I would also say in America we have adopted the idea that college, university, is symbolic of smarts. And I think that's becoming less and less true, because college is corporatized to cater to a clientele rather than to students. It's like finishing school for rich kids. You know, it's cultish. There's an outside, there's an inside. America has puritan roots, and so there's good and there's evil. You definitely see that in college which is exclusionary and where speech is policed, and you also see that where people are devoted to hard party lines because they believe in an intangible devil, for them there's always evil forces at work.

ARB: I think the other part of the corporate academic structure has to do with labor policies at colleges and universities. Often only those with family money can afford to write or to teach full time, and in that system the limited perspectives of those who grew up with wealth come to dominate. Same with journalism, which was once a field dominated by people without college educations who came up through the ranks—then J schools became the norm—suddenly you needed money to become a reporter.

BV: Absolutely. This is why I have nothing and everything at stake as a journalist, if that makes sense. I feel that if I don't start doing something for myself, what is the future? Just continuing to be a bartender? I don't want to do that, I feel that I have a lot to offer and I'm going for it in the best way that I can. Which is not about climbing a social ladder or being a careerist, it's about being dedicated to sharing a different perspective, and publishing other people who have nuanced, different, subversive perspectives. I'm really—I hate to use this word—passionate about that. And so it drives me to literally pick up shifts and to work harder. There are times where I have gulped when I got the bill for the printers, when I thought, "I could have bought a used car with this money." But ultimately by the fourth or fifth issue, I thought as long as I can sustain enough energy to basically support myself, and to put the paper out, then I'm committed. At 34 I said, "I will do this hard until I'm 40. I'm going to give myself these six years." I said, "We'll reassess at 40, and if it's not happening, I'll become a manager at Applebee's and get health benefits."

This is About Class

Ben Durham

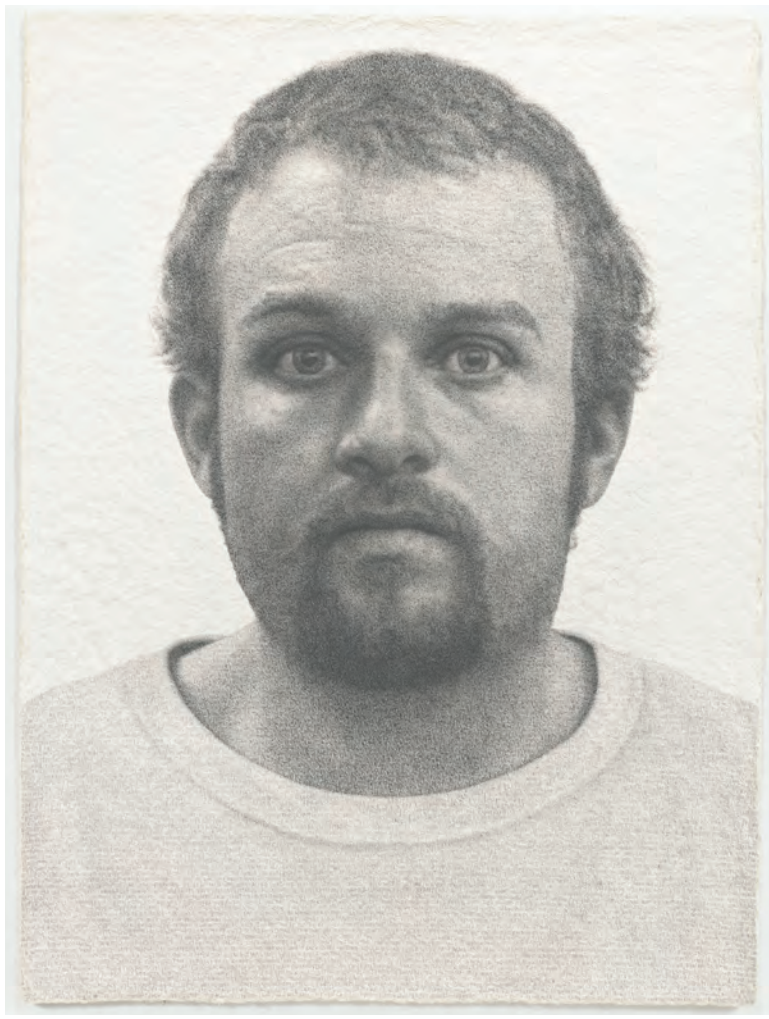
For the last 18 years I've been researching, writing, and creating portraits based on the official mugshots of friends and classmates from my childhood in central Kentucky. Some have been accused of petty crimes. Others will spend the rest of their lives in prison.

In my late teens, I learned that the Department of Corrections in my hometown maintained an online public database of every mugshot and arrest record. Visiting the website for the first time, I expected a voyeuristic glimpse into a world I knew little about but instead quickly discovered the mugshots and records of dozens of people I'd grown up with. In the 20 years since discovering the database, these mugshots have torn apart and redefined my understanding of every single aspect of my childhood. Every friendship, every interaction, every classroom, and every street of the neighborhood has been transformed. Gradually, a far more accurate map of my past came into focus.

Throughout my childhood, I heard frequently about the Bluegrass-Aspendale Housing Project. It was always discussed in the news as the center, if not the source, of much of the crime, drugs, and violence in our city. When I heard those stories as a kid, I assumed without question that these housing projects were located somewhere across town and I both feared and judged them. Only after I began researching arrest records did I finally discover that Bluegrass-Aspendale was, in fact, essentially across the street from my childhood block. Separated only by a heavily trafficked road with no crosswalks, it was less than a half of a mile away. Nearly every Black kid I'd ever known and been friends with had lived there. And yet I hadn't known.

Wedged between the affluence of grand historic homes along the outer stretch of downtown and the industrial core of factories, warehouses, and train yards just a few blocks behind, my neighborhood had once been housing for the servants of those upper-class homes. When I was a kid, it became a destination for many poor white Appalachian transplants from nearby eastern Kentucky. At the end of my block, the sidewalk ended and became a gravel truck yard filled alternately with semi-trailers or dumped trash. The almost chemical smell of peanuts roasting from the Jif factory two blocks away filled the air and, next to the factory, Bluegrass-Aspendale was fenced in on nearly all sides. Double layers of razor-wire fence, with a no-man's land between, delineated the factory's property. It's clear there were some who would always see us either as servants or criminals, if not both.

This though is not primarily about crime. This is about the gradually accumulating moments of recognition and understanding as kids that our culture viewed us as inferior and somehow dangerous. For a brief time, our ignorance of the differences between us allowed a mutual understanding and sense of connection that I've rarely felt since. I've often thought of that period of transition in elementary school from not quite understanding class or race or gender, to becoming hyper-aware of a thousand hierarchies, large and small, separating those who, just months before, had been people I felt connected to in an essential and significant way. That feeling of connection went away and never returned.



Jack by Ben Durham. Graphite text on handmade paper 2013

One morning while crossing the road to my elementary school after everyone else had gone inside, I saw a teenager who should've been elsewhere at some other school, frantically crying and banging his head again and again against a stop sign. He seemed impossibly tall to me and his rage, turning further and further inward into violent self-harm, felt like some stage of growing up in our world. In our culture of racial and class divisions, violence and hatred become simultaneously inward and outward, both the spitting of a hateful slur and the banging of your own head against a stop sign. There was never a fight or conflict between kids with a winner, it doesn't work that way and it never has, at least not for us.

My life, my understanding of myself and others, and my artwork will always be reflections of these experiences and the myriad hierarchies and systems of power throughout society. I now see everything through that lens in my attempt to not forget the tragedy—and I do not exaggerate—of many of the kids I grew up with realizing they were viewed as lesser and coming to believe it to be true. This is about those moments of realization, those moments repeated throughout a child's life, throughout a teenager's life until the criminal justice system begins to play its role. I was taught to blame the individual, yet I grew up watching us shaped, led, and manipulated by a class system that understands exactly how to maintain and proliferate its power.

Against this, I re-create each official mugshot as a drawn icon of these individuals marked to be forgotten. I do so out of belief in the significance of those I grew up alongside and a complicated sense of solidarity, but also as an effort to continually reject the system of privilege and power embodied by the contemporary art world. Portraits in particular are a fraught symbol of art's role in the designation and preservation of privilege, authority, and control. My efforts to counter this don't change the fact that my art is undeniably embedded within that hierarchical world and I've benefited from the same systems that have punished others. How can we then begin to talk about class from within its framework? It's something that I know so intimately, yet the thing for which I have such limited vocabulary and for which we as a culture have such a deep-rooted inability to accept or address. This is why I continue to believe in the active and critical conflict artists can enable.

My work will continue because I'll never stop attempting to describe the allegance I'll always have with those I grew up alongside. It's an allegiance not just to others, but to myself and the reality of my place in the world. I will not pretend to have transcended these class barriers. I will not pretend that every judgment I make and every view I have isn't colored by my understanding and experience of class. I can never separate it from every interaction, every relationship I have, and neither do I believe can anyone else. Class is our culture, everything we treasure and everything that fails us, trapping us with the aspect of ourselves we work so hard for, yet know to be our great fault.

Class is that thing.

Ben Durham *is an artist living and working in Richmond, VA. His text-based drawings are in the permanent collections of the* Whitney Museum of American Art, *the* Hammer Museum, *and the* Virginia Museum of Fine Art, *among others.*

ARB Poetry

IT'S SO HARD TO GET ANYTHING DONE KNOWING THAT HISTORY HAPPENED

Sarah Galvin

History, when everyone was playing pianos with their elbows and dancing naked with Buddy Holly and giving the neighbors shoe boxes of their own poop as presents. I'll admit that everything I know about history is from Little Richard's biography, but that admission does nothing to solve the problems of the present, like my inability to find the neighbors. I've been walking around with this shoe box for so long I don't remember where I live, but sometimes I hear piano from an open window and I stand inside the music like a liquid, outside of time, just happy my shoe box isn't empty.

Sarah Galvin *is the author of* Ugly Time, The Three Einsteins *and* The Best Party of our Lives; *contributor to* The Guardian, Vice Magazine, The Stranger, *and* City Arts; *and also a human bottle rocket.*

Traveled Traveler (where are you happy) by N. Masani Landfair. Collage on paper 2021

Paid by the Word

Nick Mamatas

The Deep End: The Literary Scene in the Great Depression and Today
by Jason Boog
223pp. OR Books 2020

Subtitled "The Literary Scene in the Great Depression and Today", *The Deep End* by Jason Boog is a very interesting, if ultimately fairly light, look at how writers organized during the Great Depression, with some personal thoughts, mostly focused on the Occupy movement of the last decade.

Naturally, writers have it bad. When I was first getting published, it was possible to get $1 a word writing cultural criticism and journalism for second-tier glossy magazines, and fifty cents a word for essays for alternative weeklies. It wasn't unusual for a novelist to make real money writing short non-fiction—20-30 pieces a year for $1000-$5000, plus a $15-30K novel advance every couple of years, and they'd almost be middle-class if they had a spouse with a real job or lived in a small town close enough to a big city. The first dot.com boom drastically increased the supply of writing (now called "content") and then the big bust of 2001 told capitalism that all this content was worth *nothing*.

That's the situation Boog was coming out of, and I was as well (I met Boog twice in the early 2000s). He stuck with journalism, and I went into fiction, which pays between 3-10 cents a word for the most part. It's not that fiction pays well at all, it's that non-fiction plummeted to meet fiction at the bottom of the price barrel. At one point, in *The Deep End,* Boog admits that an early blogging platform he worked for simply stopped paying authors but he kept filing stories in order to look busy and gainfully employed.

In the 1930s, things were a little different. Writers worked together with the organized employees of publishers to hold pickets. Daily newspaper journalists formed their first unions. The Communist Party was large enough to support a mass-circulation magazine, *The New Masses,* which launched many a career, though didn't pay much or sometimes even anything. The Federal Writers Project—also full of Reds and sympathizers—kept many a writer busy and provided decent paychecks. Boog organizes *The Deep End* around personalities and movements: Richard Wright gets a chapter, as does Nathanael West; so too does the now-unknown Maxwell Bodenheim, who launched a poetry street fair in Washington Square Park and traded typed manuscripts for hamburgers. The anti-fascist documentary poet Muriel Rukeyser also gets a chapter.

Of course, writing itself was different. Proletarian fiction and socialist realism were in vogue among most of this set, as were rhyming couplets about workers and farmers. Boog touches a bit on pulp fiction by looking at Cornell Woolrich and comparing it to his own blogging for $7.50 per 300-word post (then $4.50, then $0.00) but the emphasis is on politicized and ultimately Soviet-influenced material, and the regional non-fiction of the FWP. When talking about the contemporary scene, Boog sticks with the 2010s-era online journalism with which he is familiar, along with a brief discussion of Kindle and the ebook-pricing battles that accompanied it.

The Deep End is published by OR Books, which uses POD technology and can thus instantly update the text, so Boog is able to discuss COVID a bit, though he necessarily missed the new rebellion (and nationwide cop riot) that took place after the killing of George Floyd. He also misses a few other things too. For example, there's no discussion of how the anti-corporate globalization movement of the late 1990s led to the creation of Indymedia (and how a lack of a coherent left harmed it when it became a repository for 9/11 conspiracy theories). Many of Boog's thoughts about Occupy feel a bit tenuous, though I enjoyed nostalgically reading about Occupy Wall Street's People's Library.

Unfortunately, social media and dashed-off tweets have almost entirely replaced on-the-spot blogging and attempts to reach out to commercial media. And since a coherent left is only now beginning to form in the crucible of COVID and BLM, Boog's shrugs about the failure of Occupy to do much to help the financials and cultural position of writers feel a bit like filler. And yet, the past two years have seen substantial unionization drives among writers: small "New Media" shops ranging from Hearst Magazines and Vox to Gizmodo and *The Onion* have been organized by the Writers Guild of America, East. These employed bloggers and writers make peanuts compared to their union screenwriter siblings, leading to bureaucratic attempts to end the union drive, which were beaten back by the rank and file. Pop culture workers at Paizo Inc. and Image Comics are also forming their own unions.

The Deep End is still an interesting extended essay on leftist writing in the US, and the intersections of bohemia and activism in the 1930s, and well-worth reading for that, but I didn't find it had that much to say about today. And how could it, as every single day in the 2020s brings us new and unprecedented disasters, and yes, a few opportunities for writers to organize?

***Nick Mamatas** is the author of several novels, including* Move Under Ground *and* The Second Shooter, *and short fiction in* Best American Mystery Stories *and* The Year's Best Science Fiction and Fantasy. *His essays and reportage have appeared in* The Smart Set, Clamor, In These Times, Village Voice, *and many other places.*

White Fear

The Hanging of The Confederate Flag

Madeline ffitch

In October 2017, the clocktower rang high noon as I stood with more than 300 people at the Scripps Amphitheater on the campus of Ohio University, a land grant institution in the hills of Appalachian Ohio, where I live. We were there to watch John Sims' multimedia piece, "The Proper Way to Hang a Confederate Flag," a culminating event in his sixteen-year project "Recoloration Proclamation."

The day was cold and bright. Sunlight struck the brick walkways of the theater. Copper leaves slid underfoot on the grass. The performance began with a blessing, asking for the solidarity of Black and transgender people lynched in Ohio. It included readings by emerging and nationally known poets, including a collaborative piece that addressed Huey Newton, Fred Hampton, Harriet Tubman, and Blackness itself. The event ended with music and food, a celebration invoking a gospel of inclusion. The cast was multiracial, multigendered, and multigenerational. "It was important to me that there be many different people represented onstage," Sims later told me. "It shouldn't be seen just as a Black thing to bring the confederate flag to justice. It's everyone's responsibility."

At the height of the performance, Sims took the stage, wearing a black woolen long-coat. He stood in front of a 13-foot high pinewood gallows and read aloud "The Confederate Redress", which he had written for the occasion. "We are met on a great battlefield of symbols, where images, language and stories are weaponized to protect ideology of white supremacy," he read. "Now we must bring forth the balance of justice. The confederate flag shall hang as an acknowledgement of the trauma and pain caused to the African American experience and its peoples by the confederacy and its protectors. The confederate flag shall hang as an affirmation that the south shall never rise again among us in body or soul." As he finished, a haunting version of "Dixie" in the style of Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit" drifted across the audience and the confederate flag was strung up by a noose. The crowd cheered. Afterward, people lingered long after the food was gone, hugging, crying, introducing one another, and snapping pictures of the confederate flag hanging limp from the gallows, twisting in the slight wind.

A casual observer would almost certainly have assumed that Ohio University deserved credit for hosting this uniquely relevant piece of contemporary art, but in fact neighbors, students, alumni, local musicians and artists, activist cooks, and anti-racist organizers made the event happen despite the institution. Weeks earlier, the College of Fine Arts had declared that no Ohio University department, center, or student group could support Sims' performance. If they did, the dean claimed, they would be compelled to provide equal support to the Ku Klux Klan.

Four years on, Sims' Ohio Hanging still has relevance for me and for the Appalachian community I live in. This writing documents conversations with many who were directly involved in the performance and the process of producing Sims' work in defiance of the University that has so much power in our town. After all, as Sims says, this work is everyone's responsibility.

John Sims with The Proper Way to Hang a Confederate Flag

Ohio University's Kennedy Museum initially invited Sims to present "The Proper Way to Hang a Confederate Flag" (whose title references Dread Scott's infamous 1988 installation for audience participation, "What is the The Proper Way to Display a U.S. Flag") in a student-curated group show called "Expression and Repression: Contemporary Art Censorship in America," which also featured works by Sue Coe, Kara Walker, and David Wojnarowicz. The irony of the show's title became apparent almost immediately. When Sims reminded the Kennedy that his piece was meant to be performed outdoors, the museum's installer noted the surrounding "conservative community" and said he was concerned about "vandalism either to the piece or to the museum." The museum director went further, insisting that Sims' work be installed on a wall that couldn't be seen through the gallery's window. He said that he didn't want museum patrons—schoolchildren in particular—to have to view "controversial material." Over email, they continued to pressure Sims to compromise until August 11th 2017. That night, in Charlottesville, Virginia, torch-wielding white supremacists descended on the campus of the University of Virginia, and the next day a white supremacist drove his car into a crowd of protestors, killing anti-fascist organizer Heather Heyer and injuring many others. Sims did not hear from the Kennedy until one week later, when, curtly citing a "lack of space, time, and resources," they disinvited him from the exhibition.

I'd known Sims since 2015, when he presented his acclaimed "AfroDixie Remixes" at a weekend of workshops I helped organize. We remained in touch, and Sims forwarded me the emails from museum staff. I, in turn, called a few friends, including Prince Shakur and Jazzmine Hardges-Garner, writers and activists whom I knew would be interested. We met up at the punk bar and talked the situation over. Jolana Watson and I, both members of the direct-action collective, Appalachia Resist, decided to confront the museum's director in person.

Watson predicted that she might be sidelined based on stereotypes of Black female anger, so we decided that I, a white woman, would be the angry one, while Watson would record the conversation. Watson recalls, "We were strategic about you being the confrontational one, and I acted like the MLK. Because of that, we got a lot of information and they revealed how the museum's response was based on fear."

In his office, the museum director began to tell us how regrettable it was that logistics had made Sims' visit impossible. I interrupted to tell him that he needn't bother with the clean version, because we'd seen all the emails. I called their disinvitation cowardly. Visibly annoyed, the director shifted blame to the installer. He assured us that the museum had exhibited many civil rights era artists. He pointed to the walls around him, reminding us that there were Native American rugs on display. Finally, he accused me of bullying him.

Watson shared the recorded conversation with Sims, who contacted the National Coalition Against Censorship. The NCAC wrote the Kennedy Museum a strongly worded letter, which stated in part, "to undercut a signature work by an African American artist of stature that critiques white supremacy, especially in light of its inclusion in an exhibition about censorship of art in America—is not only ironic, it sends a message to students and other members of the community that it is too risky or dangerous to openly critique white supremacy." Within a week, the Kennedy had reinvited Sims. This time, when Sims said he wanted to perform the piece outdoors before the gallery show, they responded with enthusiasm. We took it as a victory.

But two weeks before the performance, on the day the university's press release was meant to go out, Sims noticed that his performance was not on it. The other aspects of his visit—his gallery exhibition, his lecture, the panel on art, activism and white supremacy that Watson had organized—were all there. But the performance, which was the core of his visit, was missing. At first, we thought it was a mistake. The Kennedy museum staff prevaricated, refused to answer direct questions, and finally told us to contact the College of Fine Arts. When Watson and I went to meet with the dean, he told us that for the school to support Sims' performance in any way—even simply attaching their name to it on a poster—would be a liability.

Watson reflected, "When the dean said that if OU supported John Sims it would also have to support the KKK, he was comparing Black people expressing hurt and anger to white people advocating genocide. He was saying those things are the same." He paused, then broke into a smile. "But knowing the university didn't want it to happen only made me want to do it more. When they try to repress us it just makes me louder."

With only a few weeks to go until the performance, we decided to push back. We reached out to the community. Local groups signed on as supporters. People volunteered to make food for the potluck, to bake and decorate the afro-rebel cakes, which were frosted to look like the confederate flag recolored in the red, black, and green of Black liberation. A group from West Virginia that fights mountain top removal coal mining made a donation. Artists and organizers from Pittsburgh to North Carolina, and even as far as Michigan put it out to their lists. The local paper ran Sims' op-ed piece. He placed a full-page ad in the student newspaper. We printed several hundred postcards with the Confederate Redress printed on the back. The campus Multicultural Center found ways to lend support under the radar. The Black Student Cultural Programming Board printed and distributed posters that they weren't allowed to put their student group name on.

We also made safety plans. Rather than leave security up to the police we invited Appalachian anti-fascist organizers to train people in bystander intervention, situational awareness, and anti-hate group organizing—including monitoring online forums to survey if any organized opposition to the performance was being planned. On the day of the hanging, trained street medics were on hand. Volunteers were stationed at every entrance to greet everyone who came in and keep an eye on anyone who seemed like they might be there to disrupt the event.

In the end, the security plans remained a precaution, and the audience was able to focus on the art. Sims told me, "The institution lost an opportunity to sit at the table. That lack of support required us to dig deep in the community. It was an opportunity to connect. And that's good."

Yet in our mostly white town, community support came with its own obstacles.

Sarah Garlington worked at the time with the Athens chapter of Showing Up for Racial Justice, described by its website as a "national network organizing white people for racial justice." She told me, "I thought it was a great idea for SURJ to support John's performance. We took it to the general meeting and people initially said yes. But then, some white people in SURJ began saying it was divisive and that students of color would feel threatened afterwards. They were thinking the whole event was too risky." On a text-message thread established to communicate among groups about event details, one white woman wrote, "If we do this we might get shot." Another white woman echoed her. A third agreed, and added that she had heard that students of color were also afraid. Another called the police, though no one could quite say why. At any rate, the police already knew about the publicly advertised event.

How dangerous was Sims' performance, and who was it dangerous for? Shakur told me, "White liberals tend to verbalize things about fear or danger at 'controversial' events that Black people understand and accept from their first breath." Delfin Bautista, then director of OU's LGBT center, who led the blessing at the beginning of the performance said, "For me, participating was a question of, 'How do we hold our fear and hold our boldness, too?' Even with the university saying we aren't going to endorse this, we were saying, okay well we aren't going to let fear define us." The Revolutionary Je Exodus Hooper, whose secular gospel of inclusion rounded out Sim's event, said, "I was afraid. Not for myself but for John and for the young performers. I was scared for that white man who climbed on the ladder and tied the noose. But all that fear blossomed into unapologetic pride. I was so glad that the flag was scraping the wood surface of the gallows. I thought of Eric Garner saying 'I can't breathe,' Sandra Bland saying, 'what are you going to do, arrest me.' I thought of Michael Brown, and I could impose that narrative on that twitching and suffering flag." Hardges-Garner said, "I am always at a higher risk than my non-Black peers. I was at risk before the performance and will continue to be at risk after." She told me that her favorite line of the poem she and Shakur wrote and presented that day was, "Dear Blackness, Whatever you fear, they've already done to us."

Watson didn't mince words. "Showing up for racial justice means that you might get shot," she said. "Black people are already getting shot, not even protesting, but just trying to get through the day." When the SURJ member called the police, Watson declared, "That officially wins the Distressed White Woman of the Year award."

So, it was not that some people were afraid and some people were fearless. The difference lay in what we did with those fears. It's possible to imagine that those less likely to have experienced racialized violence—white people—would be less afraid, perhaps simply because we would be more naïve about the consequences, or more arrogant about our own safety. Instead, white people's fear kept getting in the way. Maybe part of white fear is being bad at risk-assessment. Maybe, unused to being targets of racist violence, many white people—even those of us who swear we aren't racist—don't know when it's appropriate to be afraid, how afraid to be, and most of all, how our fear should or should not determine our behavior, and how our fear will harm those around us.

Yet our fear has impact, and things only get worse when individual fear is linked to broader institutional power. It was clear that in university administrative offices, people couldn't figure out how to assess "The Proper Way to Hang a Confederate Flag": was it a protest? A piece of art? Was it divisive? Was it risky? One faculty member who attended the performance and wished not to be named told me, "Honestly, I think the administration was shitting bricks. They were worried Athens would be the next Charlottesville."

Although the university was afraid that John Sims' performance might put him and others in danger, they did not provide him with transportation between his hotel and the campus. Instead, anti-fascists loaned Sims a car, and provided him with a driver and escorts for

the duration of his visit, in case of potential harassment. It was not the university administration, but students from the Multiracial Action Coalition (the same students of color that SURJ members used as an excuse to hedge their support) who organized a bus to drive people to and from the amphitheater on the day of the hanging, taking the necessary steps to care for those who wanted to attend, not avoid, the event.

"No one wants to support the KKK," a woman who works in the College of Fine Arts Marketing office explained to me when she defended the false equivalency used to justify her superiors' decision. "Everyone wants to support John Sims."

In order to not support the KKK, the institution didn't support Sims. So this is what we've come to: Non-support is actually support. Here is one endgame of white fear: panic over the specter of an impending white nationalist campus invasion led, in practical terms, to the repression and abandonment of a Black anti-racist artist. The KKK couldn't have planned it better.

It's been four years since the Ohio Hanging. In that time, there has been a nationwide uprising against racism and police violence unprecedented in its size, scope, and sustained nature. Across the country, businesses, banks, museums and municipalities have scrambled to articulate where they stand on the matter of Black lives. Ohio University is no exception, introducing a George Floyd Memorial Scholarship Fund in Fall of 2020.

Delfin Bautista no longer works for the university and is bringing a discrimination suit against it on the basis of gender and sexuality. When I ask how they think of Sims' performance four years on, they describe the way that it felt to stand onstage beside Sims, look into the audience, and not see a single member of the OU administration. "That was very telling," they said. "It shows how they really feel about Black and minoritized students." Do they trust the university's newly minted commitment to racial justice? "It's a PR move," Bautista said. "There needs to be a huge shift. What could bring that about? I have no idea."

Watson looks back on Sims' performance and remembers a pressure to be quiet that she says is particularly aimed at Black students. "When Black students spoke out about anything, they would specifically pressure us by saying your scholarship could get taken away, or your future job prospects could be jeopardized. But all those things they told me would hurt me have actually helped me a lot. The fact that I have been an activist makes me a better candidate for the kind of jobs I care about getting."

Je Hooper, who now lives in Baltimore and continues to preach secular ethics, tells me, "I still think about how John said about his work, don't marginalize it by calling it protest. His piece continues to be relevant if it's given the full nuance of art. Because remember, we are not currently fighting a confederacy. We are fighting structural, institutional, and psychological racial warfare."

When Prince Shakur heard about the George Floyd scholarship, he launched the #BlackAtOU project on his Instagram page, accusing Ohio University of co-opting racial justice movements. "It's throwing crumbs," he says. "I mean, how are you supposed to feel if you are the Black student who is recruited for a scholarship named after someone who has become a symbol of Black people being brutalized, so that you get the chance to walk around on a mostly white campus with zero plans in place for structural change." It's not only students and alumni who feel this way. The OU Black Faculty Association issued a statement calling the scholarship an "empty gesture" and an "insult". They write, "Ohio University has not yet acknowledged its own institutional racism."

In May of 2021, while Sims was in residence at an art gallery in Columbia, South Carolina, police broke into his apartment/studio in the middle of the night, pointed guns at him, cuffed him, and demanded to know why he was there. True to form, Sims turned the experience into fodder for art, filing an "artist incident report" in response to the police incident report, and spreading a 24-foot high recolored confederate flag on the steps of the South Carolina Statehouse. "The way the police treated me, that's the confederate mindset," he told me on the phone this week from his Sarasota studio. "A Black man out of place. A Black man not in the place they think he should be or expect him to be." News of the incident went global. The police chief came to Sims' gallery show, but has continued to insist that his officers followed protocol. The department has not issued an apology.

It is not lost on Sims that after the incident, artistic opportunities began to roll in. "Institutions and major economic entities all want to get on the bandwagon after the fact," he told me. When I tell him about OU's new scholarship, he laughs. "I can guarantee you that if Ohio University had the chance to host me now, they would jump at the chance," he says. "So what does it take to move the needle? To get these institutions on board? Bloodshed, harm, any kind of sensation? We have to do better."

Sims wants it to be remembered that in 2017, our perseverance paid off. "We could easily have given up," he says. "When they tried to disinvite me, to make the show smaller or to hide it, to take away funding, to impose a media blackout, to curtail departmental and student group support, we could have just given up, but we kept pushing, because we had a bigger vision than OU. We wanted to be part of a national conversation, a national reckoning." He sees aspects of that experience echoed in what has been happening in the streets this past year. "The youth are refusing to protect institutions," he says. "They are pushing us forward. Very often these liberal institutions are standing in the way of the visions they broadcast. It's the artist's responsibility to push, even when the people you are pushing are your supposed allies."

It's been four years, and despite the dean's stated fears, the KKK has yet to demand space and funding at OU. If they do, however, the university will be unable to avoid taking a position. Their stance on the Sims performance will not protect them, nor does it exempt them from implication in what is already happening on their campus and in this country at large. The Ohio Hanging reminded me that institutions are no excuse. If we wait for them to act with boldness and clarity instead of with the self-interest of the shifting political winds, we will be waiting a long time. But the action or inaction of institutions does not dictate our relationships and responsibilities. It does not protect us from criticism or exempt us from ethical obligation. In the work ahead, no one is exempt. We are all implicated.

Madeline ffitch *writes and organizes in Appalachian Ohio. She was a founding member of the punk theater company,* The Missoula Oblongata, *and is the author of the novel,* Stay and Fight, *and the story collection,* Valparaiso, Round the Horn.

When I first come in it was weird, but I learn to deal with it by going to church and working, studying for my God. Reading, Bible studies, just doing me. My upbeat attitude comes from Jesus. As a Woman who has gebuilt herself. Now being in my 60s because I have seen and heard about so many people I know dying.

Andrea, 64, in a rec room at Taconic Correctional Facility (2019). Sentence: 20 years to life. Incarcerated in 2001 at the age of 46. Photo by Sara Bennet 2019

Free Them All

Glynis Hart

Contesting Carceral Logic: Toward Abolitionist Futures
edited by Michael J. Coyle and Mechtild Nagel
228pp. Informa PLC 2022

Carceral Con: The Deceptive Terrain of Criminal Justice Reform
by Kay Whitlock, and Nancy Heitzig
276pp. University of California 2021

Lessons in Liberation: An Abolitionist Toolkit for Educators
edited by the Education for Liberation Network & Critical Resistance Editorial Collective
376pp. AK Press 2021

Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration
by Nicole R. Fleetwood
350pp. Harvard 2020

> Three quarters of all the acts which are brought every year before our courts have their origin, either directly or indirectly, in the present disorganized state of society with regard to the production and distribution of wealth – not in the perversity of human nature. As to the relatively few anti-social deeds which result from the anti-social inclinations of separate individuals, it is not by prisons, or even by resorting to the hangman, that we can diminish their numbers. By our prisons, we merely multiply them and render them worse.
>
> —Peter Kropotkin,
> *Anarchist Communism: Its Basis and Principles*

The System Doesn't Work

Mike Larsen writes in "Considering Abolition," (Vice, June 2011) that discussions of penal abolition are easily sidetracked by the implication that prison abolitionists are either dreaming of a utopia where no child grows up to be a mass murderer, or they are plotting to release mass murderers among the population. "The 'dangerous few' conversation pins us down to responding to a fear of monsters that relates to an incredibly small percentage of 'offenders'. It is a red herring," he writes. If statistics are correct, the incorrigibly violent considered a danger to society comprise less than 10 percent of the prison population. Prison abolitionists, including some in this review, focus on alleviating conditions for the other 90 percent. They work to dismantle a system that reinforces and creates violent and predatory behavior.

All four of these books support prison abolition, working to dismantle the cultural beliefs that support mass incarceration, and centering the voices of people caught up in the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC). *Contesting Carceral Logic* addresses these beliefs through a collection of academic essays and prisoners' writing.

The PIC rests on a cultural belief that bad people are locked up to protect good people. People who commit crimes are caught, punished for a period of time, and either "learn their lesson" or don't. In the words of a corrections officer at a county jail (name withheld): "People are in here because their parents didn't raise them right, so we have to do it." Judges, social workers, police officers, probation officers, as well as the TV-watching and general public, subscribe to a belief that jail and prison are somehow salutory—if not to the inmates themselves, then to those on the outside. Culture's constant, ongoing effort to describe and assign people to a criminal class, shows up in the twisted defense arguments of lawyers for Kyle Rittenhouse, the McMichaels, and Derek Chauvin. In these cases, by no means anomalous, defense lawyers sought to blame victims for their own murders by assigning them to a criminal class and claiming the murderers acted out of fear.

Contesting Carceral Logic challenges such beliefs. Diana Block of the California Collective for Women Prisoners explains in the foreword that the CCWP's prison abolition work began by women on the outside addressing the basic health care needs of incarcerated women, especially women of color, trans and gay women, who are frequently deprived of basic or acute medical care, leading to their premature deaths. "CCWP's medical advocacy has consistently battled this lack of health care which callously sucks the life out of incarcerated people." Further, since a majority of people in women's prisons have experienced sexual violence, the collective prioritizes support for sexual assault and domestic violence survivors.

Prison work such as that engaged in by CCWP, which focuses on the health needs of prisoners, pushes back against the cultural belief that prison is a just punishment for crimes committed. For instance, strip searches and cavity searches of inmates would be sexual assault in any other context; these practices traumatize inmates. Solitary confinement drives people insane, a fact that has been known since its inception at Auburn Prison in the 1800s. Yet despite pushback from advocacy groups and some surface legal changes, its use in the US continued to expand before, during, and after the pandemic.

Expansion of the maze of administrative rules, including rules meant for prisoner safety, complicates incarceration, deepening and expanding the PIC's control over prisoners' time and their bodies.

> As soon as you walk through the prison doors gang intelligence will tag you as a member of one of the many security threat groups (STG) without any validations other than the tattoos on your body. Half the time the tattoos are regular tattoos anyone gets. My problem is being faced with the possibility of...additional charges after being found guilty for rule infractions. For example, I can get caught with a homemade knife in my possession which is a rule one infraction. A hearing officer found me guilty, gave me 180 days to do on lock up, and took away 120

> days of good conduct credits pushing an already long release date back further. On top of that, I get re-booked for the same charges at the District Court...and had to take a plea deal which added six more months to my sentence. You might ask what I'm doing carrying around a weapon in the first place but after seeing on numerous occasions men dying from inmate-on-inmate knife fights, I usually need to keep access to some sort of weapon if confrontation comes my way...
>
> —Adrain Outten, *Contesting Carceral Logic*

Reforms Have Been Making It Worse

> "If there are 'career criminals' weighing the odds and making clever choices, then they are probably getting away with their crimes which would explain why I've never met any of them in prison."
>
> —Richard Sean Gross, *Contesting Carceral Logic*

Carceral Con (Whitlock & Heitzig, editors), delineates how incarceration has expanded hand-in-hand with reforms touted to reduce prison populations. Writing in their introduction that civil rights advocates have joined with conservative groups under the banner of prison reform, the authors dub those strange bedfellows, their agendas and policy templates "the bipartisan consensus."

> For example, promises to end 'overcriminalization' litter bipartisan talking points. But that's a word deceptive as quicksand. The bipartisan consensus intentionally sidesteps the matter of explosive growth in immigrant detention. Even though being in the United States without the required authorization is considered a civil, not a criminal, infraction...a decades-long fusion of immigration policy with processes of criminalization and aggressive policing —"crimmigration"— has been an expansive bipartisan project.

Efforts to divert the accused into drug courts and community supervision "increasingly entangle defendants with burdensome expectations and escalating schedules of fines and fees that increase the likelihood of eventual detention." Diversionary programs, for example, may require participants to pay for and undergo drug tests whether or not their original charge involved drugs, or to maintain full-time employment while also adhering to curfews and actively shunning people (including relatives, friends and so forth) with criminal records. Probation, which operates on the assumption that the state's aim of punishment can be accomplished outside jail or prison, increasingly becomes a pathway to incarceration as the list of requirements placed on probationers becomes less and less workable: "Hundreds of thousands of people are subject to excessive fees and surveillance because they were too poor to pay the initial fines and court fees." Nonprofits involved in prison work can become part of the surveillance network as they seek permissions from jail and prison authorities to interact with people on the inside.

Building Better Communities

Lessons in Liberation, a handbook for educators, is a mixed bag of academic essays, advocacy writings, art and classroom instruction assembled for adults to assist young people—primarily low-income youth and Black, Indigenous and youth of color —to resist and address the school-to-prison pipeline. "This toolkit is by and for those committed to starving the prison industrial complex and seeding and feeding new systems of care, safety and freedom." Produced by The Education for Liberation Network & Critical Resistance Editorial Collective, the book invites educators to understand and practice abolition as a way to create trust in teaching relationships, while giving the children they teach real tools to survive in a society pressing them toward incarceration: "Abolitionist educators struggle to live, work, do and be in right relation with others at all times; there is an alignment between what they espouse and what they actually model." The book assists educators in validating the experiences of students and teaching self-care and self-advocacy. "Abolitionist educators distinguish accountability from punishment, leveraging transformative justice and other forms of community accountability to strengthen safety, repair relationships and adjudicate harm." With its focus on young people and on changing and building systems, the toolkit has moments of fun and optimism; acknowledgements of the need for spiritual renewal and rest for teachers and children; voices of women of color and caring perspectives. It is dynamic, lively, sad, thoughtful, and incomplete—the start of a good conversation.

Truth-telling on the Inside

Finally, *Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration*, which accompanied the MoMA/PS1 exhibit of prisoners' art curated by Nicole R. Fleetwood, showcases "the visual culture of mass incarceration" and argues for its place in the canon of American art. Prison art is produced under duress, with artists having limited access to materials or space. Paper and pens are routinely limited or confiscated for rule infractions, or for no reason at all. Prison art is also used as currency and can be taken from or traded away by the artists. It can be burdened by peculiar aesthetic rules, for instance favoring abstract aesthetics and landscapes because wardens monitor the art for gang symbols.

Fleetwood writes, "One of the challenges of writing this book is that many currently and formerly incarcerated artists are not in possession of their art...Art made in prison is sent to relatives, traded with fellow prisoners, sold or 'gifted' to prison staff, donated to nonprofit organizations and sometimes made for private clients. Unlike artists who work outside prisons, who are able to document their creations, incarcerated artists often are unable to photograph or make copies of their work. There are people I interviewed who described their work and practices to me but had nothing to show."

The beauty of this book is that art is language, and prisoners can speak to those on the outside with it. The artists are all excellent, and rather than diminish the work of some by praising a few (for lack of space), I would rather direct the reader to the website accompanying the exhibit, *markingtimeart.com.*

I particularly loved Fleetwood's chapter on prison photographs, the ones inmates are allowed to take on special occasions, in prison "studios" with their loved ones. Posing for such photographs may be the only time prisoners are allowed to hug visitors. The photographs let prisoners place themselves in relation to their families and friends, to reclaim a sense of self and belonging in the outside world. One photograph, which was returned to a family member of Fleetwood after years of absence, had been in the possession of an old-timer for many years. "He wasn't familiar with anyone in it or where it had been taken. He...liked it because it was a photo of beautiful women with children. It reminded him of home."-

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An Anatomy of the World

Shawn Miller

Inflamed: Deep Medicine and the Anatomy of Injustice
by Rupa Marya and Raj Patel
496pp. Holtzbrinck Publishing Group 2021

Inflamed is a timely book about the perennial injustice of colonialism and its devastating impacts on human health. Industrialized societies are beset by diseases of inflammation, such as Covid, which disproportionately afflict marginalized communities. The solution is deep medicine, which demands nothing less than the abolition of colonial cosmology. The book does not lack in ambition.

Written by physician Rupa Marya and political economist Raj Patel, *Inflamed* is a "subversive political anatomical survey" of eight bodily systems: the immune system, circulatory system, digestive system, connective tissue, endocrine system, and nervous system. They assert that the "inflammatory diseases we are seeing today are not the cause of the body's dysfunctional reactions. They are the body's correct responses to a pathological world." The authors demonstrate, for instance, how social oppression preconditions the bodies of Black people in the United States to develop gastric cancer. They also show how the "amount of melanin in your skin is inversely proportional to the likelihood that you will leave a US hospital alive after suffering cardiac arrest."

The book's argument is straightforward and persuasive. The world makes us sick. This world—full to bursting with racist law enforcement, poverty, hunger, discrimination, displacement, and exposure to toxins—this world is the way it is because of colonialism. Therefore, to get well, we must change the world, that is, embrace Indigenous cosmologies that replace a worldview of domination, exploitation, and profit with one characterized by reciprocity, care for the land, for water, and for living beings.

Modern medicine itself is rife with injustice. Most

Distance by Nereida Garcia Ferraz. Ink on paper 2021

doctors "have unwittingly inherited a colonial worldview that emphasizes individual health, disconnecting illness from its social and historical contexts and obscuring our place in the web of life that makes us who we are." The authors use the concept of the exposome to illustrate our embeddedness in the world. The exposome is everything that a person is exposed to during the course of a lifetime and "encompasses chemical, social, psychological, ecological, historical, political, and biological elements and determines whether aging cells will become drivers of chronic systemic inflammation." The exposomes of the poor and the oppressed are often characterizable in terms of chronic stress and toxicity. Sickness and premature death are the inevitable result.

The authors do an admirable job of tracing the myriad causes of our collective ill health, drawing on Marya's work as an internal medicine physician at the University of California, San Francisco. The reader will learn a great deal about biological systems and the wretched history of colonial crimes. The reader will also encounter some nice one-liners, like "California strawberry fields are a part of a global assembly line of high technology, land theft, and human disposability."

Inflamed struggles somewhat to clearly articulate its vision of deep medicine. We read that deep medicine starts with the "act of repairing those relationships that have been damaged through systems of domination." Deep medicine is holistic and operates at the level of the system rather than the individual. It requires the abolition of patriarchy, including the gender categories it has created. Deep medicine, indeed, "will require the abolition of the colonial hospital itself." And, since Marya and Patel believe that modern medicine is colonial medicine, this means the abolition of all modern hospitals.

The concept of abolition is also left a bit underspecified. We are told that it is one of deep medicine's central prescriptions and that it "isn't a negative rejection but a positive embrace of a better way of doing things." We read that "abolition means holding life precious" and that transcending colonialism "will involve a collective journey to new forms of exchange and relations." That's fine, if a bit gauzy.

But *Inflamed* is not meant as a how-to book of personal improvement or political enlightenment. It is a call to action, and a call, specifically, to empathize with the sick, who have been made so by forces outside of their control. It demands, at minimum, that we hear the stories of the oppressed, that we believe them, and take their pain and suffering seriously. That is the only path to healing.

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Dung Beetle II by Xi Zhang. Acrylic on canvas 2017

Death Trip

Marguerite Duras, Class, Negative Freedom and the Death Drive

Cynthia Cruz

I tell him that when I was a child my mother's unhappiness took the place of dreams. My dreams were of my mother, never of Christmas trees. Always just her, a mother either flayed by poverty or distraught and muttering in the wilderness, either searching for food or endlessly telling what's happened to her, Marie Legrand from Roubaix, telling of her innocence, her savings, her hopes.

—Marguerite Duras, *The Lover*

Duras' mother is a specter haunting Duras' writing, and her life. And whenever her mother appears, poverty is dragged along with her. A remnant, a death-like darkness submerging the picture. Of her mother, Marguerite Duras wrote, "She was born a peasant, daughter of farmers, near Dunkirk."

This recurring image, a recurring memory, of her mother as death appears inside the white static of Duras' texts. Again, and again, her mother. In *The Lover,* for instance, Duras writes:

> She went to live, and die, in the department of Loir-et-Cher, in the sham Louis XIV chateau. She lived there with Dô. She was still afraid at night. She bought a gun. Dô kept watch in the attics on the top floor. She also bought a place for her elder son near Amboise. With woods. He cut them down. Then went and gambled the money away in a baccarat club in Paris. The woods were lost in one night.

But, you may ask, Why would her brother gamble away the woods? This is the same question or, rather, a variation of the question, Why do the working class and poor drink or use drugs when they are already precarious? Why do the working class spend all their money? The drive and negative freedom. The drive (what Freud calls death drive and Lacan, simply, the drive) propels one toward one's death while, at the same time, propelling one toward's one's origins. An unconscious desire to destroy everything in order to begin all over again. Though such acts may appear idiotic or passive (i.e. drinking or drug use, gambling, and so on) they can be seen as acts of negative freedom, as Slavoj Žižek writes in *The Neighbor*:

> [...]the margin of my freedom is that I can say No! to any positive element that I encounter. This negativity of freedom provides the zero-level from which every positive content can be questioned...what I can do is, in an act of negativity, 'cleanse the plate,' draw a line, exempt myself, step out of the symbolic in a 'suicidal' gesture of a radical act—What Freud called 'death drive' and what German Idealism called 'radical negativity.'

This overwhelming drive is what propels the working class subject toward their destruction in an unconscious attempt to "cleanse the plate." To begin again. In the act of negative freedom, the working class subject cuts off all possibility of rehabilitation and thus, any possibility of assimilation. Furthermore, for the working class subject, oppressed under capitalism, unable to escape from it, the only possible exit is death or temporary, simulacra of death. Pharmakons, they are both cure and poison.

In her essay, "Alcohol," Duras writes, "The proletariat, a class far more intellectual now than the bourgeoisie, has a propensity for alcohol, as can be seen all over the world." For Duras, alcohol is a means of escape, of withdrawing from the world, and, at the same time, a means of creating an alternative space within which to live. As she writes in *Writing*, "Sometimes I close the doors, shut off the telephone, shut off my voice, I don't want anything." And, "Solitude also means, either death or a book. But first and foremost it means alcohol. It means whiskey." Duras was known for withdrawing from society, from her friends, and isolating away in her house away from the city. "Though she loathed it, she watched it religiously, especially as she teetered at the edge of old age and stopped going out," as Lili Owens Rowlands writes, "During bouts of depression, which were frequent and often came after a bad review, Duras would burrow herself away at her apartment in Paris or at her country house in Yvelines, drinking litres of wine, refusing visitors and watching the eight-o'-clock news every day. This intoxication, a form of hypnosis, is offered through the television. In "The Telly and Death," Duras describes how the television is an abyss of nothingness, within which death emanates, "But on the whole, apart from the occasional major event such as the death of the famous, the Nobel Prize and votes in Parliament, nothing ever happens on television." And it is this circuit of nothingness and death, this abyss of emptiness, that draws her in, as she writes in "Men of Tomorrow":

> I can't do without television. I know there are other people like me. Watching it is like sleeping upright. It's seeing nothing at all, but sitting there, doing nothing else.

"Television is nothing, nothing," Duras writes. It is an excess, this lull, that promises, as all good narcotics do, a simulation of death. This nothingness is a recurring theme in Duras' work, most notably in her text, *Writing*, where the word "nothing" appears 24 times within its 45 pages. This nothingness, this excess, is the real, that which remains outside language. Watching television, drinking alcohol, or engaging in drug use is miraculous because it drags us over the edge (or drags the edge over us). In *The Lover*, Duras writes, "Drink accomplished

what God did not. It also served to kill me; to kill." Of course, this desire to die, for Duras, is never a literal desire for death. It is, rather, a form of the drive:

> Drinking isn't necessarily the same as wanting to die. But you can't drink without thinking you're killing yourself. Living with alcohol is living with death close at hand.

Indeed, as Duras writes in the same essay "Alcohol," When you've had too much to drink you're back at the start of the infernal cycle." Alcohol, of course, does just this: like a cocoon that forms around one's self, alcohol blurs and blots out all the external, concrete world. When one drinks on a regular basis, as Duras did, when one is always under its hypnotic, one lives one's life from within its cocoon. One lives in perpetual dream-state. Un-Dead. With the constant, unconscious belief that one day one will break out of the chrysalis and began one's life again. Begin from the exact moment when one put one's life on hold. By becoming nothing, by negating themself, the working class subject may, unconsciously, be attempting to escape capitalism..

For Duras, suffering begins in childhood, with poverty. But this suffering is augmented and increased when, at the age of fifteen, under her mother's suggestion, she sells her body for money. Duras knew she needed to bring in the money, she needed to save her mother and her brothers. So she did what her mother intuitively told her to. Though a child, she dressed in women's heels and a women's dress, wore make up and went out into the street, as Duras writes in *The Lover*:

> […]the money's lost for good, it's all over. The only thing left is this girl, she's growing up, perhaps one day she'll find out how to bring in some money. That's why, though she doesn't know it, that's why the mother lets the girl go out dressed like a child prostitute.

The young Duras brings the money home to her mother. And yet, what she is doing—selling her body—can not be acknowledged, can not be seen or addressed by her mother or her brothers, whose survival depends on it. It is as if through an act of magic, money appears. But because her mother and brothers can't or won't acknowledge this act, this violence, this trauma, is repressed where it is transformed, gaining a second life, as symptom. Because the act of prostitution must be repressed, its horrendous violence must resurface as a symptom. A marker on the surface of the body, the symptom communicates to the subject, alerting her of the repressed disturbance.The most obvious and immediate symptom in the case of Duras and her family's repression of her prostitution, is violence:

> My mother has attacks during which she falls on me, locks me up in my room, punches me, undresses me, comes up to me and smells my body, my underwear, says she can smell the Chinese's scent, goes even further, looks for stains on my underwear, and shouts, for the whole town to hear, that her daughter's a prostitute, she's going to throw her out, she wishes she'd die, no one will have anything to do with her, she's disgraced, worse than a bitch. And she weeps, asking what can she do, except drive her out of the house so she can't stink the place up anymore.

These acts of violence also mark a space between seeing and not seeing, speaking and not speaking social class. Or, rather: the truth of social class and the reality Duras' mother finds herself in. If mother destroys daughter, if not literally, then symbolically, if there is no daughter, then there is no child prostitute. And if there is no child prostitute, then there is no desperate need for money for food, clothing, and housing. And if there is not desperate need for money, then there is no poverty, no destitution. By destroying Duras the child, the mother destroys Duras, the child prostitute, and thus the truth of their poverty.

For Duras, the decision to prostitute herself marks a break. After this decision and its repercussions, nothing remained the same:

> She gets into the black car. The door shuts. A barely discernible distress suddenly seizes her, a weariness, the light over the river dims, but only slightly. Everywhere, too, there's a very slight deafness, or fog.

In the moment Duras steps into the man's black limousine, the moment she makes the conscious decision to sell her body for money, she knows she no longer belongs to her family. Furthermore, the fog described here, a fog consisting of visual haze but also silence, is the fog of oblivion, the pharmakon necessary for Duras to survive. Like her brothers, who fill themselves with food and drink when in the presence of the man Duras prostitutes herself to, Duras similarly turns to drink, "I became an alcoholic as soon as I started to drink." "I drank all the time," she writes, "and I was never drunk. I was withdrawn from the world—inaccessible but not intoxicated." Neither awake nor asleep but, rather, in an intermittent state of dreaming while being awake.

In fact, in Duras' autobiographical novel *The Lover* there is a drastic cut in the text that marks the moment when this first act of prostitution occurs, Duras describes her self in the third person:

> he's torn off the dress, he throws it down. He's torn off her little white cotton panties and carries her over like that, naked, to the bed.

Once this first act of violence occurs, the narration changes abruptly to the "I." After describing her child's body from that of an outside observer, she writes, "I didn't know you bled. He asks me if I hurt, I say no, he says he's glad."

Marx writes, the worker who must sell their labor "becomes an appendage to the machine." When the worker returns home they may try to find ways of escaping this violence. For instance, through eating or drinking to excess. But for the prostitute, whose body is the machine through which she sells her labor, she has no means of escape. We know this through her writing: by shifting from the third to first person, Duras shows us that this moment is the moment where her subjecthood was altered forever. This compulsion to sell her body to this man in order to earn money so she and her family might survive, an act that both ensures she will survive one more day while, at the same time, ushers her nearer to death, becomes from the moment she takes her first drink of alcohol, sublated and then replaced by the compulsion to drink. The act of drinking preserves her, while driving her nearer to death.

In *The Lover* in a restaurant where the man Duras is prostituting herself to purchases expensive food and drink for Duras and her family, neither of her brothers are able to look at or speak to the man because to do so would be to acknowledge reality, that their sister is selling her body for their survival. This man, whose wealth is the result of his father's real estate projects, his profiting from the poor, is, similarly, unable to acknowledge his wealth, and from where such monetary capital originates. "I ask him to tell me about his father's money, how he got rich," Duras writes, "He says it bores him to talk about money, but if I insist he'll tell me what he knows about his father's wealth." Duras continues a bit later:

> All of a sudden he starts telling me some rigamarole about the compartments. They cost much less than either apartment blocks or detached houses, and meet the needs of the working-class areas much better than separate dwellings. The people here like living close together, especially the poor, who come from the country and like living out of doors too, on the street.

Money is mystical, nothing but paper, just—as we know from Marx—as the commodity object is nothing but a mere object. The invisible force infusing the object, transforming it into the dazzling fetish it is, is the worker's labor made invisible. As Marx articulates in *Capital*, "A use-value, or useful article, therefore, has value only because abstract human labour is objectified (vergegenständlicht) or materialized in it." Money is mere printed paper. What infuses it with magical qualities is, similarly, the invisible labour of the worker: As Marx writes, "This physical object, gold or silver in its crude state, becomes, immediately on its emergence from the bowels of the earth, the direct incarnation of all human labour. Hence the magic of money."

Duras' brothers gorge themselves with food and drink, drugging themselves into oblivion. As Duras writes in *The Lover*, "My brothers go on gorging. They gorge as I've never seen anyone gorge, anywhere." This oblivion is necessary. Without this oblivion the reality of their situation would threaten to annihilate them. As Marx writes, "Perseus wore a magic cap so that the monsters he hunted down might not see him. We draw the magic cap down over our eyes and ears so as to deny that there are any monsters."

What can and cannot be said. Social class, of course, and poverty. But what occurs in the place of this acknowledgement? The violence, of course. Duras' mother's violence against Duras for selling her body not unlike the violence Duras inflicts upon herself with the act of prostitution, which becomes a compulsion, a drive. Duras writes:

> I asked him to do it again and again. Do it to me. And he did, did it in the unctuousness of blood. And it really was unto death. It has been unto death.

Because this act can't be acknowledged, its violence along with the violence of its repression, contaminates Duras and her family's lives; follows them, continues to live within them. Duras' violence upon her own mind and body with alcoholism, her brothers and her mother's gambling—result in an endless cycle of ever more poverty, ever more violence.

When Duras tells the man who pays to have sex with her why she is engaging in the transaction, there is a settling into, a falling back into, that occurs in that moment. It is as if the very act of telling the man why, might somehow negate the act, akin to the the death drive's promises that by engaging in an act of self destruction, of moving nearer toward one's death, one might be returned to one origins. Back to the beginning. And thus have the opportunity to start one's life all over again. Indeed, Duras describes this sense of falling back into as if it is a kind of death:

> I say I've always been sad. That I can see the same sadness in photos of myself when I was small. That today, recognizing it as the sadness I've always had, I could almost call it by its own name, it's so like me. Today I tell him it's a comfort, this sadness, a comfort to have fallen at last into the misfortune my mother has always predicted for me when she shrieks from the desert of her life.

This dropping into, this falling into, Duras describes is not unlike the sense of immediate relief that occurs when one first takes in the drink or drug that obliterates the horror of concrete reality.

Despite her life long despair, despite her alcoholism and her recurring bouts with depression, Duras always believed in the potential of the proletariat and in the eventual emancipation of the working class, "Hope was my sickness, hope in the proletariat," she writes. Throughout her life, Duras was insistent on this fact. Even after leaving the Communist party, still, she continued to have absolute faith in the worker.

It is important to draw a distinction between hope and optimism. The definition of optimism is "hopefulness and confidence about the future or the successful outcome of something." This is the ideology of the ruling class, this blind faith in the future. And in progress, which goes hand in hand with a forgetting of the past, a forgetting of history. This is in sharp contrast, to hope which is "to want something to happen or be true and think that it could happen or be true." This can be the case, one can have hope, even in the midst of absolute and utter despair. Duras never gave up hope, despite everything, as she wrote in *Writing*:

> We are sick with hope, those of us from '68. The hope is the one we placed in the role of the proletariat. And as for us, no law, nothing, no one, and no thing, will ever cure of us of that hope.

***Cynthia Cruz** is the author of six collections of poems. She is also the author of* Disquieting: Essays on Silence, The Melancholia of Class: A Manifesto for the Working Class, *an exploration of Freudian melancholia and the working class, was published in 2021 by Repeater Books.*

Write Now

Carrie Laben

Grievers
by adrienne maree brown
216pp. AK Press 2021

Among the strange, petty phenomena to arise in the spring of 2020—somewhere between the adoption of elbow-bumps as a ritual greeting and the run on toilet paper—was a moment when writers on Twitter turned to fretting about how they'd incorporate the pandemic into their works-in-progress. Practitioners of seemingly apolitical art, who habitually wrote in an unmarked present, were faced with a great mystery: you cannot write now. You can only write history or future.

In *Grievers*, adrienne marie brown has written a pandemic inseparable from history, embedded in the Black communities of Detroit and all their pain and promise. She has laid out a possible future for those communities, one founded on love and mutual aid in the face of official indifference and cruelty. brown's pandemic is not Covid-19. No one coughs, no one requires a ventilator, no one spreads vaccine-related conspiracy theories on Facebook because there is no vaccine. Instead, it is an equally menacing and much stranger phenomenon. The victims (all Black residents of Detroit) are seized by sudden unresponsiveness. Their hearts still beat, they are still breathing, at least for a time, but all voluntary activity ceases. The abrupt onset of the disease and the lack of an obvious causal link between victims make it in some ways more reminiscent of the Rapture as conceived by evangelical Christians than any conventional germ.

Protagonist Dune certainly feels herself left behind. Her mother, patient zero, was the sort of secular saint who crops up in those communities most in need—abuse survivor, organizer, neighborhood hub, homemaker, a support to those around her even as she mourns the too-early loss of her own husband. The etiology of the disease is never made explicit, but it's strongly implied that bearing too much emotional weight is what triggers the condition. Dune, a loner, starts the story by cremating the woman who was her primary human connection and spends the rest of the novel's pages trying to discover a new way of sharing emotional burdens without herself succumbing. Dune may not be an instinctively warm person, but she has a practicality and determination that can be equally valuable.

Grievers has none of the trappings of a medical thriller or an urban fantasy (despite some uncanny business with the miniature model of the city Dune's father was working on when he died). Instead, it details small practical moments—finding food, befriending a stray dog, dealing with the hygiene needs of a disabled loved one, making a decision that in hindsight will prove wrong—that pervade life in an emergency. It reads like a Toni Cade Bambara story set in a universe a few beats out of step with our own.

There are bits of *Grievers* that are too on the nose; primarily the dream sequences, which provide an undreamlike roadmap to our hero's psyche, and the naming of the new disease itself H-8. But it's hard to imagine a more accurate picture of the moment that everything changed, or of the forever that preceded and followed it.

Carrie Laben is the author of the novel A Hawk in the Woods *and the forthcoming novella* The Water Is Wide.

Bertelsmann? Holtzbrinck?
Informa?

But I thought my books
were published by Vintage, FSG
and Routledge...

Nope. ARB lists the corporations that own publishing houses and their imprints. The majority of books, textbooks, magazines and newspapers read across the globe are published by these oligopolies. Independent presses are listed by their names.

The Painted Box by Melora Kuhn. Oil on canvas 2021

No Exit

Jon Frankel

The Second Shooter
by Nick Mamatas
400pp. Solaris 2021

The Planetbreaker's Son
by Nick Mamatas
128pp. PM Press 2021

In Nick Mamatas's new books *The Planetbreaker's Son* and *The Second Shooter,* there is no escape, and the truth isn't out there. Instead, there is an intractable tangle of contradictory thought and experience, as characters, despite great determination, fail to get to the bottom of things.

The Planetbreaker's Son, a novella, is a thought experiment that tests the proposition that humanity can ever escape anything: personality, history, Earth, and, ultimately, physical existence. The Planetbreaker, his son, his wife, and his parents are coded objects living in "…a foot-ball-field-sized starship zipping through RS [real space]." Humans have destroyed the Earth, one eighth of the population has won a lottery to board an AI guided spaceship headed for an exo-planet. The catch is they must leave their bodies behind. The AI creates multiple worlds and the Planetbreaker's job is to destroys these worlds by entering them, finding a rock, and tossing it over his shoulder. "Planetbreaker's keep the denizens of the football-field-sized starship from complacency." People just can't live without their apocalypses.

The characters spend their time reflecting on their ontological status and arguing about the meaning of it all. Part of the plot involves the Planetbreaker's son's visit with his grandparents, the Greek titans Kronos and Rhea, who live in a black hole. Like the Homeric gods, they aren't transcendent deities but dotty, quarrelsome old people, and the visit creates an anomaly, splitting the son into two. The mother meanwhile 'works' in a robot that runs on a track on the hull of the spaceship, giving her a sense of embodiment and much speculation about the inability to 'tell the dancer from the dance.'

It is both true and insane that the rich and powerful, rather than solving problems like poverty and global climate destruction, are building panic rooms and plan on colonizing Mars, a toxic, radioactive desert. Others believe they can become immortal by uploading their minds to the cloud. Mamatas demolishes this, especially the idea that uploading somehow is an escape from physical reality, as coded objects are electrons and photons and the cloud comprises windowless refrigerated buildings located in shitty rustbelt cities. Musk and Bezos would still be greedy, narcissistic jerks whether they were coded in molecular biological systems or quantum computers.

The Second Shooter is a novel, a satirical thriller about freelance journalist Mike Karras's research for a book about second shooters. Witnesses to assassinations and mass shootings often see a second shooter who can't later be located. Evidence disappears and the witnesses are seen as crazy. Karras is a marginal guy, working for a small anarchist press in Ann Arbor, living in hotels on a meagre expense account. It begins with him interviewing an ex-cop in Texas who claims the second shooter she witnessed was a literal blur, leading Karras's publisher to speculate that the shooter wore an invisibility cloak. Is it science fiction? Is the publisher crazy? Or is there a conspiracy?

Karras's investigation leads him to a truck bombing in Oklahoma, which he witnesses, and then Berkeley, where he interviews a woman named Rahel, who was raised by Ethiopian immigrants and survived a church shooting. Rahel is a deeply religious woman with a large family. As he often observes, people want to talk, and Rahel wants him to know her story. She is a compelling witness and Karras begins to believe her. As his skepticism frays, he becomes a participant in the conspiracies he has so far only observed, leading to a violent confrontation with an Alex Jones podcaster, and another shooting in New Jersey. Eventually Karras, Rahel, the publisher, and another witness go on a road trip to save the world that ends at the Mall of America.

With breathtaking detail and considerable humor Mamatas takes on American conspiracy culture and the media that amplifies it. The narrative is relentless in its exploration of the politics and psychology of conspiracy, expanding into theology, physics, and metaphysics. By the end reality itself is in question. Like the coded objects of *The Planetbreaker's Son*, the characters of *The Second Shooter* are lost in a virtual, mediated world. All of their efforts to find the truth lead not to conclusions but branching passages of further complexity. Voracious conspiracy thinking is left, like Siva's world-destroying demon, with no option but to consume itself.

Neither book is a schematic conceptual exercise. Mamatas is a great storyteller and a master of genre. At no point in *The Second Shooter* does he lose sight of the thriller, SF, fantasy elements that drive the narrative. By the end it is a full-on Philip K Dick house of mirrors, but it is far from a PKD cartoon. It is a powerful, brilliant work of literary art in which there is no escaping the absurdity of existence.

***Jon Frankel** is a novelist and poet who lives in Ithaca, NY. He is the author of* Specimen Tank *(Manic D Press),* GAHA: Babes of the Abyss, The Man Who Can't Die, *and* Isle of Dogs *(Whiskey Tit Press).*

A Dumpster Has Possibility

The Artificial Obvious of Carrot Quinn

Corinne Manning

The Sunset Route: Freight Trains, Forgiveness, and Freedom on The Rails in the American West
by Carrot Quinn
320pp. Bertelsmann 2021

Carboniferous 4 by Sam Hodge. Pigment from Thames coal, gum arabic, collage on paper 2020

In *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, Annie Dillard is high on seeing. It's a drug that has slowed her down to the level of observing a single amoeba and dreaming about its night. For Dillard seeing is an act of reconstruction: to reach something beyond the literal mind—a dreamscape where she can truly witness. Wendell Berry, in his poem To Know the Dark says "to know the dark, go dark, go without sight." My housemates taught me this poem as a song. One person remembered the hymn ending on a minor note, the other on an upswing. The creature at the end of the poem "with dark feet and dark wings" is either ominous or sweet depending on how you sing it. Dillard decides to know the dark too, her senses pumping and alive, while the drama of dusk at Tinker Creek unfolds. In these classics of nature writing there are two ways of seeing—the natural obvious and the artificial obvious—and only one of them can allow you to see possibility.

This is a reference to Stewart Edward White "As soon as you can forget the naturally obvious and construct an artificial obvious then you too will see the deer." The natural obvious is what you think you are supposed to see, the artificial obvious is what is truly being seen.

In memoir, the form is often inundated with what we are supposed to see. This may be a problem in all prose writing. "Seeing is a risky business" Annie Dillard writes and this is especially true when we need to put language around trauma so that people outside the experience can see it. Certain narratives are well known in memoir: the victim persevering, the broken addict finding hope at the end of the trail. This is the natural obvious of survival, and it is the natural obvious of the publishing industry.

The writer Carrot Quinn, however, has figured out how to write memoir in the artificial obvious.

You may know Carrot from the trail blog *Dispatches from the Wild,* where they have kept 11,000 miles of notations on their travels on foot or from the self-published memoir *Thru-Hiking will Break Your Heart*, which pulls from these posts to tell the story of their first time thru-hiking the entirety of the Pacific Crest Trail from Mexico to Canada. Or maybe, like me, someone you love visited you at a terrible moment in your life and handed you *The Sunset Route: Freight Trains, Forgiveness, and Freedom on The Rails in the American West*. She had left the book's jacket at home and handed me a black hardcover with the title embossed in copper on the side. To know the dark, go dark, go without sight.

Quinn writes in first person present tense. Her voice —poetic, funny, and engaging—gives the reader the illusion they are discovering the world alongside her; a world that can break you and make you high.

Quinn carries many things in her oversized pack as she catches a ride on her first freight train, leaving the Portland train yard and heading to California and eventually Texas. Her pack rattles with cans of beans, it holds not enough water and a sleeping bag that she will lose to the sucking wound of the train floor, but most importantly, it holds a copy of Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek.* She has read this copy out loud to a lover on a futon in a basement, and also to a friend who she will lose and then regain in a cabin in Alaska. She likely carried it another time in Texas on the day she was arrested for stealing a ride on a freight train and failing to appear in court.

"We live in a universe in which multiple things are true at once" writes Quinn who is many things at once: a child experiencing true starvation in a smoke-filled apartment amidst her mother's religious visions; a little sister whose older brother shows her how to hide in the woods when the Anchorage weather is kinder and to eat dumpster donuts from the bakery factory outlet when there isn't food at home, which is always. She is also a 20-year-old speeding from Colorado to Portland in her cousin's car as he reads *The People's History of the United States* out loud, radicalizing her over the course of hours. She is an anarchist punk finding pin worms next to the train yard. She is free and having group sex at the Wych Elm house. She is a six-year-old in a Catholic gift shop longing for rosary beads that are beyond any money she can imagine. And an adult holding these rosary beads in her hand and buying them for six dollars. She is somewhere eating a greasy hash brown. She isn't brushing her teeth. She is hitchhiking with a stranger who's become her lover. She is shoplifting a sweater for this lover. She is reminded of trauma by a friend and in turn watches the love and trust recede from that friend's eyes as they skin a Caribou together.

"I think about how subjective reality is," Carrot writes, "how even looking directly at a thing, saying it out loud, will alter it."

So, taking a cue from Dillard she avoids a destination or at least doesn't depend on it. The book moves through time, a chapter taking place in 2003, another in 1996. The connections between chapters is found in the accrual of detail, the context of a life but also the way that the future speaks to the past. Narrative that imposes a destination is often a lie. Because we know the only true destinations are death and loss or occasionally, falling in love. "How do I show how I healed?" is a different question than "Why do I keep choosing to live?"

The Sunset Route is a bewitching text for this reason, and at times feels like a practice in mindfulness, in turning and facing the unfaceable—not a book looking for answers or looking to give answers. We will never critique our way out of suffering.

In the linear narrative of life laid out in this memoir, Quinn's born-into family is a single mom with schizophrenic visions of the Virgin Mary and an older brother in a smoke-stained apartment in Anchorage, Alaska. She and her brother are often hungry, their clothes unwashed, no food in the cabinet. She goes to school and tries to focus with spots in front of her eyes. She and her brother lie in bed with leg cramps. They grow up feral. This is not poverty porn. It is not a memoir where you watch the world swing around and save the narrator: You are ready for her grandparents to save her—they won't, it's worse—and what a relief when she escapes their home. You think that her father will want to know her—he doesn't. You will think maybe his mother will want to know her—she doesn't. You think the predatory powers will have mercy on Carrot's van after they start to tow it while she is sitting in it eating, they don't.

"There is no one to call. My body shudders. I am hyperventilating now. There is an ache inside me. It eats my bone marrow. The entire world hates me. And the hate is attacking me. There is no one who wants me to live, and so I am dying."

But on the train, Carrot is very much alive. She knows how to be hungry, she doesn't expect anything to save her or to see something hopeful in the woods in front of her. As a result, she sees the cedar, the birch trees, the wind rustling in their branches, she sees the remnants where hobos of the past have bedded down, the feral cats rubbing along her leg. The stars spread infinitely across the sky, and beyond this universe even more stars. She is entrenched in the artificial obvious, which makes it possible to meet a kind stranger and fall in love with the smile lines by their eyes, to reconnect with a friend who ghosted her three years before, to forgive her mother.

"Maybe that's all human relationships are—accepting the fact that we'll never be truly seen but sticking around anyway, for the pure animal comfort of knowing someone over the span of a life."

Quinn merges with the shame and misery until she becomes grief and then it's not that grief is gone or that it stops haunting, but it doesn't control her. Or rather Quinn stops trying to control the grief. The train rumbles her to sleep.

Dillard writes, "The worlds spiritual geniuses seem to discover universally that the mind's muddy river, this ceaseless flow of trivia and trash, cannot be dammed, and that trying to dam it is a waste of effort that might lead to madness. Instead, you must allow the muddy river to flow unheeded in the dim channels of consciousness[…] the secret of seeing is to sail on solar wind. Hone and spread your spirit till you yourself are a sail[.]"

Dillard reminds us that we aren't creatures that create light, we can only put ourselves in the path of its beam. Yet Carrot Quinn as a writer appears to create light. To read her work is to put yourself in the path of a beam, to steep in the artificial obvious and that's when you'll see the deer.

***Corinne Manning's** debut story collection* We Had No Rules *received starred reviews from* Booklist *and* Publisher's Weekly. *Their book reviews have appeared in* BOMB, Bitch, *and* The Brooklyn Rail.

Burn the House

Cara Hoffman

My cousin Patrick lived down by the old hotel on route 227. He had been prom king at our high school and now ran an electronics repair shop. He owned his own house because he'd married into used-car-dealership money. His wife had white skin, and nearly white hair and pale gray eyes, and this made her look like a ghost or a photo negative. She worked as a teacher's aide and she often repeated what she said, using the phrase 'like I said' to connect two identical phrases, in a kind of elliptical sentence-long stutter.

My cousin had been good friends with Dechellis and in the evening Dechellis would talk about how much he hated the woman my cousin married and how we should do something about it.

Like kill her?

No, he said. Like tell Patrick

Tell him what? That you hate her?

No, he said. Tell him what's wrong with her. Dechellis put his dental floss and nail clippers back into the milk crate and started rolling a cigarette.

Pedigree of Industiral Boquets by Yasue Maetake. Polyurethane resin, steel, brass, copper, paper, oil paint 2016-2021. Courtesy of the artist and Microscope Gallery

We don't know what's wrong with her, I said. And it occurred to me that there was some reason Dechellis hadn't got more of an education. It wasn't just something me and the man in the library didn't do. He'd been smart, he'd been friends with all the smartest kids in school, he'd been in all those clubs.

Why didn't you go to college? I asked him.

I did, he said smirking.

Where? I asked

Northwestern, he said.

Northwestern where?

He said, That's the name of the school, moron.

Why didn't you graduate? I said.

He said, I did, don't think you and me are the same, Kylie.

The thing that most upset me about the woman my cousin married was that she wouldn't give back a chair I'd asked him to keep at his house for me. And now that I lived in the doublewide, and had no furniture, I wanted something to sit on. She offered to give me two end tables they were getting rid of instead.

I'd rather have the chair, I told her.

It's really a part of our living room now, she said. And like I said it's part of the living room now and you can have the end tables.

The chair is mine though, I said. You guys were storing it for me.

Well like I said, she told me, it's become part of our house and like I said if you want the end tables you can come and take them.

I called my cousin and told him I wanted my motherfucking chair back.

What? he said. Who's…?

I want the blue chair back because I don't have any fucking furniture, I said. I'm living in a trailer by Coward's and I just have a mattress.

Kylie? he said.

Yes, it's Kylie, who else gave you the goddamn chair?

I thought you were living in Grandma Swank's house he said. Are you living with Dechellis?

I told him I was and that the next time he got together with Dechellis, he could give him the chair.

Sure, he said, No problem.

Ten minutes later his wife called back and told me that, like she said, I couldn't have the chair.

I am going to burn your motherfucking house down, I said. But what I meant was I wanted the chair back because it was the chair my mother had in her bedroom and she would sit in it and listen to me when I practiced. And she would sit in it when she read books in the evening, and she would sit in it in her yellow robe with a towel on her head when she filed her nails.

My cousin's voice was on the phone now. Did you just say you're going to burn our house down?

I'm obviously not going to burn your house down, I said.

Give me the phone, Dechellis said, pulling it from my hands.

Dechellis told my cousin he was coming over to his house and he was going to take the chair.

When he got off the phone, I asked how he was going to do it since we had no car and there was no public transportation out where we lived.

We'll take a boat he said. We'll go down the inlet and dock at Danford's and then walk up to 227.

We don't have a boat, I said.

Your uncle has a boat.

He doesn't, I said.

Well, his boyfriend does then. Dechellis said. I seen them out on it.

It's getting dark, I said.

Dechellis asked if I really wanted the chair or if I wanted to make him look like an idiot and I said with his plan it wasn't an either-or choice, I could probably have both.

The inlet released into a lake that in recent years had a toxic algae bloom, a kind of red fuzz floated everywhere and no one could swim in it without their skin burning.

But it's a beautiful night to be out on the water, Dechellis said.

There is no way Johnny will loan us his boat, I said.

How's he going to know about it? said Dechellis.

And he was right. Johnny didn't know.

The sky was black overhead and the moon was cut into a sharp little arc and parts of the sky looked like they were brushed with glittering dust and the waterside bars and taverns were lit up. Their windows gleaming orange into the night and the sound of the water lapping against the side of the boat seemed like an ancient noise to me, like an ancient voice. The current was with us to the mouth of the lake and then we rowed hugging the coast, seeing the houses and docks of the summer people that looked haunted and shabby compared to the silhouettes of the willows and maples and pines and the majestic dark of the shale cliffsides.

Dechellis told me about a paper route he'd had when he was a kid and how one day, after eight years of delivering, he picked up the papers, took them to the edge of the lake and set them all on fire. After we rowed a little farther, he said he was happy we were doing the right thing about the chair. That the only way to survive the avalanche of small indignities we faced every day was to take this kind of decisive action.

It didn't take as long as I thought to get to Danford's public slip, where fancy boats rocked, their white masts gleaming. We docked the boat and pulled it up on to the shore and hid it beneath some wisteria. Then we walked uphill for about half a mile, on a dirt trail that wound into the cliffside. If we had brought a flashlight, we'd have been able to see the shale cliff had collapsed on to the path, and the pot holes and ditches and smashed bottles and the raspberry bush that was mostly a tangle of thorns.

When we emerged near a drainpipe on 227, the streaks of blood on Dechellis' face shone dark in the moonlight. Sticks and leaves were caught in his long hair and his hands and beard were black with mud.

Kylie, he said, you look like shit.

I laced my boots tighter against the pain of a turned ankle and we walked along the side of the road until we reached my cousin's tiny house. It cowered in the shadow of the sprawling abandoned hotel with white paint peeling like a molting bird.

We crunched up the gravel driveway and rang the doorbell.

My cousin opened the door and winced.

I said, hello, I'm making this brief call to share an important message with you about our lord and savior Jesus Christ.

My cousin laughed hard, then looked annoyed with himself.

Did you get hit by a car? He asked Dechellis.

Roman soldiers did this to him, I said.

Yeah, yeah, alright, my cousin said.

You know why we're here Patrick, said Dechellis

To burn the house down? My cousin asked.

I never said I was going to burn your house down. I said.

You did though, said Patrick.

You're goddamn lucky we don't burn your fucking house down, said Dechellis.

My cousin didn't move from the doorway. Beyond him I could see into the living room; the television was on and the blue light of it was reflecting on his wife's skin as she sat in the chair, pretending we weren't standing five feet away from her.

In addition to the chair, they had a couch, an ottoman, another chair, a bookcase and a coffee table. The coffee table had computer magazines on it and coasters and mugs and figurines from role playing games. They had framed posters from science fiction movies hanging on their walls. And also shelves with framed pictures of the two of them together. The house was so much like his childhood room, still filled with toys and movie posters and coca-cola bottles. Still the flickering of the TV.

I'd ask you in, my cousin said, but you're both covered in dirt.

Patrick, I said, can I please have the chair back? I don't have any furniture in my house.

That's your choice Kylie, he said. You could be living at Grandma Swank's with plenty of furniture.

At this his wife finally stood up and said she couldn't believe I was there at ten o'clock at night covered in dirt with a filthy hobo trying and take their living room chair. And that it was ten o'clock at night and there I was, like she said, trying to take the chair with a filthy hobo.

I'd like to get some of my mother's things back, I said to my cousin ignoring her.

He said, I hear you Kylie but this isn't the way.

At that Dechellis pushed past my cousin and stomped his muddy shoes all over their beige carpeting. My cousin's wife let out a little shriek of rage as she

backed herself into the kitchen and Dechellis picked up the chair and brought it outside.

My cousin's wife shouted that she was going to call the police and my cousin shut the door before we could hear her say it again.

Once we had walked to the road, I told Dechellis there was no way we'd be able to get it down the hill and into the boat and he said one of us would have to hitch hike home, the other would take the boat and moor it back at Johnny's dock.

I said it was going to be impossible to get a ride with the chair. Watch, I said, and stuck out my thumb. We waited in darkness on the side of the road. The peepers were calling and the pines were tall and the stars were still gleaming down on us.

Every time a car approached, we were briefly blinded then revealed to one another as filthy, thorn-scratched monsters standing next to a blue overstuffed wingback chair with delicate wooden legs.

Finally a car stopped but it was a police car.

That motherfucker, Dechellis whispered.

The cop left his brights on as he walked toward us so it was hard to see his face but once he got close enough, I realized it was Wade, my uncle's AA sponsor. He was short and burly but not fat and he had big, dark wideset eyes.

Kylie? he said, what are you doing out here?

I said, just moving my chair from my cousin's house.

Is your cousin a groundhog? He asked

I said, yes.

What's going on here? he asked.

I'm moving this chair, I said.

With what? he asked.

With Dechellis, I said.

My boat's moored down at the slip. Dechellis said in some crisp approximation of a rich person's voice.

What happened to your face? Wade asked. I didn't know which of us he was addressing so I didn't say anything. Dechellis didn't say anything either and then Wade shook his head and said he wasn't going to tell my uncle because Gordon had enough stress in his life.

Tell him what? I said.

Everyone was quiet. Another car passed. Wade pinched the top of his nose and shut his eyes. Okay he said So you're taking this chair down to the slip?

No, I told him because the dirt path was wet and part of the shale cliff had collapsed and there were thorn hedges. That's why I was trying to hitch a ride.

Wade pointed his flashlight in the direction of some clean wide concrete steps at the edge of the road. They seemed to appear out of nowhere like he was projecting the image with his flashlight.

Dechellis asked how long those steps had been there and Wade said since 1997.

Never used em a day in my life, Dechellis said.

The stairs led down to a wide sidewalk and then a boardwalk that ran directly to the slip.

The lake looked beautiful with the moon shining higher and the stars brighter than ever. The wisteria glowed in the pale light; yellow flowers washed white. I set the chair down at the water's edge and sat in it watching the silver ripples on black water. Dechellis had been right about getting out and doing things. There were other boats docked at the slip; some sail boats, a motor boat, but most people with boats kept them in their yards beneath a tarp like Johnny had, so people wouldn't steal them.

Once he'd pulled the boat from beneath the wisteria it was clear it would be a tight fit for the chair, but so what. I thought about the man who worked in the library, and how I would describe the night to him. I thought about his voice and his eyes. I thought about his hands weighted with a book as he looked at its spine.

I said maybe we should stay here and watch the sun come up.

The sun will be up in seven hours said Dechellis.

We put the chair in the boat, laying it on its back with the legs sticking out over the stern and pushed off. The water was like glass. There were no boats and the frogs were silent and, every once in a while, we heard an owl. We rowed hard toward the inlet—going straight out into the lake this time instead of paddling up the coast. And I felt like now that I had the chair, I had everything. I had a job, a quiet place to live. The sky and the water were talking to one another and I felt like I was singing in that moment without opening my mouth or making a sound. The night was a vast black canopy that spread between the sheltering cliffs. I was hot from rowing in the cool air, and even the scratches from the thorns and the bruises from the fall felt good.

We passed under a low bridge and then into the inlet, we passed the same bars and taverns, and people were out now on the decks drinking beneath strands of halogen lights and even though we couldn't afford to join them they waved to us as we drifted by. Farther in we could see the tents of the jungle, blue and red and dingy and little fires where people were having a camp meal or sitting and drinking.

When we pulled up to Johnny's dock, I got out of the boat first and Dechellis tossed me the rope so I could tie it up. Then he handed me the chair, which was caked with dried mud, and hopped on to the dock. I tipped the chair upside down carrying it by resting the seat on my head and we walked the narrow mile back home.

***Cara Hoffman** is the author of* RUIN *published by PM Press, April 2022.*

Sound and Vision

Andrew May

Nonsequiturs/Unlogische Folgerungen
by Frederic Rzewski
576 pp. MusikTexte 2007

Composers of concert music tend to avoid political engagement, perhaps a consequence of the marginal cultural place of our work. Not so Frederic Rzewski, who died in June of 2021 at the age of 83. He was fearless: as a teacher, composer, and pianist. He was as outspoken about real-world struggles as he was uncompromising about music.

In his essay "Music and Political Ideals," literally at the center of the book *Nonsequiturs,* Rzewski presented music history in political context, concluding that "Western music, if it is to survive at all, cannot restrict itself to building on its own tradition, as it has largely done until now." His own music looked far beyond that tradition, questioning the roles of composers, improvisers, performers and listeners, and connecting with new and unexpected audiences. Much of his work proposed a self-organizing community of musicians, particularly in improvising ensembles like Musica Elettronica Viva (MEV), which he co-founded in Rome in 1966. *Nonsequiturs* includes several MEV scores (generally texts proposing relationships and perspectives) and commentaries on the project, sometimes quite critical, e.g. "Despite its anarchist ideals, MEV was fated to become a professional ensemble with a central nucleus." This quote encapsulates a central dilemma of *Nonsequiturs*, explored through lectures, essays, musical scores, letters, tributes to other musicians, and program notes: can musicians reinvent their practice in a way that liberates them, both aesthetically and politically, without becoming the guardians of new and oppressive aesthetic and political norms? Rzewski pursued this goal throughout his life; some musicians dismissed him as a gadfly, while others were inspired to rethink why and how we make and share our work.

As a revolutionary and also an erudite scholar, a highly trained composer, and a virtuoso pianist, Rzewski was inevitably ambivalent about the tension between his political and musical ideals. In a 1984 interview, the most personally revealing text in *Nonsequiturs*, Vivian Perlis asked how he felt about being called a "political composer." He replied, "It doesn't mean very much to me… I am in the habit of trying to relate my work to

Phoenix Savage, Ambient Void. Installation of 10,000 ceramic eggshells 2011

the world around me, and if this means being a political composer, then I suppose that's what it has to be, but I don't think there's anything especially unusual about it." In fact, many of his best works were unusual in explicitly combining the political with the musical: *Coming Together* for voice and ensemble takes as its text a letter Samuel Melville wrote shortly before dying in the Attica uprising, while the hour-long piano piece *The People United Will Never Be Defeated* is a set of polystylistic variations on a protest song Sergio Ortega and Quilapayún wrote against the Pinochet regime. The first text in Rzewski's book, "Nonsequiturs. A Lecture with Music," flips the relationship between words and music: a collection of aphorisms grouped into 25 sections, it is interlaced with cues to sections in the score of his piano piece *Fouges* (which, like all his music, is freely downloadable) to create a blueprint for spoken word and piano performance. The text concludes: "Music probably cannot change the world. But it is a good idea to act as though it could./ The situation is hopeless, but you try to make the best of it. At the very least, you stand a chance of producing some good music. And music is always better than no music."

Rzewski's book is also better than no book. It is a loosely structured catalogue of insights from kaleidoscopically shifting perspectives (much like its titular lecture), assembled into groupings like "Music, What for?" and "Music and Politics." Its refusal of structural norms reflects Rzewski's ideals. Individual texts amplify and illuminate one another. For example, "Little Bangs. Toward a Nihilistic Theory of Improvisation" contains an anecdote about Pablo Neruda reminding a young worker that "he is in fact a poet, since he, like everybody, dreams," which resonates with Rzewski's questioning of his own role—and also with an anecdote in Rzewski's tribute "On John Cage," in which Cage responded to the younger composer's request for advice: "You have an abrasive personality. Your problem is that you waste your energy fighting against the things you don't like in the world. You should find some organization whose function is to fight the things you don't like in the world…" Rzewski assessed the advice retrospectively: "I made a serious effort to follow it. But the organization he was talking about didn't exist. What I didn't like about the world was precisely its organization, and its organizations."

Rzewski's writings in *Nonsequiturs* seem often in flux between prose and poetry. This is reinforced by the imprint itself: each text is presented in English and German on facing pages, as one finds in poetry translations. The textual scores for pieces are particularly moving and inspiring. "Impersonation #2," part of a set of *Work Songs* for MEV, concludes with these "general rules: abandon control, but not so as to allow yourself to drift needlessly into danger. If another person is in danger, be a saving force for that person." Like many proposals in *Nonsequiturs*, it is worth pursuing, in or out of music.

***Andrew May** writes, improvises, codes, and performs in several genres of music, some of which may not yet have names. They work as a teacher at the University of North Texas.*

A Day at the Office

Noël Fagerhaugh

Employment
by Gina Tron
80pp. Vegetarian Alcoholic Press 2002

Class mobility may be one of the most enduring myths in Western society, and "working your way up the corporate ladder" has to be its last malicious white collar lie.

In *Employment*, Gina Tron's second poetry collection, the poet uses the ironic gimmick of "shitty jobs" that all writers must endure in order to make ends meet, creating a single poem from each low-paying, highly abusive job—from exploited hourly worker to successful, independent writer who actually makes a living from her craft.

Bullying, a particular tool of classism, is omnipresent in position after position; from soul-deadening cashier to brain-numbing warehouse worker. In "Sushi Server" Tron owns up to this class programming in a revelatory moment, "i'm programmed to fear being unemployed/ because then i'll become invisible/ and i'm not a quitter/ i'm used to abuse and desperation." In another piece, "Stockbroker," we hear echoes of the old Horatio Alger myth, that rags to riches tale fed to all working poor and immigrants, of hard work and rewards: "if you work hard, it is impossible to fail/ if you work hard/ you can't not be rich, loaded." By the last poem of the collection, Tron makes the shift in identity from invisible, abused wage slave to published writer.

While many of the "bosses" in these poems exhibit the trappings of elevated wealth and status, all have direct contact with the hourly wage slaves under them.

The Go Back II by Jared Owens. Acrylic, soil from prison yard at F.C.I. Fairton, oil stick, transfer film and graphite on panel 2021

Only the real estate agent's wife shows any awareness of maintaining the social divide clearly between her and Tron. "She walks up to my desk and doesn't say hi/ She dumps a stack of papers on my desk/ tells me to file them/ i ask a question, Her eyes stab mine. Rookie mistake, a man/ explains, you don't ask Her questions" The other bosses selectively intimidate, threaten, or brainwash Tron into submission, or silent rebellion. Tron as the bully's victim in these poems has little agency or recourse in the face of workplace abuse because, like so many aspiring writers, she needs the job.

The poem, "Stockbroker," is inspired by her time at a Canadian call center for a financial investment firm when she was 21. In her essay, "I Spent a Year at a Shady Canadian Call Center" she details how that job damaged her sense of self, and offers: "it's a cautionary tale about what happens when you're young and broke and desperate and don't value yourself."

Throughout the collection, Tron uses capitalization to draw power lines. As the narrator, Tron is always "i" and never "I." Next, the ubiquitous male "boss" is most often a "He," while his wife is "She." Only one other coworker achieves this capitalized "She" status, and that is a middle-aged deli worker whom Tron befriends, and whose own son later commits suicide. Lastly, Tron herself reaches the capitalized "I" status only in the last verse of the last poem in the collection, "Writer," when we hear her proclaim: "I am breathing/ this is my breathing machine I need it to survive/ I need it, or only my body lives." Certainly a proud moment, a capstone achievement to end this collection whose Table of Contents reads like the chronological Work History section of a particularly sad resume.

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ARB DIY

Kill the Cop in Your Head

Fuck the Police Means We Don't Act Like Cops to Each Other
by Clementine Morrigan
available at clementinemorrigan.com

This slim volume by Canadian podcaster (*Fucking Cancelled*) and activist Clementine Morrigan takes on the carceral impulse that informs so many relationships and conflicts-management within the broadly anarchist milieu. She locates the issue of so-called "cancel culture" in the rise of social media, a focus on identity politics, and the absence of explicit abolitionist ideas. Social ostracism, harassment, interminable accountability serve to create an environment where no wrongdoer has ever "done their time" and can be reintegrated into the scene or local environment. Social exile is simply punishment.

The alternative Morrigan suggests focuses on the experience of the twelve steps, which includes support for everyone who needs it, specifically making amends without an expectation or need for forgiveness, and without the cycle of a demands for a public apology, dissection of said apology, and then infinite distribution of the apology as evidence of evil-doing. Morrigan also briefly explores how trauma influences the nervous system in ways that lead to the persistence of "trigger" experiences and thwart articulation of our real needs. Overall, an intriguing zine that doesn't have, or even promise all the answers, but that does a good job exploring the hidden structures of authority even in supposedly non-hierarchal communities.

ARB: "Cancelation" doesn't seem to have a negative effect on celebrities, but what happens to ordinary people who are canceled?

CM: Cancelation campaigns target people with incessant harassment (messages, comments, tagging, hashtagging), slander (and the accused is not allowed to defend themselves), harassment of others (associates are targeted), and threats to material security (loss of employment, loss of housing).

ARB: You were canceled over Instagram posts, or failing to post to Instagram properly—what happened?

CM: I was cancelled for not posting about a particular political issue on Instagram, that I had in fact posted about. When I directed my accusers to the post, they demanded that I deplatform. This spiraled into a harassment campaign where I was slandered to thousands of people, resulting in the loss of most of my friendships and relationships, my community, employment/income, and my housing. My cancellation was absurd, but I stand with canceled people who have done things they regret to support people to do the work of taking responsibility.

ARB: You make your living as a writer despite almost totally circumventing the publishing industry. This is a special issue of ARB on writers and class, so tell us briefly about your personal economy.

CM: I have been making zines since I was a teenager. By age 30 I had built enough of an audience that I can live off my work. My income comes almost exclusively directly through my readers. I do everything myself: writing, publishing, promotion, and distribution. It's a lot of work but I keep the majority of the sale price this way. It was also huge protection when I was cancelled. I was to have two books coming out with two presses but they were too stressed out about the harassment they would receive. Because I already had an audience, I was able to self-publish those books. I think that self-publishing is an important tool for writers in this age of cancel culture.

ARB: What about right-wing attempts at cancelation, which we see a lot of in the US? How does it differ from the left-wing "Nexus"?

CM: Targeted harassment campaigns and social exile happen across the political spectrum. On the left, or rather the online, identiarian "left" we call the Nexus on my podcast *Fucking Cancelled,* cancelation is framed as righteous calls for justice by the oppressed against the powerful. Identity is leveraged when it suits the cancellation and ignored or twisted when it doesn't. Strangely, many people who take part in this punitive, abusive behavior will also call themselves abolitionists. On the right, I am sure they use entirely different ideological reasons to justify this behavior.

The Haunting

Scout Lee

Pedro's Theory: Reimagining the Promised Land
by Marcos Gonsalez
304pp. Melville House 2021

Love Is an Ex-Country
by Randa Jarrar
240pp. Bertelsmann 2021

Marcos Gonsalez's *Pedro's Theory* and Randa Jarrar's *Love is an Ex-Country* both map embodied histories of colonialism, immigration, and diaspora, while simultaneously addressing the continuing violence of policing and border patrol, war, and occupation. *Pedro's Theory* details the experiences of a multiplicity of Pedros who are at once Gonsalez himself, loved ones, strangers, and archetypes. Blending theory, memory and photography, Gonsalez writes narratives both lived and imagined, honoring what was, and what could have been. *Love is an Ex-Country* weaves together Jarrar's account of a cross country roadtrip, with reflections on adolescence, motherhood, sexuality, trauma, and survival. The two works are essay collections, where fragments of memory draw throughlines between passages of theory, criticism, micro-histories, and etymology. At times an act of archiving, and at others, utopic allegory allows the reader to think of memoir as not merely an attempt to make sense of a past self, but as a means of communication and an act of creation.

Both memoirs think deeply about physical history, the way colonial legacies, state and interpersonal violence live on in geography and in place. The way they haunt. Histories of brutality and resistance are reinscribed in all places, where every small town is every small town, and every small town is a border. Gonsalez describes his father swimming to cross the river between the US and Mexico, a waterway imbued with the collective memory of all those who came before, those who made it and those who did not. These topographical histories persist, bumping up against the veil of white innocence, white ignorance, and revealing "Americanness" as a fantasy that requires the erasure of the legacies of slavery, colonialism, imperialism. Jarrar and Gonsalez trace the genealogies of these histories, their forgetting, and their endless repetition, situating America as an imagined space. Jarrar's memories interrogate the colonial myth-making that sustains the Israeli occupation. I think of her name in a database, unable to return to Palestine, of Israeli soliders looting Palestinian family libraries; how the books that were not destroyed are held at the National Library of Israel.

Throughout Jarrar and Gonsalez's writing, the body too becomes a location through which histories are held, reenacted, and resisted; the body as a way of knowing, as an archive. What the body remembers persists, and echoes. Gonsalez writes, "Our history is a time out of joint, an oral record passed down and forgotten through time yet a memory alive in the ways our bodies hurt, grieve, love. Our history is a history of the body." Gonsalez understands his father's stories through what he expresses in tone, posture, hand movement, and facial expression. In this way, he reads the body as that which communicates in the absence of language, or when language is not enough.

Adhered #2 by Rebecca Marimutu. Laserjet on paper collage 2021

Jarrar's work often references somatic memories of trauma, where her body carries the memories of abuse, of being watched by her father, her pregnancy; the way her spine remembers the epidural needle in times of fear, vulnerability, assault. Strikingly, she notes that her body does not remember her mother caressing it. Jarrar's somatic memories of care and tenderness are instead invented; as she stands in the lobby of her parents' first apartment in Chicago, she thinks about herself there as a baby, swaddled, cradled. Of the epidural needle, she imagines her mother caressing her spine. She retroactively mothers herself.

Jarrar and Gonsalez's attention to somatic histories are inextricably tied to childhood and their experiences as children. Gonsalez speaks to the ways in which Black and brown children are policed, surveilled, and how this is normalized, standardized, and mandated, emphasizing how the experience of childhood itself is denied. He recalls the violence and harassment he endured from white children, and the speech pathology he was forced to attend, erasing the Spanish his parents taught him. He details how loneliness, alienation, shame, and guilt sit in the body, what is felt before there are words to describe it, and what has no words to describe. Gonsalez writes, "I cry as a kid because I don't have a language to tell what is going on with me."

Similarly, Jarrar writes to a denial of bodily autonomy in reflecting on the ways her adolescent sexuality was policed, controlled, and punished. Her essay, "What Love Is", shifts between childhood and young adulthood by drawing threads between her father's abuse, her parents control of her movement, the physical and sexual violence she experienced from her boyfriend, and her mother's obsession with her weight. The essay unpacks the methods by which her child body was interpreted through and punished by the scripts of patriarchy. She writes, "Sexuality, pain, love, obedience, hurt: all are woven together in the loom that is my body, that is my skin and heart."

In the act of looking back, Jarrar and Gonsalez are able to redefine and reimagine their childhoods, not as a means of erasure, but as a way to give their child selves another chance to live. I think about Gonsalez reacting to the tender photo taken of him by his mother as a child, writing, "in this photograph I can be the fat and shy and feminine and brown body made beautiful." I think of what Jarrar describes as a favorite memory of her body, in Egypt, walking to the beach, "I was a child. I was a girl. I was a girl child. No one commented on my body." In holding these memories in reverence, Jarrar and Gonsalez reinscribe their bodies as places of autonomy, of beauty, of resistance.

Pedro's Theory examines memoir, particularly the expectation to produce coherence and cohesion in its reflection of the past, and to neatly comprehend personal and collective history. Gonsalez, however, notes that as he sifts through his mother's archives of video and photography in pursuit of a better understanding of his younger self, he is instead faced with an assemblage of selves. In every attempt to understand himself, a new self is created alongside those that are unrecoverable. All of these selves, the known and the unknown, are constantly in flux. Jarrar takes a similar approach in her writing, oscillating between youth and adulthood, her essays are punctuated by snapshots in time, cradling moments of pain, of struggle, of joy.

These two works, in their fragmentation, give life to different threads of being, and hold the tension between a simultaneous yearning for definition, and an understanding of memoir as a mechanism through which the past can be stretched, explored, and invented. Jarrar recounts her tween self, lip-syncing alone in her room, dreaming of wigs, make-up, and a small stage to perform on, in control of her own body, its movements and its adornments. Gonsalez invents an alternate timeline not governed by shame and self-hatred, where instead of ignoring his neighbor Pedro in their school's hallways, they play video games together, share cake at each other's birthdays, take a picture with their arms around each other. It is these moments of exploration and invention that gesture toward a queer of color utopian horizon. By both granting recognition to what was, and imagining other possibilities altogether, they give voice to child rage, suffering, loneliness and resistance, and build frameworks for imagining other worlds outside of colonial capitalist patriarchy. They are able to conceive of the past as a site of expansive possibility, just as much as the future, endlessly composed and composing.

Scout Lee *organizes with local and state wide campaigns against policing and imprisonment, edits oral history transcripts for* The Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest, *and has been working to bring the* ACT UP Oral History Project *to a broader audience.*

Everyday Anarchist

Nick Mamatas

A Life for Anarchy:
A Stuart Christie Reader
edited by the Kate Sharpley Library
282pp. AK Press 2021

It must be difficult to be best known for something you didn't manage to do, as was the case with Stuart Christie (1946-2020), who did not manage to kill Spanish dictator Francisco Franco. But like an excellent doctor who nonetheless loses a patient now and again, Christie must be lauded for the attempt. He should also be lauded for his successes, and *A Life for Anarchy: A Stuart Christie Reader*, edited by the Kate Sharpley Library, is an excellent step in cementing Christie's posthumous reputation, and those of his comrades.

The work of creating a new world is slow and agonizing, and rather involves a lot of both publishing and prison time, to name two things Christie was very familiar with. Christie co-founded Cienfuegos Press, which thought big even while being small. One of its most notorious titles, *Towards A Citizens' Militia*, was a guide to irregular, non-Soviet backed, warfare in case of invasion, and led to intense scrutiny from the state. And yet, at the same time, Christie summarizes the Cienfuegos project as the production of titles with a "limited circulation of around 3,000 anarchists and police agents." Perhaps we won't be fielding significant guerilla forces any time soon. But, then again, maybe...

The state is an implacable enemy, despite its role in, for example, mailing you a copy of this book review. It is omnipresent, but not omnipotent, as Christie makes clear via his memoirs of his prison time, where intraleft sectarianism vanishes, where so many of the people he knew and worked with continued to organize while facing privation, surveillance, and torture. Christie's projects were not about building institutions that could conquer the state, create a new one, or produce checklists for either necessarily violent, or non-violent, revolution. "If people will say TO HELL WITH THE STATE (sic) then at least wish them well" as Christie said in his defense of the Angry Brigade, is the long and short of his politics, and this openness is what allowed him to be prolific and so connected to the international movement. A significant section of *A Life for Anarchy* is wisely dedicated to *other* lives through Christie's appreciations and obituaries of anarchists from Scotland, Spain, and elsewhere across the mileu.

A Life for Anarchy is polyphonic in another way as well: the final third is a series of appreciations of Christie from many of the people he worked with. Some are touching politico-personal reminiscences, such as the funeral speech from his daughter Branwen, who shares both anecdotes about Christie's grandchildren, and his commitment to social justice. Others are more explicitly political and biographical, detailing his activism, the state repression he faced, and what kept him going. As one comrade, MH, (shadowy!) explains, "Despite what he's best known for - the big name actions, it always struck me that at heart he was very much an everyday anarchist who would get involved in whatever needed doing including the unglamorous stuff as well." And that's the kind of anarchist we need to remember, and the kind we need.

Sleepwalking Toward Bethlehem

D.G. Gerard

Living Sea of Waking Dreams
by Richard Flanagan
304pp. Bertelsmann 2021

Kerala 2018 by Marcia Teusink. Oil on panel 2018

The last thing most of us want to read is a book as full of pain as Richard Flanagan's *Living Sea of Waking Dreams.* In the last two years many have been overwhelmed by grief; inundated by images of climate disaster, have grieved personal disasters caused or fed by capitalism and social disconnection.

It's assumed that the instinct to avoid emotional pain is universal, obvious; perhaps the only way to survive many challenges. Avoidance is an ancient instinct, but it has been turned against us. As media colonizes ever larger tracts of conscious experience, emotional avoidance is becoming all-consuming. *The Living Sea of Waking Dreams* is Flanagan's answer to this cultural tendency, casting grief as an act of rebellion and a cathartic release.

The novel focuses on an Australian family witnessing their mother's death during a bushfire season worsened by climate change. Francie, a relic of a dying era of rural farms and women's work, slowly loses her memory and her sense of self as she endures waves of painful treatments that keep her clinging to life. Anna and Terzo, Francie's successful children, return to their hometown to argue with doctors and resist Francie's death. Tommy, a working-class artist who has been present with his mother through her final years, begs his siblings to let their mother go, retreating into defeated silence when they crush his appeals. As the landscape burns and Francie continues her inevitable decline, Anna notices that body parts are vanishing without warning—first, from her own body, and later, from her son, her girlfriend, and strangers.

Flanagan links Francie's death with climate change, but it is not a direct metaphor. He does not allow us to forget that keeping Francie alive is a sin and a torment, and the same cannot be said about efforts to keep our planet alive. Francie's death represents the death of an old way of life, one which has caused harm even as it has served. As Francie's children circle her in her final days, they remember the harm she caused, and the abuse that sometimes spilled out in between her love. All is forgiven, but it is a thin forgiveness that stinks of denial. The family's drama mirrors the relationship between the upper class and capitalism—the mother of wealth and the father of endless horrors that aren't polite to discuss at the dinner table. Anna, Terzo, and the upper class cannot survive without resisting change and denying suffering, which fuels a fanatical and absurd resistance to death. Flanagan does not spare us the unpleasant results: the archetype of the steel-strong venture capitalist becomes a parody as we watch Terzo vacillate between manic, cruel love and pathetic, disturbing collapse.

The family's denial infects more than the process of death. Every aspect of life is choked by a dissociation that Flanagan makes physical through vanishing body parts. As Anna suffers through the events of the novel and cuts away inconvenient feelings and desires, she loses fingers, a knee, a breast. In moments of emotional intensity, she runs away to scroll through scenes of environmental destruction on her phone, shoving down her grief and terror and replacing it with acceptable, commodified anxiety. She has no respect for her own need to grieve and suffer, so she hates herself, and her hatred drives her to be cruel to others. Despite this, she is aware enough to notice what she is losing, and to feel alienated when people around her refuse to notice or acknowledge those losses. But environmental losses disturb her more than anything else, and they coalesce into a grief so large it can't be put into words.

The old wound in this family is the death of a son and brother, Ronnie, who killed himself as a teenager after he was abused by a priest at his Catholic school. Flanagan elegantly captures the amnesia characteristic of child abuse. Details concerning the incident are sparse because the family cannot bear to look at the tragedy directly. Fragments erupt without context, and implied violence haunts the narrative. The presence is so subtle that one can sense the characters straining to avoid deeper memory. When violations occur in a culture whose primary defense is dissociation, the first instinct of the witness is a frantic avoidance of memory. Francie's confused and fragmented memory is perhaps the final stage of this intentional forgetting.

Anna attempts to save her son, Gus, from Ronnie's fate by punishing him for his vulnerability. When Gus was young, Anna refused his need for comfort, and he never recovers from this wound. He refuses to participate in the struggle of existence and instead entombs himself in a closed world of video games and internet use. He vanishes faster than anyone, and soon enough, only one eye is left, the final portal through which he absorbs the images that flash across his screen.

Flanagan's anger spills out in sentences where Anna hypocritically bemoans the insubstantial conversations of people who surround her, describing Netflix shows and liberal magazine features as "bedtime fairytales for adults". Sometimes this anger descends into a solipsism that evokes Shakespeare's Hamlet. Anna feels superior to the emotionless drones who surround her, without considering the deep grief that others are carrying beneath their polished exteriors. And worse than Hamlet, Anna does not outwardly resist participation in the same shallow behaviors. This too is part of Flanagan's profile of the contemporary mind. Although Anna has awareness of her culture's collective dysfunction, she cannot imagine ways to transcend the systems which trap her in misery, and never bothers to search for them.

There are characters in *The Living Sea of Waking Dreams* who imagine futures that transcend the mistakes of the past. Awkward, stuttering Tommy faces the grief of his mother's death with graceful acceptance, and parents his castaway granddaughter with deep kindness. A scientist who Anna encounters on a flight, works quietly to save a parrot species from extinction and speaks freely about what sustains or pains her. This is not a novel that imagines new possibilities. It is a work of art before anything else, revealing the grief that must be faced before one can get up and begin the work of fixing things. It is a novel of gratitude and awe for a beautiful world that is already fading away.

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Dan Georgakas and members of Black Mask in New York City 1967

Up Against The Wall

The Life and Times of Dan Georgakas

Nick Mamatas

Dan Georgakas (1938-2021) was such a profound figure that upon his death, four separate and almost certainly disconnected subcultures—American anarchists, film buffs, poets, and Greek Americans—were lit up by the news. Dan Georgakas is such an obscure figure that a week after his death on November 23, 2021, his slim Wikipedia entry has yet to be updated with the fact of his passing. Wishful thinking, perhaps.

Georgakas was the son of Greek immigrants—his mother had escaped the burning of Smyrna (now Izmir) aboard the Japanese freighter Tokei Maru, which dumped its cargo to evacuate 800 ethnic Greeks and Armenians facing genocide at the hands of the Turkish Army in 1922. He grew up in Detroit as part of a tight-knit Greek community, and as the city's working class struggled under the dubious reign of the American motor industry. Two major works came out of his life experience and distrust of authority. *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying*, his study of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers co-written with Marvin Surkin, has been a central title in the study in the synthesis of black liberation and working-class struggle since 1975. *My Detroit, Growing up Greek and American in Motor City,* his late-life memoir, tells the story of Detroit from a more personal but no less radical point of view. Upon his death, the former book was championed as his signal achievement by radicals of every stripe, while the Greek American media confidently claimed that "Professor Georgakas" was best known for the second title.

When Georgakas was a child, Greeks were not quite white yet, and there was and is immense pressure on and by Greek Americans to fully assimilate into whiteness, privilege, and a fundamental conservatism. Part of what helped Georgakas resist was the world of art and imagination. The poems of Greek-Egyptian C.P. Cavafy—who was widely read among Greek Americans before becoming a "world poet" by the grace of white academia—was a major inspiration. The cosmopolitan, urbanist, and engaged poems of Cavafy "had more impact on me than any other poet I had every read," Georgakas said. "Sure, it was the Greek context but what he was saying seemed to apply directly to my Detroit of the 1960s."

More than a writer, Georgakas was also a Motherfucker. With Ben Morea, he founded Up Against the Wall Motherfucker, a Surrealist-influenced combat art collective that intervened in a New York City garbage strike by collecting bags from the Lower East Side and dumping them in the fountains at Lincoln Center and that made Woodstock free for hundreds of people by cutting a hole in the fence around the festival. Even becoming a New Yorker was fraught for Georgakas, whose grandfather fretted that he "would get involved in an eccentric lifestyle and meet unscrupulous people"—what can we say, except that παππούς was clearly a very discerning man?

Georgakas, if you were in tune either to radical sensibilities or the peculiarities of Greek surnames, was everywhere. He edited volumes of radical poetry and an oral history of the IWW, wrote widely on film for Cineaste and other publications, was a frequently cited labor historian, and also produced a regular column for *The National Herald,* the weekly English-language version of the last Greek-language daily paper in the US, *Εφνίκος Κήρυκας*. He was, of course, far to the left of everything else in the paper, which mostly highlights the business successes of Greek-Americans and keeps careful track of the slow-paced bishop-only chess game known as Greek Orthodoxy. But Georgakas, though a natural outsider, found a way to belong there, and everywhere he went, and with everything he did, while always waving the black flag of anarchy.

Dear Mother bell

BethSheba McGruder

We never met. We never had a one on one conversation. Decades ago, I sat in an audience, at a bookstore, or auditorium middle row-center and hung on your every word. Then you went dormant. Your silence was piercing. I wrote to "them" asking about you over ten years ago. No response.

Some of us "moved on," some of us went "off the grid," some of us quietly searched for you on the "web," and gave speculation that you needed rest. After all, you gave us You. Not sure if you're pleased with "us"/me. I sit on broken porch steps, working to stay busy, promising to make you proud, but just like colorful fashion, I am here a day late and a dollar short.

I'm sorry bell. What a sour word. Sorry.

I apologize for not standing up for you, for me, and all the ones sitting, standing, slouching, laying on the concrete bed porch that we have created not following your instruction. I'm truly sorry. You are the coat that armored and shielded us when we walked out into the world, but slowly over time i/we have allowed ourselves to leave our homes without intention. Sorry is sad, it is sour, it is truth. Sorry your death has given reason to relearn who you are and share you with the world and next generations.

And just like the last scene, the final act as the curtain goes down. Your audience shares your image and words in ovation; saying thank you bell, Excellent! Job well done!
i/we will continue the work.

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bell hooks by N. Masani Landfair.
Collage on paper 2021

The Body in Protest

Heather Bowlan

Villainy
by Andrea Abi-Karam
136pp. Nightboat Books 2021

Saint 1001
by Daphne Gottlieb
264pp. Madhat Press 2021

There's a saying that I attribute to Vietnam war protests, the way most quotes on the internet are randomly attributed to Gandhi or Martin Luther King Jr: "Fighting for peace is like fucking for virginity." It's cute in the way protest signs need to be. And for whatever reason (perhaps the futility, certainly the word "fucking") this phrase came to mind more than once while reading *Villainy* and *Saint 1001*.

Certainly, nobody's trying to fight or fuck for virginity in these two books, and I can't say anyone's fucking for peace, exactly. Maybe better to say fucking to fight is the through line for these textual interrogations, with lenses pointed simultaneously inward and outward. Desire as protest, with all the visceral and emotional complexity that implies.

Villainy is frantic, frenetic, unapologetically ALL CAPS and absolutely taking up space. And also returning over and over again to the idea of changing our space, or more radically, of unbecoming. In "What is Closed/What is Contained" the narrator asks:

> What does it mean to contain an identity / to contain an I in the body / I think of my multiple selves / fixed against the wall / hooks around their necks holding them in place

This builds in "The Interruption Vs Blockade"; the repetition and use of all-caps are almost hypnotizing, approaching the "FUSION OF SWEATING BODIES INTO A WHATEVER SINGULARITY" promised at the beginning of the book. Not just sweat, of course—blood, too, transformation in a physical and painful sense. "WHAT DISFIGUREMENT IS THIS" we're asked, and asked to witness, as the narrator imagines flattening and wisping like smoke out of and around enforced boundaries, the traps of trauma. Transformation is both painful and necessary:

> THIS MYTH
> IS HARD
> ON
> THE
> BODY

The stage is set for *Saint 1001*'s premise from this sentence in the (regrettably) necessary author's note describing the now-defunct Craigslist Casual Encounters section: "It is entirely possible that the great poetic form of the early millennium was the personal ad." It's so middle-aged of me to bemoan the end of that moment, but as the art of (physical) letter-writing began to slip away, the rise of the carefully crafted Casual Encounter helped many horny burgeoning wordsmiths to find each other—or at least entertain ourselves with our cleverness while we tried to get laid.

If *Villainy* is blatant, volume turned to the max, in its desire—for power/survival/voice—*Saint 1001* is maximalist in another sense. This book, framed as letters from a woman, identified as S, to her first love, a married man called J, is fully enmeshed in cultural reference, in self-reference, in mythmaking and storytelling, as the title might suggest with its reference to Scheherazade. I'd personally been holding my breath for the end of footnotes in creative texts until coming across Gottlieb's brilliant use of cf. (meaning, see for context) to refer backward and forward to other moments in the text—moments when situations or archetypes are repeated; moments that seem to summarize the entire project: "So this is kind of where it turns into a love story. Didn't you know it was going to turn into a love story?" with the footnote "Cf. pp. 1–245."

Other footnotes span every possibility from the Bible (if you want to read about a casual encounter with Jesus, you're in luck) to Scooby Doo to Julia Kristeva to Elton John to, yes, whiskey tasting notes. The footnotes themselves are necessary because all of the above is adapted and threaded into the text itself—a brilliant acknowledgment of how the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves are inevitably intertextual, and that noting and noticing those texts matters.

And if that's not enough layers for you, look out for the doodles, the cartoons and photos of the adventures

El Abrazo by Nereida Garcia Ferraz. Mixed media on canvas 2019

of a lime named Scurvy, the erasures, and so much more.

"Structure is everything," a mouse in one of S's many stories tells her radioactive children (braided into allusions to and adapted quotations from Barthes and Derrida). And while *Villainy* and *Saint 1001* have radically different structures overall (a collection of discrete poems vs an epistolary hybrid text), there are similarities in the scaffolding.

Cultural reference, for example, threads through both—theory and art and music—placing the reader in a specific context or inviting them to learn more. In *Villainy*, the narrator hopes to evoke Frantz Fanon, and the necessary violence of decolonization Fanon describes:

> i thought i could write a poem of each fanonian
> poem phase
> one for assimilation one for nostalgia one for
> the fighting phase
> i thought about doing it in a gay way i mean
> assimilation is so obvious

And other poems in the collection draw inspiration from the films of Ana Mendieta, the art of David Wojnarowicz, and the writing of Cecilia Vicuna.

Gottlieb's epistolary is loaded, even overloaded, with cultural references. More interesting, even, than the intertextual references and footnotes is S's "Frankenquilt," described as a craft project but presented as a kind of grid poem of first lines from The Canon.

Over the course of the book, we are introduced to a character, Gamete, who takes her own mythical journey through patriarchy and finally emerges in the role of Salome. Gamete's dance of the seven veils reads as a renunciation of the many men's voices that have framed so much of S's storytelling in favor of a conversation, a chorus perhaps, of women's writing telling a new story. Each veil is its own composite poem, for example, the third veil (featuring, per the footnote, "first lines of pieces by Lucille Clifton, Wanda Coleman, Sylvia Plath, Maya Angelou, Suheir Hammad, Jessica Hagedorn, Ishle Yi Park):

a woman unlike myself is running
the gates of mercy slammed on
It was a queer, sultry summer

We, this people, on a small
poem supposed to be about
some people i know
All I have ever done is write you love poems.[185]

Repetition, too, brings a kind of comfort in the inner and outer explorations of these books. Abi-Karam's background in performance poetry has given them a mastery in this technique, sometimes used to very powerful effect:

> I AM WINGED
> I AM RED
> I AM WINGED
> I AM RED
> I AM FLAT AMONGST THE OTHER
> RUINS

And sometimes it's a needed moment of humor or distance—In "The Aftermath," "WOULDN'T [phrase] BE SUCH A GOOD ALBUM NAME" punctuates the often disillusioned descriptions of interactions of protest culture, specifically the self-distancing of many writers or other would-be allies from protests or direct action.

In *Saint 1001*, Gottlieb repeats two different poems that point to the unsaid, and these poems spread out on the page—S asks about the life of J, which is referred to in the vaguest terms (man, married to a woman on the East Coast with a daughter), in a series of incomplete questions:

Do you How
Have you
Will you
What do you
When

The other main omission for much of the book is the story of a trauma sometime in early adulthood, which is referred to, in versions of the same spare language, also surrounded by white space:

alley
street sidewalk buildings
me
tree
henry
alley
henry
bar
my room

Suffering is, possibly, the hardest thing to name, to pin down, to protest or contest, since it lives in our bodies. The other main sorrow of *Saint 1001*, the death of S's lover Micah, is constantly told and retold as different scenarios—a drowning, a car crash, an overdose. And Abi-Karam's narrator, too, finds trauma difficult to write, as they describe in "I Got Lost/I Got Deleted":

> I WAIT FOR THIS SHOCK TO STOP
> I WAIT TO FEEL SOMETHING NEW
> LIKE
> EXPERIENCING SOMETHING FOR
> THE FIRST TIME
> BUT I KNOW I CANNOT BE
> REMEMBERED
> I KNOW THE BODY CANNOT
> FORGET TRAUMA
> BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW TO
> ACCESS IT
> I DON'T KNOW HOW TO GET BACK
> THERE & I KNOW I AM AFRAID 2

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