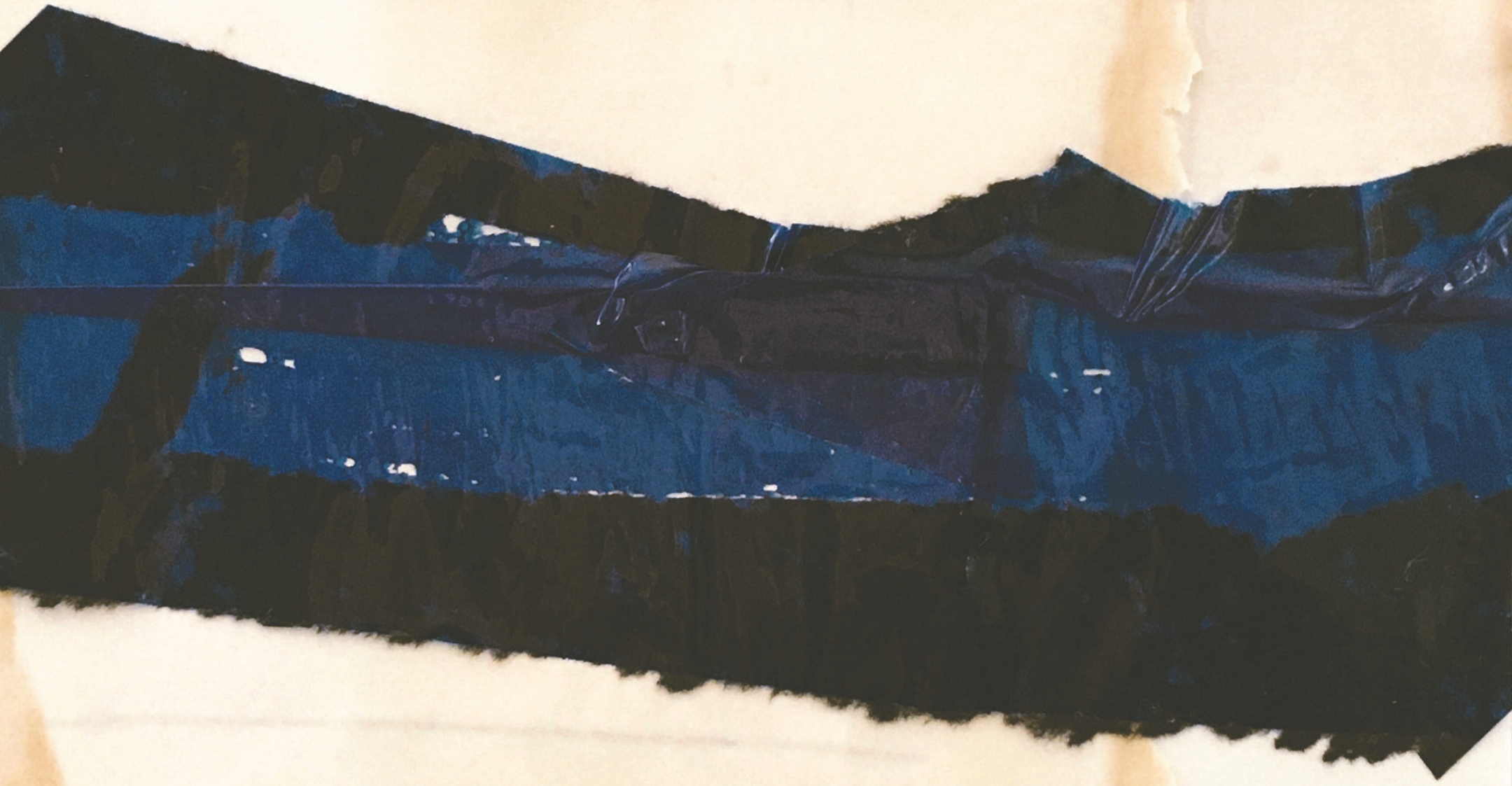
The Anarchist Review

of Books

Issue #2 Summer 2021



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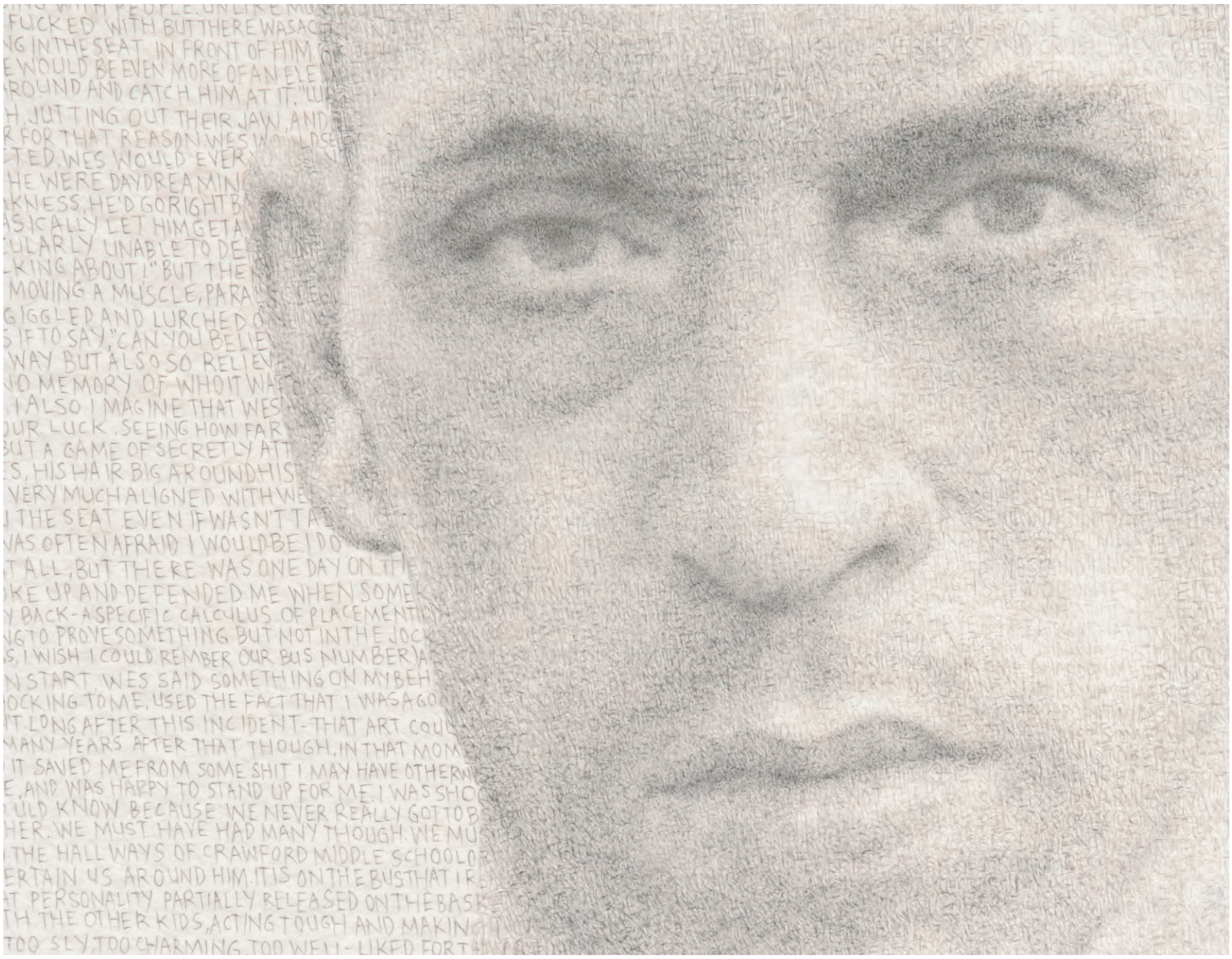

Detail of Wes (text) by Ben Durham. Graphite on handmade paper 2020

Contents

About the Cover

Horizons... by N. Masani Landfair. Collage on paper, 4½" x 6½", 2020.

N. Masani Landfair takes materials considered undesirable and redefines the worth and meaning already contained within. She uses traditional collage and assemblage to create abstract social commentary, dream landscapes, and spaces she experiences (consciously and sub-consciously) every day.

Page 2

Detail of ***Wes (text)*** by Ben Durham. Graphite on handmade paper, 37" x 28", 2020.

Ben Durham makes drawings of people he grew up with. He finds the source images for his works by looking for familiar faces and names in online databases of mugshots from the Kentucky Department of Corrections. Rather than rendering his subjects by classical means, Durham writes each of his subjects' stories, layering text in varying weights and densities until it resolves into a photorealistic likeness.

About This Issue

Welcome to the second issue of the *Anarchist Review of Books,* produced by a collective based in Atlanta, Austin, Exarchia, Chicago, New York, Oakland and Seattle. ARB publishes subversive, non-academic, 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.

We bring you this issue at a time of polarization in American artistic and intellectual discourse. Nuanced dialog and open conversation have been replaced with factionalism and strident doctrinaire absurdities. People are calling to abolish the police, but everyone has forgotten how to kill the cop in their head.

This summer while pride flags fly over banks and federal buildings, while Black Lives Matter signs dot the manicured lawns of all-white neighborhoods, while the rich buy bunkers and islands and rocket ships, believing they can break free of the disasters they captained on stolen land, the full scope of our humanity, our logic, our reason, is on the line.

Mikhail Bakunin, whose work influenced Kropotkin, Marcuse, A.S. Neil, and the labor and anti-globalization movements, wrote that we must spread our principles not with words but with deeds. Americans are living today with a reversal of these ideals, where oppressive institutions are decorated with signs of empty solidarity, where marginalized groups live under threat of essentialism and fragmentation. And where petitioning authorities has replaced dialog and direct action.

What do proclamations of inclusion really mean if inclusion reiterates the same tired stereotypes? ARB editor Yasmin Nair recently pointed out that the publishing world is unwilling to expand its idea of "writers of color." As a result, most contemporary fiction involving non-white people requires protagonists to be stereotypical; Asians contending with unbending parents, Mexican Americans with pillowy, sad abuelas cooking fragrant pozole, and so on [insert relevant stock narrative here]. This sense that non-white experiences and perspectives can only be understood in particular ways has an effect on our political imagination. If we can't create fiction that illuminates the world we're living in, in all its complications failures and possibilities, how can we take action?

There is so much to discuss, debate, celebrate, desire, demand and build.

In this issue we feature new fiction by James Kelman; delight in the revolutionary art of Pope L, and N. Masani Landfair; listen to Elissa Washuta and Theresa Warburton discuss *White Magic* and violence in anarchist communities; celebrate Douglas Martin's anti-true crime masterpiece *Wolf*; appreciate the life and work of Chinese American photographer Corky Lee; and talk to Jim Shepard, Patron Saint of the Maladapted, about the project of literature in precarious times. Ashlyn Mooney looks at radical publishing in Appalachia; Nick Mamatas takes on John Zerzan's latest foray into the jungles of symbolic thought; and I talk with technologist James Yu, who is training artificial intelligence to write, read, and critique fiction.

We invite you to open these pages to read, to dream, to debate, to see, to plot and ultimately to act.

All Power to the Imagination

Cara Hoffman
July 2021

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

This issue was proofread by Allan Kausch

Have Something to Say?
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or

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Sparks

Curated by Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore

If we're all "just human"
then who is responsible?
—Nikki Wallschlaeger, *Waterbaby* (Copper Canyon 2021)

"Life is proprietary. Do not listen."
—Anthony Cody, *Borderland Apocrypha* (Omnidawn Publishing 2020)

"Solidarity is something that's made and remade and remade, it never just is."
—Ruth Wilson Gilmore, in *Geographies of Racial Capitalism* with Ruth Wilson Gilmore, directed by Kenton Card

"Language too is a history of violence."
—Patrick Nathan, *Image Control: Art, Fascism, and the Right to Resist* (Counterpoint Press 2021)

"Loneliness must be recruited in the fight against capitalism."
—Jacob Wren, on Twitter, October 30, 2020

"Without a shared narrative, is friendship possible?"
—Kristen Millares Young, at the Hugo Literary Series, Hugo House, June 4, 2021

"We can't talk about visibility if we aren't addressing tokenism."
—Vivek Shraya, on Twitter, March 30, 2021

"Capitalism requires inequality, and racism enshrines it."
—Ruth Wilson Gilmore, in *Geographies of Racial Capitalism* with Ruth Wilson Gilmore

"Borders are the flesh wounds of empire."
—Elissa Washuta, *White Magic* (Tin House 2021)

"If the condition of the love of country is a lie, the love itself, no matter how genuine, is a lie."
—Eddie S. Glaude, *Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lessons for Our Own* (Crown 2019)

"I am tired of my own surviving."
—Shannon Perez-Darby, in conversation with Corinne Manning and Kristen Millares Young at Bluestockings, January 28, 2021

"Bad sex is a political issue, one of inequality of access to pleasure and self-determination, and it is as a political issue that we should be examining it."
—Katherine Angel, *Tomorrow Sex Will be Good Again: Women and Desire in the Age of Consent* (Verso 2021)

"When I was thirteen I decided that I will never be part of any group. The world abandoned me. So I am treating the world the same way. I distrust any kind of community. I believe in lonely voices, in lonely hearts, in lonely and scared strangers you meet briefly in the streets, in the subways, in the public toilets, and with whom you share very briefly the essence of life, love, and sex."
—Abdellah Taïa, interviewed by Georgia Phillips-Amos in BOMB, May 3, 2016

"Community is the people who show up. Invited or not, desirable or not, it can only be defined as the folks who spend time with you."
—Anne Elizabeth Moore, *Gentrifier* (Catapult 2021)

"When my hand hits the keyboard I'm lying."
—Eileen Myles, *For Now* (Yale University Press 2020)

***Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore** is the author, most recently, of* The Freezer Door. *She's also the editor of* Between Certain Death and a Possible Future: Queer Writing on Growing Up with the AIDS Crisis, *out in October 2021. For virtual book tour events and other excitement, visit mattildabernsteinsycamore.com.*

On The Fringe of the Fringe

Ola Kaminska

Queercore: How to Punk A Revolution, An Oral History
Edited by Liam Warfield, Walter Crasshole, and Yony Leyser
208pp. PM Press 2021

Archival image from Queercore: How to Punk a Revolution

The need for a community is the main theme of *Queercore: How to Punk a Revolution*. An Oral History. The book is a collection of stories, anecdotes, and conversations – a chronicle of queer punk told by artists and activists. Queercore, a cultural movement most active in the 1980s and 1990s, redefined punk for LGBTQ+ people. Or rather, as several protagonists of the book prove, it exposed the ways in which punk was always queer. It is a story of challenging normalcy, of alternatives to assimilation and homonormativity, expressed through music and art. Canadian artist Scott Treleaven explains it well: "the alignment of queer and punk was really natural. Punk has always questioned the status quo, and of course, queers should too." From Kathleen Hannah, through John Waters and Eileen Myles, to Bruce LaBruce and G.B. Jones, *Queercore* is a firsthand narrative by the artists who were there when the movement was born. The book comes with scanned photos, fragments of zines, flyers, movie stills, lists of suggested filmography, records, and zines – it's almost a crash course in queerness and punk. But the joy, mischief, and humor of the stories told in *Queercore* make it feel more like a party than a course.

Growing up in the mid-2000s in Poland, I had no idea punk could be queer. The 1970s/1980s British punk and post-punk bands I was listening to in high school: The Clash, Gang of Four, The Buzzcocks, and The Fall didn't seem like part of queer culture, neither did the local bands I would see. The performative machismo of mainstream punk didn't fit within a simplified and stereotypical image of gay culture that I had: for a long time, between disco and my internalized homophobia, there was simply no place for punk. Later, I would discover Riot Grrl, and then work my way backwards to its roots.

Queercore traces that development of queer punk from 1969 until the end of the 20th century and explores its presence in numerous cities, from Toronto to Los Angeles. As Liam Warfield notes, 1969 works as the symbolic beginning of queercore in two ways. First, as the year of the Stonewall Riots and secondly, because "something punk was in the air": Altamont concert, the Days of Rage, and the debut album by The Stooges all happened that year. Music, art, and activism—especially ACT UP and Queer Nation—constantly interweave in the history of queercore, shaping the visibility of LGBTQ+ communities and their culture. Yet, Warfield convinces readers that the burst of queercore in the 1980s was not really an answer to the AIDS crisis and Reagan. Instead, he claims "queercore began more as an absence than a confluence." It's the need for belonging and the lack of inviting space for LGBTQ+ people in macho punk culture that fueled the movement's emergence.

The account of the "fabricated" beginnings of the queer scene in Toronto is one of the most fascinating stories in the book, told primarily by artist Bruce LaBruce who describes how Toronto's queer scene was imagined by a couple of punks working in a bourgeois dessert restaurant, then put into action by one of the friends joining an all-female band Fifth Column as a male go-go dancer, and later exaggeratedly described in a popular zine to create the illusion of an active full-blown movement.

Supposedly, Toronto's fame drew in Gus Van Sant so he could film his movie there but, as LaBruce explains, "the scene" was just him and three dykes. There is both a desperate hope to create a community and the playfulness of punk in LaBruce's story. It mirrors Kathleen Hannah's famous anecdote of how in the early 1990s she told the press that riot grrrls are having meetings all over the United States, even though it wasn't true at the moment—but once her interview got printed, it became true. It's a do-it-yourself story at its best and one that resonates deeply: if you want to be part of the queer punk scene, just create it. And if that seems difficult at first, an illusion can also work. Stories about making art or music with people who get you, come up continually in Queercore. LaBruce puts it this way: "I was rejected by two subcultures, the gay subculture, and the punk subculture. I've never really felt like I've fit into either of them. So I've always felt like I'm on the fringe of the fringe." As it turned out, for the past fifty years, there have been many more people on the fringe of the fringe.

The book closes with the end of the 20th century but this does not mean that the movement is over. How to think about it in the year 2021? Does queercore still matter? It hasn't really been consumed by capitalism (not that there were no attempts—in 2017, Gucci named one of their luxury shoe collections "Queercore") and it hasn't been yet adapted into an easily digestible Netflix movie, the way riot grrrl recently was in *Moxie*. The movement seems to be preserved in its original forms: zines, records, and independent film. In the book's afterward Walter Crasshole connects queercore with the current socio-historical context, pointing out the alarming turn to right-wing politics that happening worldwide.

In Poland, there has never been a better moment for queercore to flourish. Anarcho-queer activists were on the frontlines of the protests and brutal confrontations with the police happening last summer, dubbed by the media as "The Polish Stonewall." While this name is an overstatement, the refusal of conformity has been clearly visible in the past year. Will this energy be translated into social and cultural activity? A few queer bands are already active on Poland's punk scene, and the spirit of queercore seems to exist here beyond punk as a genre. In the last months, I've been listening to a debut song from a lesbian rapper telling the story of gays being beaten up in front of a club, a folk queer band singing in the streets about police brutality, and a techno producer sampling and distorting homophobic statements made by Polish politicians. Those songs are born from the collective anger of the LGBTQ+ community that can no longer be silenced. But queercore is not only needed where the rights of LGBTQ+ people are in danger: it exists as a reminder that there are alternatives to homonormativity. Punk celebrates amateurism and creating or becoming more than being. Much like queerness, it is often characterized by process and turmoil rather than stability. Queer punk is a part of history and queercore's power still lies in its raw and subversive energy.

Creating a book about gigs, zines, performances, and various acts of activism somewhat contradicts the ephemerality of the events it describes. To me, reading *Queercore* felt like stepping into a time machine to peek at a moment in history that I've never experienced but loved and was inspired by. There is a more tangible longing there too: after a year without gigs and people, I miss overly crowded venues with poor ventilation, the sticky floors smelling of cheap beer, the bad sound system. I miss those things because they used to come with the pleasure of spending time with others, the excitement of listening to music, the feeling of community. *Queercore* is a reminder of the importance of shared passion, joy, and anger that exist in DIY venues. The book is full of anecdotes, tall tales, gossip, and moving accounts of activism and a sense of inclusion. It contradicts itself and fills in the gaps at the same time; and the numerous voices make it feel alive, like you're at a crowded show. If you've ever wanted to eavesdrop on a conversation between punks who were there when it all went down, here's your chance.

***Ola Kaminska** is a Polish punk musician and a founder of the band NANA.*

william cordova, sacsayhuaman (geometria de una sombra) pintura aerosol collage de photo en n papel 2008 Courtesia de Arndt Art Agency, Berlin, Germany

Nothing to Forgive

Josh Wagner

The Book of Trespass: Crossing the Lines that Divide Us
by Nick Hayes
372pp. Bloomsbury 2020

Living in Somerset last year, I wandered all the country paths I could find. Sometimes I'd come across a stile or kissing-gate accompanied by a little plaque: "Provided by the Ramblers Association". Concerned citizens invested in trail upkeep, how charming! But four pages into *The Book of Trespass* my notion of who "Ramblers" could be was transformed from an afternoon club of retirees into fiery activists battling it out with the police to preserve an eroding set of ancient rights.

Until a few decades ago the act of trespass was a civil misdemeanor in Great Britain, only actionable if it resulted in damages. That changed with the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, which defined a crime of Aggravated Trespass for the convenience of police who wished to remove protesters, ravers, and other unwelcome visitors from areas that had previously been de facto open to them.

Well before that, though, the tension between freedom of movement and private control of land and its resources was a source of conflict in British life. Hayes opens his book with an account of the Kinder Trespass, a 1932 action that pitted unaffiliated ramblers and members of the Young Communist League against the Duke of Derbyshire's gamekeepers in a mass action that remains one of the most celebrated acts of civil disobedience in British history. At issue was whether the moors of Derbyshire should be open to all who wished to walk, camp, and explore, or whether they would be used exclusively by the Duke and his peers for grouse-shooting.

Nick Hayes' book is part travelogue, part critical analysis, and entirely radical—tightly woven with no stitches showing. The author invites us to tromp with him across the English countryside as he commits a personal act of trespass for every chapter in search of "… the kind of moment that is only available off the path. It is an accident, unwilled and unplanned, but it comes dressed as poetry." His prose tucks us into nature's tranquility, while his survey of England's execrable record for gobbling up public space demands that we reexamine our assumptions concerning land rights, usage, and enclosure. To paraphrase Hayes, controlling the commons has always been intimately linked with controlling the commoners. Suggesting that "Property cannot comprehend mobility", he examines how the legal structures of property rights have been used to control women, ethnic minorities—especially the Roma and other travellers—activists, and outsiders of all kinds by defining ever-increasing areas where they cannot be. *Trespass* belongs on the shelf of every nature lover, every history buff, and every activist—somewhere between Sebald's *Rings of Saturn* and the *People's Histories* of Zinn and Harmon. Rigor may be occasionally sacrificed for readability, but no prerequisites are required and Hayes' fervor and personal touch plunge readers effortlessly in and out of theoretical territory. *Trespass* is a gorgeous example of putting theory into practice.

Hayes' writing maintains a grounded, earthy flavor. Its poetry springs from deceptively forthright layerings of metaphor which spiral out from two firm conceptual foundations. First, that while natural barriers are "areas of transaction, semi-permeable membranes," the hard borders of power structures act as zones of enclosure, claiming privilege and choking off access and resources. Second, that trespass serves as a social spell dictating our engagement with the land. The ultimate outcome of delineation and its enforcement goes far beyond conservation to engender social imbalance and stifle our capacity to respond flexibly to environmental crisis. *Trespass* illuminates these big picture challenges through the interconnectedness of everyday experience. It weaves between far flung perspectives on borders, walls, and fences—structures commonplace enough to vanish into the background. Little by little, *Trespass* destroys this illusion, offering the reader a vision of how land enclosure resonates with local folklore, international politics, global migration, and climate change.

Peppered throughout are Hayes' own haunting illustrations, whose perspectives dramatize the subdued conceptual energy of boundaries. It is always as if we are peering out at the gate, fence, hedge, or isolated estate from behind a bush or lurking in the shadow of some tree. A different illustrated animal heralds each of the eleven chapters—from Fox (vagabond and landless), to Spider (sensitivity and creativity), to Hare (who "defies enclosure"); and at last, the Stag, representing the mythic Hern the Hunter who inspired the rebellious tradition to which the modern Ramblers belong. In this loose and emblematic organization, Hayes appears to meander, but his various trails trace the relationship between people and land from an age of shared commons to the eleventh-century Norman conquest, clarifying ways by which land use and ownership was shored up on a mass scale for the privileged few. Trespass continues along this trajectory to the present day, when most of England's public space has been relegated to "honey pots" where "swarms of holidaymakers could be directed without disturbing the old order of land ownership."

As a whole, *The Book of Trespass* might have benefited from one last cruel edit. A slimmer volume might have engendered more urgency. But every good trespass has its thickets to push through, and without the meandering paths traversing nodes of juicy content, we would not find ourselves so clearly drawn into the woods and trails this bold text insists belong to us all in common, nor feel quite so inspired to strike out in search of glade or glen to sit and enjoy the next chapter.

In *The Book of Trespass,* the eponymous act becomes a mode of resistance, a counter-spell to the methods deployed by entrenched structures of exclusivity that corral movement and dominate the conversation. Perhaps the best expression of the book's value can be lifted from the author's own words exalting trespass itself: it "shines a light on the unequal share of wealth and power in England, it threatens to unlock a new mindset of our community's rights to the land, and, most radical of all, it jinxes the spell of an old, paternalistic order that tell us everything is just as it should be."

***Josh Wagner**'s work has been published by Cafe Irreal, Not One of Us, Cleaver Magazine, Medulla Review, Lovecraft eZine, and Image Comics. He won the 2008 Project Fanboy Best Storyline award and the 2012 Westcliffe Center's New Rocky Mountain Voices competition.*

The Block

James Kelman

Kelman's Block by Allan Kausch. Cut paper collage from vintage engravings 2021

The body landed at my feet. A short man with stumpy legs. He was staring up at me but though so wide open those eyes were seeing things from which I was excluded, not only excluded from but irrelevant to; things to which I was nonexistent. He had no knowledge of me, had never had occasion to be aware of me. He did not see me although I was staring at him through his eyeballs. I was possibly seeking some sort of reflection, of a thing that was there to the inside. What the hell was he seeing with his eyelids so widely parted. He was seeing nothing. Blood issued from his mouth. He was dead. A dead man on the pavement beneath me —with stumpy legs; a short man with a longish body. I felt his pulse: there was no pulse. I wasnt feeling his pulse at all. I was grasping the wrist of a short man. No longer a wrist. I was grasping an extension, the extension to the left of a block of matter. This block of matter was a man's body moments earlier. Unless he had been dead on leaving the window upstairs, in which case a block of matter landed at my feet and I could scarcely even be referred to in connection with 'it', with a block of matter describable as 'it' – never mind being nonexistent of, or to. And two policemen had arrived. O Jesus, said one, is he dead?

I was looking at them. The other policeman had knelt to examine the block and was saying: No pulse. Dead. No doubt about it poor bastard. What happened? And looking at me, addressing me, the policeman was addressing me.

I said: A block of matter landed at my feet.

What was that?

The block of matter, it was a man's body previous to impact unless of course he was out the game prior to that, in which case, in which case a block of matter landed at my feet.

What happened?

This, I said and gestured at the block. This; it was suddenly by my feet. I stared into t he objects that had formerly been eyes before doing as you did, I grasped the left extension there to . . . see.

What?

The pulse. You were saying there was no pulse, but in a sense – well, right enough I suppose you were quite correct to say there was no pulse. I had grasped what I took to be a wrist to find I was grasping the left extension of a block of matter. Just before you arrived. I found that what was a man's body was in fact a block and . . . I frowned. The missing connection, it is what happens. It is this.

Do you live around here? said the policeman.

What, aye, yes. Along the road a bit.

Did you see him falling?

An impossibility. That is uh . . .

He was here when you got here?

No. He may have been. He might well have been alive, it I mean. No – he . . . unless of course the . . . I had taken it for granted that it landed when I arrived but it might possibly . . . no, definitely not. I heard the thump. The impact. Of the impact.

Jesus Christ.

The other policeman glanced at him and then at me: What's your name?

McLeish, Michael. I live along the road a bit.

Where exactly?

Number 3.

And where might you be going at this time of the morning?

Work, I'm going to work. I'm a milkman.

Do you have any i.d.?

Pardon?

Give me your phone.

I dont have one.

The other policeman was rifling through the garments covering the block. And he brought out a wallet and peered into its contents. Robert McKillop, he said, I think his name is Robert McKillop. I better go up to his house Geordie, you stay here with . . . He indicated me in a vaguely surreptitious manner.

I'm going to my work, I said.

Whereabouts?

Partick.

The milk depot?

Aye, yes.

I know it well. What did you say your name was?

McLeish, Michael.

Fine. You're better just to wait here a minute.

The policeman named Geordie leaned against the tenement wall while his mate walked into the close. When he had reappeared he said, Mrs McKillop's upset – I'll stay with her meantime Geordie, you better report right away.

What about this yin here? I mean we know where he works and that.

Aye . . . the other one nodded at me: On your way. He gestured along the road, the direction I should take. You'll be hearing from us shortly, he said.

At the milk depot I was involved in the stacking of crates of milk onto my lorry. The milk containers were made of glass. They were bottles. One of the crates fell. Broken glass and milk sloshing about on the floor. The gaffer swore at me. You ya useless bastard. Get your lorry loaded and get out of my sight.

I wiped my hands and handed in my notice. Right now, I said, I'm leaving right now.

What d'you mean right now you're leaving! Get that fucking wagon loaded and get on your way.

No, I'm not here now. I'm no longer . . . I cannot be said to be here as a driver of milk lorries any more. I've handed in my notice and wiped my hands of the whole carry on. Morning.

I walked to the exit. The gaffer coming after me.

McArra the checkerman who always was singing had stopped his singing to be gazing at us from behind a row of crates. I could see the cavity between his lips. The gaffer's hand had grasped my elbow. I looked at it. He withdrew it. Listen McLeish, he was saying. You've got a job to do. A week's notice you have to give. Dont think you can just say you're leaving and then walk out the fucking door.

I am not here now. I am presently walking out the fucking door.

Stop when I'm talking to you!

No. A block of matter landed at my feet an hour ago. I have to be elsewhere. I have to be going now to be elsewhere. Good morning.

Fuck you then. Aye, and dont ever show your face back in this depot again. McArra you're a witness to this! he's walking off the job.

Cheerio McArra. I called: I am, to be going.

Cheerio McLeish, said McArra the checkerman.

Outside in the street I had to stop. This was not an ordinary kind of carry on. I had to lean against the wall. I closed my eyelids but it was worse. Spinning into a hundred miles of a distance, this speck. Speck. This big cavity I was inside of and also enclosing and when the eyelids had opened something had been presupposed by something. Thank Christ for that, I said, for that, the something.

Are you alright son?

Me . . . I . . . I was . . . I glanced to the side and there was this middle-aged woman standing in a dark coloured raincoat, in a pair of white shoes; a striped

headscarf wrapped about her head. And a big pair of glasses, spectacles. She was squinting at me. Dizzy, I said to her, a bit dizzy Mrs – I'm no a drunk man or anything.

O I didnt think you were son I didnt think you were, else I wouldnt've stopped. I'm out for my messages.

I looked at her. I said: Too early for messages, no shops open for another couple of hours.

Aye son. But I cant do without a drop of milk in my tea and there was none left when I looked in the cupboard, so here I am. I sometimes get a carton of milk or sometimes a bottle straight from the milk depot if I'm up early.

First thing this morning you could've called me a milk man, I said while easing myself up from the wall. I was a deliverer of bottles.

O aye.

I nodded.

Will you manage alright now?

Aye, thanks, cheerio Mrs.

Cheerio son.

I was in my room. A tremendous thumping. I was lying face down on the bed. The thumping was happening to the door. McLeish. McLeish. Michael McLeish! A voice calling the name of me from outside of my room. And this tremendous thumping for the door and calling me by name McLeish! Jesus God.

Right you are, I shouted. And I pulled the pillow out from under my chin and pulled it down on the top of the back of my head. I closed my eyelids. The thumping stopped. I got up after seconds and opened the door.

We went to the milk depot, said one policeman, but you had left by then.

The second policeman was looking at my eyes. I shut the lids on him. I opened my mouth and said something to which neither answered. I repeated it but still no reply. They were not hearing me. I did not want to stare.

I told your gaffer what happened earlier on, said one policeman. He was worried about you. He said to tell you to give him a call and things would be okay. No wonder you were upset. I told him that. He said anyone would be. Can we come in?

Can we come in? the other policeman said.

Aye.

Can we come in a minute Michael? said the policeman.

I opened the door wider and returned to bed. They were standing at the foot of it with their hats in their hands. They looked roundabout. There were the two chairs. There are the chairs, I said.

Then they were lighting cigarettes. A smoke, asked one. Want a smoke?

Aye. I'm not getting things out properly.

Do you want one Michael?

I'm just not getting out it all the way. The block as well . . . it wasnt really the block.

The body.

The other handed me an already burning cigarette. Then I had it in my mouth. I was smoking. Fine as the smoke was entering my insides. The manner in which smoke enters an empty milk bottle and curls round the inner walls almost making this kind of shinnying noise while it is doing the curling. Any bottle. Empty bottles. The waves, the clouds, how they swirl and curl. The other policeman was saying: Nice place this. You've got some good pictures on the wall. I like that one there with the big circles. Is it an original?

Aye, yes. I painted it. I painted it in paint, the ordinary paint. Dulux I mean – that emulsion stuff.

Christ that's really good. I didnt know you were a painter.

It is good right enough, the other policeman said. He peered at it, his forehead strained in effort, seeing the paint and its substance, how the mass exists and attracts or not. The policeman could see this.

I held out my hand to him. Fingers. I used my pinkies; right and left for the adjacents. You know that way of touching the emulsion. Dip in the pinkies. Curl at the joints as though beckoning. That was what I was doing with the . . . And the milk bottle, the milk bottle too I suppose.

But dont let it get you down, the policeman said. We had a word with your boss and he said you were to get in touch with him and it would be okay, about the job and everything else about it, about what has happened, there are no reports, not from him.

Broken bottles cannot be repaired.

Yes, the other policeman said. The fact is we need to go to the station. Our serjeant wants to hear how it happened with Mr McKillop this morning. How you saw it yourself Michael, how you witnessed it Michael. We can get a refreshment down there, tea or coffee. Okay? Just shove on your clothes and we'll get going.

In the back seat of the patrol car one of them said: I'm not kidding but that painting of yours Michael, it is really good. Are the rest of them yours as well?

Aye, yes. I was doing painting. I was painting a lot sometimes, before I started this job - unemployed although employed, as I was, in the painting.

The policeman was looking at me, between my eyes; onto the bridge of my nose. I closed the eyelids: reddish grey. I could guess what would be going on. The whole of it. The description. A block of matter wasnt it. It would be no good for them – the serjeant, the details of it, the thump of impact. What I was doing and the rest of it. Jesus God. I was painting a lot sometimes, I said to him.

What's up?

Nothing. I'm just not getting the things, a hold . . . sploshing about.

It had to upset you Michael dont worry about that. A body landing like that.

Not just that, the block. Not just the block. Ach. I stopped and was shaking my head. The words werent coming. Nothing at all to come and why the words were never. They cannot come by themselves. They can come by themselves. Without, not without. The anything. They can do it but only with it, the anything. What is the anything; that something. A particular set of things maybe.

The policeman smiled.

Open the window a bit, the other policeman said. Give him a breath of fresh air. Gets hell of a stuffy in here. And refreshments when we get there.

A wee room inside the station I was walked into. A policeman and a serjeant following. I was to sit at a table with the serjeant to be facing me. And he saying: I just want you to tell me what it was happened earlier on. in your own words Mr McLeish, in your own words.

A block of matter, it was at my feet. I was . . . I glanced at the serjeant to add, I couldnt be said to be there in a sense. A thump of impact and the block of matter.

A block of matter, he replied after a moment. Yes I know what you're meaning about that. Mr McKillop was dead and so you didnt see him that way; you just saw him as a kind of shape – is that right, is that what you're meaning?

I was walking and the thump, the block.

You were walking to work?

Aye, yes.

And the next thing, wham? the body lands at your feet?

No. In a sense though you . . . No, though; I was walking, thump, the block of matter. And yet – he was a short man, stumpy legs, longish body. And less then – less than, immediately a block of matter. Eyes. The objects that had been eyes. Not had been eyes at all. They were never eyes. Never ever had been eyes for the block. McKillop's eyes those objects had been part of. Part of the eyes. And I looked into them and they were not eyes. Just bits – bits of the block. There are no reflections, there is nothing.

Look son I'm sorry, I know you're . . . The serjeant was glancing at the policeman. And his eyes!

Quizzical, I said.

Quizzical!

Aye, yes.

He was looking at me then I was looking out at him. He began looking at the policeman. Without words, both talking. I said, It doesnt matter anyhow.

What doesnt matter?

Nothing, the anything.

The serjeant stood up. I'll be back in a minute. He went out and came back in again carrying 3 cartons of tea and a folder under his arm. Tea Mr McLeish, he said.

I grasped the carton of tea.

So, out walking at the crack of dawn and wham, a block called McKillop lands at your feet.

That'll do, I said.

What'll do?

The serjeant was staring at my nose. I could have put an index finger inside. He was speaking to me. It's okay son we're not thinking you were doing anything apart from going to your work. A bit early right enough but that's when milk men go about. Mrs McKillop told us her end and you're fine.

Serjeant?

What?

Nothing.

After a moment he nodded: Away you go home. Your record isnt the cleanest and it's our job to know all about that and all about you too, a man who goes his own way. I can see you've changed. For the better. Geordie tells me you've a steady job nowadays driving the milk lorries and you've a good hobby into the bargain so – you're fine. And I dont think we'll need to see you again. But if we do I'll send somebody round. Number 3 it is eh? Aye, right you are. The serjeant stood up again and said to the policeman: Let him finish his tea.

Okay serj.

Fine. Cheerio then son, he said to me.

James Kelman *is the author of long and short stories, plays and essays. He was born in Scotland in 1946, left school at 15 and has worked at one thing or another. He began writing at the age of twenty-two and will fight to continue, no matter what.*

Small Town Visitations I by N. Masani Landfair. Collage on paper 2020

Zerzan's Dangerous Idea

Nick Mamatas

When We Are Human: Notes from the Age of Pandemics
by John Zerzan
252pp. Feral House 2021

COVID, as a historical agent, has a program far more radical than any mainstream political party, radical movement, or even book review newspaper. The virus has reordered everything from international affairs to contemporary fashion, made the notoriously tightwad US government expand unemployment benefits and send out multiple stimulus checks, and transformed work and social life. What COVID didn't do was change the mind of any major thinkers: libertarians remain sure that the free market would have provided vaccines more easily, the imperial states continue to point fingers and assign blame, various shades of Communist recommend joining this or that party of a new type and building socialism, and John Zerzan believes the issue is symbolic thought itself.

If one thinks that sounds glib, one need only look at the table of contents of Zerzan's latest, *When We Are Human: Notes from the Age of Pandemics*, released by the almost always provocative publisher Feral House. A chapter of this book was also published by Feral House in Zerzan's 2018 book *A People's History of Civilization*.

Zerzan's reading of anthropology is rather lazily cherry-picked to support his claim that symbolic thought is only 30,000 years old. Even if we take his brute force assertion that expertise in toolmaking and the use of practical language doesn't require symbolic thought to be true, that isn't sufficient to demonstrate that symbolic thought didn't exist in pre-history. Orality would not be preserved in the fossil record, so pointing to its absence demonstrates nothing. What we do know is that the Neanderthal toolkit was far more limited than the toolkits of early modern humans, and differences in brain structure suggest strongly that symbolic thought was a factor. Whether this thought helped create the diversity of tools, or physical manipulation of materials that led to selection for larger brains more readily capable of symbolic thought is up for grabs—feel free to choose what you like based on whether you are an idealist or a materialist. But either way, toolmaking does involve symbolic thought.

Further, there is evidence that symbolic thought existed prior to 30,000 years go. The Divje Babe flute is at least 43,000 years old. The "Seven Sisters" story of the Pleiades is at least 100,000 years old—it's ubiquitous across cultures, and 100,000 years ago the seven stars in the sky were all visible. (We've only seen six for centuries.) The Daraki-Chattan cupules, the oldest known rock art, are at least 290,000 years old and may be as old as 700,000 years. That the possible range is so wide shows only how foolish it is to make any sort of definitive claim about the date of the rise of symbolic thought, but regardless, musical-instrument making, narrative construction using figurative language and false utterances such as "These stars were sisters once", and visual art production all necessarily involve symbolic thought, even if practical toolmaking and everyday language do not.

Given that Zerzan starts with his conclusions, all the evidence fits, even when it doesn't. He discusses evidence of fire-use deep in caves to show that fire-making was early human technology—simply "finding" fire via lightning strikes wouldn't allow our ancestors to light up subterranean depths. Later, in discussions of the division of labor and the assorted class divisions and tyrannies, he notes that the assembly line long predates capitalism—Marco Polo saw assembly lines in action loading ships in China. But, ah, isn't this also how "found" fire can end up in a deep cave: several ancestral humans or hominids with sticks in the depths, a "kept" flame passed from stick to stick, person to person, like runners in a baton race or firefighters in a bucket brigade? Such a complex and social activity would involve conceptualizing and solving the problem mentally before carrying it out, and labor would be divided but not necessarily in an exploitative manner. It would involve symbolic thought. It only seems impossible to Zerzan because he has foreclosed on the possibility of the early emergence of symbolic thought.

The rest of the book is similar. Where does racism come from? Domestication of animals, and ultimately symbolic thought. Forget that domestication is between 10,000 and 15,000 years old, and the phenomenon of racism dates from the 15th century. Where does autism come from? Technology and thus symbolic thought. The same with diabetes and getting lost while driving—Zerzan crankily declares that people can no longer read maps. But maps are clearly artifacts of symbolic thought, so he should be happy...

When We Are Human ultimately doesn't have much to say about pandemics, despite the urgency of the situation as described in the introduction by James V. Morgan. Of course, Morgan believes that academics publishing journal articles and getting six-figure tenure track jobs is a pressing social problem, in an era where the average college teacher in the US is an adjunct who makes less than minimum wage. The problem, proximately, is that Zerzan and his co-thinkers find, like any good millenarian Christian, that the world has fallen thanks to humans tending trees and seeking knowledge. The problem, ultimately, is that Zerzan and his co-thinkers are literally against thinking.

***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* 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.*

Damage Done

Carrie Laben

Wolf
by Douglas A. Martin
144pp. Nightboat 2020

Wolf, the latest novel from Douglas Martin, is 'based on a true story' as the movies might say. Specifically, it was inspired by a newspaper photo. In the photo and accompanying article two brothers barely on the cusp of adolescence appeared as defendants, accused of killing their father with a baseball bat one night as he dozed in his recliner, possibly at the urging of a man described as a "family friend" who had been sexually molesting the younger boy.

This sort of event might inspire any number of writers to salacious retellings or to earnest analysis of society's failings. Martin takes a different approach—he calls the book "anti-true crime" and in interviews speaks of drawing inspiration from work like Maggie Nelson's *Jane* but also from the novels of Dennis Cooper and Clive Barker. Certainly these comparisons are borne out in Wolf's thickets of events and circumstances, bodies and urges to survive. But what does anti-true crime mean here?

The anti doesn't apply to the true—Martin interprets but never deviates from the known facts of the case. And it doesn't apply to the crime, for many crimes, not just murder and sexual predation, occur in the course of the story. It applies to what publishing has made of true crime, a strange genre that has achieved overwhelming popularity in our current cultural moment.

True crime demands detail. Journalistic where-what-when-why-how, and as many specifics of pain as can be stuffed in under the rubric of truth-telling. Martin eschews all names and most specifics—people watch shows, do things, do those things to an it or a him or a that. Characters are indicated by their roles and relationships to each other, situations by broad outlines or incidentals. Sometimes, especially at the beginning as the reader acclimates, it's not quite certain who is speaking or about what or when or how—just forget why. Sometimes an entire family or community seems to be speaking at once.

The lack of precision removes any pretense that this novel is about solving a crime, or the problems that led to the crime. In particular, solutions offered by the state fall by the wayside like blown leaves in this book. A foster family takes the older boy, then returns him with platitudes about how they couldn't have possibly done any more than the nothing they accomplished. The school system is an incidental encumbrance, a chance for the boys to be bullied, a source of homework that becomes a point of conflict and control between parent and child. And the police and courts come only when the damage has been done.

I have spoken of lack of precision, of vagueness. But it's important to note that every shifting point of view, every missing article and imprecise noun, every oddly-structured sentence contributes to an emotional picture that could not be more accurate. The tide of mutual frustration, bewilderment, and desperation that engulfs the boys and their father is real and immediate. They share a common fate—to be poor, as to be a child, is to be surveilled and judged and misunderstood by people who have more power than you and think they have more wisdom. But this commonality goes unrecognized between them, and only increases the tension that finally flames up into violence.

Most true crime invites the reader to be part of the judging class. This is obvious in the part of the genre that functions as copaganda, but it is also true in works that highlight police incompetence or corruption. The unresolved mystery is presented as a failure of a system that can and should work better with a few tweaks. *Wolf*, though never explicitly abolitionist, is anti-true crime because it presents a world where externally-imposed justice was never an option.

***Carrie Laben** is the author of the novel* A Hawk in the Woods *and the forthcoming novella* The Water Is Wide. *Their work has been awarded the Shirley Jackson Award in Short Fiction and Duke University's Documentary Essay Prize.*

The Beloved Body

Fragmentation and Loss in the Work of Douglas A. Martin

Grace Joshua Byron

The cut of literature is deep. "I am interested in language that wounds or seduces me." Barthes wrote famously in *The Pleasure of the Text*. Barthes recurs again and again in Douglas A Martin's examination of Kathy Acker, the text, Martin explicates. Martin lays out Acker's work like a map, a landscape, populated in a chronology that leads one consequentially down a path, two roads diverged in a yellow wood. Well if so, *Wolf* sets the wood on fire. Not as a way of decreation, of immolation or masochism, but in the sense that the gentle house of loss is figured anew. The house is not gentle.

Douglas A Martin's *Wolf*, lets the house burn. A house he had been slowly building and populating with Hart Crane, lovers, Rimbaud, and Francis Bacon among others. The porous nature of the house and the body for queer and trans people in history has always been a troubling problem. The house is never safe, the body is never stable. An author can vanish into the body and the house. As Foucault says, and Martin quotes in *Your Body Figured,* "the point is…a question of creating space into which the writing subject constantly disappears".

When Martin quotes Acker, "My body doesn't exist" at the end of a fragment in *Acker*, we feel the dare. For Martin, the body is the cut of literature. The body does exist, it leaps off the page, or rather, the body is the page. For Barthes, the text is the body. If this is the case for Martin, the wounded body, the masochism and sadism stretched throughout his work force us to reckon with the text as violence. Certainly, Martin's grasp of Acker depends on this concept. The break of Acker's literature, the brutality. Or, as in Rilke: "the beauty and the terror".

Most of Martin's books are fragmentary, cut-up. We find many fragments of Barthes revealing the never-reaching-wholeness of queer literature. So why try? Why write the readerly text and why not instead write the writerly text? Proust has come and gone, now we are forced to deal with the epistolary, the diary, the autofiction, the autotheory. "Only time allows value" Acker tells us. Martin's books condense and expand time like they do the body, splayed out, crusted, broken, beaten, or simply at a loss for the scene. The scene is empty. The scene is short as a haiku because the evening comes quick.

What is a loss? *Wolf* follows the loss of security, safety, a family dissolves in front of us, so translucent we cannot see what is in front of us fully. I listen as the contents of the novel are described. That happened? That's what this book is about? I think. How can that happen? How can it be? All loss is continual, explicitly, and difficult if

From Dual Destructions by Kristen DiGeloromo. Digital Collage 2021

not impossible to trace in public. The writer disappears in the text.

The work of Douglas A Martin, *Wolf* in particular, senses and displays whiteness turned inward. The violence of surveillance, the home, the body, capitalism, legacies of domination and power. It turns inward eventually, it cannot stop the surveillance, the beating, the sadism. Brutality is thin. It does not stop, it is never appeased. And to think one is safe is illusory.

Can the punk be beautiful? In *Outline of My Lover,* what is given up is given up freely, almost daily. The lover is a fragile instrument. But as Martin moves, we find the houses of writing are apartments lining a city moving closer and closer to darkness. We find Kathy Acker. We find abuse, neglect, murder. We do not move into a nice house with Sylvere Lottringer and have a made-up affair with a professor named Dick who in turn loved Kathy Acker and sent her one of her last letters.

The patriarch enacts his own fences, his own protection, his own making of family. In this, God recurs. God turns up as a point of origin, and origin, birth, home, as a places of violence. In *Your Body Figured,* Rilke is a god, benevolent and ever-vigilant. "He was your first man, a religious man in his own way."

Martin writes of a sexual original experience Hart Crane has as a sort of religious and theological origin. Writing of Chris Kraus, Olivia Laing discusses "…using the loved object to will yourself into life." In this space of the love-object as the will-to-power, Douglas A Martin, George Dyer, and Kathy Acker find something in common. The loved object as a purpose unentangled from art-making, victimhood, and a way out. For Crane, the loved object becomes a way out of the crank of loneliness dawdling slowly. Days of working, days of almost touching, days on the docks. "There's always another E., a J., a sea of them. They have many names, but they wash away." Crane says.

For George Dyer, there is a fantasy of raison d'etre in another, that Francis Bacon is a vampire and he is the beloved body. I imagine Francis Bacon felt much the opposite.

The beloved body needs a beloved, to be loved is to love. "You needed a Verlaine." Martin's Crane says. "You found it only natural to want to cling." The beloved is a vampire and the lover is a vampire as well we find in *Your Body Figured*, the work of Richard Dyer reminding us of the link of the aristocrat and power to the image of the queer vampire. The power of a lover is haunting, as in *Outline of My Lover*.

If we write a literature of violence, as Édouard Louis desires to, what fractures occur? Whose violence? Does writing violence replicate it or extract it to its core? Does recreating our trauma heal?

Abuse, money, power, age, harm, race, neglect, flow through Martin's work in a way that is difficult to talk about. It triggers, envisions, enacts, and comes back again and again to the cut of literature.

One walks away contemplating the image of wounds, the image of fire, the image of continual loss. As someone who has had their body violated, it becomes a challenge to witness, to see, to find the writer displaying and vanishing within the text of violence. If Louis creates a literature of violence, one explicit and political in nature, Douglas A Martin creates a literature where brutality lifts the thin veil of dust over the fabric of the body and disappears in the night.

***Grace Joshua Byron** is a writer, filmmaker and co-creator of* Trans Monogamist *(Artless Media, 2019) and* The Nonbinary Carrie Bradshaw *(2020). She lives in Brooklyn.*

A Human Wrote This Headline

A Conversation with James Yu

Cara Hoffman

James Yu *is the creator of Sudowrite, an Artificial Intelligence system for creative writing which uses GPT-3 (Generative Pre-Trained Transformer) a third-generation language prediction model created by Open AI, that uses deep learning to produce human-like text. GPT-3 has read the entire internet. It can accurately mimic the voice of any writer, generate new narrative, thematic ideas, characters and plot. The system is currently in Beta where it is learning from a select number of professional writers who are using it as a tool and a game. Yu took some time to talk with* ARB *about artificial intelligence in literature, publishing and literary culture.*

ARB: You've said that the Sudowrite functions with an almost human efficacy. What does something like that mean when you are talking about fiction for example?

James Yu: What I've found is that, when I've used this system in writing short stories and various fictional narratives—it has pierced that veil of being able to understand the ideas themselves. It almost attains a human voice. How the system works, at the very basic level, is you give it a few paragraphs of your text—or even five thousand words—and you could request "I want two hundred words back of what you think the next paragraph would be." It's been shocking to see how closely it can attain my voice. That's the profound thing. And it's awesome and also scary in some ways.

ARB: It sure is.

JY: It makes you question if can we break down human thought and human writing to just mere algorithms. I think it is a similar moment for a writer, as maybe Garry Kasperov felt when he was facing Deep Blue. But Sudowrite is not about generating an entire book for you. It can do that if you want, but we think of it as a tool, similar to how grammar check is a tool, or those lists of different ideas writers use for character and plot. Except it's on steroids. But the author is always in control; and we don't expect writers to just generate a thousand words and say, "I am ready to publish this now."

AI's are already here; they're called corporations.

ARB: I'm wondering, how does GPT-3 effect authorship? How also do you prevent this from becoming a tool for publishers—eliminating authors and using editors. I could see how it could morph into something where publishers eliminate the difficult part that requires negotiation with a human being, or potentially eliminate the difficult personality or the just the person who has to be paid. There are levels of labor issues, intellectual property issues, and then the issue of corporate control, and I'm wondering how you've thought about these things, or what you see as the evolution of the system, and your part in it.

JY: Let's talk about intellectual property first. This is an open question, with AI systems, and any sort of creative output, whether it's visual arts or writing. It has not been tested in the courts yet, in terms of how the output of neural networks effects copyright. I expect it will be tested in the courts in the next years, as this becomes more prevalent. The question is similar to that macaque monkey, have you seen that? Where the monkey took a photo, using a photographer's camera, and PETA defended the monkey, saying, "the monkey owns the copyright." So, in some ways it is adjacent to that question, because if, let's say an author goes in and generates 20,000 words, and it's total hands off, using some kind of system, who owns the rights to that content? Can they actually own copyright? What is the work that the author has put into it. In the case of the macaque monkey, it was deemed to be in the public domain, because monkeys can't own property and they don't have use for money. The photographer didn't take the photo at all, the monkey took it. Now the question is: is an AI system like GPT-3 a monkey? Is it the proverbial monkey at the typewriter just typing?

We are telling writers "Don't generate 20,000 words and put it into your manuscript, and call it a day. Do the work, edit it organically." Even though GPT-3 is really good, it's not going to be able to do full narrative arcs right now. One day perhaps. Maybe GPT-5.

ARB: When do you think it will be able to do that? It seems like the rate at which these things accelerate is exponential, right?

JY: Yep.

ARB : We've seen this already with translation software.

JY: It's similar to Moore's Law (which states the speed and capability of computers will increase every couple of years, and we will pay less for them) Right now, GPT-2, is good at the sentence level. GPT-3 is good at the paragraph level. I don't have an accurate prediction, but, I'd say GPT-4 and -5, they'll probably be able to write a short story, at some proficiency and cobble together sort of this narrative arc.

I've been trying to generate poetry as well as short stories on GPT-3. I've done some tests with poet scholars. And this is an example where it works, because it's short enough, it's 1000 words or so. For this test I've been doing, it's totally hands off. I let Sudowrite choose the topic for the poem. I let it write the entirety of the lines. Of course, I've written an algorithm on top of GPT-3 to steer it in such a way that it can make poems in the style of something you would see in the *New Yorker*, or in a publication that is reputable, and I'm analyzing that. And that's a case where it's almost there. They're not the best poems in the world, but they've been able to fool scholars. I think compared to let's say a published poem in an obscure publication, maybe the first poem from a working professional poet, it's actually been able to trick some folks. And I've tested it on a few dozen folks who are familiar with poetry but they're not experts, and they can't tell.

ARB: So, the technology can now fool humans about a foundational form of art. And again, this has happened in a relatively short period of time. The inception of the technology and then being able to use it for a form of lyrical language linked to the oral tradition.

JY: But It's not perfect. It can't rhyme. It's terrible at trying to come up with a sonnet, for example, or anything that has sonic qualities, because of how it's trained. It doesn't have a sense of hearing. So, it's not very good at wordplay. It can guess at some patterns it's seen, but the way it breaks down words is not how we break down words in syllables. Actually, it breaks down words in different ways depending on context. And that has ramifications for what the strengths and weaknesses of the system are.

ARB: Could you teach it meter, like dactylic hexameter?

JY: We would have to restructure the entire training model in order to do that. A specialized neural network, that is not based on the underlying design of GPT-3 could do sonnets and other things much better than GPT-3.

But that being said, GPT-3 is very general. It hasn't been trained to write fiction, or screenplays, or poetry. That's actually one aspect about this system that has been really impressive, is that it can do all these things that it wasn't trained for. You give it some texts, and it tries to generate text that it would find to be of a high probability of seeing next. That's basically all it's given a task for.

ARB: It's not that different from how people are trained to write. We learn through reading. We've talked a little bit about the intellectual property, but I was wondering if you could talk about the possibility of corporations using a version of this technology to cut out the middle man, the middle man being the artist.

JY: I think a lot of this is hard to predict. Let's assume that GPT-6 can write a whole novel by itself. I think in that world—this is just my opinion—there will still be a demand for original human voices writing lived human experiences, in books and in stories and things like that. But, I also think that in that world there will be these sort of [AI] novels. It can write formulaic novels pretty well I imagine, because it can read all of those and think Okay, here's another vampire romance novel, and, just churn it out. In that case, I think it's not that dissimilar to some of those pop authors writing pulp fiction.

I think that model is not dissimilar to Hollywood. A whole organization is creating these narratives. Is it a human actually at that point? I think that actually AI's are already here; they're called corporations.

ARB: Agreed. Corporations function like artificial intelligence. But I think Sudowrite is next level. Contemporary fiction published by a large corporation is weighted with the input and the pressure of that company's marketing team, and with the desires and expectations of the shareholders of the multinationals that own them—like Bertelsmann for example. And over time, as a result, we have seen contemporary fiction become more formulaic. It seems like GPT is hitting this sweet spot, at a time where we have a consolidation of corporate control over literature, and a corporate desire for even more control.

JY: Right, like, accrete all this power.

ARB: Exactly. The corporate structure is already working to this end, and then we have Sudowrite and whatever technology that is doing the memetic-human thinking, or memetic-human prose writing. But the formula is already in place, editors are already demanding—as you're saying about Hollywood—certain structures. So

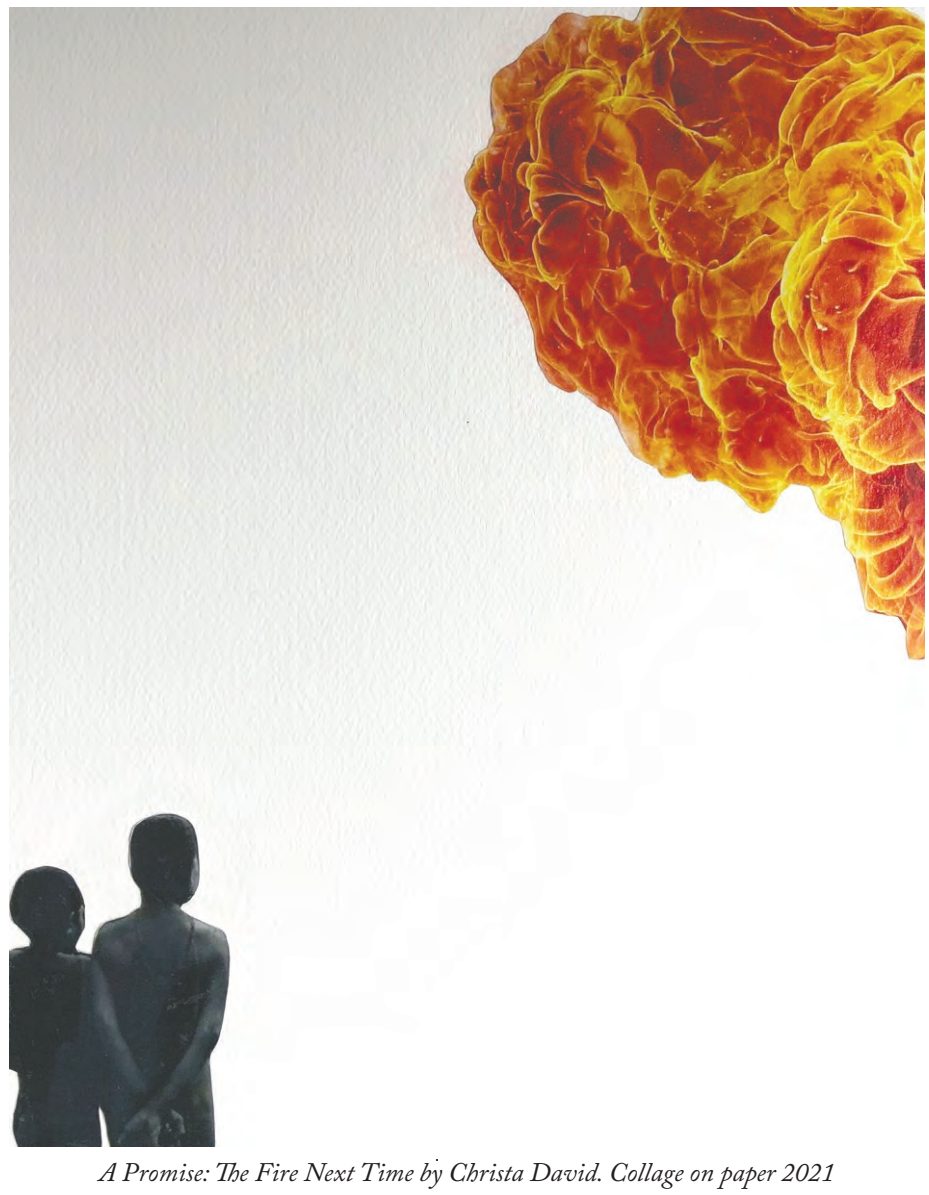
where is literature going in America? Sudowrite, seems to answer the wish list of the corporations who already want to streamline and cut out the artist. I think when people think about writing literature, they conceive of it as a way to elicit empathy and emotion. These are foundational things about writing characters and plots and settings. Human beings inhabit those characters—they have empathetic experiences reading. And so, it's curious to me how all that will work when the creator of those words is not capable of human experience. How is it when something incapable of empathy is engaged in an art practice that is about eliciting empathy?

JY: Is the creator having empathy important to the output of the perception of that art? I don't have a good answer to that question. I think that if you look at a piece of artwork and it elicits that emotion in you then you can say AI resonates with me. I think that's the wonderful thing about literature, you read that and you think "Wow, this paragraph, or this chapter has captured my personal experience in a way that almost transcends it, brings out a dimension that I didn't think about, and it changes me." But now, what if I learned that was a machine that wrote that?

The question then is but has it read it? GPT-3 has read every single romance scene on the internet and in all the books. So, maybe it's read the screenplay to *Casablanca*. So, it knows about heartache!

ARB: This is a Philip K. Dick novel. The machine that reads the screenplay to *Casablanca*, does it know about heartache?

JY: I don't think it knows. What does it mean to know? Does a machine see red, experience red, in the same way as we do? I don't think today. But now imagine a world where GPT-3 gets embodied. Because I think that is going back to the rhyming thing. I think giving it simulated ears, and it hearing words and thinking, "I like that! I like how the word 'pop!' sounds." Can it have a body that goes through the world and experiences these things? Now, are we, in that world, edging closer to a machine that we can say understands as we humans do that this machine can understand the world that we're in? Because right now it's very abstract, its body is just a server farm. This is probably again the sci-fi story world, but I think that is where it can get closer, how this machine could understand heartache. Because it's gone out into the world and formed relationships with people, and has had lived experiences, and now it's capable of writing that novel. Versus like a sarcastic parrot because a lot of people think, its work is just random burblings of things it's read and it doesn't actually know what heartache is.



A Promise: The Fire Next Time by Christa David. Collage on paper 2021

Here's an example, when the lightbulb really went off. I was writing a short story and I was pondering the ending, I didn't like it that much. I thought, What if I just gave GPT-3 the last scene, and see what it gives me in the next paragraph. And it gave me something that totally made me see the story in a different light. As if it were a human editor, or a critique partner.

It instigated me to re-write the story in a different light. And that's crazy! Because it's just this thing, this computer, but it's been able to make me think in different ways and refine my story in ways that were hidden from me. I feel like the themes, and the random burblings of your subconscious need that provocation, And if a machine can provoke it—

ARB: The provocation has existed forever in different tools that writers have used. Philip K. Dick who flipped an I Ching coin to determine the plot of *The Man in the High Castle.* He gave over agency to this act of randomness that he believed had spiritual significance. The difference though I think is the I Ching coin is an object, you stick it back in your desk drawer, it's done. Of course, AI is a tool, but we're giving it ever increasing power over our way of conceiving of the world. And you and I having this conversation where we ponder its evolution and knowledge of heartache is anthropomorphizing. Does the monkey deserve credit for the photograph? Can the machine feel heartache? I'm wondering what we're willing to go through in our minds to support the idea that technology is capable of things like kindness and benevolence; and I mean this in an expansive way. How are we to believe that entities we know are not kind and not benevolent, like corporations, would use AI in a benevolent way? I'm wondering about how you, as someone deeply involved in this process thinks about that?

JY: I do worry about corporate capture of value. Because power begets power. Cara, I'm sure you understand that, and I've seen that as well. Me and my co-founder have both been in the tech world—previously I sold a company to Facebook, and I've been in the bowels of a social media company and those power structures. And for this company specifically, my personal ethos is we want to build this in a different way. It's not a hyper-growth company. This is also why we have been very careful about releasing this to authors who are mindful. We go through our work with them to come up with, maybe safe is not the right word, but it's like a more organic way of working with this tool. How do we mindfully incorporate that into a writing practice?

How do we incorporate this to help people be creative? Now the question of whether GPT-3 or other companies also developing tools, how will they be used in corporations? I think given the current power structures, a large amount of information work can be handled by NLP (Natural Language Processing) systems. A lot of boilerplate writing will just be done by these AI systems in the future. My hope is that it would up-level folks to become more like editors. Maybe a future title is AI editor. It's hard for me to answer across industry how ramifications are going to be. I'm assuming some of them will be positive and some of them will be quite negative. Open AI, the company that makes GPT-3, is also very keen on safety. They are very worried about the use of AI technologies for misinformation at scale. Especially if you are using GPT-3 for a psychiatric session.

ARB: A psychiatric session.

JY: Yeah, somebody actually emailed me saying they want to use Sudowrite for psychotherapy. I'm like, "Don't do that!" We are not designing a system to be safe in clinical studies. We've made a system for creative output, and things like that.

Like you were saying, the I Ching is not a sort of entity that has its own optimization function and its own kinds of independence. I mean the sort of independence that GPT-3 has that other systems don't. I think that's why we tend to anthropomorphize these kinds of systems versus the I Ching. But this is somewhere in between.

Visual artists have tools like photoshop, and we don't blink an eye when like they use a filter, or they use some kind of AI technology to make visual art. We've had grammar check and spell check and Scribner and all these things to help you organize your thoughts. So I think what's exciting about GPT-3 is it's the first time that it can pierce that veil. What does a filter mean in the literature world? Maybe I want a better description of this apple and Sudowrite will give me ten and ask which one I like. You like the one that's metaphorical? Here's ten ways to describe how an apple smells. And it can actually draw upon the context of that system.

ARB: What is this going to do to the people who create work? You are also a writer, there's a meditative practice that you engage in where you are in a state of flow while writing. You are not interrupted. You certainly research which is part of the process, but a bigger part of writing is people doing things, going to places, and having experiences, or reading in order to write something better. It's true the internet does make it possible to fake it. I didn't go there, but I googled it, etc…But this is something that infiltrates the actual process of flow, interrupts the meditative practice, where you sit and you think and you don't outsource your mind. And so I'm wondering what that's going to do to people who have a more hermetic, maybe monastic practice. Of course, people don't have to use Sudowrite. You're still choosing to do it, but it's very much infiltrating a sacred practice if you're an artist. You're the one who remembers the way the apple smells and tastes and feels in your mouth, you're the one who knows the feeling of hunger and pleasure and you're the one that brings all those associations into it in order to describe. And so, while it might be quicker and interesting—it's definitely interesting to ask something that isn't alive about apples—I'm wondering what it's going to do to us as creatures.

JY: I think it is similar to research. I mean that's the way I'm treating it. There is that flow state that you're talking about, I think it's super important. If you get rid of that you get rid of the core—then you might as well just let it generate the novel at that point. I think it is a matter of best practices, especially from new

writers. If you are a working writer, you have these practices that are embedded with you. Now if you're a new writer, let's say coming in and writing for the first time and you have a system like Sudowrite. What does that do to shape the next generation of writers?

ARB: Right.

JY: I think this is inevitable. The genie's out of the bottle. These AI systems will be here. I think it's similar to photoshop filters too. As writers we're all responsible for our own craft, for improving our craft. GPT-3 is not going to do that for you. I think that's really up to the writer, to bring your imbued experiences. We can think of it as a research activity, or like you mentioned, reading other books in the genre, or getting provoked by a video or other things to get your mind going. I typically use Sudowrite when I'm stuck. I'm treating it like another tool like Google. We always have to have Google discipline and Wikipedia discipline. I'm terrible at that. I go down the Wikipedia rabbit hole. And sometimes when I'm using Sudowrite, I'm reading all these entries it's giving back but it's not actually helping me move the story forward. I think that's when we need to have that artist's discipline of saying okay that tactic or this tool is not getting me to the next level of craft, maybe, I need to take a walk…

ARB: …maybe I need to focus on the material world.

JY: It can't replace critique groups but that being said, I'm currently developing a literary analysis mode where you can feed it a story and it will tell you what it thinks the themes are, and what areas it thinks you should spend more time on, or need more clarity in the story.

ARB: That's more than a stand in for editors and writers. The system is editor and writer and critic.

JY: Yeah, kind of.

ARB: If the system can be editor, writer and critic and then people are increasingly in the role of spectator, reader, consumer. Does this type of technology further create a passivity among people at a time when we've already become acclimated to being more passive, observing but not acting?

JY: I think that will depend on how these tools are designed. It can make you passive. It's almost like a video game in some way. It's not quite like reading, it's not quite like writing, it's kind of like an interactive game text adventure. For a lot of these systems that are built on GPT-3 will depend on how they design those systems. In Sudowrite there is what we call 'Wormhole', a feature that gives you ideas for what to do next, we don't insert that into the text editor section. It's on a menu of options. Then you can insert it, but it is always marked as purple. So you know what is raw AI text and what is not AI and can edit it. You're creating this narrative world with the computer. Which is fine. I think that there will be more of this interactive literature in the future.

Cara Hoffman *is the author of* Running *and a founding editor of* The Anarchist Review of Books.

Foraging (asphyxia version) by Pope.L. Digital c-print 1993-1995/2008
Courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York

What Survives Us

The Horrors of Paul Tremblay

Christopher Clark

Paul Tremblay writes horror that scares me in a way few fictional works are still capable. His work reminds me of horror's ability to connect us through an engagement with crisis. It is a feeling I associate vividly with snarling wall-clouds and bruising hailstorms, the Blitzkrieg violence of spring weather in Tornado Alley. In a storm-cellar dugout, my brother and I would tell each other scary stories to fill the time between first-siren and all-clear. Huddled, with flashlights sometimes under chins, just like in the movies, telling each other about haunted dolls, Bloody Marys, and half-remembered plots from grainy VHS rentals. A sense of time slowing even as our hearts sped up, bird-quick in our chests.

We would frighten ourselves. But we were afraid together.

Untitled, from the series The White Problem by Carla Repice Oil on board, 2019

In 2015, with the publication of *A Head Full of Ghosts*, Paul Tremblay established himself as an important voice in horror. The book, which Tremblay describes as a "secular possession novel," is a moving tale of sisterhood, mental illness, and the infiltration of media into our lives.

With wrenching empathy, Tremblay paints a portrait of a family in turmoil, using ambiguity as a lever to sway between possibly genuine demonic activity and mental health decline. The novel serves as a critique of the religious moralism of the exorcism genre, and of the legacy of Reagan's America; the supernatural haunting the edges of things, almost as a comforting explanation, a way to reconcile the horror and make it inhuman; to absolve ourselves, in some way; to impute the meaningless menace of the world with a face and a form.

Tremblay followed this post-modern feminist novel with *Disappearance at Devil's Rock,* a subtle ghost story with allusions to of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* Joan Lindsay's historical novel about girls disappearing while on a school trip, and the parental guilt and trauma of Denis Lehane's *Mystic River.* The novel opens with a phone call in the dead of night, and a son who never came home. From there, Tremblay expertly weaves the tales of Tommy, his friends, and a desperate mother, all filtered through the strange, liminal shadows of Borderland State Park. The final scene is as quiet as it is devastating in its implications: showing a broken parent, in the process of finding a way to let go and move on. It ends with the final piece of the novel's puzzle, a last whisper to the reader and a coda in a ghost story that may or may not have any ghosts in it at all.

With *The Cabin at the End of the World*, Tremblay entered a new apocalyptic phase in his writing. The many nested American crises that have been simmering for decades, boiled over in 2016. Tremblay says that the novel was a direct reaction to finding himself suddenly living in "Trumplandia." This story of a home-invasion opens with a young girl, Wen, approached by a stranger outside the remote cabin where she and her fathers are vacationing. The stranger, Leonard, tells her: "None of what's going to happen is your fault."

The writing is pitched to its highest intensity, the stakes in each moment compounding, resulting in a tsunami we know must eventually break. And when the novel ends, Tremblay refuses the easy exit, the final-act bombast of most horror novels: instead, we are left with what he calls "the hope of horror of choosing to go on." The willingness to move, to hold onto whatever survives of us.

It is this feeling that dominates his latest novel, *Survivor Song*, which prefigures the Covid-19 pandemic and its concomitant social breakdowns. The novel was published at the height of the pandemic and has the contours of Romero's *Night of the Living Dead,* dealing with (possibly) a new strain of rabies that overwhelms victims within hours. It is a claustrophobic and tense work about infection, the immediacy of social collapse, and the fragility of the various infrastructures that undergird our survival. But it is also, more importantly, a novel about friendship and solidarity in the face of the unendurable.

The central relationship in the novel, between Ramola, a medical doctor, and her friend Natalie, is guided by a principle of mutual aid. Natalie, infected and pregnant with her first child, is reeling from the horror of seeing her husband murdered. The novel becomes a race to save her, and, if all else fails, to save her unborn child. It is masterfully tense. A pulse runs through this book, a slippery tightrope vein.

As we continue to navigate (or rather, fail to navigate) a global pandemic, economic crises, climate collapse, the rise of fascism, Tremblay's brand of horror fiction is necessary and important; grounded in a humane, even anarchist, understanding and love for people struggling against the vast, ungovernable forces that dictate our lives. Tremblay reminds us that "civilization is a lot harder to kill" than people. There are things that endure beyond us, that move past us, that extend into a future we won't see, a future we must fight like hell to see.

Tremblay's work acknowledges the need for community and solidarity; in their absence, the worst happens. In their presence, bad things happen, yes: but moments of grace become possible and emerge from the brutal wreckage to provide respite, connection. In his novels, the ambiguously supernatural—whether in the form of religious cults, zombies, demonic possession—is always secondary to the grace of finding one another in the wreckage.

Tremblay sees in horror, and in all outsider art, the ability to engage a shared recognition of the truth. Things are not right, and sometimes horror is our best lens for looking directly at the problems surrounding us. He never takes the easy relief and catharsis of so much of the genre. In his work, there are no good answers and no simple ways out. There is only us, living through the awful reach of other peoples' decisions, the enduring horrors we didn't create. But we have each other. We are caught in this storm together. And artists like Paul Tremblay help us to find each other in the dark.

As he writes in *Cabin at the End of the World:* "Maybe the truth is the end has already been happening long before we arrived…and what we're seeing, what we've been seeing, is not the fireworks of the world's denouement, but the final flickering sparks of our afterward."

***Christopher Clark** is a librarian, teacher, and writer. He currently lives in Southern Utah.*

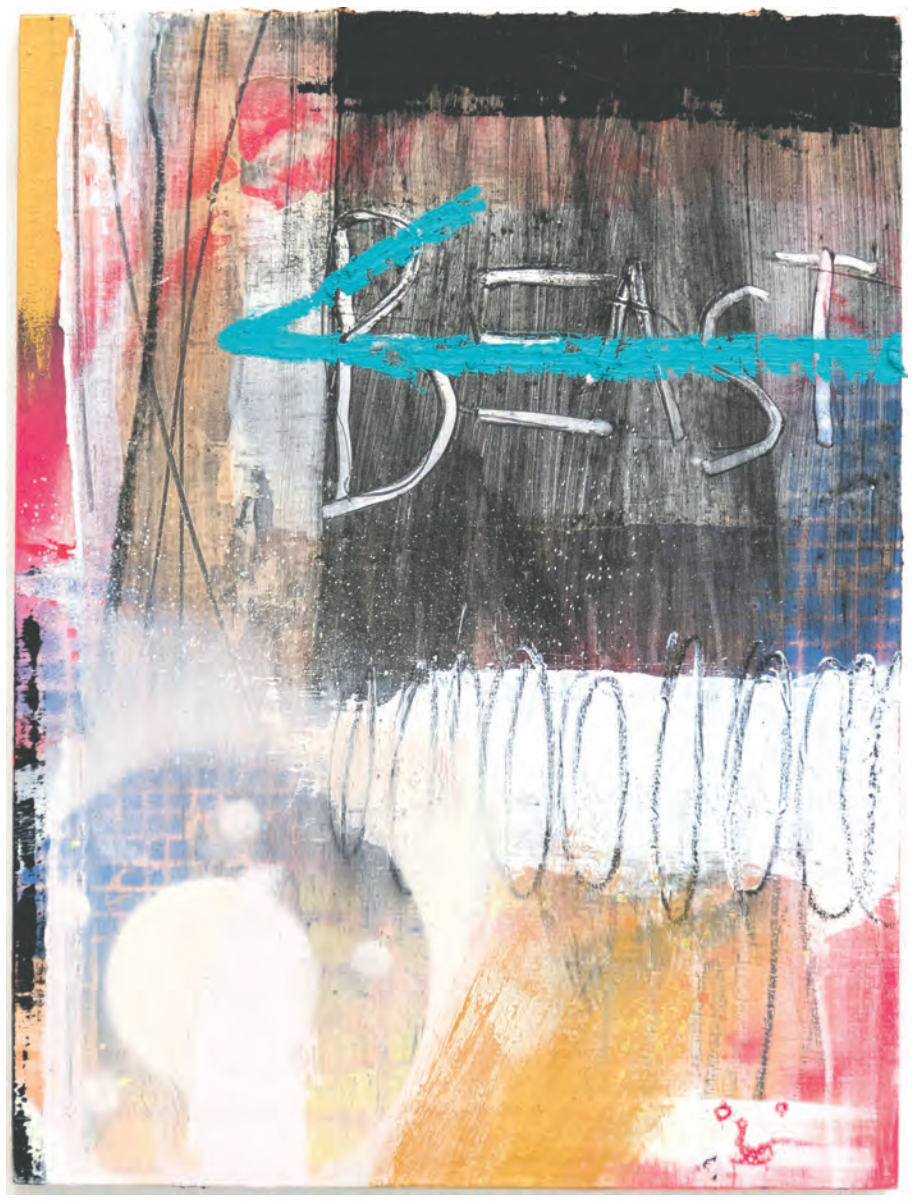
Understanding the Land

A Conversation between Elissa Washuta and Theresa Warburton

__Theresa Warburton__ is the author of Other Worlds Here: Honoring Native Women's Writing in Contemporary Anarchist Movements *(Northwestern University Press, 2021) in which she addresses her fellow settler anarchists and responds to the idea that "another world is possible" by recognizing the other worlds already here in the work of Native women writers.*

__Elissa Washuta__ is the author of My Body Is a Book of Rules *(Red Hen 2014) and* White Magic *(Tin House 2021), a collection of intertwined personal essays about land, colonization, heartbreak, and witchery. Elissa offers readers an encyclopedia of the pain, fear, danger, hope and wonder she has experienced as a Cowlitz woman seeking romantic love in the face of the settler colonial desire for her disappearance.*

Together they are the editors of Shapes of Native Nonfiction: Collected Essays by Contemporary Writers *(University of Washington Press, 2019). They conducted the following conversation over email in April 2021.*



Wilder by Ka'ila Farrell-Smith. Mixed media on wood panel 2021

Elissa Washuta: From our first meeting we found so many of our interests aligning, and we developed such a deep sense of mutual trust through our work together. As I was reading your chapter on Leslie Marmon Silko's work in *Other Worlds Here*, I was thinking back to your time with her archives. I realized I don't know the origin story of your book, and I would like to. How did the work on this book begin?

Theresa Warburton: The origin story of my book is simple. I went to graduate school with a plan to study gendered violence in radical communities, exploring why it persisted in spaces that were understood to be explicitly feminist. I was especially interested in anarchist spaces, since I'd been influenced by anarchist feminism but had also seen and experienced gendered violence in those spaces. Gendered violence fit well within some radical circles that I traveled in. I wanted to know why. My first year, I had a course on Native and Indigenous Methodologies and when we all went around talking about our work, the professor listened to what I had to say and then asked calmly: "So, what does it mean to do that work on Native land?" And ever since, I've been trying to answer that question.

How about you? What was the impulse that drew you to this project or drew it towards you?

EW: I love that question about working on Native land. I've tried asking something similar in academic spaces, but the answers are often variations on That's a good question or Why don't you tell me? I do think my work on *White Magic* was a process of both drawing something and being drawn toward something, and I didn't realize it for much of the process, but that "something" was a relationship with land and all that means.

The pull toward and through the book wasn't a strong one for the first several years I tried to work on it. I had to become a different writer, a different person. I had to believe I was the only person who could write the book I wanted to write. Once I accepted that I was never going to predict what editors wanted or how to give it to them, I freed myself from limitations that had kept me from making progress. I became more willing to do what I wanted; to retain the power to make final decisions about what the book was going to be and when it could be deemed "finished."

I didn't realize how radical it would be to believe that I am an expert. Once I understood all that, the pull to write the book got very strong.

Pain and fear are formless, and I think I'm drawn to formal considerations as supportive structures to contain them. *White Magic* takes the form of linked but standalone essays with a constellation of symbols that add dimensions beyond the arcing line of inquiry, with a long essay near the end that uses overlapping January to December timelines for 2016/2017/2018 to explore my recent history through narrative movements that feel, to me as writer, like the tesseract in *A Wrinkle in Time*.

And your book, too, uses form so intentionally. I find your book affirming, of this knowledge I have, and feel stalled in communicating, that settlers can meaningfully do work against settlement, and with a significant amount of autonomy and initiative: you all can not only share in the work by doing what we're asking for, but you can also pay attention to what we need and let that inform future supportive actions.

Your book so clearly lays out the process of looking at existing work that Native women writers have already done and using it to understand settlement and the world it disrupts. What are your hopes for how settler anarchists might use your book?

TW: The form of my book was really the thing that eventually made it click for me, when it was just a series of ideas that I wanted to bring together. I'd initially thought of it as a call-and-response model, where there was a question or impasse in anarchist thought that then could be answered through Native women's writing. But there was something about that model that felt disingenuous to me as I went, when I started thinking about power structures and what it means to call upon Native women to "fix" prominent issues in anarchist thought and practice. But I still wanted to stage this as a conversation, so part of my work with form was figuring out how to do that. What I ended up with is this series of inquiries. The book has three sections, each of which explore one way that settlement is replicated in anarchist spaces—through telling contemporary anarchist history, through approaches to gendered violence, and through attempts at describing a transnational movement. Then, each of those units is broken into two chapters: one that explores a particular way that settlement has shaped anarchist approaches to that topic since the turn of the century and another that looks to Native women's literature to see a different model.

The premise of the book, is that we make the mistake of assuming, as anarchists, our movements are inherently anti-settlement. I think we need to be more intentional, not because of personal limitations or the inability of anarchism to account for structures of power, but because of how insidious the structure of settlement is. There needs to be intentionality around building different kinds of relationships between people and between movements. I also hope that it makes people more familiar with the amazing world-making work that's central to Native literatures, which I think is a big part of that.

EW: I love the way your book's structure positions Native women's writing as the answers settler anarchists are looking for, even if we weren't actually talking to them. Talking to settler leftists can be a waste of time, and I don't know how much time I get on this earth, but I've squandered enough of it. I've talked to too many leftists who seem receptive to what I have to say, but after I've said it, it becomes clear they think their edification is enough of an event to make the exchange worth my time. In 2016, I went to a Socialist Alternative meeting, because it was Seattle they had a member on city council. The meeting opened with a non-Native person speaking about current events, including the water protection at Standing Rock, and they managed to speak to that at some length without ever mentioning Native people, or the fact that it was happening on Standing Rock land. This introduction was followed by a white man quizzing the socialists on the definition of socialism and related terms. At some point during the meeting, I got fed up, I raised my hand, and when called on, I told them I objected to the omission of tribal nations from all of their analysis. It was explained to me that we are all workers and that socialists were responsible for making Indigenous Peoples Day a city holiday.

After the meeting, a young man wanted to meet and talk further. He shared a link to their newsletter so I could read to prepare, and I sent him a link to my essay "Apocalypse Logic" so he could understand where I'm coming from when I say I want the settler state to be dismantled and tribal governance restored. I did the reading, but he did not. When we met up, I told him I cannot consider socialists comrades unless they fully recognize, and want to disrupt and destroy, the ways socialism is simply working toward maintaining settlement but organizing settlers differently than our current system. He told me—and I don't remember the context—that I was not a worker, and in fact was a member of the bourgeoisie, because as a writer, I did own the means of production, which was my laptop, or possibly my mind. He told me I needed to join Socialist Alternative because they needed my help in understanding Native issues.

There are many people on the left who I'm certain couldn't tell me a thing about what settlement means to them, because it means nothing to them. You just talked about "how insidious the structure of settlement is"—yes. Getting settlers to understand the land as not simply stolen but as occupied, and treaties as foundational documents to the creation of the U.S., feels impossible.

There is significant work needed to bring Native women's writing to people who need to read it but don't know that yet. The audience needs more context, because settler colonialism has destroyed context—that's the goal, context erasure.

And my book definitely serves as an exploration of something that requires a lot of space. For readers, I hope this book does some work to legitimize heartsickness as a form of psychic pain, because it's too often dismissed, but I wanted my broad research to show that ruptures in romantic relationships are frequently brought about by the destructive force of colonialism. We are pushed toward partnering to make rent, or to have a reliable source of connection in the absence of functioning communities, or to validate our worth in a culture that constantly erodes our sense of self-worth. These behaviors are often framed as personal failings—but what's the alternative? Settlers burned our longhouses where we lived with hundreds of relatives. They separated us from our land and from the meaning we have always found in our agreements and relationships with non-human beings. It tells us we don't know who we are. I like that in books, we get to rebuild ourselves and our relationships and we get to work out meaning in a space we build ourselves.

Detail of Taktakl'iyayna (Red Mountain) by Ka'ila Farrell-Smith. Mixed media on wood panel 2018

ARB Non-Fiction

Where We All May Live the Dawn

Theresa Warburton

I want to return to the phrase "another world is possible," to which my own history of engagement with anarchist politics and the impetus of the concept of other worlds here is deeply connected. This phrase is ubiquitous in anarchist organizing around the world: it is the title of a 2002 film by Mark Dworkin and Melissa Young about that year's meeting of the World Social Forum, which adopted the phrase as its slogan the next year; the title of David McNally's 2006 book on globalization and anticapitalism; the name of an organizing coalition that arose from the Direct Action Network (DAN), which was instrumental to the 1999 protests; and is invoked innumerable times in articles about social movements in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. And, often, this phrase is connected to the uprising of the Zapatistas in 1994, a moment to which many contemporary anarchists point in their establishment of a genealogy of New Anarchism.

However, even in the connection of this phrase to the Indigenous uprising of the Zapatistas and in its ubiquitous adoption as a symbol of New Anarchist politics, we can see the elision of questions of settlement that necessitates a shift to the paradigm of other worlds here that I've suggested throughout. This phrase appears in the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, issued by the EZLN (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, or Zapatista Army of National Liberation) in June 2005. The passage reads:

> If you look at one of those studies the governments make, you will see that the only indigenous communities which have improved their living conditions—whether in health, education, food, or housing—were those which are in Zapatistas territory, which is what we call where our villages are. And all of that has been possible because of the progress made by the Zapatista villages and because of the very large support which has been received from good and noble persons, whom we call "civil societies," and from their organizations throughout the world. As if all of these people have made 'another world is possible' a reality, but through actions, not just words.

Here, the EZLN makes a direct connection to global radical politics not through calls to global solidarity but through a rooting in a place-based focus on local Indigenous communities. This is the first place, however, that this phrase appears in the official communications of the EZLN, twelve years after the First Declaration was issued. The association of the phrase "another world is possible" with the Zapatistas seems to come, in some ways, from a conflation of this phrase with another that appeared in the Fourth Declaration in 1996 that appears in the epigraph above.

In this declaration, released two years after the First Declaration and nine years before the Sixth Declaration in which the phrase "another world is possible" appears, the EZLN use the description "a world where many worlds fit" to describe their radical political vision. Though this shares numerous qualities with the more pervasive "another world is possible," this phrase and the larger quote from which it is extracted above illuminates a functionally and formally different approach to the question of (an)other world(s). It signals the need to imagine not a singular new future world, but to create the conditions for many worlds, both nascent and existing, to flourish; it emphasizes the relationship between words and worlds; it centers the role of the nation as a foundation of Indigenous worlds; and it hails us as people who "all may live the dawn" within the framework of the expressly Indigenous foundations of the EZLN's uprising.

The difference between these two phrases, "another world is possible" and "a world where many worlds fit" may seem inconsequential, but the effect of these words in shaping the radical political visions of New Anarchism is significant. When, as radical activists and scholars, we invite ourselves and others to imagine "another world is possible," one without the state, without capitalism, without settlement, without prisons, without police, this encourages us to stop normalizing these structures and their seeming perpetuity on the physical and social landscapes of our world. But we must also recognize that, in other ways, such imagining may not be the most difficult or imperative part of the process. What is more, framing our radical praxis this way can support the structure of settlement by obscuring the myriad worlds that have lived with the land and its people since time immemorial. Because, in fact, there have been and continue to be worlds that are without the state, without capitalism, without settlement, without prisons, without police. These worlds don't exist in a pure past to which we must return, but rather continue to exist within the words, the land, and the people that are constituted through and of these worlds.

Those worlds, the "other" ones that we are searching for, are here. And if we look at this place—at North America, at Turtle Island—and can only ask the question, "Can we imagine what this place might look like without those things?," then we are doing precisely that which Silko warns against in the epigraph to *Other Worlds Here*. If we look at the land and its people and think "there are no politics here," that those politics must be created to imagine a world without the structures that we work to oppose—then we are wrong. Again, recognizing "other worlds here" is not about trying to go back to a time before these things. Rather, it is about understanding that the practices these worlds require, the practices for the kinds of relationships we need to have to ensure their existence—those practices that anarchists are searching for through our praxis, already live here. Yes, another world is possible. One of the reasons we can even know this, though, even entertain this thought, is because there are other worlds here—if only we would honor them.

Rocks, Caves, Lakes, Fens, Bogs, Dens, and Shades of Death

Elissa Washuta

ROCKS

I was told that I grew up at the foot of a mountain, but Jenny Jump is just a hill. It hardly has a summit. That tree-topped bent knee rising over the lake passes for a peak in Jersey.

People say Jenny lived there a long time ago, in a small white house under a cliff with her father. She was nine, picking berries or playing atop the cliff, the day a savage Indian, or a bunch of them, supposedly came to ravage her. She called to her father, but he was far below. The Indians were coming for her. Her father cried, "Jump, Jenny, Jump!"; so Jenny jumped from the high, rocky cliff to her death.

One online account of the Jenny Jump story says her father intended to catch her. As a child, I assumed he wanted her to die rather than be kidnapped by Indians: the story could be a tidy example of the cinema trope of the fate worse than death, a phrase that once referred exclusively to rape, especially one that took a girl's virginity. Catholic school prepared me to spot these narrative tropes: I memorized dozens of virgin martyrs' stories, sickening accounts of girls and women whose commitment to purity for Christ never faltered, even as pagan men tortured and killed them. Agatha's breasts were amputated. Agnes's body sprouted an impenetrable hair coat to block rape, and a burning at the stake failed before a soldier beheaded her. Lucy, after an eye-gouging, wouldn't burn, either, so her head, too, was severed. Maria Goretti was stabbed fourteen times after refusing a man's advances. Cecilia bled out for days after an executioner failed to cut off her head. Dymphna was beheaded. Juliana was beheaded. Justina was beheaded. Catherine of Alexandria was strapped to a spiked wheel, which broke, so she was beheaded. Apollonia's teeth were shattered and then she was burned at the stake. Ursula was beheaded.

Jenny jumped.

Near the end of the 1992 film adaptation of *The Last of the Mohicans*, violins throb while the petite white Alice shuffles to a cliff's edge, never taking her eyes off Magua, the Huron villain who just ate a man's heart. Alice's blonde hair covers her cheeks but doesn't obscure her dying eyes. She looks left. We see the cliff's impossible face. She looks back at Magua for nine whole movie seconds. He lowers his knife, but not much, and flicks his fingers to beckon. The shot moves back to Alice's face, and her head turns, and we see Magua's hand wait as she shifts her body forward and steps off the cliff. Shot from below in slow motion, she falls, all skirts. Magua walks away.

The TV Tropes website has a listing for "No Escape but Down," but this down is not an escape. It is a decisive end. And trope is inadequate. Even plot device is not enough. Before I knew how to write my own name, I knew that women jump off cliffs to die. I've known Jenny's story longer than I've known what story means—longer than I've known the difference between history and figment.

The Antidote

Kelly Rose Pflug-Back

We Do This 'Til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice
by Mariame Kaba
240pp. AK Press 2021

Freedom Book by Emory Douglas. Ink Jet Print 2017
Courtesy of the artist and Artist Rights Society

Until recently, many people were primarily familiar with Mariame Kaba's work through her anonymous Twitter account, Prison Culture. For years, the dedicated organizer maintained anonymity while working behind the scenes of organizations such as Survived and Punished, as well as various individual defense campaigns for incarcerated people in the United States.

In this slim and concise volume of interviews, essays, and articles, Kaba has given us the invaluable resources of her compassion, lived experience, and radical imagination. *We Do This 'Til We Free Us* manages to approach the subject of prison abolition in a way that is accessible and comprehensible, while holding the full complexity of the work which abolition entails. True to Kaba's politics, this book is a collaborative effort, featuring the thoughts, insights, and experiences of advocates who Kaba has fought with, and for, in the course of her work as an abolitionist. She writes in conversation with a community, rather than as an isolated voice, often prioritizing the experiential wisdom of incarcerated youth, people in the sex trade, and others directly affected by the violence of the prison system. Much like the communities which Kaba urges us to build, the structure of the book itself attests to the ways that lateral, collaborative ways of thinking and organizing, are stronger than hierarchical or individualist ones.

Kaba has a way of cutting through the fat, getting straight to the foundations of violence and the carceral and punitive mind-set that rules a society founded by slavery and colonialism. "Let us be clear," she asserts. "Our punishment system, which is grounded in genocide and slavery and which has continued to replicate the functions and themes of those atrocities, can never be made just."

While abolition is commonly dismissed as utopian and impossible, Kaba continues to remind us that the status quo is what is in fact impossible: that freedom for Black Americans does not truly exist in an atmosphere of constant presumption of guilt; that Black women like Cyntoia Brown cannot be found to have acted in self defense when the state views them as having "no selves to defend"; that the difficulty of finding solutions does not justify the problem.

Kaba holds and carries the stories of people tortured, killed, and terrorized by American police with heartfelt care. Her devotion to their stories being heard, believed, and remembered in a social and political climate that tells us to look the other way, permeates the book with the emotional depth which is so often missing from political organizing.

Far from reaching for easy or catch-all solutions, Kaba pushes us to face the full responsibility of what community-led justice looks like. As she states, a world without harm isn't possible. *We Do This 'Til We Free Us* is a challenge to equip ourselves for the careful, difficult, and heartfelt work of dealing with the violence, oppression, and the obsession with punishment which live "both inside and outside of us." As the title alludes, it is a long and arduous road to change, but it is one that we are nonetheless capable of walking, if we choose to rise to the task.

Through Kaba's radical lens, we see even the rare incarceration of those who commit heinous violence as a fraudulent substitute for justice: the individual may be stopped from harming others in outside society, but the system which failed the victims, which created the conditions of violence, remains in place. When the individual villain is locked away the system can be applauded, and we are baited into looking away from the fact that the system itself is the killer.

In the case of Larry Nassar, whose multiple life sentences were widely applauded as signaling progressive change for survivors of sexual violence in the American justice system, Kaba writes (with Kelly Hayes) that an abolitionist stance includes "focusing not just on individuals but also the institutions and structures that perpetuate, foster, and maintain interpersonal violence, [including]...the administrators at Michigan State University and USA Gymnastics who ignored initial disclosures of sexual assault and took no actions to stop his violent behavior."

Kaba's interview with Shira Hassan, an organizer with the sex-worker-led Young Women's Empowerment Project, further complicates the dominant narratives surrounding the #MeToo movement, challenging us to see sexual violence and coercion as a spectrum of violation which is ever-present in all aspects of society, rather than as isolated, abhorrent acts. How, she asks, do we move past the catharsis of watching high-profile individuals like Weinstein finally be exposed, and begin doing the much longer and more concerted effort of creating world in which sexual violence itself is unthinkable?

This book will change your inner world, and inspire you to make the world around you reflect that. As author Saidiya Hartman, one of Kaba's co-writers, states, "care is the antidote to violence." In this book, Kaba offers us this antidote, in abundance. It is, after all, one of the only things strong enough to transcend prison walls.

Kelly Rose Pflug-Back *writes fiction, poetry, and journalism. Her first book of poems,* The Hammer of Witches, *is available from Caitlin Press/Dagger Editions 2020*

Saint Jim

An Interview with Jim Shepard

Cara Hoffman

Clean Up (red) by Marcia Teusink. Oil and mixed media on canvas 2020

***Jim Shepard** is the author of eight novels, including* The Book of Aron, *which won the Sophie Brody Medal for Achievement in Jewish Literature from the American Library Association and the PEN/New England Award for fiction. He is also the author of five story collections, including his latest,* The World to Come. *Five of his short stories have been chosen for the Best American Short Stories, two for the PEN/O. Henry Prize, and one for a Pushcart Prize. This spring, as vaccines against COVID-19 were rolling out across the country, and his latest novel* Phase Six, *the story of a deadly pandemic born from climate change was about to be published, Shepard spoke with ARB about suffering, compassion and the project of literature in precarious times.*

ARB: The critic Art Winslow called you the Patron Saint of the Mal Adapted. Much of your work deals with characters coming up against various forms of authority, outsiders navigating the world, insiders who feel alienated. But this goes beyond the trope of the outsider who triumphs in the end.

JS: I love that designation, maybe because I could have used one of those when I was growing up. I suppose like most writers, I've always felt like an outsider myself—someone faintly worrisome, watching from the periphery—and I've always believed that one of literature's saving graces is its ability to go back for the stragglers. One way or the other, I tend to write more from the worm's eye view, and much more rarely about those on top of the pile.

ARB: Your two most recent novels, *The Book of Aron* and *Phase Six* portray incredible suffering—one historic—the other what might have been called speculative some years ago, but now could be described as a chronicle of an inevitability. Can you talk a bit about writing suffering; violence, disease, psychological cruelty. What is it writers are giving readers by putting these things on the page with such precision? Is this a primary work of the artist?

JS: Literature is about the enlargement of the empathetic imagination, so there's always a usefulness to depicting suffering with any fidelity. There's always the anxiety about exploitation whenever suffering is mobilized in a work, and I suppose the way we deal with that is to try to render that suffering with enough compassionate precision that the result is at least as redemptive as it is exploitative. I think it was Chekhov who suggested that literature confronts ugliness in the service of its opposite, and probably when we're examining those aspects of being human that seem to have the most urgency for us as difficult subjects with which to wrestle, suffering inevitably comes up.

ARB: Your work is also very, very funny.

JS: Comedy may be one of the more commonplace and successful ways of tilting some of the awful absurdity with which we're faced in a direction that's easier to manage. Certainly, during some of the most awful stretches of things that I've gone through, I found myself grateful for the relief that even momentary laughter was able to provide.

ARB: A good deal has been written about your research and your work as a writer of historical fiction. How do you navigate what has already been mythologized? What kinds of source material do you trust—or is this question irrelevant in writing fiction?

JS: A good question. Of course, the issue of accuracy is a different one for a fiction writer than for a historian. Even so, I think that that literature that deals with history the most effectively understands first that fiction about real events needs to respect the facts, and second that as our politicians have taught us, facts are malleable things. The trick may be to do everything possible to honor that first point while taking full advantage of the second. Like historians, fiction writers are dealing with conflicting possibilities by making our own best-informed guesses, but unlike historians we're also more often keeping an eye on the aesthetic object we're trying to construct. I tend to try to rely on primary documents whenever I can, and I assume that I have much less hesitation than a historian might when it comes to assigning a thought that I found in one letter from North Carolina in 1863 to another letter that I'm constructing from Tennessee in 1865.

ARB: Do you think the practice of writing and the practice of teaching writing and literature has changed over the last thirty years? The standard writers' bio of yore was to claim working-class chops: one had 'worked as a bricklayer, a bartender, a longshoreman, etc…' now contemporary fiction is populated by people who 'earned an MFA, received a fellowship, taught at universities.' Has this professionalization of the craft affected American literature and American culture?

JS: That transformation seems to me to have happened about 30 years ago. It engendered what you might expect: more novels about writers, and fewer set on shrimp boats. It might have also turned literature in a direction away from the popular arts, but literature was most likely headed that way, given the way television and movies would always be more accessible and easier to engage. The newer transformations have involved the diminution of readership and the balkanization of constituencies. The former being driven at least partially by the collapse of our educational institutions and the unprecedented competition offered by all the other forms of media on our personal devices.

ARB: *Phase Six* is a rough read more than a year into the pandemic, and it's not just a virus you are writing about, but the destruction of the environment, and the way ease of travel, the way we're interconnected, makes pandemics more likely. The book focuses on friendship and loss and on how bureaucratic systems fail and scientific systems work. There are so many moving parts and you convey how survival can be contingent on the smallest pieces of luck. What was it like to write such a book at this moment in time? Did you feel prescient?

JS: As you might expect, the experience of watching a matrix of catastrophe unfold right after you've worked as comprehensively as you could to try to imagine that very thing has a surreal edge to it. It's like an echo of déjà vu leavened with the superstitious sense on the one hand that maybe your imagination should have left well enough alone, and a chastened sense on the other that Cassandras are a dime a dozen, and by definition ignored. Even so, the project doesn't seem to me entirely futile, since the entire project of literature might be about trying to prevent ourselves rom repeating our mistakes, and unless we learn from those mistakes, we have a lot of COVID-19s and worse ahead of us.

Harry Potter and the Blood of the Proletariat

Hal Duncan

Another day, another signatory to an open letter supporting J.K. Rowling, trans-exclusionary "radical feminist" extraordinaire. One small mercy: Rowling tanking her rep has quietly snuffed the Hashtag Resistance's fantasies casting everything as Gryffindor versus Slytherin and has opened eyes to persistent critiques of Harry Potter like the paucity of PoC in Hogwarts; the cringesome namings of a Cho Chang or Seamus Finnegan; the closeting of a Dumbledore outed retrospectively; etc..

Justly raging as these are at the abjection driving exclusion, I worry there's a bourgeois propriety to any "fix" oblivious to what exactly it is, in Hogwarts, the abject are excluded from. There's a reason some of us hated Harry Potter's liberal centrism from the get-go, never fuckin wanted to see ourselves in the cosy Gryffindor common room before a fire lit by a happy house-elf slave.

I put it to you that, actually, in that worldscape: anyone can do magic.

To do magic is to do the extraordinary. There are kids born of parents both of whom know they can do magic. Those kids know they can do magic. There are kids born of parents one of whom knows they can do magic. They also know they can do magic. And then there are kids with parents neither of whom even know magic exists, kids also oblivious—until they accidentally do magic so blatant it has to be acknowledged. And along comes someone from the wizarding world to tell them they're Speshul.

"You're a wizard, Harry," says Hagrid.

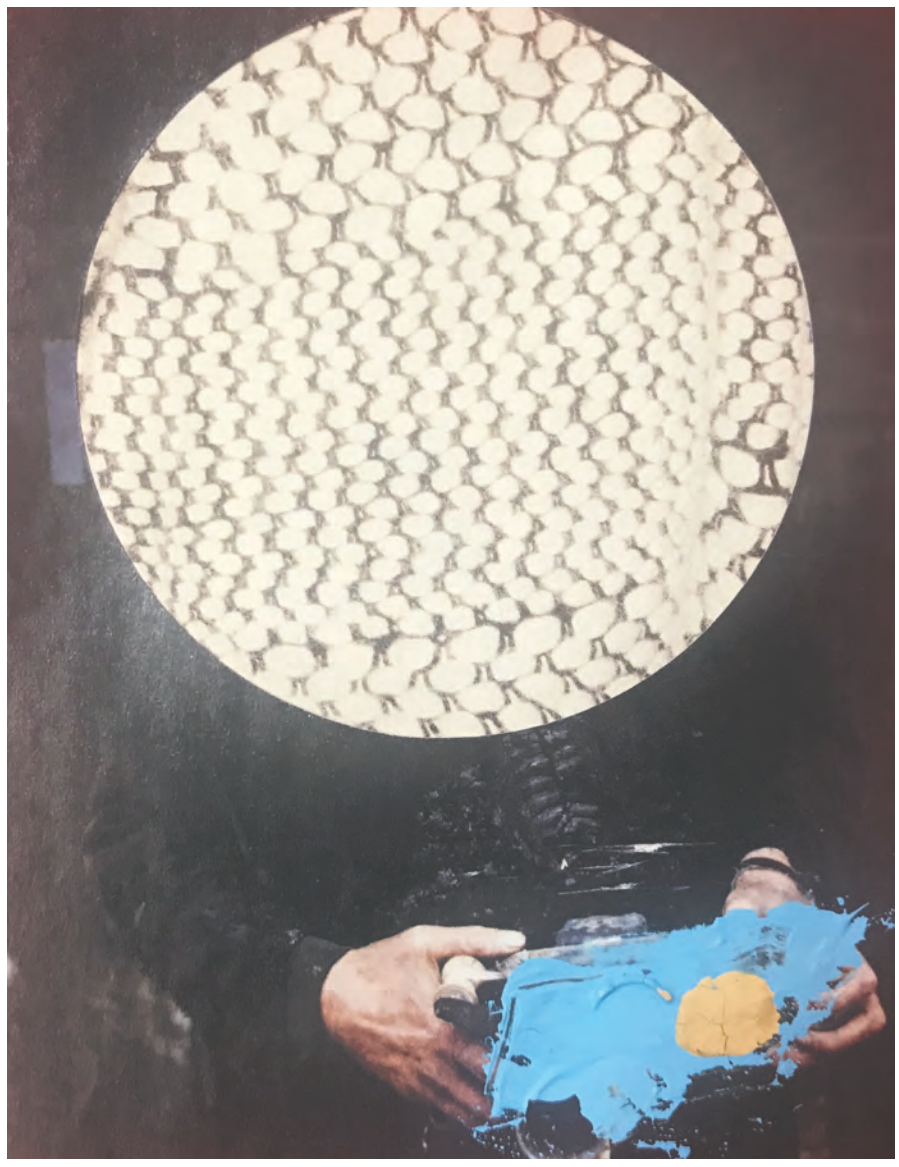
But the truth is: anyone can do magic... if only they knew that they could, if only the entire culture weren't designed to keep magic secret and cast as an innate talent that you, Muggle, are born without.

Prove yourself capable of magic, indeed, and you're deemed a "Muggle-born", huchled off to Hogwarts for inculcation, reviled as "Mudblood", to be sure, by inbred aristos but assimilated nicely via one of Hogwarts' four houses: Sandhurst; the Bullingdon Club; the Royal Society; the Civil Service. Because while you may not be an aristo, Mudblood, you're no mere pleb like yer maw and da. This is what Hermione Granger, class traitor, is told, and blithely accepts. One might contrive a rationale—a recessive trait, distant wizard ancestors—but why should we? It's not on the page. And it's a lie. This is a class metaphor, class war via fiction.

What about Squibs though? In the books, these are kids born of magical parents, raised knowing magic's reality, who nonetheless fail to do magic. How do they fit with a premise that it's ignorance keeping Muggles disempowered?

I think of the Seven Up! documentary series following kids from the age of seven over seven decades now, of the son of two teachers expected by all to excel academically, clearly stressed into a breakdown by the pressure to perform figurative magic... to be extraordinary.

Failing to get into Oxbridge, he ended up dropping out of a London uni, living in a squat, then homeless. No alcohol or drug issues, but he did fall into the underclass, a kid with no belief in his own ability to do magic despite his class roots. A large degree of his "failure", to be clear, was rejection of the future defined for him. If by the system's standards he bombed out of the upper/middle class, he himself viewed his wilderness years as freedom, as a magic unfathomable to the (petit)bourgeoisie. Still, in later installments, his sense of having not achieved was palpable and poignant.



I See the Moon and the Moon Sees Me by Maya Pindyck. Mixed media on paper 2019

Tellingly, rather than essentializing Squibdom as inherent deficit in one's blood, the novels waver on this point, with Argus Filch on one hand clearly lacking talent (for which the novels have zero sympathy), but with Neville Longbottom on the other, his ineptness a product of abusive pushiness, reversed when he finds himself in the supportive sodality of Dumbledore's Army. With confidence, he flourishes.

In the fantasy of class privilege, even as Neville points us at the truth of why Harry's cousin Dudley might really be incapable of magic—as a Muggle not by blood, but by (lack of) belief—Filch is wheeled in because the Squib cannot be another disproof of the lie. It cannot be that just as anyone can do magic, so it cannot be that anyone could fail. The system of class privilege has a safety net for the mediocre (Ron), but cock forbid you "fail" so utterly you move class downways, become a prole.

Harry's Uncle Vernon is a thorough Tory. His work as director of a drill factory—making tools for workies—smacks of a cue to read the family's boorishness as that of social-climbed proles, and while classism would cast them as obtuse to bourgeois propriety because proles, the obnoxiousness can also be read as simple aspirational bastardy. But it's not just the Dursleys scorned so. By the time a Muggle campsite manager at the Quidditch World Cup is muttering about "foreigners", it's hard not to think of that chattering class tendency to cast Trump or Brexit voters as working class. It's those small minds, see, making proles incapable of the extraordinary, doomed to under-achieving misery.

In the orthodox reading, Muggles cannot do magic; this is a TrueFact™ of the worldscape. The fact remains: ninety-nine percent would never know to try, and any who try and fail might do so simply due to a lack not of magic blood but of, say, confidence. If you ask Rowling herself, she'd surely insist the ability is innate. But so what? Death of the Author, baby.

Must we take the villain Voldemort's stance on Muggles being so by blood as TrueFact™? Characters can be full of shit, so the inability to do magic being genetic requires support by more than just dialogue. Only a reliable omniscient narrator's declaration, within the text, that something is a TrueFact™ would render a contrary reading invalid. And in all seven books of the series, the nearest we get to such is a parenthetical reference characterising the Dursleys: "not a drop of magical blood in their veins." Compare "not a magical bone in their bodies" or "not a magical hair on their heads". All could be read as wholly figurative, leaving the question of why exactly Muggles lack magic wide open.

You have a choice. Do you read that "not a drop of magical blood in their veins" literally, for the sake of a cozy fantasy in which Dumbledore was Bad when he sought to subjugate Muggles by force, but Good now he's a kind patrician training generations of the elite who'll enforce the Ministry of Magic's Statute of Secrecy, keeping Muggles in disempowered ignorance? Or do you read it as purely figurative, every character in the books dead wrong, because to take that shit literally is to bask in a damned lie of class superiority as eugenic truth?

I know where I stand, and I regret to inform you that it does not leave the heroes looking very heroic.

Voldemort and his pureblood Death Eaters are fascist villains, aiming to exterminate the Mudbloods, subjugate the Muggles, but the supposed heroes? They too swallow the lie that not just anyone can do magic, that it's a talent you're born with, that should anyone from the ranks of those who don't know magic exists nonetheless do it, they are not disproof of the lie, not magical Muggles, but Muggle-born.

So the heroes fight in the Battle of Hogwarts for their bastion of class privilege and its traditions. Accepted into the elite, co-opted with the privileges denied his parents, made loyal to the system, traitor to his class, Dean Thomas, Muggle-born and Black (and commonly shipped with his mate Seamus as gay) is a soldier in that fight; Rowling has made him a champion of eugenics. In Hogwarts, even which house you're Sorted into tends to run in the family—in stark contrast to sibling personality divergence as researched norm. Never mind racial essentialism, the system Dean is assimilated into assumes traits born of breeding like every human is a Kennel Club pooch. "Bad blood," says Hagrid of the wicked Malfoys.

Aye, naw, mate. I'll not speak for any PoC, but I sure as fuck don't want queers represented in a Dean buying into that shite.

Where the absence of diversity in HP is railed against, frankly the last thing I'd wish for as a queer from a Scottish housing scheme is Teh Gayz represented in Hogwarts. I'm glad Rowling kept Dumbledore in the closet, queers excluded. It's a truer picture of how Hermione Granger, class traitor, would be no better ally to any abject group than she is to her own underclass.

None of them would be. Raised among the underclass of Muggles, Harry is a class traitor too, his parentage meaning fuck all—because anyone can do magic. And Ron? For all the salt-of-the-earth drag slapped on the skint Weasleys in contrast with the aristo drag of the Malfoys, their country home might as well be some old manor house run down by the cost of upkeep; they are no less born into privilege. The best that can be said of Ron is he's friendly to the proles where Draco's foul. He's only a bigot

about every other breed of sentient being—house-elf, giant, goblin, whatever.

Hermione argues the egalitarian corner, but she's already half-assimilated, middle class in real terms, child of two dentists; her liberal condescension might be a pointed critique were her white saviour activism only face-palmed by a class conscious Harry for its shallowness rather than disdained as oblivious to the TrueFacts™ of biological determinism in which elves are servile, giants savage, goblins shady—they just are. Sadly, to see the utter wrongosity of biological determinism in elves, giants or goblins would be to see its wrongosity in wizards and Muggles, and since that's disallowed, a drama of prejudiced versus progressive can only play out one way.

The more the narrative tries to resolve liberal angst, the worse it becomes, book by book. Rowling might always have been, from her youth as Hermione, an imposture of progressivism disguising paternalism disguising prejudice, but she may just have inadvertently radicalised herself, allowing a callow peeve at Tall Poppy Syndrome to metastasize into a monstrous politics in which TERFdom is a lamentably logical outcome.

The truth is: anyone can do magic. But cock forbid the underclass aspire to the extraordinary. Perish the thought of oiks sticking the vickies up at a scholarship to Magical Eton, becoming class conscious rebels against the system, revealing magic's reality to their fellow scum. There is a story in that, but Rowling quashes it.

Instead, it does not escape me that Hermione Granger, class traitor, erases all memory of herself from her Muggle parents' minds, on the path that will ultimately lead to a future as Minister of Magic, overseeing an entire state apparatus dedicated to maintaining Muggle ignorance.

There is no real resistance to fascism founded on such allegiance to class privilege. Where bourgeois propriety valorises moderation, you can't trust it not to moderate any "improper" egalitarianism. It will argue for civility in the face of atrocities, of any real opposition. It will call itself the Resistance and do everything it can to stop you punching Nazis.

Removing the anti-semitic goblins would not fix this. Removing the enslaved house elves would not fix this. The class privilege is written into the conceit of Muggles being innately incapable, at best pitiable, mostly despicable. There is a damned lie at the heart of Rowling's mythos that no number of queers or PoC ensconced in Hogwarts' dorms would rectify.

And yet…

It intrigues me that actively looking for a decisive binding of magic to blood, I found only that ambiguous parenthetical, and Neville binding magical inability to self-belief instead of blood. And I found signpost after signpost of missed turns, contrivances symptomatic of avoidance, plotholes, all fixable by a simple tweak at the end of the first act of the series's narrative arc and a working through of repercussions.

I have a theory that any narrative tapping into the id is fundamentally anarchist, in refusing ego's authoritarianism, and socialist, empathy an inbuilt driver toward sodality. Like water finding its level, story from the id seeks its own shape, will realize itself with integrity, artistic and ethical, if only the writer isn't too obtuse and obstinate to catch the turns it flags. Rowling's series is rife with such flags, so thoroughly one can trace in it a phantom of what could have been, a radical egalitarian story following the action as is, almost beat for beat, just…not warped by denial into a trashfire of eugenics apologetics.

To fix that fantasy of class privilege, you'd need the Chamber of Secrets to have contained the biggest secret of all: anyone can do magic. One wee tweak to let Harry recognize the lie that the blood of the proletariat lacks magic, reject this as eugenics, and you have him, with Hermione and Ron—as class traitor in the good sense—starting a revolution against the Ministry's bourgeois paternalism as much as Voldemort's fascism.

If only…I think, picturing a Hogwarts by way of Lindsay Anderson's 1968 *If*…by way of Michael de Larrabeiti's 1970s–80s Borribles trilogy, a public school story and a kids' fantasy respectively, both immeasurably more progressive products of decades prior to Rowling's neoliberal brainrot.

Hal Duncan is the author of Vellum *and* Ink, *more recently* Testament, *and numerous short stories, poems, essays, even some musicals. Homophobic hatemail once dubbed him "*THE…Sodomite Hal Duncan!!*" (sic), and you can find him online at* http://www.halduncan.com *or on Twitter as* @Hal_Duncan, *revelling in that role.*

The First Guy to Apologize

Noël Fagerhaugh

First Person Singular
by Haruki Murakami
256 pp. Knopf (Bertelsmann SE & CO) 2021

Imagine if you will, Murakami himself in a Paul Smith designer suit and Italian tie, sipping a vodka gimlet with a twist from a Baccarat crystal cocktail glass…

In this collection of eight short stories, *First Person Singular,* Murakami offers his readers comforting moments of crystalline prose in which men move passively through familiar themes of ennui and magical realism, random, pointless events, or chance encounters with women and young girls. Feminists and reviewers have repeatedly pointed out a lack of depth and agency in Murakami's female characters—they serve largely in the development of the male character and his desire.

This holds true for *First Person Singular* with the exception of two stories in which there is some creative surrealism at play. The rest are replete with young women of low self-worth or middle-aged women lacking morals. In "With the Beatles" only one woman is named, and she takes her own life. There are, however, a few "new" Murakami women here, doing, and saying, and strongly affecting the protagonists, despite their relative lack of dimensionality.

During a series of interviews and conversations with the novelist Meiko Kawakami held in Tokyo in 2017, she questions Murakami about his depiction of women. In his answers, Murakami reveals some of his thoughts and intentions behind the female characters he creates. At other times he offers weakly, "I'm not a thinker, or a critic, or a social activist. I'm just a novelist. If someone tells me that my work is flawed when viewed through a particular ism, or could have used a bit more thought, all that I can do is offer a sincere apology and say, 'I'm sorry.' I'll be the first guy to apologize." At one point Kawakami issues a challenge of sorts when she asks, "… do you think it's possible that in future books there will be female examples of characters… who are a little bit mysterious or unfamiliar, characters who make you say, 'Whoa, this is new'?" Murakami replies, "I'll continue creating new characters, different from the ones that came before, which certainly applies to women too." Do we see his answer to her challenge in the women he creates here in *First Person Singular*?

Fallen Andrew Jackson by Melora Kuhn. Oil on canvas 2020

Even though the "new" Murakami women still act as compliments to his protagonists, they each have some redeeming qualities to their characters, however flawed. The poet of "On A Stone Pillow" writes dark and lovely tanka which the narrator treasures for years to come, even as she gives her body to the unavailable man she loves any time he calls. The forty-something year old woman known only as "F*" is a sensitive, intelligent and charismatic aficionado of classical music who defrauds "ordinary people" of their hard-earned money through a Ponzi scheme. Finally, the fifty-something assailant from the title story has the confidence to confront and accuse a man she believes has horribly wronged her friend, but has to down three drinks to work up the courage, becoming ugly in the process. Most of these interactions are not pleasant in the end, and lead to sadness and confusion for the narrator.

The title story in particular reads as a response to feminist critique of his characters. One can't help but consider this narrator as a possible Murakami stand-in. What "horrible, awful thing" has he done to women? He is just a man, putting on a suit, masquerading about town, drinking and reading in a strange bar, minding his own business. The narrator thinks to question his accuser but he can't, finding himself, "Afraid of having her drag out, into the light, something inside me, something completely unknown to me." He fails to recognize himself in the barroom mirrors. Can it be that Murakami offers this pitiable excuse for the unaware man accused of mistreating women in his stories?

Leaving the bar after his troubling encounter, the narrator finds the world outside changed from a pleasant spring evening to an almost post-apocalyptic scene of an Eden gone dark, abysmal and ashen. Sulfuric clouds emerge from faceless people and hang in the frozen air. Snakes twist along the trunks of trees, alerting the reader that these many "Trees of Knowledge" are well guarded, their fruit unavailable to the narrator who is shocked by this cold, inverted hell that is his new world.

Now go back to that image you had at the beginning of this review, and picture Murakami again in his high-end duds, giving his critics what they asked for—more dimensional female characters but with the "twist" of women who are capable of self-harm, self-sabotage, and social self-immolation, but never self-actualization, just as he himself is incapable of self-reflection, or is he? Memoir or fiction?

Noël Fagerhaugh *is a former metalworker and adjunct English professor in Oakland, CA where she teaches Writing and Critical Thinking. She writes poetry.*

Fetch The Bolt Cutters

C. Russell Price

Seven kids and dead at 23, Benjamin Franklin
Russell Price, you started some mess.
I only found you because I was lonely
and had nowhere to go
and no money to do anything with.
The dark woods have been replaced
with the dark web. Having fun isn't hard
when you've got a library card. You probably had 1 book
and we know what that was. What is in us
that makes us start back South
and end up in a flyover state?
We always saddleback in Virginia.
Next door, they discovered
Mountain Dew and every October since
we've walked main street sweet breath
hands begging for some Pepsi Cola signed relief.
Yesterday in a city that wasn't here
when you were in an a-line maxi skirt,
Mary Sturgill would have loved and been hung for,
I thought about all the evil in our family.
I've been trying to measure my pain
against y'all's. John James had sixteen kids
in twenty years. We never all seem to make it.
You, Benjamin Franklin Russell Price
were dead at 23 but nowhere says what of.
Now our people can read and write,
but they don't. Our family has always lived
with something scratching in the walls.
I'm writing about you in the heat
of another preventable disaster.
A friend who comes to me through a trauma machine
used a website and found an entire family she never knew of.
Maybe I'm wanting some tragic secret to be resolved,
maybe I'm just tired of our poverty line.
Get this shit, I saw your census, the taker's cursive
CA on Survivor of the Confederate or Union Army.
I hope you're fucking burning in hell, traitor.
At our community's last reenactment of the North's invasion of our homeland,
this dumbshit punk kid next to me asked his dumbshit mom if the South wins
this year. I should practice empathy, but I'm tired of our Southerness
always being both a caricature and a blistering truth.
We've probably always been acceptable white trash wherever we've been.
I guess you'd be proud of some parts of this family,
I hope I'm pissing you off. I spend all day trying to get y'all,
to see how we got where we are. All the bastards in this family
will get their due. Maybe I'm wrong about Mary loving this dress,
maybe I'm wrong about assuming your transphobia. Maybe everything isn't completely fucked.
In an imagined seance, all y'all look up at me from below and regret your transactions
and acknowledge that you were too poor to enslave people during your time
and beg for my forgiveness for your complacency and say you love my eye makeup
and you weep enough Confederate funded salt to warrant a Historical Marker
and when I look down to you, with my amazing eye makeup, I say, "After all this time,
you'll be tickled shitless to know that one good ol' boy still loves the CSA.
More members of our clan will be joining you momentarily."
I say to my dead fuckhead relatives across time and space:
I am the product of your nightmares, all suffering is suffering,
we can have green thumbs and problematic politics.
We know hunger like a sibling.
Everyone around us is always dying it seems. That we can agree on.
When my Grandmother was dying, I lied and said I had finished a happy book on the apocalypse.
I had my Mama show her deathbed ridden my chapbook TONIGHT WE FUCK THE TRAILER PARK OUT OF EACH OTHER in capital letters across the cover, and my Mama said it was called A HAPPY BOOK ON THE APOCALYPSE.
Nanny was blind with pain meds and said *how pretty what a nice cover Russell would be proud.*
Even if you think you died with a secret, it takes two to keep it.
Did they fucking rhyme in your time?
One dude on our tree lived to be 91. WHY THO?
With a name like Hezekial, he had to be queer and beautiful.
How far we are from all of you and still we're tilling stolen land with bad teeth and weak hearts.
The night I made myself a bridegroom to the doomsday I took my dead grandfather's name,
all the rotted limbs branch out like an acceptable eyesore. I'm taking everything back.
I think it's safe to assume two things 1) y'all would love Fiona Apple and Amy Winehouse, too, & 2) the family line dies with me.

C. Russell Price *is an Appalachian genderqueer punk from Virginia but now lives in Chicago.*

Porn Star by Marvin Tate. Assemblage 2018

Mourning and Retribution

Rebeca Sánchez Castro

Nancy
by Bruno Lloret, translated by Ellen Jones.
156 pp. Two Lines Press 2021

Nancy by Bruno Lloret was the first novel written by a Chilean man I had read in a long time, and my first thought before reading it was how bold of him to choose a female character to be the protagonist and narrator.

The difficulty was not related to how the novel is written or translated. I know firsthand the hardships of translation, so chapeau for Ellen Jones who did a remarkable job, managing the use of colloquial expressions and keeping it Spanglish at times. As I came across complex concepts like *imbunche*, I imagined footnotes could have been useful, but then if an English-speaking reader is approaching a text originally written in Spanish, it is good to leave room for them to do the homework to catch up with the multicultural openness the world requires these days.

The difficulties of reading *Nancy* have nothing to do with the ✕'s that swarm the pages, since the novel incorporates this figure as a punctuation mark of its own. The effect of this exercise first reminded me of Vicente Huidobro's calligrams, but it's a gesture of its own that gives the pages a texture, like sand piling on a dune or the tinny specks the wind blows in your eye; or like marks on skin, sometimes invisible but perceptible at touch. The ✕s add up to the visual resources the novel incorporates, such as x-rays and signs that help in the construction of meaning and a playful push to the reader to engage in the game of seeing where imagination takes you.

Reading *Nancy* felt a little like reading *Mrs. Dalloway,* in the sense that it concentrates the life of the protagonist on a key moment of her becoming. But while *Mrs. Dalloway* was a rich white lady whose life flashes by in anticipation of the party and the odyssey to buy the flowers, Nancy's on a very opposite shore: surfing through poverty, cancer and morphine, clinging to life in a little town sandwiched between the Pacific Ocean and the Atacama Desert. That was my difficulty: *Nancy* took me right back to that thin strip of land clinging to the South American continent where I grew up.

Nancy made me experience once again the desert as a site for mourning—over the blood that's been spilled through centuries of war over the lands' riches; for the water that no longer runs on the river beds; for the sisters we've lost victims to machismo; for the many lost to tyranny and fascism whose bodies were scattered across the dunes, but remained mummified by the nitrate in the ground; for the isolation, the injustice and neglect of all governments; for the wounds inflicted in the name of religion. I felt again tiny as a girl confronted by the desert's aridity, its vastness and that of the Pacific where the rest of our dead were disappeared, and where industrial fishing is destroying ecosystems so precious. Though it is not the center of the story, the ecological crisis is inevitably part of the novel's background, just as are the inequities and claims for justice by the Chilean people.

So, yes, it was hard to read because it is very well told and it felt close to my heart, but it also rewarded me with a great joy: imaginary retribution. When I was studying literature back in Santiago, around 2007, maybe, I read Alejandro Jodorowsky's novel *The Parrot of Seven Tongues,* which amused me and transported me to a surreal version of Chile among poets and Mapuches on a journey to revolt and reform the nation. I confess I had to look up the plot of the novel, as I had forgotten about the epic purpose that guided it. Instead, a tiny story contained in it has been stuck in my memory for all these years, a disgusting detail I had never been able to let go of: there was a male character who found pleasure in bursting his lover's hymen every night, as it would grow back in her each day. I can't be sure about Lloret's intention, but when Nancy experiences the bleeding of her hymen time after time when having sex, and the focus is put on her fear for her health, that younger version of me who read Jodorowsky felt understood and held.

Rebeca Sánchez Castro *lives in Seattle, WA, and studies a PhD in Universidad de Chile, where she previously got a degree in Hispanic Literature (2009). She works independently as a curator and translator.*

Into Your Own Country

Ashlyn Mooney

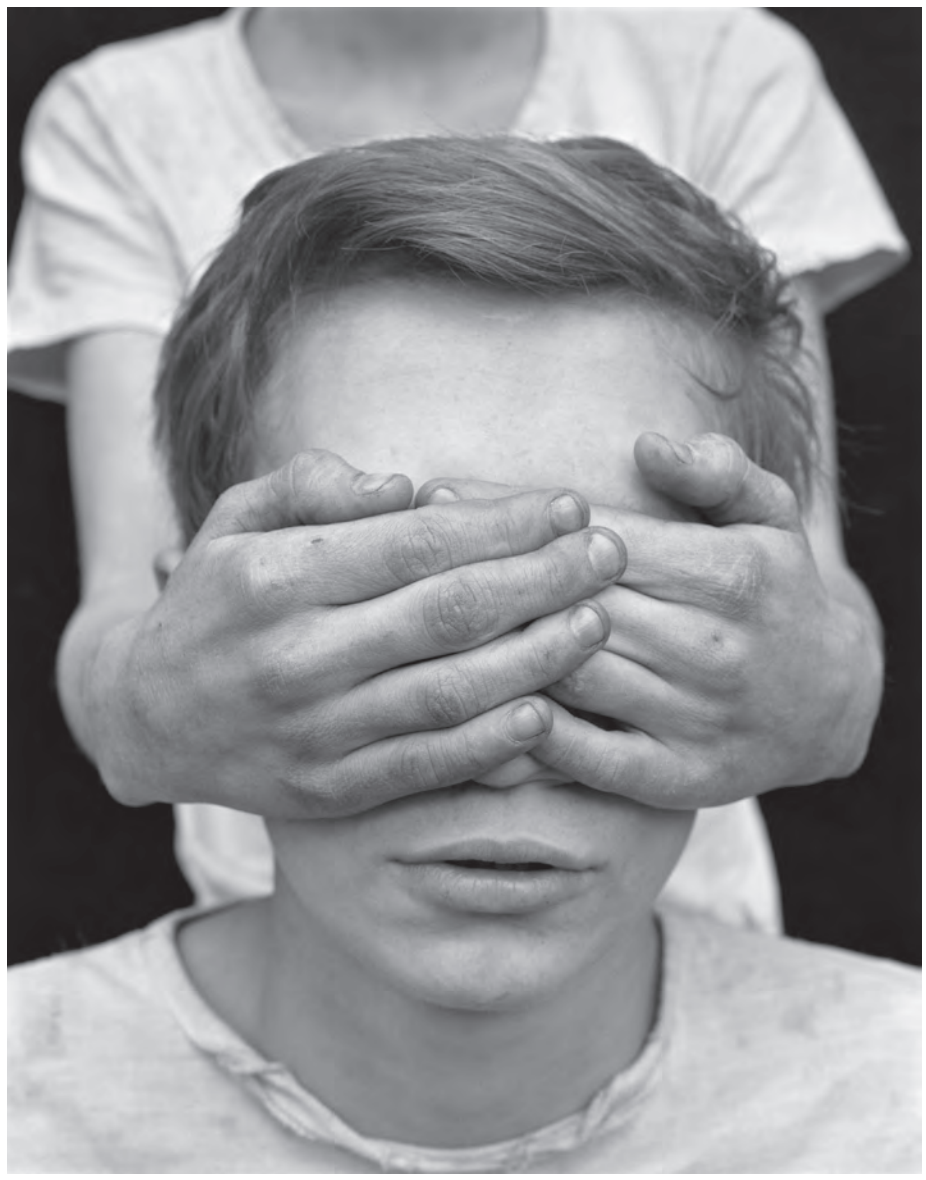
So Much to Be Angry About: Appalachian Movement Press and Radical DIY Publishing, 1969–1979
by Shaun Slifer
256 pp. West Virginia University Press 2021

"What three things can never be done?" asks the radical poet Muriel Rukeyser in "The Book of the Dead," her response to the 1931 Hawk's Nest Tunnel Disaster in Gauley Bridge, West Virginia—an industrial cataclysm that killed hundreds of Appalachian workers, most of them Black men. Rukeyser answers her question: "Forget. Keep silent. Stand alone."

Her words stand as artistic, political, and historical injunctions: remember, speak, find community. These three imperatives drove the founders of the Appalachian Movement Press, a DIY Leftist press that operated in Huntington, West Virginia (seventy miles from Gauley Bridge) from 1969 –1979. The history of the AMP—the only movement press in Appalachia at the time—is recovered and remembered in Shaun Slifer's new book, *So Much to be Angry About*.

The title quotes Tom Woodruff, one of the AMP's founders: "He is an angry Appalachian," Woodruff wrote of the poet and fellow activist Don West, "but there is so much to be angry about." Entrenched poverty, exploitative and extractive strip-mining operations, preventable ecological and human tragedies (Hawk's Nest Tunnel among them), and the widespread ridicule of Appalachian people as dumb and illiterate—these are a few of the evils that provoked and galvanized the members of the Appalachian Movement Press. Many of the original printers had been part of the Students for a Democratic Society chapter at Marshall University. The SDS dissolved just months after the chapter gained recognition, but the young activists had coalesced into a local movement. Committed to radicalizing and educating their rural, conservative community, they needed a way to get the message out. But freedom of the press, as the adage goes, belongs only to those who own one.

So they bought a press. It was an A.B. Dick, a table-top, office-scale offset printer that one of the AMP printers described as a "behemoth...cranky and temperamental!" Josh MacPhee's introduction to *So Much to Be Angry About* is a fascinating description of the role of the A.B. Dick in the rise of the New Left. Hundreds of movements across the country led to a proliferation of printed matter, much of it produced on A.B. Dick machines run out of rented or squatted spaces, basements and garages. Some presses printed original material; some reprinted existing material; others, like the AMP, did both. New York City's Come!Unity Press ran an A.B. Dick 360 out of a small Midtown Loft: anyone could use the press, so long as they printed the materials themselves and either gave away the material for free or on a sliding-scale. The AMP was similarly against selling material for fixed profits: one 1972 AMP newsletter listed the price of a subscription as "$0.00 for unemployed Appalachians."



Johnny and Charles by Wendy Ewald. Gelatin silver print 1982

The A.B. Dick was rapidly usurped by the copy machine and the internet, the old presses shuttered as operating costs rose and movements increasingly bifurcated. But in the 1960s and 70s, as MacPhee's introduction emphasizes, presses like Come!Unity and AMP were small but vital nexuses of regional activism, centers of remembering lost histories—speaking out against present wrongs, and standing together. Because the A.B. Dick was relatively easy to use, organizers could figure out how to use it and distribute their material; but because they weren't that easy to use—they required funds and multiple operators, and radical printers were in short supply—the small publishing enterprises drew together a variety of organizers. The presses shaped the movements they served.

So Much to Be Angry About is one of only a few books dedicated to telling the story of a movement printshop, despite the pivotal place of such presses in the history of the New Left. The book is divided into two parts. The first is a chronological history of the AMP. The second reprints a few of the AMP's more significant publications. A portrait of a scrappy but flawed organization emerges. Their original mission was to "[get] correct and full information to all Appalachians." Their graphics, reproduced in Slifer's book, were less aesthetic than utilitarian: their printer's colophon was a simple coal-miner's pick-ax. The founders saw Appalachia as an "internal colony" of the United States, a region whose resources were extracted to serve the rest of the country, at great economic and psychological cost to Appalachians themselves. The AMP published and reprinted journalistic accounts of industrial disasters, newsletters, tracts, and even children's books, all of it reflecting a regional, class-conscious sensibility and an anti-capitalist, anti-corporate political sensibility. In Slifer's words, the AMP printers wanted to "propel their largely working-class readership to a collective understanding of their history of workplace struggles for basic rights and unionization."

Slifer's prose is precise, his research meticulous—he draws from extensive interviews and independent research, including his exhumation of forgotten, mouldering materials from the basement of the Appalachian South Folklife Center. And despite his obvious respect of the AMP and its region, he never gives way to nostalgia. In sometimes excruciatingly meticulous detail, he attends to the AMPs political and organization failings: the internecine conflicts, the sometimes myopic regionalism, the implicit and sometimes explicit sexism and racism of the materials it published. This was an all-white, almost all male group of printers; they operated out of a storefront in an African American neighborhood, but they "had very little to do with the neighborhood" generally, and the version of uniquely "Appalachian" history they imagined and printed tended to ignore the people who first inhabited Appalachia and minimize the influence of white supremacist ideologies in the region. A press guarantees only the freedom of speech, not the quality. Like any technology, its limits are first of all those of the people who use it.

With *So Much to Be Angry About*, Slifer gives a respectful and rigorous account of the Appalachian Movement Press and the regional context that created it. The AMP in particular may not intrigue readers outside Appalachia, but the press is intriguing as a particular example of the New Left movement presses that forged paths through the complex political landscape of the 60s and 70s—paths that, in Rukeyser's words, "will take you into your own country."

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

Resistance is not Revolution

Nick Mamatas

Busted Synapses
by Erica L. Satifka
104pp. Broken Eye Books, 2020

The ornaments that mark the scene breaks in Erica L. Satifka's cyberpunk novella *Busted Synapses* are modeled after the circuit symbol for the resistor, specifically the slightly old-fashioned jagged line glyph of the American National Standards Institute. It's a fitting choice, as the story is one of resistance, and one that eschews contemporary fashions.

Cyberpunk has been, since its beginnings, cool. The earliest cyberpunk stories appeared in the slick science magazine *Omni*, and novels such as *Neuromancer* found an audience much broader than the typical science fiction novel of the era. The heroes were often broken, the neon-bright futures full of menace and corruption, but the motifs remained strangely aspirational. One almost wanted to live in a cyberpunk dystopia, which was good, as forty years later we're all doing just that.

But we don't get to be the hacker hero, the assassin heavy, or the corporate overlord. Most of us are like the characters in *Busted Synapses*: Jess, who lives with her mother and sister, and is doomed by student loans and precarity. Dale, who works in fast food, has side hustles playing videogames for audiences, and selling soporific Trancium pills. William is a vagabond who performs with a small and not very good traveling circus. Alicia is an android with a Taser touch and secret memories of how the company that designed her purposely destroyed the great cities of the Northeast—Pittsburgh is practically seafront property now.

Perhaps we're not like that last character but there is our story: the New People, created by the untouchable Solfind corporation, are taking over as a new proletariat, and for the flesh-and-blood characters there are only side hustles, poverty, plugging into entertainment streams, and the oddly obsolete records—yes, records that one plays on a record player—of one Johnny Eternal. Alicia, one of Jess's co-workers at a call center, inserts herself in the casual dynamic of friends and frenemies in mid-apocalyptic Wheeling, West Virginia. Jess, a bigot, sees Alicia only as an "it", but to Dale she soon becomes a real person, as real as anyone whose personality and ambitions have been smashed by the total surround of Solfind's extractive processes. Together, Dale and Alicia concoct a plan to expose the company and take it down.

But there is no revolution to come, no intact world to return to. In minimalist, almost Raymond Carveresque prose, Satifka sends Dale on a journey into the new world Solfind promises, or into some kind of new world anyway, while Jess takes her little sister Lou to join her crush William in the circus only to be told that he's already left.

Resistance is not revolution, escapism is not true escape. The big plan to destroy Solfind is about as well-conceptualized as any plan formulated during a late-night bull session among friends who mostly get high and play games together. What Satfika refuses to sell is what Solfind and even the techno-dystopians promise: a world you can change into a better tomorrow. What you get instead is representation, cyberpunk for what they used to call the 99%. The greatest invention of this novella is a new mode of cyberpunk, the transformation of the genre into dirty realism.

Breathe by Paul S. Benjamin. Video Installation 2016

Breathing Under Water

Jed Walsh

Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals
by Alexis Pauline Gumbs
192 pp. AK Press 2020

You and I have never gone swimming together. But I think I can still imagine it. The towels beneath us are soft, thick, and warm. We have enough food and water to stay for hours. I wade into the water while you rest in the sun. You walk at the edge of water and rock while I read. I float; you dance. I splash, you twirl. We play.

During the pandemic I haven't been reading much. I realized this is partly because I like to be inside a book most when I'm among other people's bodies. For me the pandemic has meant a forced break from riding public transit and working in public schools, the two spaces where I read most in previous years. When I read a book now, I am longing for it to remind me what it's like to be in my own body, and what it's like to be with other bodies, both human and other-than-human. *Undrowned* does precisely that.

On the book's light blue cover, there is an insignia of three dark blue dolphins, whose bodies form a circle, nearly touching. The insignia was designed by Alexis Pauline Gumbs' grandmother, Lydia Gumbs, for the flag of Anguilla during the 1967 revolution, and reappears dozens of times throughout the book's 174 pages. I haven't seen dolphins since I lived in Florida during college, where I attended some of my classes in a pink marble mansion previously owned by Charles Ringling of the Ringling Bros Circus. I'd watch dolphins swim in the Gulf of Mexico while I sat in philosophy classes with names like The Ethics of Otherness and Language, Thought, and the World. Now that I've read *Undrowned*, I find myself with new questions: what histories of anti-Blackness are part of the legacy of the Ringling Bros Circus and the Ringlings' wealth that enabled them to build such an ostentatious mansion? Which indigenous nations' land was I on while I lived in Florida? Who had watched those dolphins before me, and what were those nations' relationships with the marine mammals that live in the Gulf of Mexico? What do the dolphins know that I have forgotten?

Undrowned has a structure: there are nineteen lessons that Gumbs has learned from observing, studying, and loving marine mammals. Each lesson is titled with a short phrase written in lower-case letters, like "listen," "practice," "end capitalism," "surrender," and "go deep." At the end of the book are activities: one activity per lesson, written for both individuals and for pods working together. This is a book of practicing and collaboration, as well as a book of poetry, repetition, and meditation. And it is a book about sea cows, bottlenose dolphins, river dolphins, Weddell seals, North Atlantic right whales, walruses, and many more.

In the introduction, Gumbs writes that at one point, she bought copies of an Audubon Society guide to marine mammals, as well as a Smithsonian Handbook to marine mammals. She attempted to read these books with the goal of learning more about animals with whom she felt a deep sense of kinship. But in reading these guides, Gumbs found herself "confronted with the colonial, racist, sexist, heteropatriarchalizing capitalist constructs that are trying to kill me—the net I am already caught in, so to speak." So, on one level, *Undrowned* is Gumbs' repudiation of these books. Instead it offers an entirely new way of writing and thinking about marine mammals from a place of identifying with them, as siblings, teachers, community members, and friends.

Undrowned also takes up Black feminism as sacred practice. Gumbs writes that *Undrowned* is intended to be read by "everyone who knows that a world where queer Black feminine folks are living their most abundant, expressed, and loving lives is a world where everyone is free." Many words in this sentence strike me as central to the book's aims: "queer"; "Black"; "feminine"; "abundant;" "loving;" and "free." Gumbs doesn't offer definitions for any of these terms, and I understand them in the most expansive and inclusive sense. They all feel like descriptors that Gumbs seeks and finds in marine mammals—and at the same time, these are all traits that are threatened, in both humans and non-humans, by capitalism, state violence, anti-Blackness, heteropatriarchy, climate change, hunting, zoos. Gumbs asks me, as a non-Black reader, to reflect on the ways that I am complicit in the systems that imprison, hunt, and kill Gumbs' Black kin, both human and marine mammal. In a passage that haunts me, in three sentences that connote both white supremacy as a crumbling edifice and the melting of the polar ice caps, Gumbs writes, "Once upon a time there was whiteness. It will soon be a memory. Are you learning to swim?"

One of the works that *Undrowned* reminds me of is *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scien-tific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Both books are by women of color writers who wrestle with the artificial binary between scientific and poetic understandings of the natural world. Both books deprioritize a human-based perspective and seek teachings from our relatives in the animal and plant worlds. Like *Braiding Sweetgrass, Undrowned* is a book to read slowly. Every sentence feels layered with meaning, and the more I re-read a passage, the more directions each sentence seems to go. And the wonder with which Gumbs writes about marine mammals is truly a joy that reawakens my child-self's ability to be awed by all the amazing animals that live with us on this planet.

It feels like Gumbs knows that I've been holding my breath, holding all this tension, holding all this grief. Reading this astonishing text, I am reminded of my relationships with others, what it's like to be a body among other bodies, what it's like to move and be in movement. While reading *Undrowned*, I bought multiple copies to give to friends. Because, in the middle of a pandemic, this book offers me so much that I have needed for so long and that I now want to share with you: a reminder of touching and being touched; a reminder to play; a reminder to keep breathing.

***Jed Walsh** lives, writes, and plays on occupied Duwamish land. He's a member of the collectively-run Pipsqueak Community Space.*

City Lights

S. Flynn

I am waiting
for the war to be fought
which will make the world safe
for anarchy
and I am waiting
for the final withering away
of all governments
and I am perpetually awaiting
a rebirth of wonder

I stole *A Coney Island of the Mind* from the public library when I was fourteen years old, by reaching my arm into the book deposit drop as far as it would go, and grabbing whatever was within reach—and that was Ferlinghetti.

I lived in a small town filled with empty streets and industrial ruins. A flood had destroyed the center of town which had never been restored and ancient thick trunked trees, tall and blazing orange in autumn, lined the roads. Forests and low hills surrounded the place, walking distance along the narrow highway. Across from the rolling hills of a cemetery where ornate mausoleums overlooked a sea of unmarked crosses, a maximum-security prison rose like a castle behind razor wire, with medieval crenelated turrets and American flags.

I didn't know what Coney Island was. My life was lived outside in woods by a river, and when inside I blinded myself with a book in front of my face and deafened myself with David Bowie albums on continuous repeat. I had never been to the ocean. I frittered away insomniac nights with movies on a New York City station picked up on channel six; *Midnight Cowboy, Christianne F.* My parents had a good library and by the time I was in middle school my mother had already read me *The Canterbury Tales, The Sun Also Rises* and *Portrait of the Artist*—so I wasn't alone in my head. I had the modernists, but what I didn't have until, Ferlinghetti, was a clue.

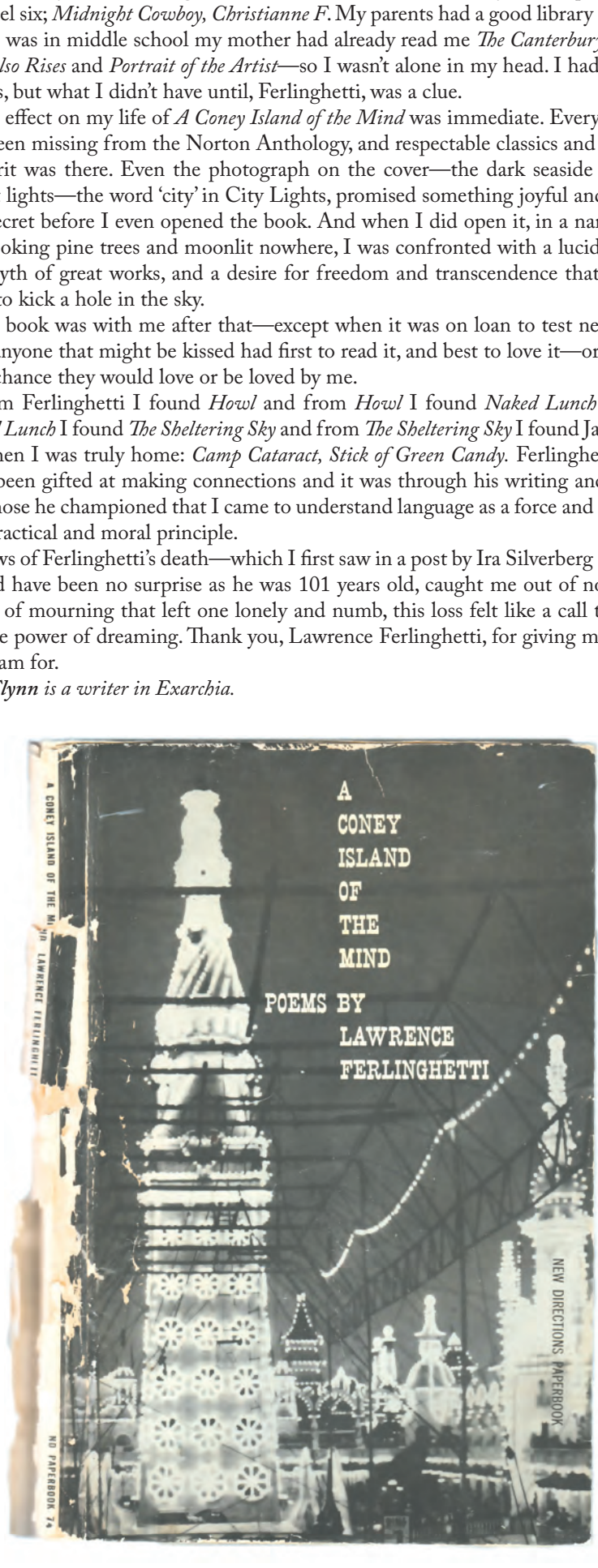
The effect on my life of *A Coney Island of the Mind* was immediate. Everything that had been missing from the Norton Anthology, and respectable classics and late-night TV grit was there. Even the photograph on the cover—the dark seaside night and bright lights—the word 'city' in City Lights, promised something joyful and salacious and secret before I even opened the book. And when I did open it, in a narrow room overlooking pine trees and moonlit nowhere, I was confronted with a lucid attack on the myth of great works, and a desire for freedom and transcendence that made me want to kick a hole in the sky.

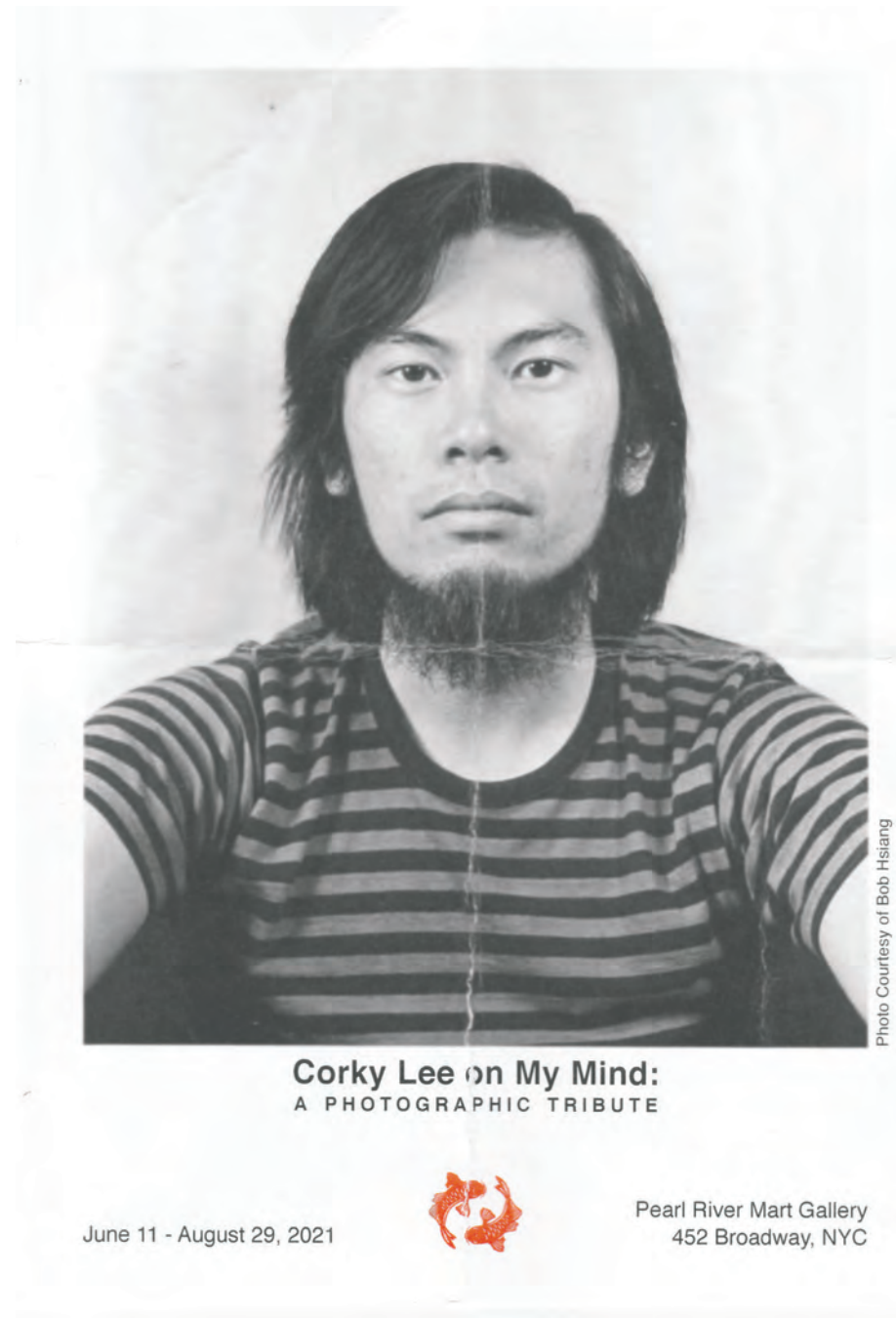
The book was with me after that—except when it was on loan to test new friends. And anyone that might be kissed had first to read it, and best to love it—or there was little chance they would love or be loved by me.

From Ferlinghetti I found *Howl* and from *Howl* I found *Naked Lunch* and from *Naked Lunch* I found *The Sheltering Sky* and from *The Sheltering Sky* I found Jane Bowles and then I was truly home: *Camp Cataract, Stick of Green Candy.* Ferlinghetti had always been gifted at making connections and it was through his writing and thinking and those he championed that I came to understand language as a force and anarchism as a practical and moral principle.

News of Ferlinghetti's death—which I first saw in a post by Ira Silverberg and which should have been no surprise as he was 101 years old, caught me out of nowhere. In a year of mourning that left one lonely and numb, this loss felt like a call to remember the power of dreaming. Thank you, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, for giving me so much to dream for.

S. Flynn *is a writer in Exarchia.*





Undisputed & Unofficial

Marc Lepson

Corky Lee's business card read "Undisputed Unofficial Asian American Photographer Laureate." And it was true. Known for his documentary work and activism in New York's Chinatown and in Asian American communities across the US, Lee photographed working people with a lens that reflected his intelligence, openness, and deep interest in the lives of those around him. You only had to meet him once to observe these qualities. He also understood photography's power as propaganda and used it with purpose. His 1975 photo of a man bleeding from his head being led away by the NYC cops that had beaten him, ran on the front page of the *New York Post*. In 2014 he re-photographed the famous meeting of trains at the completion of the cross-continental railroad, this time filled with descendants of the Chinese immigrants who built the tracks but were excluded from the original picture. Throughout the years in-between, he exhaustively photographed all aspects of the Asian American experience and importantly, convinced editors and publishers that these images needed to be seen.

In late January 2021, Corky Lee died in a New York hospital from COVID-19. He was 73 years old. Without private health insurance, his family was held financially responsible for a sizable portion of his care and raised almost $50,000 to cover the costs. This banal failure of the state will soon be forgotten, but Corky Lee's visual record and deep human impact leave an expansive legacy not easily diminished.

Marc Lepson *is an artist and curator. He collaborates on art direction for the* Anarchist Review of Books.

Still Water

Heather Bowlan

Entering Sappho
by Sarah Dowling
Coach House Books 2020

Minerva the Miscarriage of the Brain
by Johanna Hedva
Sming Sming Books + Wolfman 2020

What does it mean to create art in awareness of a lineage? How do we reckon with tradition, that labyrinth, full of dead ends and trick passages, and also, possibly, a path? How do we acknowledge, come to terms with, reject or rebuff the canon, our possible place in it if we're not, will never be, members of the DWM club?

These questions are impossible to fully answer, but their asking continues to fuel some truly thoughtful and challenging art. Greek literature, mythology, and archetypes shape some of the questioning in two recent books, Sarah Dowling's *Entering Sappho*, and Johanna Hedva's *Minerva the Miscarriage of the Brain*.

Both of these books engage with immersion in location, geographically as well as literarily. The Sappho of Dowling's title refers to the ancient Greek lyric poet but more immediately to a small, mostly abandoned logging town in Washington State bearing that name. There's an obvious irony in visiting a place named Sappho, after the poet whose own island home became the source of the word lesbian, but Dowling is interested in the more complicated relationship between the place, its white settlers a century-plus ago, its contemporary queer tourists posing in front of the eponymous sign.

Untitled from the series Dual Destructions by Kristen DiGeloromo. Digital Collage 2021

Dowling's poetry incorporates oral histories recorded from white settlers after opening with a dreamlike sequence set during the time of the logging town's settlement—and then transitions back into lyric poems that are out of place/space/time. A litany that appears and reappears throughout the poems provides the context of other placenames inspired by Greek writers or literature, underscoring the singularity of the one North American town bearing Sappho's name while placing it among a tradition of settlers renaming existing spaces according to their history and values:

YOU'RE ENTERING
Ninety-seven Troys
Eighty-three Eurekas
Fifty-seven Etnas
Fifty-six Antiochs
Fifty-four Athenses
Fifty-four Romes
Fifty-one Albions
And fifty Arcadias

For Hedva, place is also participant, not just setting, for their writing and performance pieces. Many of the performances documented in *Minerva* are designed with a hyper-specific location in mind, to the point that several of them occur once, in one location, and never again (as with the series of performances "Actually, It Happened a Moment Ago" in July 2011, captured here by photos and brief descriptions).

Hedva goes so far as to refine terms like "site-specific" to "site-responsive": "I like 'site-responsive': that a site is there doing its thing, and one can respond to it. It implies conversation. The responses pile up, are different from each other, cling, and haunt." Surely Dowling would approve of this redefinition. We see Hedva embrace Los Angeles as the main site for their responsive art in a number of ways—setting a revisioning of *The Odyssey* in a Honda Odyssey driving on the 2 Freeway in gentrifying Northeast LA, or in the daily orbits of strangers they followed for 24 hours as part of an interrupted and ultimately traumatic performance sequence.

The treatment of source texts as a starting point is another commonality between these books (perhaps the most obvious from their titles). Dowling offers what I'd call riffs and what she calls experimental translations of some of Sappho's fragments, which are threaded throughout the sections. Their shifting repetition has a ghostly effect—Sappho's words, translated, reflected, refracted, echoing, haunting:

on the high branch,
ripening and turning

red on the – reddening high
on the – getting ripe like

that sweet apple on the top-
most bough

An interesting connection—Hedva also quotes one of the fragments that Dowling riffs on through much of *Entering Sappho* (and referenced above):

As a sweet apple turns red on a high branch,
high on the highest branch and the applepickers forgot—
well, no they didn't forget—were not able to reach…

As *Entering Sappho* progresses, these refractions become more unsettling, more grounded in what Dowling calls "annihilating desire": "I // was reddening high at the tip. I tangled my / hair. I pumped rounds into convenient targets."

Hedva's work explores the myth of Minerva, as the book's title implies, particularly in the eponymous poem in relation to the experience of giving birth, creating human life, of the ways it's been tied to female anatomy, and the stories the speaker's father (among other men) has told:

My first moments in the center of a ring of men,
easing like sloshing cream my pelvis
to wing open, to acquiesce

This poem, and the others in this section and throughout the book, are stark and visceral—sometimes quiet in their anguish and sometimes blunt: "Death will be simple: / the safest thing I will have ever sucked on." In contrast, a large early portion of the book reflects on Hedva's work developing The Greek Cycle, a series of four performances over four years that reimagined classic Greek plays: *Hecuba, The Odyssey, Alcestis*, and *Medea*. These notes, especially alongside photos of various performances, are compelling—but it's the difference between primary and secondary sources, in a sense. It's hard to grab onto why it's significant when they report that during one performance, "one woman, a mother who has the same birthday as me, cried the entire time."

Dowling and Hedva both devote space in their books to providing their own intentions and personal contexts in afterword sections. For both writers, at the end of their work, they find a desire to reconcile the space between an author's intentions and what they've created, between the writer and the reader. It's impossible, of course, but this reaching for understanding across difference, connection across solitude, is also irrepressible. In this moment, this pandemic, it seems fair to say that perhaps annihilating desire is our lineage and our heritage—as writers, as humans.

But I'd argue that, while these notes are another way to enter and understand the texts that come before, the most powerful moments in both books occur when both allow the magic (I'll say it) of their writing to create its own context with the reader. For Dowling, this is the final section of her book, "Leucadian Leap," which builds off the history, translation—location—that have come before to create a new dream/nightmarescape.

I was Troy, Eureka, Etna, and Antioch.
I scraped a big red gash. I was terrible but I for-

got. I took the older-thank-being knives to beautiful limbs. I names myself for the ancient poet-

ess.

For Hedva and *Minerva*, it's the presentation of the script for a performance, rather than the earlier descriptions of performances, that closes the collection of writings (before the Afterword), and offers the best sense of the work's incantatory power—along with some striking photographs from its sole performance, at El Mirage Dry Lakebed in the Mojave Desert in 2015:

There I am, in a glass-bottomed boat,
That's barely the size of my own body.
It fits me perfectly.
It can contain only me.
Little, vulnerable, teacup me.
We are in the middle of a black ocean.
The water is still.

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