

Two weeks after the election, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. My immediate thought upon hearing the diagnosis was, "I cannot leave my daughters with Trump as their President." This thought revealed a tangle of anxieties that are deeply tied to my biology. I was still reeling from the wound of Trump's election when I learned about the tumor growing in my left breast. Suddenly, my body became the site of a battle I could not afford to lose.

RADIO

But the real revelation was that my body had always been such a site. While I had hoped that my daughters might experience their bodies as fully their own, I had to admit that as long as we validate men who believe women's pussies are up for grabs, our bodies will always be battlefields.

11.8.16

During the election season, several women relayed stories of Trump's violation of their bodies, particularly their breasts; he took it upon himself to grab or fondle them in elevators, at parties, during photo shoots, at restaurants. In 2006, Howard Stern asked Donald Trump if he would honor his vows to Melania if she were injured in an accident that left her arms, face and legs mangled. Trump answered with a question, "How do the breasts look?"



RADIO

11 . 8 . 16

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#83

ESSAY PRESS SINGLES

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11.27.16

Dear [REDACTED],

In the wake of an election that solidified our country's many disconnects, Essay Press would like to invite our authors to share their responses to the hatred triggered by Trump.

The intention of this project is two-part: (1) to create a time capsule for our gut reactions to this political season, a collection we can return to when we feel complacency or forgetfulness settling; (2) to make use of the unique capacities and freedoms of the essay to explore the dichotomies of bipartisanship, and to integrate personal responses with societal facts.

Though the election serves as an impetus for this project, submitted essays need not be restricted to direct discussions of the results. We are also interested in pieces that explore the climate of fear and hate manifested across the globe, and how we as artists, writers, and individuals can respond to, or begin to comprehend, both singular and cumulative events.

—Aimee, Maria, & Travis

H. L. HIX

First Notes to Self, toward Contesting the Hate State

1.

I do not hate Donald Trump. I do not hate those whose hate has aligned itself with Donald Trump, those whose hate Donald Trump would validate. I do not hate who Donald Trump is, or hate what he stands for. I do not hate what he has said, or hate him for saying it. I do not hate. *Any* hate feeds the Hate State. Even hating the Hate State feeds it, even hating its figureheads, and I will not feed the Hate State, not knowingly, not willingly.

2.

Donald Trump is a sneeze, not the virus. He is a symptom, not the disease itself. Disappearance of the symptom would accompany elimination of the disease, but merely inhibiting the symptom would cure nothing.

3.

Even my opposing Trump, insofar as I oppose *him*, only occults a personality. If I oppose him successfully, but not by opposing what

made him him and placed him where he is, then what made him him and placed him here will simply make a next him to take his place. Again, Trump is a symptom, a sign. Let my discernment be adequate to direct my opposition against the signified rather than against the signifier per se.

4.

Michael Callon and John Law: “A *collectif* is an emergent *effect* created by the interaction of the heterogeneous parts that make it up.” Donald Trump is an effect. Let me not contest *him* as if he were a cause; let me contest instead the causes of which he is only one of the ill effects.

5.

It’s true that a vote for Trump was not rational, in this sense: the circumstances of those who voted for Trump will not be bettered by the Trump presidency. But that does not mean a vote for Trump had no rationality at all. If the system has resulted in (and is resulting in) ever-increasing concentration of wealth, and ever-narrower distribution of wealth (here construed narrowly as capital and broadly as civic entitlement and well-being), then, offered a choice between one who would smooth and enhance the system’s continued functioning and one who would disrupt its functioning, if I am among those many *from* whom wealth is being transferred, rather than those few *to* whom wealth is being transferred, it is rational to support the proponent of disruption. For those many, life conditions are not bettered by the disruption, but they are worsened by the smoothing and continuity.

6.

Until I can understand as rational the decision to vote for Trump, I cannot rightly identify the illness he symptomatizes, and until I identify the illness I cannot treat it effectively.

7.

In the terms of informal logic, my dismissing Trump voters as stupid or ignorant would be an ad hominem. In political terms, my treating their vote as stupidity or ignorance would participate in and advance the regime of what Wendy Brown calls “responsibilization,” assigning to *individuals* responsibility for what are actually the outcomes of a political order.

8.

If (as Bernard Williams, for example, has argued) such virtues as truthfulness are at least partly dispositional, then robust fulfillment of my citizenship may entail not only asking “What can I *do*?” and answering with some form of activism against the Hate State, but also asking “How ought I *stand*?” and answering with some way(s) to *dispose myself* toward the Hate State.

9.

Lauren Berlant: Hegemony is “not merely domination dressed more becomingly—it is a metastructure of consent ... As citizens of the promise of hegemonic sociability we have consented to consent to a

story about the potentialities of the good life around which people execute all sorts of collateral agreements.” Let me not content myself with opposing the collateral agreements that will be executed during Trump’s presidency, but also work toward altering the metastructure of consent within which their execution occurs.

10.

In addition to particular acts of violence, there is also *structural* violence. My not performing particular acts of violence does not free me from participation in structural violence. To diminish my complicity in structural violence and to resist structures of violence is a *project* that is contingent on a prior project, namely working to see those structures, learning to see them *as* violent. Analogously, there are particular acts of hate, and there is structural hate. Let me refuse to perpetrate acts of hate, yes, but let me also be perspicacious in learning to see structures of hate, and tireless in working to resist those structures and to diminish my complicity in them. Let me not only fulfill the decision not to add to the *sum* of acts of hate, but also muster will and action and vision enough to resist the *whole* that is the Hate State.

SOPHIA TERAZAWA

That Which Falls Out

Plans were made and remade, as we tried to decide what to do. Some were ready to risk anything to get away. Others feared to leave the protection of the camp.

—Miné Okubo, *Citizen 13660*

“Give him a chance,” my mother states, as we plunge down I-35. Her hands grip the steering wheel. “Give him a chance.” She shouts over me. I shout—“Where did you learn to say that!”—meaning “chance” from Old French *cheance*, the toss of dice, meaning “that which falls out,” despair, a burning car, but “chance,” chance was never a part of my mother’s vocabulary until now. I shout. She shouts over me. Must! Give chance!

Citizen. The English language can only take us so far. The space for hatred growing or “that which falls out,” fear in the absence of words. Drought. Locusts. Shame. I shout, but nothing, again, falls out.

SUMMER 2016

In silence I could wish for peace of mind, a better word for peace, for peace was not enough in Dallas. A man had chased my mother down. She must have cut him off. My mother, we all admit, was a terrible driver, so she must have cut him off on the way home from work, as

refugees sometimes do on a mad dash out of home. She rarely waited in lines, played dumb at the DMV to a scolding, “Ma’am, please wait your turn.”

She must have switched two lanes, as refugees sometimes do, across the intersection, one hand around a cell phone, aunties clucking from the other side, “How is Saigon? How is Saigon?”

A man had chased my mother down. A man had left red ants inside her mailbox. A man had sued my mother, twice. Mama, mama, you *have to* wait your turn. As children we felt mortified when our mother cut the line. All these immigrants. All uncivilized. All loud, brutal (and loud!). My mother picked her teeth in public and didn’t give a fuck. My sister was her patience, forever silent at her side. I was, however, steel fists clenching, “Call the cops, mama! You *have to* make it stop! Don’t let these bad men get away!”

My mother sneezed. Wiped that booger on her sleeve. She didn’t give a fuck.

“Mama fine,” she’d say.

“But!” I flailed, “You could have gotten killed that time!”

“Really?” she’d say all quiet, her round face turned up toward me, suddenly the space between us smaller than her fear. I began to wail, loud and brutal. My sister also cried. Her tears stoically quiet. Our father in the back seat would wait three minutes or so, then cough, “How. How Dramatic.”

We all erupted with laughter. How could we not?

It’s near impossible for my mother to recognize hate in the United States, but she knew the danger in writing about it when I told her I was working on an essay after the election.

“But!” she burst, “Writer get kill!”

Implying that the act of documenting hatred in the land of milk and honey was an act of terror; that American peace could not possibly have room for violence; that writing about a disease that

could not possibly exist in this nation was enough to get more than one witness killed; that we really *all* have it best; that in comparison with what my mother had seen in Vietnam circa 1965, we had become, as my father observed, dramatic.

When *The Last Samurai* starring Tom Cruise came out in 2003, we piled into a Honda mini-van with the only other Japanese family my father knew within a 50 mile radius to watch this noble American movie star Become One With the equally noble savages of our great fatherland.

“Sahh,” Fuji-san professed as we left our local movie theater, “You know, the Fuji-family was once samurai.”

“Sahh,” my father whispered from inside the car as Fuji-san waved goodbye, “You know, a real samurai does not boast about being samurai.”

“You mean, we are samurai,” my sister gasped.

“Oh, no,” my father grinned, “We led a simple life.”

To lead a simple life. To stay and fight. To flee. To fall out of touch. To call your mother less because it hurts to break her faith in you. To shout though she will neither know nor choose to hear you deeply. Mama, will you read these words and know me fully? Mama, this is but the beginning of a long, long essay that you said would get me killed.

To be dramatic. To never look away. To flinch.

I lead a simple life. I write. I only write.

STEVE BENSON

In November 2016

A CONFUSION OF SELVES

In the midst of grief, terror, shock, dissociation, anger, shame, we join here to discuss the implications and usefulness of our voices.

Our voices are virtually scrambled, technically compromised by affective static and a confusion of tongues and identifications.

I feel ready to respond to what I have been able to admit to sight and mind today.

If the essence of spirit, if *God*, then, is omnipresent, not a monotheistic unitary *figure* but a nature that finds home everywhere, then love is everywhere and we are made of it, expressive of it, no matter whom we vote for, assault, humiliate, or succor.

Somehow love goes awry, differently among different members of our human communities, and hence we have opportunity to learn how this happens and how to assist in its realignment to wellness, coherence, attachment, and wholehearted vitality.

A multiplicity of self or being may be addressed, if crudely and indefinitely for the time being, through a literary practice.

We can learn from one another, from experience, how we may, variously, articulate and listen for and understand this.

This interest and education is potentially an enormous gain for our field of service to our communities and their individual members.

In a cathartic, overwhelming, world-reverberating event such as the recent election's outcome, we may experience our complexly, contradictorily experienced shared or multifold identity.

We feel together its conflicts, burdens, looming pressures, terrifying potentials.

Many affects are known to us and suspected among us.

Concern and anxiety now cast us into an unknown, unknown largely since we have tended so complacently to see identity and affect as an individual's business, or as arising within a local circumstance or an interpersonal dynamic.

Crowd psychology and mass psychology don't seem to describe the circumstance I feel we are more palpably confronting now, as if we were an uncountable number of anxious and exasperated, tearful and trembling deaf and blind persons addressing the epiphany of a gargantuan, rambunctious, and yet querulous elephant in our midst.

Who or what is happening, will be trampled, smashed, how?

WAR'S BEING

The idea that war
is a good thing is
an elitist idea—the
idea of the rulers
How anyone enjoys
or wants a war except
those who may profit

from it, who may
direct the play of
power for and against
the people they
command and those
they kill, maim, traumatize and starve
I otherwise don't
know. I find my way
a different way than
was expected for me
to get here

ON NOT KNOWING AND THE DIFFICULTY OF KNOWING

As I was washing dishes before sitting down to read this evening, I was thinking about the APA's initial expression of regret and embarrassment (I think) resulting from its officers realizing what their blinkers had conveniently eclipsed for a decade in the collusion of the Association as a whole with the Department of Defense in its specific efforts to validate "enhanced interrogations" of persons held in confinement outside the USA by its military as neither prisoners of war nor criminal agents, many eventually acknowledged as impossible to charge with offenses, while subject to torture, solitary confinement, and utter isolation from their families, with innumerable focused humiliations and lasting functional deficits entailed, as a recent series of articles in the *New York Times* illuminates repeatedly.

My repeated appeals to highly-placed APA officers to consider offering more than an apology have failed of any response thus far.

It seems to me only reasonable and practical that the APA engage in a process of restorative justice under the supervision of independent parties, to address harms done to and experienced by not only the prisoners but their families and communities, and all peoples who might identify with them or bear the consequences of their suffering, in the USA, in the Arab world, and elsewhere.

Such a task would partake of the "deep immersion" of learning from and through another culture that Clifford Geertz has advocated in his characterization of industrious anthropology fieldwork.

The "participation and emotional engagement" that Geertz says "burrows into" an unfamiliar culture "to create a shared relational culture" is integral to the task and outcome of restorative justice as I understand it.

Such a process restores the trust that human beings deserve and need to thrive and develop safely, not as economic engines of profit but as intelligent organisms interacting sustainably with their social and ecological circumstances.

CARE IF

I don't really
care if the water
lifts up out of the
pond or flows
away, but don't
let it evaporate
We have too long
to live here, as one

people, to get ready
to end it when we
are so close to the end
Everyone needs
taking care of someone
in protection safety
comfort tenderness
That's what I think
and feel. But what
about me? I have my
self, when I'm alone
to love and come
back to

DAN BEACHY-QUICK

Reckoning the Shadow

The dreams began in the summer. I'd walk into a movie theater only to realize it was a rally for Donald Trump. He wasn't there, only his face was present, filling up the entire screen. His face and nothing else. The others there were elderly men, all African-American. I was the only white person, except for Trump, but Trump was only an image, only a head, so I was the only white man there. Trump didn't give a speech. He didn't open his mouth. He just closed his eyes and then tears came out. He cried and made no sound. One by one the men in the theater stood up. Each one of them was crying. I was learning how to cry, but I wasn't crying yet.

Sometimes it takes no therapist to read the dreams.

On the day of the election the weather was so warm the students wore shorts and skirts. I walked across campus to a building where, for an hour, 39 undergraduates and I would discuss Keats's vision of the fall of the Titans, and the young god waking to his own power, prophet-poet Apollo, learning what it is to sing, to see. There is a courtyard lawn the windows look out on in the classroom where I teach. In that lawn a large raptor—a red-tail or a harrier, I couldn't tell—stood within the circle of feathers of the bird it had just killed. The hawk wouldn't move, wouldn't be scared away, even as students came close, took pictures, took selfies, the raptor stayed still, proud in the devastation.

Sometimes it takes no seer to read the signs.



Not many days after the election my inbox started filling up with plans to protest, plans to resist, and as each day passed into the next, as those words *protest* and *resist* seemed to gather their support around them, I found my initial enthusiasm fading. It depressed me. Not the election—that horrified me. The urge to protest, the urge to give voice, the urge to act. All the noise of response, it tired me out. It made me want to go to sleep and dream.

But I didn't have any dreams. The omens stopped coming.

I'd wake early from uneasy sleep and read in the early hours before the family woke up. The two books: Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* and Robert Pogue Harrison's *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition*. In the former I read about plague and war, about calamity that seemed it would never end, about ambition outstripping valor, and about valor that found itself tattered and worse.

Socrates fought in that war.

Plato, Socrates's great student, realizing he could no longer wish to become a statesman, removed himself from the polis, and on the outskirts of Athens, built that walled garden known as the Academy, removed from the city to grow some other quality than those that make up a citizen—love that cultivates mind, mind that nourishes soul, soul that turns itself over as soil is turned to sow in humus a seed. Soul, soil. Humus, human. Little imperfect homonyms that mark such a fragile faith.

Or so I learned from the latter book, whose pages I opened when I could no longer keep track of what commander laid siege to what city in those endlessly ending volumes of ancient history.



The Ancient Greeks had an instinct to make gods of all they could. The Titans lament in Tartarus while the Olympians drink ambrosia from golden cups; Pan springs through the forest where the nymphs in springs bathe; but there were other gods, embodiments of ideas more abstract—the Fates, the Graces, Justice, and though I can't recall ever reading of her, that goddess most fearsome in my mind, Necessity.

When I found myself honest with myself, I wanted to resist resisting. I wanted to find some remove where I could work on love and learn how to listen or learn how to cry. I wanted to make a little garden inside the walls of my mind, my home, my classroom, and turn aside as a leaf turns aside, heliotropic—which is to say, I wanted to ask what power is it that holds me in its sway.

When Necessity rules Justice what occurs feels unjust. Nero and his fiddle. Trump and his gold. But what's worst is how right it is, how inevitable, how fated.

That goddess Memory tells John Keats that if he could only learn to listen as she can hear that the breeze blowing across the world would be filled with all the voices that ever had lived, and if he could hear them as she did, he would weep because he would know. Some breeze blew through this election. On that wind cry out those voices of slaves, of Native Americans, of the poor kept poor, of blood in the fields that grew the crop, of cruelty, of violence, the whip of lashes, the whip of roots torn up, of languages no longer spoken for all the tongues have been severed, and worse, and worse, that all occurred within the gleaming vision of those American ideals, those elected gods—Equality, Justice, Freedom.

These horrors are the opposite side of the same fact called America. Hope digs a hole for its own grave and that work is named Fear. Such manufacturing is in no danger of leaving the country. It is work that has been underway long before the Constitution was written, and makes of the Constitution a vision of beauty that lies, as a gold-plated chamber-pot lies about its use, or as Midas lies, or a Midas-like man.

I think I'm learning that you can't protest Necessity. What is more just than a billionaire white man whose hatred leaks out his smile as he promises what he does—greatness, wealth, hugeness—to become President of a country whose ideals were written down in persecuted blood? He wasn't elected by some failure of pollsters; not by white women in the middle states; not by millennials voting out of party; not by the rural or working poor. He was elected by Necessity, who has put before us the worst vision of what we are so that we cannot turn aside and pretend otherwise, so we cannot say, this isn't me. It is me. It is us. Some part of me. Some part of us. We have elected our shadow. It's cast from 18-karat gold. It's vicious and will cause suffering. And it's ours to reckon.

JH PHRYDAS

Notes on Evil, the Body, and Theory

1.

After reading Louis Menand's article "[The de Man Case](#)" in *The New Yorker* two years ago, I began to wonder about evil and its implications in theory and contemporary writing practices. Now more than ever, I continue to track such reverberations.

I was brought up in the interstitial space between deconstructionist, post-colonial, and identity theory circles in Berkeley 2002–2006. The turn of the 21st century was ripe with insecurity and mistrust—we were backed into a corner—caught at the ideological edge of worldwide catastrophe and the War on Terror. As the US reinvigorated its stance as an imperialist power, some began to realize that pure literary theory wasn't going to cut it anymore. Emphasis began to be placed on body studies, community/individual politics, and aggression/violence as sites of philosophical, political, and literary praxis.

How much of these popular and academic responses to poetry are affected by ideologies of evil refracted through historical embodiments that make us question language and its conduits? Menand's essay highlights such questions as he brings up, via book review, the problematic past of critic and deconstructionist Paul de Man: his Nazi leanings, his bigamist lifestyle, his extreme opportunism, and

his propensity to lie his way to places of authority. A political and cultural chameleon answering only to himself.

2.

Here's an experiment: place "Love as a Practice of Freedom" by bell hooks next to Jacques Derrida's "Mnemosyne." Which has more authority, power, and value? Now envision the bodies of these two writers next to each other. Which has more authority, power, and value?

Textual vs. social prestige creates a difference in reception of information when the body behind the writing is always at stake. I see contemporary writers attempting to reconfigure the popular understanding of literary criticism, theory, and philosophy when it comes to language. The body, both the one that writes and the one that reads, needs a place, and yet how can we retain a sense of the negative valence that is so vital for illuminating the utilization of language for evil?

People don't like thinking about evil anymore, afraid of essentializing connotations or subtle nods to reifying, ossifying, or totalizing ideology. In a world of constant emergence, our age is directly linked to these schools of thought and are thus accountable to them—to the extent that we are charged to perform some sort of transparent critique.

Can we say, in this era, what is evil, and what is not? And how does this relate to resistance within contemporary poetics?

3.

My students say it's impossible to read a text without thinking of the author. "What's the point?" they ask, and to a certain extent,

they are right. In a world with erasure of privacy and the near-total consummation of life to the rigors of social media—a move that is self-propelled—and in a time with opacity in government and continual torture and killing of civilians by drones, what is the point of reading a text simply for metaphor, plot, characterization, or allegory?

It is easier to do with straightforward narrative—the so-called novel, or short story—in which understandable characters live out real-life scenarios, take risks, deal with loss, and find love. The value of these texts arises from empathic resonance: we can understand, we have felt these feelings, we are intrinsically all human, all sharing in a common identity. It is the manipulation of (or resistance to) the intensity of this empathic resonance that gives a narrative its power and thus its value. These tales can be separated from the author because it is the tales themselves that hold that which is readable, understandable, and, to a certain extent, pedagogic. Genre fiction, best-selling novels, emotionally-driven short story collections all take their form from the transcription of oral storytelling that underscored the social and religious structuring of our farthest flung ancestors. In this way, we can view mainstream writing as a post-cursor to fairytales, origin myths, and epic (i.e. identity/nation-state building) poetics.

Once that understandable space gives way at the edges of what language can do, something else occurs. As we move towards non-narrative texts and experimental forms, we begin to lose the paradigm through which we affix value: we find ourselves on a mezzanine level, looking down at the conversations occurring in the lobby below.

And yet, many bodies are in the lobby and on the mezzanine simultaneously: the very same body doubled in emanatory being. Not a mirror, but a co-presence through which we find ample room to write and critique the crystalline formations of language as they arise. The light generated by such writing escapes the confines of the building, pouring out of windows to meet the harsh contrast of sunlight in the streets, along open fields. Instead of commingling,

these lights cut into matter, chiseling out of prior forms the human condition: bone, blood, muscle, tongue, speech, identity, action.

4.

The contour of a ceramic sculpture has the same force of language as a sentence whispered to a lover. Since perception is an act, receiving can be just as active as the passive scan at the edge of a meadow. We receive color, light, and sound through every cell, coursing through us: the world penetrates us incessantly.

There is a tendency to attempt some level of control at this point: by positing consciousness, cognitive thought, modal logics, in effect, as a reaction against the fear of this constant violation of sensory experience. “No, we *move* information about, we are *curators*, and thus we control what we are, what we receive and don’t receive.” And yet, we cannot help but receive, perceiving vessels without limit.

Language, then, becomes the police officer, the border guard, the bureaucrat sitting at their desk, surrounded by piles of different colored stamps. We can theorize such figures via indexes, legal hierarchies, commands and allowances: the body *as object* becomes enmeshed in complicity via total un-avoidance. Kafka knew this and wrote accordingly.

And yet, cops and administrators have nervous systems too.

Those that speak sweet and harsh, that instruct us in the ways of the world, that support and inspire, whose words we read and thereby construct the world: what about their bodies, their actions, their histories, sculpted in the light of language and sun? Does it matter who they are and how they live(d)?

And how does this affect the way we construct notions of evil through language?

5.

Does language have an unconscious?

JULIE CARR

What is an Enemy?

AGAIN RED: APRIL 16, 2013

Let me tell you a story: we ran and we ran and then we heard a sound. It was like a cannon going off. We thought it was a celebration, but when another went off, we turned around and started to run the other way.

There are those that are dead and those that are injured, those

who have lost
their legs or feet.

We had enemies. But we didn't know who they were, for we didn't know who we were. For me it was anyone on any side with a gun. But that wasn't enough. That wasn't really

clear enough.

%

What was most essential could not be expressed.
And so we each chose our own enemies, since we did not know who the true enemy was.

Mine was never a mother.

THE MIRRORLESS ROOM

What I thought was, What would justice look like in such a situation?
And the answer came: I am so sorry, no justice.

The father saw his son on Facebook, his son with his two legs blown off. So that when a boy wrote a poem in which a girl's legs were only half visible, we were not sure if he meant her legs immersed in the healing waters of the sea or her legs ripped right off her body.

One by one the little victims recede to make space for new ones.
Over and over:

“The lions in the lazy passages of time.”

THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF SOCIAL POWER:
NOVEMBER 10, 2016

We swat side by side at the counter, reading the poems out loud.
I got up to peel a squash.

In the other room, horses were arranged in a stable. Piano lesson.
“Homework.”
I tried to approach a naïve awareness of the earth and my place on it.

“My six months of military training did not let me see the world in
a more positive light,” someone said on the radio.

The stink of the real lay like a scum on the pages
of the poem.

WHERE WERE YOU GOING WITH THAT?

Standing in line for our noodles it occurred to me that if one
of my children, say, shot someone at school, or say, planted
a bomb at a marathon, or say, shot an unarmed man with
his back turned, I would no longer love that child. It would
be easier than I’d previously thought to simply stop loving
him or her.

I have no idea if that is true.

OUR MYTHOLOGY, OR, THE BODY THAT IS
AND IS NOT MINE

Two brothers who always, throughout their childhoods, detested
one another. Their parents learned finally that their only task, the
only parenting skill they absolutely had to master, was to keep their
sons apart. Of course the boys had separate rooms, separate schools,
but they also needed separate mealtimes, separate vacations, separate
outdoor play areas. As the boys grew older, the task of keeping them
apart grew more urgent, for now they could do more harm to one
another than simply cutting or bruising. Eventually the doors between
rooms were not enough. One boy or another would break a lock, or
shatter a door with his fists and feet, hard toys or tools, once with an
ax. The parents considered buying a separate house, keeping one boy
in one with one parent, the other in the other with the other. But the
parents loved each other; they had no wish to live apart. They loved
the boys too, for as long as the boys were separated, as long as they
were not aware of one another’s presences, they were delightful. They
enjoyed swimming, bike riding, coin collecting, and other harmless
things, when alone. They read books, wrote stories, even sang songs
to themselves, when alone.

The parents decided, finally, to build a wall in the center of the house,
a brick wall with only one tiny door. This tiny door was made of
steel, secured with enormous padlocks on both sides. This lock had
only two keys; one hung from a chain around the mother’s neck, the
other around the dad’s. The parents passed back and forth through
this door all day long, crawling on their hands and knees, and quickly
locking the door behind them. No sound passed through the wall,
and no light. And for a while, it worked. The brothers seemed to
forget about one another. Each half of the house had its own door to

the outside, its own family room, its own music. Inside their separate spaces, the brothers focused on their peaceful activities: stamp and coin collecting, reading, taking care of animals (one had a snake, the other, a rabbit). But then one day, as the mother was scurrying through the door with a sandwich for one son, the other son coughed. It was a tiny cough—more a clearing of the throat. It could have been a chair scraping the floor. It could have been a dog down the road. But the other brother knew; he'd recognize that cough anywhere. He stood to his full height (and he was quite big now, almost a man) and approached his mother, still on her knees. "What's there?" the brother asked, stepping toward the door. His mother, without thinking, clasped her hand to her chest. And the boy immediately knew: the key, under her shirt, between her breasts, its stillness, its perfect flatness. All art is entertaining on some level, entertaining a darkness, or a delight, entertaining a spirit or an arrogance, entertaining a rage.

%

And maybe you ask which brother is to blame? (Check our origins.)

FULL SPEECH: BEFORE THE ELECTION / AFTER THE ELECTION

And those who turn away will be punished.
And those who speak will be listened in on.
And those who attempt to leave will be followed.
And those who stand together will be surrounded.
And those who cry will be monitored.

And those who dig in the dirt will be invaded.
And those who open the window will be greeted.
And those who face the enemy will be abused.
And those who work will be poisoned.
And those who resist will be accused.
And those who fumble for their license
And those who just driving home
And those who try to turn away—

ONCE ONLY AGAIN AND AGAIN

Once only again and again: imagine the morsel, if possible, of Jewish resistance—the charred chair, no windows, more morbid far arrests, the red and the black, the unburied, the future. Once and once again once, a woman comes through the door, pushing her hair back from her face, a hedonistic moment, like poetry night in Glasgow, or like a little seaside town where teenagers film themselves reading from notebooks while sitting on statues in the winter. Imagine, if you can, their flowing flower-eyes. Imagine you might once and once again blindly or foolishly address the State with a little mouth full of water.

Writing, finally, to continue beginning again. To be a universe! To be a universe!

—Robert Duncan

This was "writing by a God in whose hand the breath was."

DIANA ARTERIAN

We Are Each Other's Harvest

In 2012 I took to the practice of ignoring the election as much as possible, until I could ignore it no more. As a registered Democrat, this entails ignoring the Republican primary entirely and (when there is a Democratic primary) largely ignoring it too, supplementing news with hours of research prior to casting my ballot. Media bias and candidates' recent flubs are thus not in my mind, and I can look solely at the facts—this is the thinking. The ignoring practice seemed to go relatively well for me, emotionally, and of course Obama prevailed in 2012. Thus 2016 (or, really, 2015 to 2016) unfolded similarly. I read no more than headlines, maybe an article or two. Like many liberal Americans living in cities, I ignored Trump as much as possible. His rhetoric of hate was simultaneously painful and absurd. All that ever came from my paying attention was a remarkable rise in my blood pressure. Maria Alekhina of the famously imprisoned Russian activist band Pussy Riot spoke out early on about our reactions to Trump in December of 2015 in a tone that now reads as chillingly prescient. In describing the Russian public's response to Putin's first terms, she says, "Everybody was joking about it ... Everybody [is] joking about Donald Trump now, but it's a very short way from joke to sad reality." Certainly this lack of serious consideration is a large part of what allowed Trump those electoral votes, for in the aftermath we're seeing all the factors that played into the election

of a bigoted man whose only political experience is spreading racist conspiracy theories about our first president-of-color. His tirades got airplay, and lots of it. Alekhina goes on, "You have to seriously think about giving a microphone [to Trump] ... to follow and comment [on] every word of this man is really not the best idea." I was heeding that advice, at least.

But a lot of people other than liberals were ignoring his bigoted remarks. Many listened to the other statements he was making, and those statements struck a chord, leading to many votes in his favor. Enough votes in the right places. Many "educated white women"—over 50 percent of them—voted for him, rather than for a highly qualified first woman president. As an educated white woman, I take the opportunity to apologize on behalf of my demographic whenever possible. And, of course, the vast majority of Trump voters (other than rich whites) was poor whites. George Packer's remarkable article "Hillary Clinton and the Populist Revolt" came out prior to the election and elucidates the rift between the poor and working-class white folks and the DNC. In the 1968 Democratic nomination, the Party establishment selected the non-nominee (and non-antiwar), Hubert Humphry. There was uproar, which "led to the creation of the McGovern-Fraser Commission, which reformed the Democrats' nominating process, weakening the Party bosses and strengthening women, minorities, young people, and single-issue activists"—thus leaving members of unions and "workers organizations" out in the cold. Liberals stopped paying attention (or giving much power, at least) to the marginalized white working-class population almost 50 years ago. This coupled with increasing visibility of people of color, empowered women, and/or queer persons in entertainment and news (or, say, in our most powerful political seat) is a threatening thing. There was a similar response from poor whites during desegregation—they were certainly at the bottom of the white totem pole, but still held a position well above blacks. The destabilization of that position, the

loss of that power, is terrifying. The rhetoric of “taking back America” is largely founded in that fear, and without much consideration of the fact that America was taken from indigenous peoples by the white man in the first place, and blacks who are descended from slaves hardly had much choice in whether or not their ancestors sustained the most brutal forced migration in the history of the world. But this is hard to keep in mind when you’re poor and you feel like those in power aren’t speaking to you, are judging you, and don’t give a fuck about how or whether you can feed your family or not.

The day after the election my immediate thought was my friend who told me Trump’s voice was a trigger for her PTSD as a rape survivor. Another’s anxiety was so bad she couldn’t go to work for fear of vomiting. I heard a woman crying in bed all night through the wall. The other immediate thought was my Pakistani-American partner, and how can I use my whiteness to protect him? Maybe we needed to go to a courthouse and get married, now. He went to the store that day and said he felt fearful for the first time in a long time in a public space. He lost trust in those around him, and in that vacuum entered terror. “Thank God we live in a city,” he said.

I felt sick, like I was facing a death. It was grief for my own civil liberties and of those whom I love most. Felt sick that internalized (and externalized) misogyny was so prevalent. Racism and ableism so accepted. It was also grief for the marginalized group who had cast their ballots for a man who would bring them none of the relief he promised. Yes, my immediate thoughts went to this population, too. Their pain was for liberals’ lack of consideration for their struggles—they were largely unheard and maligned for so long with little recourse. While I am friends with those who grew up in rural areas and poor, they “made it out” and often look back not without some scorn. I was just as guilty of the casting aside of a seriously disadvantaged population in this country because it wasn’t in front of me (the very thing so many of us criticize the poor

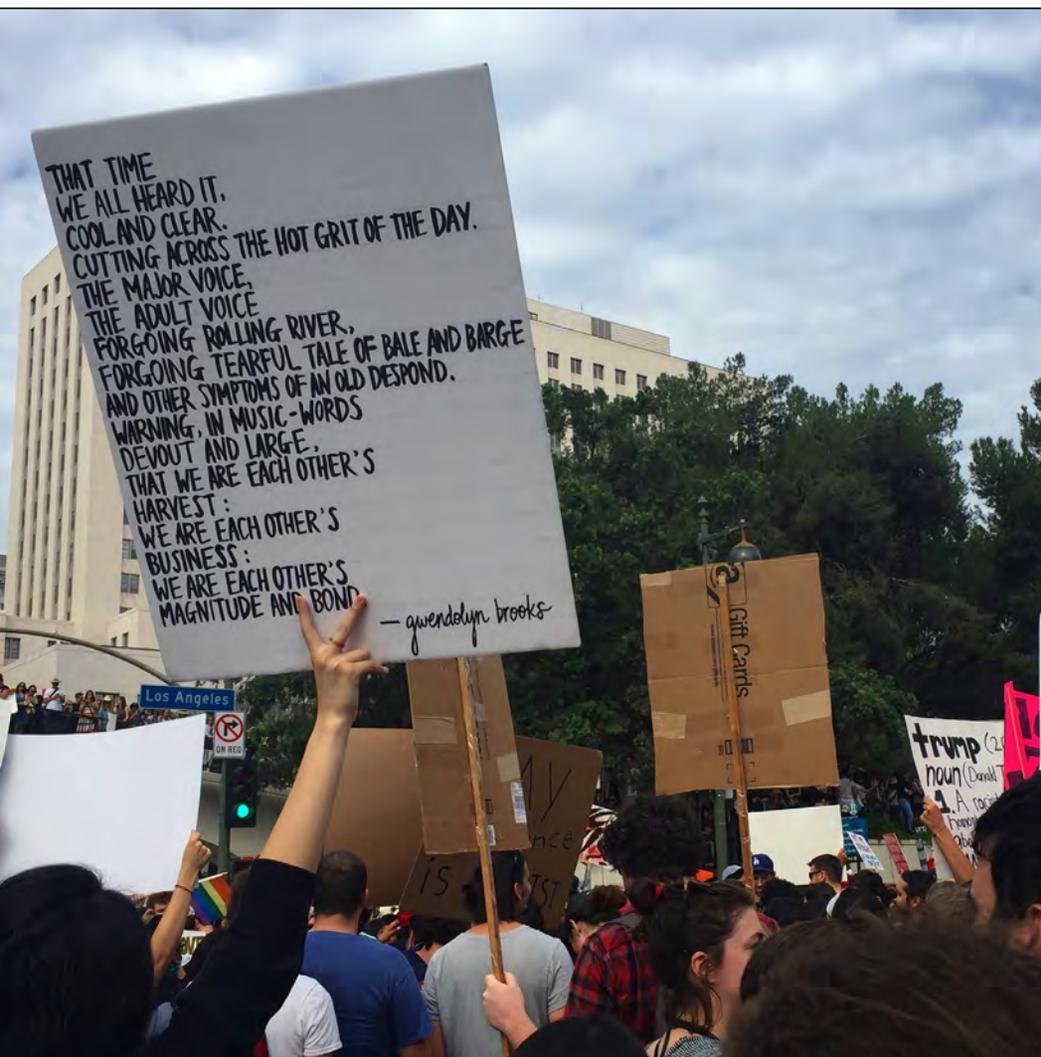
rural white population in this country for). Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said recently, “Rural America is 15 percent of America’s population. It’s the same percentage as African-Americans; it’s the same percentage as Hispanics. We spend a lot of time thinking about that 15 percent—and we should, God bless them, we should. But not to the exclusion of the other 15 percent, we don’t have to exclude them.”

So I was moved when I put my body in the street close to other bodies that were hurting and angry and sad, and saw a poster that was not mocking Trump or knocking Republicans, but was a poem. Not only that, but a poem from one of my favorite writers—one of the greatest in this nation’s history—Gwendolyn Brooks. It reads (in part):

*we are each other’s
harvest:
we are each other’s
business:
we are each other’s
magnitude and bond.*

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Photograph by Diana Arterian

LEORA FRIDMAN

On Bleeding

I woke up the day after the election to talk to a creative writing class that had read my book, a sweet undergraduate class in Boston. It was 8 am and I did not bother to shower or put on my contacts. I didn't know how to pull myself together. I thought: *all I can do is show my face.*

The class asked me many good questions, and it was a balm of a kind to talk about abstraction and political language, fragments, and liberation. It was easier than I expected to tell them how my book was made, to connect it to politics. The last question they asked me was about whether I think writing *matters* in a larger sense—a sweet-faced student so close to camera asking, *what effect does poetry have, politically speaking?*

That's a great question, I said, paused and thought to end it there. What effect does anything have?

I wanted to flip everything, and turn it back to them, ask them how any thing originates. I thought of Hilary Plum quoting Zach Savich: “what can literature be a cause of?”

I can't help but think also, now, of Trump: *what can Trump be a cause of?*

In many ways this is what all the articles are trying to answer, as if Trump is some kind of artistic creation, something we can historicize so quickly, watching the pen and ink, the conditions behind us, the brushes we picked up to make him that we can only see in our hands after the fact.

But also I mostly feel disgusted by these stories of our hands in the past, our hands in a womb of the past, making Trump. I'm not very interested in how he was made. He was made.

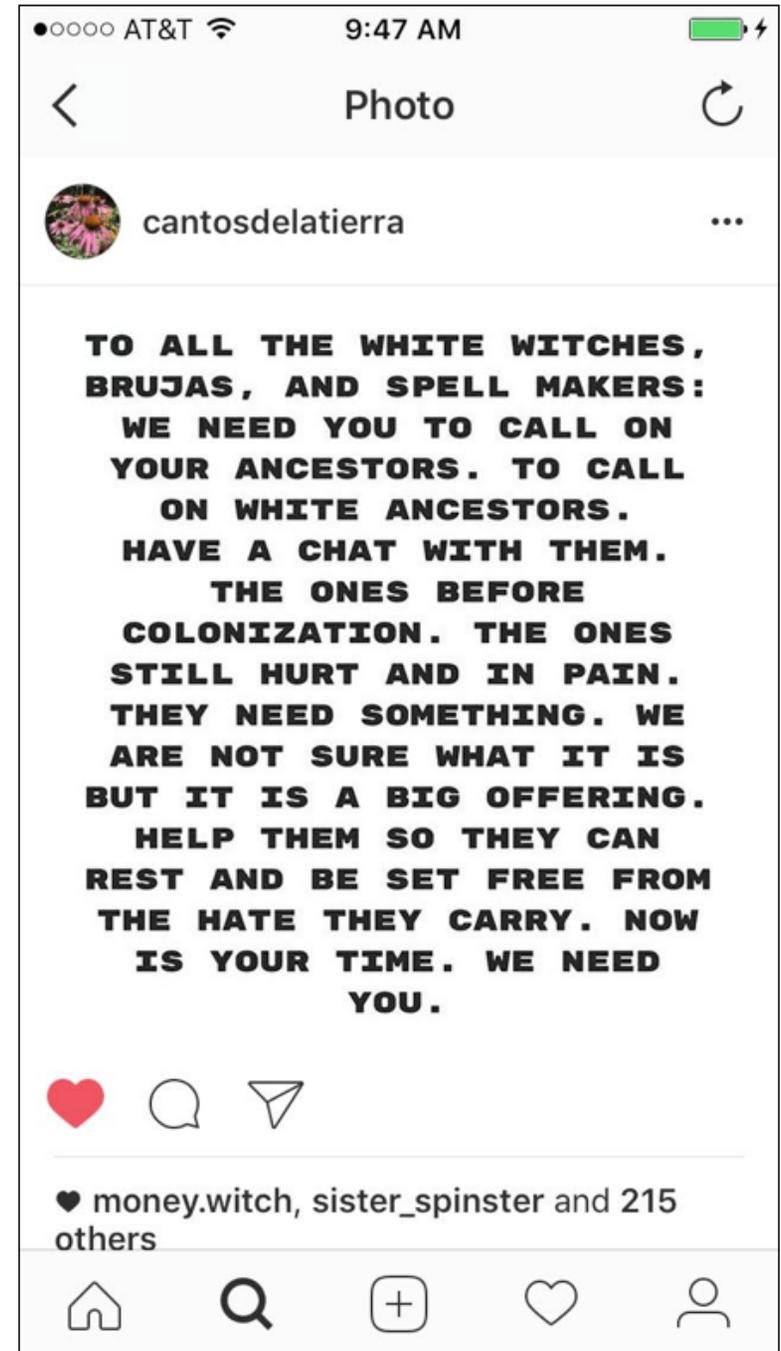
He is a familiar thing to me, I tell my parents, and they nod, don't have to say *Holocaust* or *pogroms* or *genocide*. *We have seen this cycle before*, they say.

Not having made a human myself, I see the cycle but forget the creation. I stretch to believe we created him. I try.

Part of who I am is not having had my face shoved up against how we create each other.

Part of who I am is having lost who created me, my ancestors dark cloaked in immigration, assimilation, new names. Some things stay, but so much has been shoved off.

I cut myself off of Facebook in the weeks after the election but kept Instagram, thinking, *how bad can it be*. The first thing I saw on Instagram that moved me after the election was this, from Berenice Dimas:



Even now looking that over I have chills all over my body.

This weekend I'm leading a retreat called *Writing for Ancestral Healing*. It's been planned for months but now, post-Trump election, it seems even spookier. We'll be looking at fragments and writing into them. I'm still figuring out what we're actually going to do. Are we going to call on our ancestors? Are we going to learn how we got here?

I ask Taya about how to work with ancestors, not having much experience myself. It's essential, she says, to call on the well ancestors, not the un-well ones. We reach back for the strength of our well ancestors, not to muck around with or bring down the trauma from the un-well ones.

Taya gives me a book on ancient Jewish views of the afterlife. In it, Simcha Paull Raphael writes of ancient Jewish practice: "Death itself was not seen as a cessation of existence. On the contrary, to be gathered to one's ancestors implied but a passage to another realm..."

Another realm. Is this a new country? Or the same old same old one? Could it be both / for different people?

I think we killed America, Sunisa said to me the day after the election, in mourning shock.

But we're getting used to it, and quickly. As those of us who feel shock about this election get used to it, that death becomes a passage into another realm.

Whatever ideas I had about democracy and fairness and ethics on a political scale do not cease, but become information to draw upon, the way I'll ask my students to use fragments to recall their ancestors. A new family history, if you will.

Exactly two weeks after the election I got on my bike after spinning class and was suddenly weak with pain all through my abdomen, could barely push the pedals. *This can't be that bad*, I told myself,

and cycled home through a fog of stabbing in my stomach. Once home, I collapsed on the bathroom floor and doubted my pain for another full hour before I called my husband and he took me to the emergency room.

A cyst had burst on my ovary and blood spilled into my belly. Curled over, barely able to lift my hands over my head for the CT scan because the pain, the pain shooting through my back and down into my groin and thighs, I thought: *well, if I can get through this I could probably get through pregnancy*.

Embarrassing to admit, but that's the main thing I thought: will this pain make it possible for me to pass something on?

I'm trying to write a book right now about what it means to make family / what it means to build loyalty / how we take care of each other. I'm trying to write about how to make a family and I don't know. My body doesn't know. My body parts that make family are bursting.

My father-in-law happened to be in town when my cyst burst and he came too, to the emergency room. He is an emergency room doctor and had many good questions to ask.

Is there any chance you're pregnant, he asked me, and then when I shook my head he asked again. *At all, any chance at all*, he said, two long fingers on my belly.

He pressed down, and asked, *does this hurt when I press?* It hurt some places more than others but also everywhere. I nodded.

Sorry to ask this, but does it hurt in your labia, he asked, and I nodded and finally sobbed.

My body knows about how to make a family. It does it almost every month. It stopped for a while—the big black blot of 15 years of birth

control that slowed it down, stopped my ovulation, brought on bloats of pain each month without any bleeding, without any release.

I tried to trick it for a while with those hormones, but without question my body knows how a person is made.

The internet says that coming off of birth control can cause a lot of things. Your hormones are all over the place. Your body struggles to re-regulate. You might get cysts and pains and bloods and acne—you might get them a lot more. Your body is coming off of thinking it was pregnant for 15 years.

Carrie Lorig writes: “I wake up, red creature in my arms.

Isn't it part speech?
Couldn't it be relief?”

I haven't menstruated since the election, and I'm eager, awaiting.

I try to write an essay about how to form family and the bottom half of my body disappears. I can barely feel anything as I write this, just a low ache in my belly where my stomach is still trying to pass the last of the blood from the burst cyst.

And so I try to write an essay about how to make a family. I think hard but instead of finding an answer I back up into a body. My body is having a hard time digesting. That's all I feel.

For a while at the emergency room, I couldn't pee for the pregnancy test because it hurt too much every time I bore down on my muscles to pee. They couldn't safely test me for everything else until they knew whether I was pregnant, so we waited for a while. My husband stood by the toilet holding the specimen container while I squeezed and shook and sobbed.

Hélène Cixous writes: “How can you trust the earth when your flesh has run away? How is it credible that this flesh is your flesh when the flour of my body poisons my breath?”

The internet says white women are at fault. The internet tells me to turn to my own people and flush this out, flesh this out, “do my own work.”

The day after I went to the emergency room it's Thanksgiving. While we cook, I strategize with my husband about how we will talk about politics, how to relate things to our own family history, talk about where we've all come from, and what makes it possible for us to be here.

Around the table with the feast food we try to combine gratitude and critique, try to bring up Standing Rock and reparations. But we keep having to start over again because each person starts talking about Trump, how evil he is, what it was that made him, made him win.

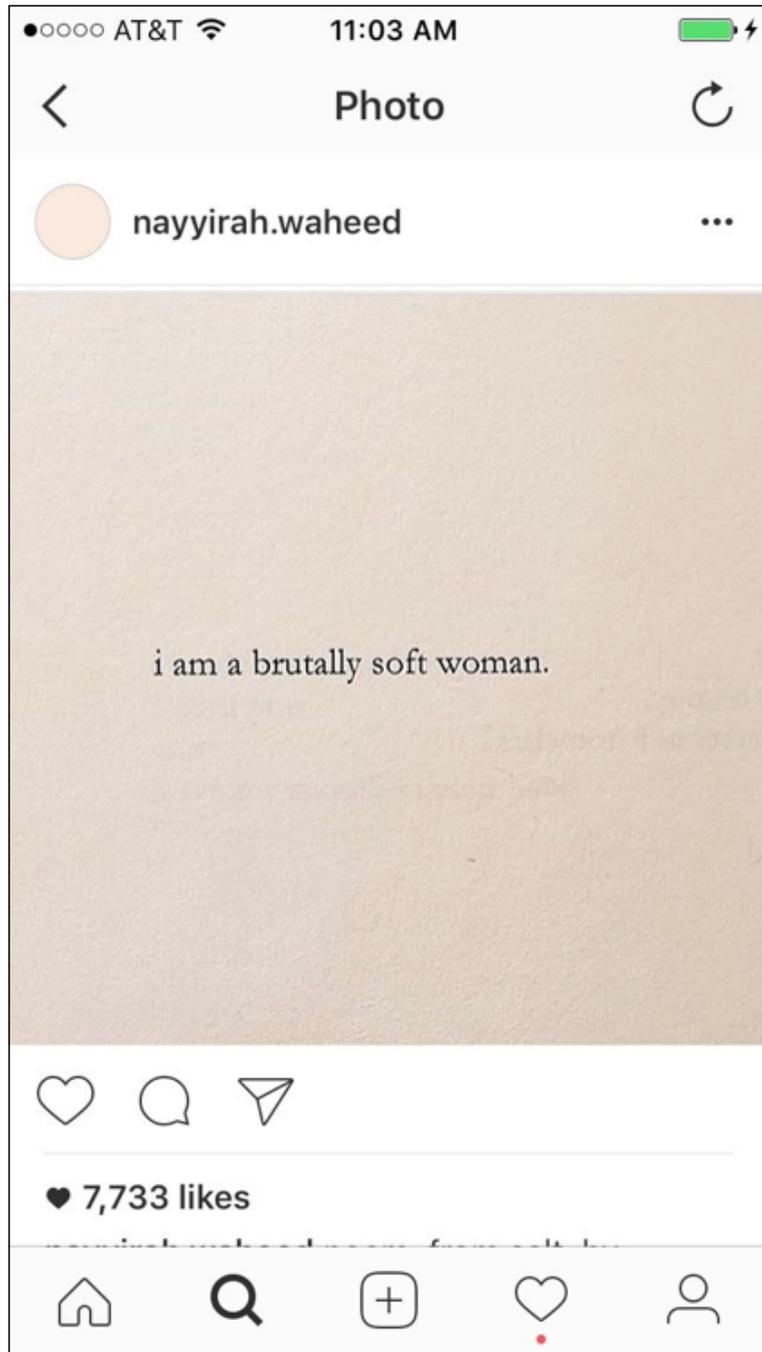
The red blood of my monthly muck in the trash, how the toilet reminds me please not to throw it away, and so I gather it in my hands, blot it up with toilet paper.

Nothing but toilet paper in the toilet, please.

Anything but toilet paper will stop this up.

This is a delicate system so please don't throw anything into it.

Please don't clog our system.



The first thing everyone asks me after the hospital is can I still have babies. In case you were wondering: yes, I can still have babies.

But will I? In what world? What babies will I have? How bloody?

The doctor says my body will reabsorb the cyst, my belly will process the blood, that *sometimes this just happens to women*. *No one knows why*, she says.

But my friends say cysts are definitely an indication of something wrong, that I should rest, not exercise so hard, look into balancing my hormones.

My acupuncturist friends say cysts are a result of an imbalance in the liver or kidneys, that it is cold and damp in my *qi*.

My closest friends say of course this happened: my body was full of Trump, wanted to burst and pass it on.

You'll be amazed at how easy it is to forget this in a few days, the doctor says as she gives me a prescription for painkillers.

If the pain comes back, she warns me, *try not to forget it's from this*.

TONY TRIGILIO

Good Night from the End of the American Experiment

The day after the election in Chicago, a city already suffering immensely from racism and violence, the streets were somber, everyone walking shoulder-slumped, their heads down or staring straight ahead. Our gestures were mechanical; anything spontaneous came off as incoherent. I hadn't seen anything like this in the city since the day after 9/11. Like so many other cities across the US, we knew that the country, even with its perpetual and glaring flaws, was entering an era like nothing we had experienced in our lives. The magical thinking of American exceptionalism had been replaced overnight (literally) by the threat of an autocracy to come.

Throughout the 2016 election cycle, I prepared for the worst by reading about the historical conditions of the emergence of totalitarianism in 1930s Germany and in postwar Eastern Europe. I'm not alone in this; many Americans chatted on social media about doing the same, and our research now feels like a travel guide to the new landscape that awaits us. In these weeks after the election, I've been reading Czeslaw Milosz's memoir *The Captive Mind*, and it's forced me to reflect on the seemingly minute moral choices that a person has to make every day under authoritarian rule—how the day-to-day pressures of the totalitarian ethos can overwhelm a person, and, before you realize it, you've become a completely changed individual and your past life is no longer recognizable. "One

compromise leads to another and a third," Milosz writes of totalitarianism's moral suffocation, "until at last, though everything one says may be perfectly logical, it no longer has anything in common with the flesh and blood of living people."

My work as a writer often begins with the premise that dailiness—everyday ongoing-ness—might appear mundane but actually is the locus of our political life. I can't stop thinking of how we go on with daily life and construct a vibrant opposition while also living the seemingly mundane day-to-day minutiae of our lives. This question keeps me up at night, and I think it's why the study of totalitarianism has been crucial in these first few weeks after the election. I keep asking myself how others have remade their lives in order to function within, and to resist, the constant pressure of state totalitarianism. I emailed an old friend recently, someone I hadn't spoken to in over a year—we'd been too busy and tired from our jobs to keep in touch regularly—and, after a short preamble about my Trump night terrors, which I knew she shared, I froze and couldn't continue the email. How could I even ask something as basic as how she was doing? Is there a way to say "How's it going" without referencing Trump? I couldn't imagine asking mundane questions like this, and, in the same way, I couldn't see her responding with "I'm not bad" or "I'm doing all right" or "Could be better but I can't complain" or "I wish the sun didn't go down so early in November" without mentioning that, in the words of journalist and scholar Sarah Kendzior, we all should be "preparing to live like a nation of dissidents."

I'm talking about a mundane email greeting, I know, but it's teaching me about the struggle to live an ordinary life without assenting to totalitarianism as an "ordinary" condition of life. We can't ignore the dailiness of our experience—can't ignore the politics of everyday lived experience—even if we're living with the threat of state totalitarianism. The ongoing-ness of the present moment, is still

just that, the present moment, even when the present moment is horrifying. This was precisely the mode of consciousness I couldn't understand about totalitarian regimes when I was growing up. I couldn't figure out how ordinary folks functioned within the mundane moment-by-moment realities of everyday life when pretty much everything was controlled and circumscribed and surveilled by the state. I understood bread lines intellectually, but I could never grasp how people could appreciate the taste of their bread when they suspected the bakery clerk was an informant for the Stasi. As a child, I didn't think bread would even have a "taste" in that kind of situation. How could you decide to wear your favorite red shirt or your second-favorite blue shirt—or how could you possibly, living in an autocracy, even have a "favorite" shirt—when you knew that if you said the wrong thing in public you'd be sent to a soccer stadium and shot. But of course bread always will evoke a taste. And our closets include other clothes that we only wear when our favorite clothes are in the wash. A life consists of accumulating moments of the ordinary, but how does the ordinary coexist with a political shift as dramatic and frightening as our current turn to totalitarianism—especially in a country like the U.S. that for generations had deluded itself into believing that its systems of law, with their abstractly interconnected structures of presumed mutual power and consent, would, like no other country, prevent it from being hijacked by an autocratic leader. "*If something exists in one place,*" Milosz writes of totalitarianism (the italics are his), "*it will exist everywhere.*" I don't know what the next year will bring, let alone the next four years. But we don't have to be the new administration's hostages. Accepting the fact of our ordinariness, of our vulnerability to the totalitarianism that "can exist everywhere"—accepting the demise of exceptionalism—can be the first step toward acts of ordinary resistance.

LAYNIE BROWNE

A Book of First Sentences

GENRE

Suspension feeders colonizing the intertidal zone. Boat and dog pavement. The relationship between temperature and flirtation rate kept short for the summer. How did you do? In this case, genre does not behave as an inviolable particle. High-demand deletions? No, I'm going to the store. Can you stay with my objects? I can't put myself in the reader's shoes. High shore individuals might be expected to adjust interiority to compensate. You do without plot, for example. A single eye, a malformed brain, and a missing upper jaw. Characters disintegrate. Your narrator speaks about the reclusively of words, and all that they hide.

THE DOMINANT NARRATIVE

She wore a spare summer dress, taut in the waist, flared at the hemline. A refusal of seasonal machinations. Her sandals poorly negotiate the forest. She ignores the weather. How can we talk about the narrative we require when the dominant narrative dictates? How do we occupy our own bodies? I'm not interested in being prescriptive yet when I see her approach I move in another direction. The dominant narrative has sun in its eye, is blind, submissive to glare, subversive in the substrata unseen on the surface. I just wanted to walk out of this town. But it isn't a town. I want to walk out of my mind. I want to walk out on the dominant narrative each of us owns. When will we shake off our resolute mantles, drop our skins? She has often forgotten her own humanity, the mouths from which she emerged. She walks without waiting. Wades into your face. Her hands are everywhere apparent. She walks confidently into any room seeing nothing. She overpowers her own inhabitants. Before the arrival of untextured talk, she sat at a table feeling sick. She had flown all night, walked and talked all day, arrived early or late. She was certain of her strategies. She talked while reading texts about the problematic nature of discourse. Reading about inequity began to dislodge all of her content. The dominant narrative emptied itself convulsively and then made itself horizontal and swallowed the universalists. She dreams in magnetic prose, wakes with an image of a translucent figure peeled from a red gel. The dominant narrative enacts every problem with narrative, appears only in one language, her language, which is also the language of days becoming evenings, nights becoming mornings, currencies, eventualities.

THE VIEW

The blue was brighter blue, and the sky was shorn. They sat in front of one of the large windows looking out to the sound. White movement on the surface dazzled. How did the light separate into so many particles? Until this moment she had not contemplated danger in the view. Was she looking at her life pulled apart into each minute instance and lit from a staggering source? Was she gazing at possibility? She looked across at him. He was staring, mildly stunned. Did his thoughts follow currents, shore birds, an ochre leaf skittering across the wooden deck? Or was he thinking about an introduction to the study of living systems, the process by which single cells develop, signaling between embryonic cells and heart formation? She turned again to the danger. If each dancing skip along the surface were a turn one might take one could sit here forever redesigning choreography. Each day they seemed to sit for longer increments. Mornings or afternoons would slip away suddenly, arced and menaced. As if they had been drawn into their places to silently brood or sigh. What if each light spot were an obligation or a solution? She set out to diagramming the dazzle, a cartography of water, a net of light at times skated by boats, birds, or clouds. At night, when the lights on the water were absent and all was sealed darkness, except for a path made by the moon, had those lights leapt to sky? Were stars water? The fluidity that made up their bodies? She imagined his torso, his entire body filled with starlight, something bright in his throat as he spoke. What was he saying? She was so far hidden by the view from ordinary cognizance that she had difficulty understanding. Was he patient? Lapsed again into silence? What did his gaze communicate? He, like herself, seemed unable to rise. How long had they been sequestered in these positions today? She was thirsty. Her legs were numb. But her eyes turned again to the glass, obeyed. Had the water and sky held them captive? If this were the case she could think of no others to which she would have succumbed. No mystery so vast and riveting had ever before haunted her senses. Had they become mere captions to the view?

DEVASTATION

Devastated, she closed the book. The last word was *smile*. But her face did not reflect those letters in that particular order. Had she understood the secret? Not known or seen. Through fine pores, slowly penetrating. Did she contain all that was meant to be known by others—the undisclosed, private, confidential. The outer later of something that is hollow. For the use of a single person. A wooden stem and many large branches. One spoken to. Delivered by word of mouth. A drawing that connects things with lines to show how they are related. To do what you say you will do, what others expect. She resided on a long and usually hard seat for two or more people. An opening in something. Indecent and offensive. She wanted to immediately begin again. Along the side of a street. She searched for the beginning, exposed, *seeping from the walls, from the boxed trees, the benches, the dirty sidewalks, the public square* to a place where a river enters the ocean.



THOM DONOVAN

Post-Face

1.

Today Ted posted a picture of someone in a Big Bird costume sitting on a park bench in Central Park, holding a package (or is it all of their worldly possessions?) in their lap. I wrote in the comments of Ted's post: "allegory." Big Bird—symbol of childhood and public broadcasting—getting the fuck out of this hell dimension. Allegory of the public sphere's withdrawal.

For many years it felt like the ground was slipping from under my feet—the erosion of civil liberties under W. Bush, the destruction of society through neoliberalism, governance through debt—until I realized there never was any ground. America was never great. As I told my students yesterday, you cannot found a country on genocide and slave labor and not expect for it to eventually self-destruct. Exceptionality has always been constitutionality's greatest myth.

The title of this book holds many connotations. *Withdrawn*: as in, a depressive or anti-social psychological state; an occultation of the senses; a period of suspended use of a controlled substance; to exit, or to pull away; to become isolated, alienated; to retreat; to take or bear away. So finally, perhaps, begins the real withdrawal—from aesthetics into politics, from a false sense of being grounded to pondering the

lack of ground under our feet—necessitated by an event that had not been so much unthinkable or unimaginable as unactualized.

Yesterday I wanted to write on Facebook (and my wanting to write on Facebook is very likely part of the problem): *It was everyone's fault. Not just for not stopping Trump, but for not stopping Obama, and before him W. Bush, and before him Bill Clinton, and before him Bush senior, and before him Reagan...* and so on and so forth through a chain of presidents since the nation's founding. I wanted to write also, and I write now: *My poetry is a failure. The books I have written are failures. This book is a failure*, because they have not made the necessary demands on our conscience. I wanted my books to constitute a "commons." I wanted them to "prefigure" a world we "would want." I wanted them to "punctuate clock time differently." But as my friend Brian curses in his book *Face Down*, implicating my practice across a span of books and years and conversations, "Fuck these tiny holes." A strategy of "counter-distribution" was never enough. Bringing "life" from an online environment into a bound codex was never enough. Creating the community to which I wished "to belong in my dreams" was not enough.

And yet, at the risk of creating an alibi for myself, I believe that *Withdrawn: a Discourse* may trouble the way art (and poetry) is typically conceived as "autonomous" from social life, if not politics itself. As the epigraphs go:

My study began with Rimbaud and what I took to be Rimbaud's flight from *l'être poète*: a flight that took shape, as I came to realize not with his famous silence, his departure for Africa, but in 1870 when he wrote his first poem. Rimbaud left literature before he even got there.

—Kristin Ross

In the names away in blocks
with double names to interrupt
and gather

—Fred Moten

Written under the influence of Kristin Ross' *The Emergence of Social Space: Arthur Rimbaud and the Paris Commune* and Fred Moten's *B Jenkins*, the book attempts to create a space where poetry can disappear through its occasion, its sociopolitical contexts, and the nexus of relations that it actively constructs through dedication, interlocution, and modes of address. To present the discourse in lieu of the poems. For an exchange among proper names to be objectless. For the poems *qua* objects to be occluded, leaving what we say to each other, if not what we do, unreified. "Life is what escapes," Moten writes after Michel Foucault. That *Withdrawn* has yet to appear and perhaps never will would now seem a perverse accomplishment of this "project."

Yet, Not an Alternative's contribution to the book correctly warns that participatory art can itself become reifying. Discourse can become a fetish without action in socio-political space. Generously, Brian Holmes' essay in the book posits that *Withdrawn* is an attempt to establish a "missing matrix of mutual self-recognition" within "the rhythm of punctuated outbursts that composes a not-so-secret history." However, he also admonishes that "[t]he obvious problem, which climate change reveals, is that it is really getting a little too late to continually return to living in the gaps between such explosions." In other words, the intensification of cycles of crisis troubles the luxury of protracted reflection represented by my attempt to posit a dreamy cohort—*my team, my band, my commune, my friends*.

In his proleptic review of *Withdrawn* included in *Withdrawn: a Discourse*, Ian Dreiblatt playfully imagines me like St. Anthony retreating to the desert, absconded from Empire, holding court

among acolytes, pilgrims, and fellow exiles. Teaching most of all has saved me from the fate of the recluse. Teaching and a tenuous sense of community after the precarious birth of my daughter two years ago when it became nearly impossible to be communal and public and generous in the ways I was previously. We need to withdraw sometimes to ground ourselves. To have the resources intellectually and imaginatively that can prepare us for the unactualized.

Nearly two months ago Dottie and I had a cancer scare with our daughter. After performing an ultrasound and an MRI doctors couldn't discern whether a vascular tumor on my daughter's left arm was malignant. In the days following her surgery, I imagined what I would do if they discovered cancer. I imagined losing her and what it would mean to live in a world without my daughter. Should she die, I was determined to live my life differently in her absence. My friend Rob correctly recognized the possibility of her death opening a space for fantasy related to my capacity for world-forming. She was not diagnosed with cancer—thank goodness—but a residue of those fantasies remains. They are activated again by the situation we find ourselves in. If the world is in fact lost what should we create in its place? If God has withdrawn, an image so central to Jewish and Islamic antinomianism, what laws should we observe? What will command and compel us?

Or, as Aimé Césaire writes in his *Cahier*:

What can I do?
One must begin somewhere.
Begin what?

The only thing in the world
worth beginning:
The End of the world of course.

Perhaps now that neoliberalism has revealed its dark underbelly we must finally do the work that Césaire implored us to do all along. To bring about the “End of the world,” which is to say, of racist, misogynist, xenophobic, settlerist capital.

2.

America, you owe for reality!
Give back the people you took.

—Robert Creeley

Let us all survive, who need to OK?
And we wish each other luck!

—Amiri Baraka

One of the central presumptions of Robert Creeley’s poem “America” which I question is his use of the plural pronoun “we,” having recourse to “we” myself in many of the poems of *Withdrawn*. To whom does this refer? Whom is this “we” inclusive of? Who is “the People” invented by America, presumably by the Constitution? Who are the people it “took”? It is unfortunately not clear, and this lack of clarity is a problem. Amiri Baraka’s particularity in “Who Will Survive America” is refreshing in this regard. For it is only the “Black Man” who will survive in America. Not “Negroes,” not “Crackers,” not “Christians,” not “Red Negroes.” The distinction is not merely divisive. Rather, an Afro-Pessimist *avant la lettre*, Baraka recognizes a central antagonism between “White” and “Black” paradigms, and it is the former which, for both Wilderson and Baraka, cannot survive. Whiteness must die, and we are now finally forced to kill it once and for all, lest we all perish.

Who this “we” will be constituted by is something I have been struggling with. Specifically, how and whether it might include me. Both *Withdrawn* and its companion book are thoroughly entangled

with the problem of collectivity, and specifically what it means for the poem to be a locus for collective enunciation, mutuality, and exchange. But a “we” has limits, as I discovered the hard way when I gave a reading last year at the home of friends in Ypsilanti, Michigan. For writing through the “we” in relation to Black Lives Matter and in memory of the many Black people who have been murdered by police I was taken to task by audience members, none of whom, interestingly enough, were Black. A year later I am haunted by the question of whether my art can claim solidarity with others differentiated by their vulnerability to premature death.

Ultimately, I don’t know what I would do without interlocutors, people to think and talk with, a “we” both constituted in fantasy and reality. *Withdrawn* and *Withdrawn: a Discourse* bear out this compulsion. Art objects and texts I encounter often become guides—both in the spiritual and geographic sense. They are orientating intellectually, morally, and emotionally. Encounters with others often seem evental and catalyze occasions for poetry. George Oppen writes that “other voices wake us or we drown,” emending T.S. Eliot’s original *and* to an *or*. The folks gathered in this book are ones who have woken me in different ways, at various stages of my life. Having written *with* them in *Withdrawn*, through a sense of identification and solidarity, I write *to* them in *Withdrawn: a Discourse*, as a means of dramatizing exchange. I realize that there is nothing very extraordinary about this: we all write to each other, poets especially, and an age of social media has made us more garrulous than ever. However, through this project I wanted to honor this *writing to* and *writing with* as central aspects of whatever can be called “my practice.” The result is a *metadiscourse*: a reflection, framing, or amplification of the act of discourse itself.

—11/11/2016 NYC

NICOLE COOLEY

Aftermath

Notes from NYC

On the first day of the After, Wednesday November 9, the city is cold and wet and no one is speaking.

Subway empty and quiet. Streets hushed and dark. Rain lashes the window of my bus.

On my way to work, I know it's an awful pathetic fallacy, the kind I caution my classes against.

On the way to work, on the silent bus, shame and grief etched on my body.

Invisible.



Last night in the space between the before and the after in the space of the election day which stretched too long but not long enough my husband and my daughters and I watched the results unfold on TV in our bedroom and by nine pm the ice cream sandwiches we'd bought to celebrate the first woman president seemed wrong and we had to eat them fast as quickly as possible as if disgraced.



SHAME a painful; humiliation or distress; wrong or foolish; mortification; disgrace; dishonor; discredit; degradation; a person, action, or situation; a loss of respect or honor



The election is not only the first election my girls have truly understood, not only the election in which they came into the voting booth with us to vote for the first ever female president, not only the election that would carry on the project of

The election in which so many of my students were first-time voters.



On the day after, on my way to teach, I check my email over and over. My university offers no direction.



Older daughter born in the midst of the Bush-Gore recount and we saved the *New York Times* front pages about it thinking how ironic it would be for her to read later as she grows up we stuffed the pages in her baby book.



My students—
My students so many immigrants
My students first generation My students undocumented

My students economically vulnerable
My students' myriad stories
My students now afraid to come to class



I am cast back to 9/11 and the day after—another Wednesday—when I had a new baby and had just begun my teaching job and again no direction and walking into the classroom and not knowing what to say and telling the students the Muriel Rukeyser poem we planned to talk about was too painful and how would we begin another conversation how would any of us know how—



When I walk in to my class, before I set down my books, a student calls out, Professor who did you vote for?

As if he needs to check before we begin.



Truth: I need to remember history.

The last time I experienced this shame this wrong this despair about the country was not 9/11 but was four years later

—eleven years ago 2005 when Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast—

with my parents there with my childhood home in New Orleans and in that city and I believed there would be a revolution oh I was so sure.



☆

“Will it be okay, professor, tell me it will be okay?” my student asks, then explains she has her passport in her book bag.

☆

For years I’ve understood, to be a parent is to show endless optimism.

To be a teacher it now strikes me is the same.

☆

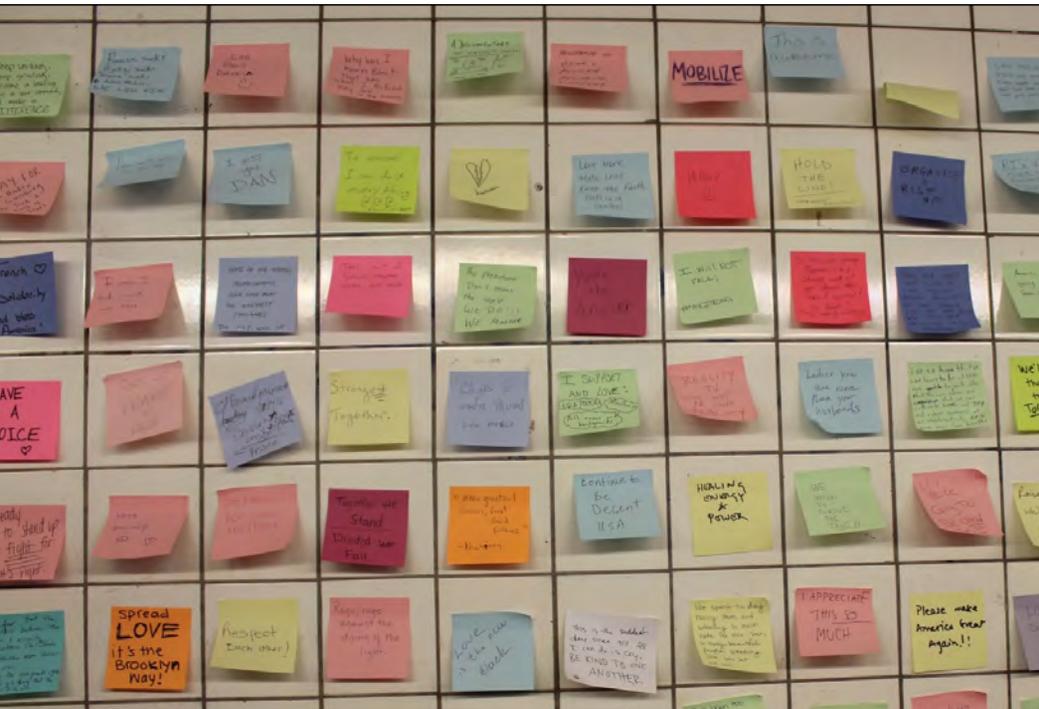
On our campus students in hijab wonder if they will have to *register on a database*.

On our campus, the third generation of Holocaust survivors wonders if history will repeat itself.

☆

In the Before my family watched SNL and laughed at Alec Baldwin parodying Trump and younger daughter dressed as “the anti-Trump” for Halloween with a black t-shirt on which she sewed badges she printed from the Internet and made herself and all the parents where she trick or treated in our liberal town loved her costume and we took pictures of her and sent them to friends and family and we laughed at the idea of Trump winning as it seemed so and we felt so comfortable in our mocking the impossible and her costume was very funny.

☆



Photograph by Arcadia Hinton-Cooley (NYC, November 11, 2016)

And then my students—
And then my daughters—

☆

TRIGGER part of the action moved by; to fire a gun; trigger of a spray gun like a mechanical; initiating a process or reaction

☆

And now none of this is funny

☆

Two days after the election younger daughter and I go to see the subway wall at 14th street where people have stuck post-it notes about how they feel about the election and it is twenty-four hours in and hundreds of post it notes cover the tile wall and daughter and I write our notes – *Love Trumps Hate, Believe in Love*—and take pictures.

I have seen the wall of post-its before and I stood outside the Camellia Grill in New Orleans a year after the hurricane and I wrote all the messages down in my notebook and each one each flap each scrap of text and the bucket of small pencils reminded me maybe wrongly that language could save us.

☆

How wrong it feels to revisit
How wrong to compare

☆

But what have I actually lost? Do I have the right to grieve?

☆

The week after, on November 16, my students make their own wall of Post-Its on the glass windows of the dining hall at Queens College.

Pink and yellow and blue Post-It notes stuck to the window.

The Unity Wall.

It is so much less angry than what my daughter and I saw on the subway:

You Will Get Through This. Be Yourself.

☆

For comfort, I sleep with one daughter one night, another the next, our bodies crowded together in their twin beds.

☆

AFTERMATH second-growth crop; consequence; result; stricken

☆

What right do I have to feel any of this in my body?

And why do I feel bruised from the inside.

When I look in the mirror I expect to see purple and black, blood blooming under my skin.

And nothing.

Each day I sit with my students in our classroom and try to talk about the importance of language.

Each night I lie beside my daughters in their beds and listen to them breathe.

NOTES

The erased definitions are from Merriam-Webster Dictionary online.

B.T. SHAW

Q: What is the difference between Muslim extremism and Christian extremism?

Eleven months ago I moved with my husband and our youngest to Jakarta, Indonesia, two oceans and 8,000-plus miles from the United States. To reach stateside friends and family, we must rewind: Their today is our yesterday. *Hallo from the future!* I message again and again. A dumb joke. I'm seriously not over it.

Jakarta is the planet's most populous city on its most populous island, so the future is dense, it churns. On a land mass the size of the State of Georgia, 145 million people (10 million in Jakarta alone, though never alone) simultaneously live and die in a whirl of constant making, buying, begging, scrapping, scamming, loving, hating. Jamming vehicles through side streets built for pony-carts, turning highways into parking lots.

Eighty-five percent of us are Muslim. By *us* I mean Jakartans. Our little family isn't Muslim.

I have many great Muslim friends. And some of them, I will say, not all, have called me and said, 'Donald, thank you very much; you're exposing an unbelievable problem and we have to get to the bottom of it.' We have a serious problem. And we can't be the stupid country any more. We're laughed at all over the world.

—Donald Trump, January 14, 2016

In the quantum mechanics of expatriate physics, the evening of November 8 was the morning of November 9. At breakfast, polls still showed Hillary Clinton for the win, so we planned a celebratory lunch downtown.

By noon, though, our appetites had vanished in a crimson sea. When my home state joined the red brigade, (bloody hell, Ohio), I flagged the waiter for a bourbon. He glanced at my abandoned dish, raised an eyebrow—

We're American, I said.

He returned with a drink in each hand. *I'm so sorry*, he said. *Second one's on the house.*

Search term (from Jakarta, in English, lowercase mine): *what do you call a muslim*

First page, first hit: *Islamic Jokes—Muslim Jokes.*

Q: How do you tell a Sunni from a Shiite?

A: The Sunnis are the ones with the Shiite blown out of them.

And right underneath: *More Offensive Muslim Jokes from Planck's Constant*, scribed in the U.S. by a self-identified racist.

Q: What's the difference between Tehran and Hiroshima?

A: Nothing, yet.

The future has a soundtrack. Two-stroke engines, air-cons, discontinuous chitinous hum. Jackhammers. Caged birdsong.

Also, call to prayer. Five times a day, muezzin lead the faithful in recitations from the Quran, the words broadcast through public address systems so as to bless all, even we nonbelievers, within earshot.

“Trump is president, asshole, so you can kiss your fuckin’ visa goodbye, scumbag,” the man in the SUV yells [at a Moroccan Uber driver in Queens, New York]. “We’ll deport you soon, don’t worry, you fuckin’ terrorist.”

—The Huffington Post, November 22, 2016

Our neighborhood is home to three mosques. In my office, in the kitchen, in the bedroom before dawn, I consciously aim to accept azan as grace—though often instead it feels more a reminder that me and mine—Western, non-believers, temporary in our residence—are fundamentally irrelevant in a culture that’s dominated Java since the 16th century. To some minds, we’re unwelcome even, though so far everyone’s been too polite to say so directly. Stares? Yes. Aloofness? Occasionally. Feigned interest motivated by an assumed economic status associated with Northern European skin tone? Certainly. None of which challenges anything except my complacency, which deserves shaking. The worst I’ve heard is *bule*, which is akin to Hawaii’s multi-veiled *haole*. Exactly one salesperson has requested I complete my transaction in Bahasa Indonesia; he good-naturedly grinned at my attempt and offered a quick list of synonyms.

In our four years abroad, Southeast Asians have seemed to categorize U.S. citizens as loud, oafish, helpless, fat, privileged—but also warm, funny, big-hearted, and deep-pocketed, so more often welcome than not. As a group we’re assumed to be ignorant about geography, languages other than English, the metric system, and history outside of North America—but not terminally stupid. At least not till Trump. (*Q: Why do the Germans love Americans?* *A: Because Americans are the most-hated people in the world now.*)

Indonesian Muslims who’ve spoken to me—carefully, measuredly—disagree with the president-elect’s *great many Muslim friends*. They don’t praise Trump; they fear his bombast. Religious tolerance is

a hard-won, delicate matter in Indonesia, and Trump's extremist rhetoric is a perfect recruiting tool for radical groups. Already this fall and early winter hardliners have staged demonstrations that drew up to 200,000 against the city's Christian governor, who's up for election in February. My friends and acquaintances are afraid. They should be. We all should be.

Search: *what do you call a christian*

Thirty-eight entirely sincere results, then Reddit delivers the first joke:

Q. What do you call it when Batman skips church?

A. Christian Bale

So punny.

I scroll 11 more pages before reaching a second discreet hit: *Religious Jokes*, a Reader's Digest compilation so tepid it doubles as a snooze-aid. No dream-spoiling threats of nuclear annihilation.

Though he rarely drinks, the day of the night of the election my husband gladly accepted that second bourbon. Between sips he refreshed his phone screen like it was a Magic 8 Ball, but sources kept saying no.

The restaurant we'd chosen is in a mall three miles from the Starbucks where ISL-backed terrorists detonated several blasts on January 14, 2016, two days before our scheduled move to the city. Four attackers and four civilians died; 23 people were wounded. A short stroll to the other end of the mall is the Ritz-Carlton Hotel. In 2009 it was suicide-bombed in tandem with a nearby Marriott, killing nine and injuring at least 50. A group now associated with ISIS claimed responsibility.

Glass empty, I stared at a UFO-themed mural and sympathized. I'm somewhat accustomed to my Otherness in Jakarta—alienation from my home country, however, is shocking. I'm left to conclude Trump and his supporters believe they have the luxury to indulge in a worldview that divides *us* and *them*. An easy fallacy, and dangerous, turning real people across the globe, including Americans, into targets.

Indonesia's national motto is *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity). Metal detectors, bag searches, vehicle inspections—vigilance precedes nearly every move we make in Jakarta. Despite recent upticks in activity by hardliners, a majority of people here continuously fight to protect pluralism, i.e., one another, i.e., us. *Bomb the shit out of 'em* isn't a strategy or a solution. It's a taunt. We're wise to watch who laughs from every side.



Medallion at the Pacifist Cannibal Lounge in Cicurug, Java, Indonesia
Photograph by BT Shaw

SUSANNE PAOLA ANTONETTA

All Over Again

Three weeks before the 2016 U.S. election, in a city many of the folks who voted for Donald Trump would call their spiritual home, I walked through the Yad Vashem, Jerusalem's Holocaust Museum. It's laid out as a glass and stone trapezoid of hallways, each few broken up by what the architect calls a "disruption"—a break, impassable—in the floor. You can walk around the disruptions, but you cannot cross them. The stoppages are the point.

As I walked into the museum I cried, before the Holocaust history even began, at a film that showed Jews in pre-war Europe: one girl looked uncannily like my childhood best friend. The girl in the film had Bonnie's pin-curled hair, quick, snaggly smile, face shape. They could have been kin. In Elizabeth, New Jersey, where I lived, many of my neighbors were Jews who, like Bonnie's parents, had fled the war. I knew a husband and wife—friends of my aunt's—who'd been forced to send fellow Jews to their deaths at their concentration camp. My aunt told me of this (told me tensely, and only once), *It was save yourself and save a few others or die and save no one. So they did the first.*

Like many Americans, I'd come across the world of the alternative right through this election. I checked out the websites, from *Breitbart* to *American Renaissance* to the openly neo-Nazi *Daily Stormer*, saw the cartoon images of Trump transformed into a citron-haired, comb-overed frog—inhabiting the alt right's favorite symbol of

itself, Pepe. Trump re-tweeted fake facts from the alt right, including that 81% of murdered white folks are killed by blacks, the kind of pop-eyed information Nazi papers once reported about Jews. In January of 2016 Trump re-tweeted a message—a photo of Jeb Bush photoshopped as a beggar—that hailed from the hashtag #white genocide, out in “Jewmerica.” It was a move the founder of the *Daily Stormer* called going “full-wink-wink-wink to his most aggressive supporters,” meaning the *Stormer’s* followers, of course, and himself.

How the news of October 2016 echoed in those halls of the Yad Vashem: ethnic groups condemned as rapists, as killers. Registries. Of course, our economy is not what Germany’s was before the war; we have legalized gay marriage; there are plenty of differences. History repeats, but like all organic repetitions, it doesn’t repeat exactly. Its DNA shifts. That should not reassure us. DNA shifts are notoriously superficial: color, texture, not heart.

And, if it seems odd in 2016 that groups in the U.S. devoted to the idea of racial purity, and a white populism kicking off from that, would look to a billionaire for inspiration, it is not. It is an echo, or, as Yogi Berra would call it, *deja vu* all over again.

For this recurrence we visit another place, a door that leads conceptually straight to the Yad Vashem: Number 4 Tiergartenstrasse in Berlin. Here at this address on a bureaucratic street a project known as T4, *Aktion T4* in German, was developed and implemented. Aktion T4 began in 1939 and predated the Holocaust by two years, and it provided the Holocaust with its vision and its technology. T4 mandated the euthanasia of the mentally and physically disabled, and began in 1939 with the murder of five thousand young children. It later expanded to older children and adults, mostly mental patients.

The roots of T4 had been laid decades before Hitler, with a eugenics movement that largely migrated to Germany from its home in the States. Eugenics flourished with funding provided by the rich—the Carnegies and the Rockefellers, the Harrimans, and the

Kelloggs. The Rockefeller Foundation established the Kaiser Wilhelm eugenics institute in Germany, as well as the lab where Josef Mengele worked before moving to Auschwitz. We led Germany in forcible sterilization.

Our 1924 Immigration Act was designed to greatly limit the number of people we let in from southern and eastern Europe, the sources of the eugenicists’ “inferior races.” It was a time of heavy immigration. Like the alt right and Mr. Hashtag White Genocide, eugenics groups saw in this the dilution and ultimate loss of their race, bright good genes sinking under strange new ones. Not to mention the threat posed by the cognitively different. An early proponent of creating a thing called a gas chamber to kill mental patients was the Carnegie Institute, here in the U.S., in the early 1920s.

The Carnegie Institute also kept rooms full of index cards on thousands of American families, notes on which should be allowed to breed. My father’s and my mother’s could have been there, his dark peasant Italian, hers West Indian and regularly visited with insanity.

T4 doctors ended up going the way of the Carnegie Institute. They asphyxiated, overdosed, and starved patients but found these methods unwieldy, so they established death centers (*Tötungsanstaltens*), with gas showers and attached crematoria, at mental institutions.

Some of the children killed by T4 had been surrendered, incredibly, by their parents: not a happy choice, doctors advised, but a matter of social hygiene. Ultimately T4 slaughtered two hundred thousand people, and created Hitler’s technology of mass death. T4 doctors were recruited to carry out the Holocaust.

As a teenager, diagnosed with schizophrenia (I am actually bipolar), I was told little about my diagnosis, but my parents were advised to expect a lifetime of institutionalization for me. They never doubted the words of doctors; in their minds they let me go, a loosening I can barely articulate but will never forget. Like many females diagnosed with anything psychiatric in the 60s and 70s,

I got round after round of memory-blotting shock treatment, given to females over males in many hospitals at a rate of nine to one. I have lost months. But this is what people were told to do.

The role of Aktion T4 in the Holocaust is covered in the Yad Vashem, and in most books on the subject. It's rarely discussed in the public discourse of Nazism. Maybe it's too close. This particular disruption yawns at our feet in America and has never been fully closed.

I knew Bonnie's family history as a child, but before the Yad Vashem I'd only cried for her once, and that was because I learned Santa Claus didn't come to her apartment as he did to mine. I cried on my stoop, and I imagine she came to comfort me: two little girls, two little flotsam bodies the waves of history forgot perhaps to take under. Where the door of this election leads I cannot say. Only that I see a crevasse, and I don't know the way around it yet.

MATTHEW COOPERMAN

Dark Ecology & the Orange Apocalypse

In the photograph I am standing on a street corner in Helsinki, 1974, the camera looking over my blond head at a passing limousine. It's a Mercedes, bullet proof, and carries Leonid Brezhnev to a further round of SALT TALKS, hopefully, to ratchet down the nuclear threat, with Gerald Ford. Brezhnev's dark head slides by in a blur against the sultry Finnish afternoon. It's a sight made possible by my rabidly political father and his hyperactive camera. We are on vacation, a family of four, headed to Leningrad in the coming week.

Suppose a door out a window on the way to Minsk is a guardhouse and the border, gated zone in greenflannel, Kalashnikovs, red epaulettes, and my father with his stealth Ricoh snapping conspiracies under his raincoat. Suppose it like exposure, emulsion's dyingsilver. I sit as still as a samovar and the black gatepasses over me...

It is at once an image of peril, and the beginning of the end of that peril. For soon the Cold War will abate, and a New Age will usher in the Atlanteans, and their harmonic power chord of a kinder world. Rational heads will prevail, and mutuality will grow, yes...? Looking back,

that twinned watershed in world history and the becoming consciousness of a boy seems quaint. What a lovely afternoon! Yet against nostalgia for an Aquarian revolution, the tragedy had already begun:

The end of the world has already happened. We sprayed the DDT. We exploded the nuclear bombs. We changed the climate. This is what it looks like after the end of the world. Today is not the end of history. We're living at the beginning of history. The ecological thought things forward. It knows that we have only just begun, like someone waking up from a dream.

—Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*

In this important book, Morton—ecocritic, philosopher and cultural critic—deconstructs illusions of a kinder, gentler world, exposing the mutative tendencies of the anthropocene, while advocating for an embrace of the ecological thought. In short, not merely Nature (that thing, he notes, we place conveniently “over there”) but video gaming, highway systems, artificial intelligence, air pollution, media, the flow of capital, etc, all bear the mark of the ecological thought. It's a Darwinian hash right up to our ankles, and indeed inside our bacteriological selves as well; and it's continuous in scale such that everything's connected to everything else. No foreground and no background, the planet itself stitched into the mesh of space. Climate's a perfect example, warping and woofing at light speed; there is no separation between the U.S. airspace and the rain in China. And “like a horror movie, evolution is as much about disintegration as things coming together; time lapse makes things strange.”

Alive, awake in early 2017, the world is indeed strange. Donald J. Trump, the most unlikely presidential candidate in American history, teeters on the threshold of the White House. Morton's ecological thought blares warning in the arena of Trump's impending

inauguration. It's going to get darker, it probably won't get lighter, which is to say the specter of catastrophe looms daily on the horizon, even if we're mid-stream in the “catastrophe of oxygen.” When our future president declares chumminess with the very agent of war we may come to know again, and then saber rattles to the tweet, “The United States must greatly strengthen and expand its nuclear capability until such time as the world comes to its senses regarding nukes,” (22 December 2016), we're in trouble. *Putin! Putin! Putin! Puttin' on the Putin!* The din of the arena strains credulity.

Let's say polling room, intricate busing I was, Black Panthers,
blotter blue, ecumenical philosophy, a nuclear 2.2

Such buzz and then such languor: how the marsh for the mall,
the hill for the cross, the slough for the production
of burning unguents...

Accepting the legitimacy of a Trump Presidency means never having to worry about the progressive nature of history. Hegel was such a dork; the future is now, gyring like an unrelenting stream of money swirling from the rafters of the arena. Capital, cut loose from Regulation, commodifies all that it sees. Caught in its tractor beam, we unite as citizens sponsoring our demise. For make no mistake, we are complicit, and one of the consequences of Capital running the show is self-loathing. We bought in. We are riven Americans.

Another way to see this is *déjà vu*. As much as I want to look at the big picture, what Timothy Morton describes as the dark ecology of a global multiplicity, it feels strangely familiar. For we are living in the *beginning* of the central tragedy of our age, and I already thought I *had*. Bush-Gore in 2000 was the most unprecedented event in my politically mature life. How could a state (Florida) and a Supreme Court (Scalia, etc), have so thoroughly stolen an election? And how

could the awful events of 9/11—and the resulting binary of world power—Christian-Moslem—have so thoroughly been prologue? It was really weird then and it feels really weird now. And yet, I think back on those halcyon days when Americans seemed to come together in some recognition that we too are connected to the rest of the world’s violence. Sadly, that faded into the “axis of evil” and the catalyzation of a fundamentalist, nationalist anger that has swept the globe. That anger has now circulated back into American identity itself. Black Lives Matter vs. the Blue Wall, Red states vs. blue, Alt Right against Bernie Left, and yes, the dark stain of slavery, the Union vs. the Confederacy, still slaving in the jowls of American identity. What’s not to hate? It’s hard to feel good about America right now. Keeping a loving, tolerant disposition will be one of the real challenges during the Trump Administration.

Tragically, beyond the inherent racism and sexism the 2016 election cycle exposed, it’s a more classic false consciousness. How could the unemployed and uneducated, for lack of an ideological vision of a person who would fully ignite under Trump, vote in pure belief for the single worst enemy he or she has? The Billionaire with all of *his* might has nothing but Wal-Mart discounts to offer the working class. In the globalized world of Empire, heavy manufacturing is elsewhere. And now, with a cabinet of billionaires whose net worth is greater than the sum of all of the former presidents and their cabinets combined, the corporatizing of America is complete.

To be sure, the Army of Discontent is not limited to America, and drawing a specific ignition to this phenomenon is problematic. Yet we are witnessing a slide into nationalism that is chilling in its pace. Of course, it’s a further foliation of Bush’s “axis of evil” which served to demonize whole spheres of the world’s populace; the Arab Spring spawned not democracy but fundamentalism. Trump’s polarizing rhetoric plays right into the hands of jihadi terror.

Team Trump: “The clash of civilizations is back!” (20 November 2016). The Donald’s got the launch codes. Ozymandian sands cannot be far behind.

As a biopolitical body America is passing out of one state of sovereignty and into another. Trump’s fluid corporatism obtains a shape, a form, even as it deterritorializes the presidency itself. *Unpresidented!!! Boo! Not fair!* Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire* prophetically described something of this state back in 2000:

Empire is materializing before our very eyes. Over the past several decades, colonial regimes were overthrown and then precipitously after the Soviet barriers to the capitalist world market finally collapsed, we have witnessed an irresistible and irreversible globalization of economic and cultural exchanges. Along with the global market and global circuits of production has emerged a global order, a new logic and structure of rule—in short, a new form of sovereignty.

The litany of impending disaster grows luminous: A gutted EPA led by a climate change denier. The State Department run by an oil tycoon. The Treasury controlled by a Goldman-Sach’s partner. A Navy SEAL as Secretary of the Interior. Public education policy spawned by a theocrat with vouchers. Affordable housing helmed by a bumbling doctor who admittedly is over his head. Labor run by the ruthless CEO of Hardee’s. Civil Rights protections shackled by an openly racist and sexist prosecutor. The Speaker of the House defunding Planned Parenthood. And the Supreme Court, that most long-aged body, looming like a deconstructive jurist with a very old white wig. Having come through the WPA, the Civil Rights Movement and its resulting Great Society, we stand on the precipice of some civil collapse. I am too disbelieving to think all of this is

true, and yet each day a tweet comes in announcing the Orange Apocalypse. America eats its tail. That tail is connected to a head, and we will have to work out the connection in the coming years. To wit, Trump is dark ecology, and his intricately global economy embodies our new world order. It is a display, daily, of tweets and memes of influence, mere attention, beyond any ostensible content, and that attention is precisely the connective argument of dark ecology. Marshall McLuhan sleeps a restless sleep; and we must contend with the message.

Yet still I dream, recurringly. In a parallel universe former President Al Gore nods graciously to outgoing President Obama, while President-elect Clinton gets ready to make history. I dream this green dream, again and again, and a more unified, peaceful earth cools a little.



In another photograph I am seen from above, leaning on a railing on a marble dais overlooking a parade ground. I look casual, it's clearly hot, and I sweat in my tank top and OP shorts, no doubt a bit bored by the monuments. It's a nice photo, kodachrome nostalgic, seemingly random, but it's not, it's Nuremberg, and there I am, a vaguely Jewish Californian, poised for the camera like progress. We shall see.

ANNA GURTON-WACHTER

The Hanging Crystal

A woman keeps stumbling into the traffic intersection. Her eyes are on the sky, drunk. I try to bring her back to the curb. "No! This is where I belong!" she screams, falling onto the hood of an oncoming car. The homeless guy watching says maybe there are too many humans anyway. Then he has a giggle and a sigh. I step into the well-lit room. The presentation begins on Erotics and Embodiment. Afterwards someone asks the panel when they stopped trusting in the human capacity for imagination. A stranger looks me in the eyes and says, "Get me out of here." By look me in the eyes I mean posts something on the internet. By "Get me out of here" I mean they say, "Peace and love."

Alex reads a poem about whiteness. Stacy reads a poem about mourning. Ian reads a poem about underground tunnels. Thom reads a poem about writing letters. I start to talk to Dan about an idea I have not fully formed yet. All of the ideas seem to hang in the air with invisible question marks floating beside them. Jeremy says he could barely bring himself to be here today. Adjua gives me a warm hug and then abruptly starts talking about an upcoming funeral. Charity says at least now all conceptual poetry will go away for good. Just kidding, she says, nothing ever really goes away. Then the poets giggle and sigh.

I sit down at a restaurant facing a couple, one of whom is dangling a crystal on a long chain, letting it hang a few inches above her steaming plate of food. I love that I get to witness this, seeing the crystal provide some crystalline data as to whether or not to begin eating, catching light that sends messages about what eating will do for her spiritually, what kind of change it will make in the body, in the mind. Transformation and liveness intact. At least there is this moment.

Sometimes the old New York is alive in these beings, the ones who still have the desire to protect an aura of consumption, to let some material voice decide one's hunger, one's state of being fed, and I think is this the last of our treasured time together, neighbor? I witness this act and steal a vow from my ancestors. I say out loud, "I am going to the city where I can most be appreciated." The town, the planet, the underground tunnel. Overwhelm me. Descendants of purge overwhelm me. Our feminist materialities overwhelm me!

Robert has a way of being in the world that I decide I want to emulate when I can. I think THIS, recognizing whom to emulate, surrounding myself with these voices, is what I want from life. Bruce asks us where the protests begin and end. I sit down on the train next to a stranger and all at once he starts telling me his life story, no preamble, just unburdening himself, he says. At the halfway point in the life story the man looks in his wife's eyes and tells her he can see her death approaching. Maybe now is not the time for Robert's brand of gentleness after all. I tell another stranger about how I don't have good boundaries with strangers. Nick sends a text and behind all of his words I hear him saying, "You can throw your hostility at me. I can take it." MC tells a room of her colleagues that now is the time when we need to talk about our abortions without shame and then the room falls a new kind of silent.

Then all the stories of what classrooms are like now, what teaching has become, how many kinds of people can't get out of bed. I'm there too. I wake up and Ian is crying on my shoulder. How long have we all been here, like this, collapsing and waking up mid-cry? Was that today or some other day replaying itself in staggered loops?

I see myself standing on top of the Empire State Building holding the last of the potable water in a small vessel strung around my neck. The old New York was always here, ready to validate any crisis, watching as I take the last drinkable water and bury it next to my pen, my computer, my whole self. Another kind of gift appears and it is thirst, one could say, but I'm not there yet. I leave work midday to go to the movies. The movie is about a sanitation worker who becomes obsessed with surfing. There is no talking, just beautiful teenagers staring at waves. I talk to my doctor on the phone and he recommends not eating anymore. He says fast. He says all degeneration is normal. I keep hearing in my head on repeat "all degeneration is normal." The new New York and the old New York are holding hands, waving to me, getting ready for the age of broken affinities. I seek only the surroundings of my descent into youth. A reminder that every pose I've ever done is child's pose. "Fuck this unity bullshit." I hear a voice in the movie theater call out in the dark, throwing a bottle at the screen. I forget to ever go back to work. I hang the crystal over my new name and prepare to feast. Who said that? Is someone there? The new kind of silence screams. Listening to it is how I begin to collect myself and listening to it is how I piss into the many mouths of yesterday.

It's years later. I mean days. The television chooses the channel. The comedian appears, the one who gave up comedy to host this classic game show. In error, a black square covers half of the screen. I can't

see the contestants' faces. I wake up inside the spill. My eyes are slick black shut but I see you, my friend, hovering above the oil, breathing into its mass for me. Then the contestants jump in and out of the frame. All of the jobless people at home watching with me. What else can we do? Or was that just blood spilling inside of me again? Someone wins something. The formula stays the same, a guess is made at how much it all costs. Out the window I see an animatronic Santa waving to passersby. Nick texts that he is dying. No, it's called living, I say. Same thing. My abortions are also my accomplishments. I say it like it's nothing, like it's not important, and Adjuia who is listening doesn't hear it that way. I have to remind myself to break down my casualness more slowly. To ripen towards care. I woke up inside the spill laughing. Maybe the television game show host still gets to be funny sometimes, and the beautiful model who stands beside the dining room set and the brand new car whisper sweet words to him as he falls asleep in his dressing room at the end of the day when the show is finally over. Dear sweet and salty teardrop words, overwhelm me. Overwhelm me, how much does it cost. Overwhelm me, how much does it continue to cost.

ABY KAUPANG

selections from *13 Lines*

In the month following Donald Trump's election to President of the United States, the Southern Poverty Law Center received over 1,094 reports of hate crimes. A burst of hate. The following poems were written with the assistance of the *Hate on Display* database through the Anti-defamation League's website and in-part for the Holter Museum of Art's traveling exhibition, *Speaking Volumes: Transforming Hate* which will travel through my hometown of Fort Collins in January 2017. The exhibit was birthed in 2004 when copies of the Creativity Movement's,—a virulent white supremacist group—"bibles" landed in the hands of artists who were asked to "respond to, integrate or transform" the racist books in provocative ways. The following poems seek to simultaneously educate readers on frequent hate symbols and acronyms which now pollute the world around us, as well as to transform the language of hate.

PARENTHESES

reshape nest

a serpent she tears a sprees then ashes ten per rape he's sent
reap he nests pears he sent reap she nets era she spent
eras he spent

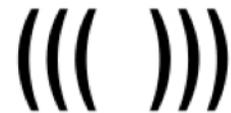
heaps resent hearse spent

paths serene neat spheres

shapes enter

aspens there anthers seep panthers see

asters



Multiple parentheses—or the “echo,”—is a typographical practice used by anti-Semites on-line to denote the being or thought inside the parentheses is Jewish. Ex: (((Natalie Weiss))). The use of the echo was relatively uncommon, but in the spring of 2016, anti-Semites began using the echo when responding to or re-tweeting Jewish journalists, or journalists thought to be Jewish, which brought more attention to the practice. Anti-Semites began using inverted parentheses themselves, on their own screen names, to indicate that they were not Jewish or were anti-Jewish.

RAHOWA

RaHoWa

a war oh!

a war ho!

a raw oh

a rah ow

a hora

aha!

row

RAHOWA

RAHOWA is an acronym for “Racial Holy War,” a term created by the Creativity Movement, a white supremacist pseudo-religion, as a rallying cry for the white supremacist cause. Over the years, its usage spread beyond Creativity Movement members into the broader white supremacist movement.

BOUND FOR GLORY

Long Body Furor Born Dourly Fog Furor Bony Gold

Goodby Fur Lorn	Bong Dolor Fury	Burn Godly Roof
		Burn Goodly Fro
Blond Four Orgy	Nobly Dog Furor	Burn Goodly For
Bloody Frog Run	Nobly God Furor	Burn Godly Roof
Bold Furry Goon	Nobly Gourd Fro	Burn Drool Fogy
Bond Furor Logy	Nobly Gourd For	Burn Dolor Fogy
Bod Forlorn Guy	Nobly Drug Roof	Burn Lord Goofy
Bod Flurry Goon	Nobly Dour Frog	
Broody Flog Run		Boo Dong Flurry
Broody Flog Urn	Burn Flood Orgy	Boo Dry Furlong
Body Floor Rung	Burn Flood Gory	

Bold Urn Of Orgy

Bold Urn Of Gory

Born Old Fury Go Born Do For Ugly

Body Flog Run Or Blood Fry Gun Or Body For Lung Or

Rob Found Glory

Rob Ungodly

Rob Ungodly

Drub Of Glory On

Drub Of Glory On

Drub Of Glory On



Bound for Glory is the name of an African-American hymnal co-opted by a longstanding white power music band (dating back to 1989) from Minneapolis. It is popular among white supremacists.

SASHA STEENSEN

Bellwethers

Shame & My Left Breast

Hands on your breast can keep your heart beating.

—Jenny Holzer, *The Survival Series*

1.

For the past year, I have been writing about shame—its etymology, its history, its cultural import, its power and its pitfalls. When I began the essay, Donald Trump was on his way to securing the Republican nomination. From June 2015, when he announced his candidacy, to June 2016 when he became the obvious front-runner, Trump managed to insult a wide-range of individuals and groups. If I were to offer a timeline of Trump's path to the nomination, shame would certainly claim its place. Consider just these incidents:

June 2015: In his speech announcing his candidacy, he called Mexicans drug dealers and rapists; a month later he was leading among GOP candidates in the USA Suffolk University poll.

September 2015: In an interview with *Rolling Stone*, he criticized the appearance of fellow Republican nominee Carly Fiorina; a few days later he hit an all-time high in a poll released by CNN/ ORC.

November 2015: Trump retweeted a false crime statistic stating that eighty percent of murders are committed by African Americans. A week later, at a campaign rally, he mocked a reporter with disabilities. By the end of the month, he was 20 percentage points above his closest rival, Ben Carson.

December 2015: Trump calls for a “total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States.”

Now he will secure the nomination, I thought. The more people he shamed, the more supporters he seemed to gain. Once he became the nominee, Trump’s groping hands appeared everywhere and his circle of shame widened.

Early on in the project, I suspected that I might write about the shame that fuels reality TV, but I wasn’t expecting to write about it as a campaign strategy. In a 2008 op-ed piece for the *Huffington Post*, Tom Alderman asked, “We root for the neo-executives on *The Apprentice*. But aren’t we really waiting for the last three minutes when the strange man with the orange-colored, vinyl hair utters ‘You’re fired’ through his pouty lips?” Trump transformed the shaming model that made *The Apprentice* so popular into a political tool, thus ensuring that he would receive all the free publicity the media could offer. Presenting himself as immune to shame, Trump was able to project patriarchal strength, thus mobilizing voters who have long felt powerless and ignored. When Trump capitalized on the shame these voters felt, promising to turn their shame into pride by “making America great again,” he was inviting his supporters to identify with him, a rich, powerful figure who can say and do whatever he pleases without repercussions.

I honestly don’t know what originally drew me to the subject of shame, and I certainly couldn’t have predicted the ways it would play out politically, but by November 8th, I was seeing its blushing form

everywhere. To stay home and write about shame on election day felt akin to watching a bully humiliate someone from a safe distance. Instead, I made a shirt that read “Tell me how you feel about your vote,” and I listened. I spent the day 100 feet away from four different polling stations, recording over five hours of responses. I never asked anyone who they voted for, nor did I ask about specific issues. I made it clear I was interested only in voters’ emotions. Nonetheless, people often used a particular phrase to suggest which way they voted (“I’m ready for change;” “Washington is crooked;” “I was happy to vote for a woman;” “I didn’t vote for either of those clowns”). When I headed home at the end of the day, I sensed that about one-third of the voters I talked to voted for Trump, and at least a dozen voted independent.

Listening to the recordings a week after we received news of Trump’s success, I was struck by the fact that the same emotions seemed to come up again and again, from voters on all sides. Just as I heard as I campaigned for Clinton, many voters told me they wished the options had been better, and while some voters reported feeling “good,” “great” and even “fantastic” about their vote, the majority of voters I talked to had less positive feelings. They reported feeling “disappointed,” “sick,” “like crap,” “shitty,” “stress-y,” “conflicted,” and “confused.” One man told me that the candidates “made [his] skin crawl,” and another woman said they “left a bad taste in [her] mouth.” Not surprisingly, many voters told me they were voting against someone rather than for someone, and one likened this election season to “a popularity contest,” while another compared it to a “playground fight.”

If voters didn’t mention their emotions, I asked the follow up question, “Do any emotions come to mind when you think back on this election cycle?” I felt most connected to people when they answered this question because, as one voter told me, “People often vote with their emotions and emotions are formed out of people’s

experiences.” Perhaps the most common emotions I heard were fear, sadness, anger, and disgust. But I also heard the words “embarrassed” and “ashamed” several times throughout the day. One man said, “We’ve humiliated ourselves as a country; this election is beneath us.”

There is no doubt that shame played a large and multifaceted role in Trump’s success. His megalomania, racism, sexism, and xenophobia have certainly emboldened him, but Trump’s comments are not merely a reflection of his own questionable mental or moral state. Instead, Trump has deliberately played a game in which he speaks a rallying cry of bigotry and waits for the inevitable, “You should be ashamed of yourself.” Trump then redirects that shame by mocking his detractors, inciting violence, or attacking an individual or a group. The magic happens in the redirection because it is at that moment when Trump is able to mobilize those who share his views and those who have felt displaced or ignored by the government for decades.

Trump understands that the white working class, and much of the white middle class, have long felt their opportunities shrinking. And to be fair, jobs have gone overseas and many people do feel deep economic insecurity. But these same people have often also assumed that while their opportunities have shrunk, others, namely immigrants, people of color and women, have seen their opportunities flourish. For these voters, a black president was proof of these shifting opportunities. Of course, this couldn’t be further from the truth, but Trump knew that if he spoke to those suspicions, he would speak to a large portion of Americans. He knew that many white Americans would love to successfully transfer their shame to someone else, namely to someone not white.

It is possible, too, that shame operated in Trump’s favor in another, somewhat unexpected way as well. As far back as December 2015, some pollsters were speculating that Trump’s candidacy was inspiring what has been referred to as the “mode effect” in which voters give different answers about who they plan to vote for depending on

how they are polled. In Trump’s case, some suggested, “A sizable percentage of poll respondents, though willing to punch a phone key to say they support Trump, are still too embarrassed to actually tell another human being” (McGill).

I would venture to say that a lot of those embarrassed Trump supporters were women who felt conflicted about their vote. I know of several women who reluctantly voted for Trump despite the fact that they know that his comments about women’s bodies are deeply damaging. I don’t know how to understand their voting choices, but I do know that the Access Hollywood tapes are proof that a Trump administration presents a direct threat to women’s bodies. One outspoken female Trump supporter I talked to dismissed the tapes noting, “All men talk that way because all men are pigs.” All men aren’t pigs, but those who are will be emboldened by this president. Women: hold tight your bodies.

2.

Two weeks after the election, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. My immediate thought upon hearing the diagnosis was, “I cannot leave my daughters with Trump as their President.” This thought revealed a tangle of anxieties that are deeply tied to my biology. I was still reeling from the wound of Trump’s election when I learned about the tumors growing in my left breast. Suddenly, my body became the site of a battle I could not afford to lose.

But the real revelation was that my body had always been such a site. While I had hoped that my daughters might experience their bodies as fully their own, I had to admit that as long as we validate men who believe women’s pussies are up for grabs, our bodies will always be battlefields. During the election season, several women relayed stories of Trump’s violation of their bodies, particularly their

breasts; he took it upon himself to grab or fondle them in elevators, at parties, during photo shoots, at restaurants. In 2006, Howard Stern asked Donald Trump if he would honor his vows to Melania if she were injured in an accident that left her arms, face and legs mangled. Trump answered with a question, “How do the breasts look?” (Salisbury).

“*The breasts.*” The article in this question is telling. Melania’s breasts don’t belong to her, but she is not alone. She has centuries of company, including Marie-Antoinette. Louis XV is rumored to have asked after the future queen’s breasts, “And her breasts? That’s the first thing one looks at in a woman.” It seems even the richest of women can’t be said to own their own breasts. As Marilyn Yalom asks at the beginning of her *A History of the Breast*,

Who owns the breast? Does it belong to the suckling child, whose life is dependent on a mother’s milk or an effective substitute? Does it belong to the man or woman who fondles it? Does it belong to the artist who represents the female form, or the fashion arbiter who chooses small or large breasts according to the market’s continual demand for a new style? Does it belong to the clothing industry which promotes “the training bra” for prepubescent girls, the “support bra” for older women, and the Wonderbra for women wanting more noticeable cleavage? Does it belong to religious and moral judges who insist that breasts be chaste covered? Does it belong to the law, which can order the arrest of ‘topless’ women? Does it belong to the doctor who decides how often breasts should be mammogrammed and when they should be biopsied or removed? Does it belong to the plastic surgeon who reconstructs it for purely cosmetic reasons? Does it belong to the pornographer who buys the rights to expose some women’s breasts, often in settings demeaning and injurious to all women? Or does it belong to the woman for whom breasts are a part of her own body? (3-4)

If the answer to the final question is *yes*, women have to go through a lot of people before they can take ownership of their own breasts. No one lays such claims on men’s bodies.

In the course of three weeks, my breast underwent biopsies, mammograms, ultrasounds, MRIs, and examinations by countless doctors, nurses, and technicians. My breast emerged as an entity with a history to tell—when did it first mature; was it subjected to birth control, and if so, for how long; did it feed babies; did it suffer from clogged ducts; how many biopsies did it undergo; did it have a history of lumps; did it want to be saved or lopped off, replaced with a bigger version of itself? I wasn’t sure what my breast wanted, but I knew I wanted to keep my breast, however altered it might be after surgery.

Thankfully, this was my oncologist’s recommendation. Mastectomy is a much more complicated surgery than lumpectomy, and removing the entire breast wouldn’t significantly lower the risk of further breast cancer. But, the first surgeon I saw did not agree. He was adamant that my breast would not look like the other breast. I “was young,” he said, and I would want “to wear a bathing suit.” He recommended a double mastectomy with implants. “Any size you want,” he said. He continually looked to my husband for support, and when he found none, he demanded I consult with a plastic surgeon. Handing me his colleague’s business card, he said he’d be willing to do the lumpectomy, but he didn’t recommend it.

For the first time since I weaned my youngest daughter, seven years prior, my breast no longer felt like mine anymore. The surgeon’s insistence on appearance reminded me that, at least in part, my breast had always belonged to the breast-obsessed culture that looks first at a woman’s chest to assess her worthiness. If I refused to replace my smaller, deformed breast, I would forfeit my greatest power—my attractiveness. Before anger set in, I felt a tinge of shame. The shame I had already been feeling—for thinking I was healthy when I was in fact sick; for causing my daughters to worry years down the road

about their own breasts; for having to back out of family and work responsibilities; for drinking alcohol, taking birth control pills, and eating poorly when I was a young adult—was brought to the surface by this surgeon who reminded me that my breast has never been entirely my own.

Wayne Koestenbaum defines humiliation as “the intrusion of an unwanted substance or action upon an undefended body” (29). Cancer was the intrusion that turned so many eyes toward my left breast, but it also initiated other intrusions, some meant to cure, but all involving harm. The surgeon’s recommendation to remove and replace my breasts was a humiliation that reflected the culture’s insistence that the breast must *look* healthy even if it isn’t. Cancer may itself be a violation that is remitted only by further violations, but this particular violation would only complicate my treatment. It would be easy to see the surgeon as the “unwanted substance or action” but it would be shortsighted. He is a symptom of a culture that continues to lay claim to women’s bodies as aesthetic objects there for the grabbing.

Florence Williams calls breasts “the bellwethers for the changing health of people,” and while she is referring primarily to the breast’s vulnerability to environmental pollutants, the same could be said about the breast’s ability to signal the health of our society as a whole (11). As long as the breast is not allowed to belong to the body that carries it, we will be sick. Why is this? The easy answer is that objectification of women hurts at least half of our population. But perhaps it is also because the breast is the organ that paved the way for society itself. As Williams writes, “breast-feeding may well have enabled the development of gesture, intimacy, communication, and socialization. Our nipples helped develop and prepare the human palate for speech” (4). Regardless of whether we were breast or bottle-fed, our primordial breast formed the lips and strengthened

the muscles we would use to speak, to be in communion with one another, to be intimate.

A large part of my initial grief upon finding out that my left breast had been infected was the realization that the very thing that had nurtured and sustained my daughters was now hurting me. As a new mother, I found breastfeeding to be both deeply fulfilling and impossibly challenging. In this way, it served as a useful introduction to the experience of parenting in general. Swollen breasts, clogged ducts, low milk production, and a jaundiced baby who would fall asleep long before she received enough milk, all made for painful, sleep-deprived days. The well-intended lactation specialist I had the misfortune of consulting insisted that I either breastfeed or pump every-other-hour, day and night, for several weeks. Not surprisingly, this left me depleted and exhausted, and when my mother-in-law witnessed me pumping without bottles attached, milk pooling on my lap, she convinced me to call off the milk-production experiment.

The sweeter moments involved my daughter stroking my chest and looking up at me, or unlatching to babble syllables that slowly but magically came to sound a lot like “mama.” Williams’s assessment that the breast plays a primary role in the development of speech is obvious to anyone who has watched a baby nurse. Their mouth opens to an O, and when the mouth finds the nipple, it closes, engaging and exercising every muscle it will soon use to speak. Patterns used in breastfeeding foreshadow patterns used for speech. Plosives require that we seal and retract our lips. To pronounce fricatives, we suck in our cheeks. We need a strong tongue to make an “l” or an “r” sound. And this is just the mechanics of speech. The baby learns the fundamentals of communication as she stares at her mother’s face, studying her expressions and gestures, listening to her soft, soothing words.

But the process of learning to speak is not simply a matter of mimicry. Linguists have disagreed as to why so many languages share similar words for mother and father, but I tend to believe that these

words are a collaboration, in which the baby's babblings meet the parents' eager ears. Making the sound that comes most easily to her, the babbling baby names the mother. The mother then responds with encouraging facial expressions and excited words, teaching the baby that her sounds have meaning. As Roman Jakobson notes, this is a crucial moment of shared understanding in which mother and baby discover their own collaborative creativity: "the so-called 'baby talk' used by the grownups when speaking with infants is a kind of pidgin, a typical mixed language, where the addressers try to adjust themselves to the verbal habits of their addressees and to establish a common code suitable for both interlocutors in a child-adult dialogue" (538).

Mama. Mammary. Mammal. If the baby names the mother, she also names the breast. And, by extension, she names a whole family of animals that include humans. We have the breast and the baby to thank for our humanity. And, I suppose we have Linnaeus to thank as well since he forever linked mammals to the female breast when he coined the term "Mammalia." Prior to this, we were simply known as quadrupeds. Just a few decades after Linnaeus, the bare-breasted female figure became a favorite symbol of the French Revolution. As Yalom writes, "female breasts were enlisted to convey a wide array of republican ideals, such as liberty, fraternity, equality, patriotism, courage, justice, generosity, and abundance. The idea of the Republic as bounteous mother, her swelling breasts accessible to everyone, has been a mainstay of liberal politics ever since" (120).

It is tempting to be nostalgic for a time when a woman's biggest obstacle to laying claim to her own breast was a hungry nation needing to be fed. That almost seems an easier obstacle to overcome than the inevitable ramifications of having a president who believes that he has an inalienable right to grab women's pussies and breasts. If the French adapted classical models of bare-breasted women, ready to feed a populace or fight against anyone who threatened the Republic,

what might our symbol be? When I close my eyes to imagine it, all I see is an ocean of men in red hats, arms outstretched, ready to grab me. Without a second's hesitation, I put my right hand upon my heart, not to pledge allegiance, but to hold tight my left breast.

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JENNIFER KWON DOBBS

Some Trees and a Prayer of Thanksgiving

... So why do I tell you
anything? Because you still listen, because in times like these
to have you listen at all, it's necessary
to talk about trees.

—Adrienne Rich, "What Kind of Times Are These"

From that place between a chestnut and cedar where grass grows uphill
there's a hunter sharpening his jackknife. A pale bride
lists back and forth in the form of a doe's white stomach
shaved pink for the taking.

And inside her belly, there's a voice
that is not yet a voice
ringed with cartilage, ringed in promise
of a time when the hunter sketched maps and stitched camouflage nets

under the cold stars, under the trees' civil congress
checked and balanced by an autumn wind—
the doe racing among birch aisles, her cloven hooves cutting
a signature, a pact with that leafmold paradise

that I, insouciant mammal, also needed.
The trees witness

the hunter remove his jacket and spread blue tarp for the dismantling
we can forecast by his implements.

Do I need to explain
crouched under a twig thicket for you to see?



You, who submits your homework on time, it's April 29. I'm writing
to you from a bus stop in Pittsburgh, my skin on fire, my skin like
that of Bonnie Pham and her son Chris Pham weeping on the
Post-Gazette's front page, "Cold killer's 20-mile trail leaves 5 dead,"
and as I board the 71C to cross Shadyside to the Pitt campus, I burn
like a target among the white people reading or daydreaming while
plugged into their Walkmans, their backs slouched against safety
glass, their legs stretched out across entire rows.

I go to the back of the bus among the sleepers, and my skin
hurts with the knowledge *What if?* What if Richard Baumhammers
boarded this bus and pulled out a gun? Whose skin would become
scenery like trees impassive to the forest floor? Whose skin would he
gaze past, his grip tightening on the Glock, his line of sight tracking?
Whose skin would he read in the crosshairs?

I do the math: there are 17 white women, 12 white men, a black
bus driver, and me. Boarding the bus, Baumhammers would need
to spread his arms out like a tree—his right hand pointing to the
driver and his left hand at me. I redo the math: two targets, one tree.

The bus swerves on to Liberty Avenue, and the weight of this
knowledge guts me. My body like a pouch empties out; a terrible
wind that is not a voice flaps inside of me and hardens a beak. This
public space in which my brown body is not safe rattles like a tin
can, but I absorb the shock. I swallow the crow that tries to break
out of my throat.



I see you, Jeremy. I see you, brother-in-law, driving a truck to a Catoosa oilrig and slugging back Jägerbombs after your shift ends. I see your YouTube video about President Obama as a monkey, your Ben Carson bumper sticker, and Croatian bullpup rifles locked in a living room safe, the key around your neck next to your heart, your heart 100 percent ‘merican—the best country on Earth—and I hear the pride in your voice as you tell your two teenage boys that they’re ‘mericans, so they don’t need to watch what they say ‘round any foreigner who doesn’t love this country as much as they do, who has no right to this country like they do.

And I see you cast your vote for Trump on Election Day. I see your wall that you’ve slowly built between us manifest at a public high school, just miles north of my home in Saint Paul. Swatsikas spray-painted on the school’s bathroom stalls, Go Back to Africa, #Whitesonly, #Whiteamerica, Trump. And I wonder if you remember that you have a brown sister-in-law who looks like a foreigner in this version of America that you elected? I wonder if you’re worried about my brown body’s safety in this America because we’re family? I wonder if you see us as family, and if you do, why Trump’s racism wasn’t a deal-breaker for you.

I’m afraid of you, and I love you in this America.



Beloved, let us see each other.

Let us gather in the center among the trees.

Let us care for one another.

Let us pray.

O God, our creator, we give thanks for our brown and black bodies

for these vessels in which our families have poured so much love,
for the perfection of your art that is our limbs that can bend time
with dance,
for our hands that can throw clay into song,
for our eyes that can envision possibility,
for our mouths that can speak truths that our minds have cultivated
from the excellence of our reading and the wisdom of our listening
to elders and our hearts in which pumps their blood and ours.

We give thanks, Lord, for the perfection of these rivers

for the gift of teachers who mentor us to discern our hearts’
thrumming from the buzz of microaggressions that have pricked
our brown and black skins for a blood meal to reproduce casually,
but when threatened, swarm into racist slogans that have defaced
the halls of this institution that, no matter their variety, mean
“for whites only.”

Dear God, that is why we give thanks for this community,

for this family away from our families,
for the young woman of color pulling an all-nighter to earn an A
on a paper,
for the young man of color annotating his textbook and acing the exam,
for these future leaders whose time at St. Olaf College we ask you
to protect and to devote wholly to their educations, not for the
edification of others who have never lived among diversity.

God, remind our students of color that they are here because they are talented and that they are cause enough, although we know how generous their hearts, how deep their talents especially for love.

That love was figured in the temporary safe space Jabri and Don created right after the election, and as corn husks for tamales soaked in boiling water, we as a community of color cried together, listened to and fed each other, and healed our racial burdens that have doubled since Donald J. Trump's election doubled-down on racism.

God, fortify us with your love.

Rather than endure, may we thrive on the back of your love.

In this teachable moment, God, who sees beyond partisan politics and who summons us each to receive your blessings:

Bless the LGBTQI young women and men who VP-elect Mike Pence, an advocate for conversion therapy, argued before Congress signal the end of civilization.

God, open his heart to your love.

God bless the undocumented students who pay full tuition to study on the Hill and bless the students, staff, and faculty whose relatives are vulnerable to Trump's campaign pledge to round up the undocumented on day one.

God, open his heart to your love.

God bless the Muslim members of our community for whom Reince Priebus recently said Trump's team wouldn't rule out a forced registry.

God, open their hearts to your love.

God bless the international students who fear whether after interim they'll be allowed to re-enter this country and to continue studying at St. Olaf.

God, open borders with your love.

God bless the women on this campus and everywhere now that the United States has elected a president who bragged, "Grab them by the pussy. Just kiss."

God, protect and empower the women with your love.

God bless our regents, president, and administrators and grant them political courage to draw inspiration from our Lutheran traditions to make this college of the church a sanctuary for all who learn, live, and work here.

God, guide their hearts with your love.

God bless the faculty to teach. God bless the staff to teach.

God, sustain their hearts with your love.

God bless the members of this community who enjoy white privilege. Move their hearts, God, with your love to become anti-racist allies.

God bless the anonymous writers of hate speech on this college campus, the Trump voters, the ones who do not believe racism is real.

God, move their hearts and minds with your love.

God, may these walls written with the names of Norwegian immigrants include the names of alumni of color. May these stones proclaim the accomplishments of our brown and black bodies alongside those of our white peers.

God, open our house to receive your love.

God, equalize the ledgers, grant FTE and resources to those with the energy and knowledge to teach about race, power, privilege, inequality, Islam, gender, sexuality, and disability.

God, let this work be seen and received as acts of love.

God—who has known me before I became me, who guided my voice while I led Youth Sunday at Disciples of Christ First Christian Church, who helped me find the right pitch as I sang alto in the choir, who humbled my hands as I passed the offertory plate as a junior deacon, and who answered my 13-year prayer to find my birth mother who serves you as a pastor in Daegu, South Korea.

God, let me be a vessel of love.

Let us all be vessels of love, as we strive to fulfill our tasks no matter our religion, no matter what name we call you, Lord, or whether we call upon you or not.

Grant us grace as we enter into the unknown that is the next four years in America.

Help us see—as we wander through this glen of trees—that bend of light that may be nothing

but a sash across the shadows,

an amber figure darting among the orange and yellow leaves,

and as we pursue this dream,

may we have the courage to give thanks for each other's goodness, and may we fulfill this task—for which we were born—with awe and delight.

Amen.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

In the aftermath of the November 8 election, students of color, female students, LGBTQI, Muslim, international, and undocumented students at my institution (like so many others at campuses across the U.S.) felt overwhelming fear and grief particularly in response to the dramatic national uptick in racist hate crimes, Trump's campaign promise to "build the wall," and Vice President-elect Pence's aggressive anti-LGBTQI legislative record. As program director of Race and Ethnic Studies, I sought a meeting with the college president to propose short-term and long-term strategies to support the students most affected by Trump's election.

Although the president did not decline our meeting, he did not move forward to schedule it.

The president usually attends daily chapel as part of his duties to “a college of the church.” Knowing this, I wrote and delivered this poem and prayer, which were broadcast live via streaming video and stored on the college’s website.

If the president would not converse with me in a secular context, then perhaps he would pray with me in a religious one? Maybe for ten minutes, we could feel and imagine together?

Since Trump’s election, racists under the banner of “academic freedom” have been emboldened to attack schools, colleges and universities, students, staff, and professors who seem to represent “a radical left agenda.” From spray-painted hate graffiti to Professor Watchlist to death threats against professors caught on video critiquing Trump’s election, these assaults occur within a leadership vacuum to end them that is likely to persist long after Trump takes the oath of office.

Now—more than ever—creative acts of feeling, sensing, thinking, and speaking are needed to resist the normalization of this violence. My poem and prayer emerge from my deep faith in art to intervene and to enact a dream.

JESSICA SMITH

Agape in the Southland Erasure Responses to the Election

[T]he only way to ultimately change humanity and make for the society that we all long for is to keep love at the center of our lives.... [W]hen we talk of loving those who oppose you and those who seek to defeat you we are not talking about *eros* or *philia*. The Greek language comes out with another word and it is agape. *Agape* is understanding, creative, redemptive good will for all men. It is an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return... It is the type of love that stands at the center of the movement that we are trying to carry on in the Southland—*agape*.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.,
“The Power of Non-Violence,” 1957

In the week prior to the election, my students and I de-accessed a number of books from our high school library, focusing on religious and historical texts that were outdated or damaged. I started teaching erasure poetry to my Experimental Literature class on November 7. The students who helped me in the library had taken the covers off the weeded books so that the interior pages could be recycled as source texts for erasure.

I took a stack of these pages to my class along with white-out, markers, and colored pencils. I showed them Tom Phillips’ *A Humument*, Mary Ruefle’s *A Little White Shadow*,

Jen Bervin's *Nets*, Michalis Pichler's *The Ego and Its Own*, Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes*, Wave Books' erasure poetry site, and Make Blackout Poetry on Instagram. We erased the random book pages that had come out of our library. We did this activity all week, varying the methods we used to erase the pages. On the third day, Wednesday, the day after the election, I was late to class because I was talking to my boss about the election and the voices of real, abject terror I was hearing from some of our more vulnerable students. I asked my class to meet me in the library instead of our normal classroom. It seemed like spatial disruption was appropriate to our shock and pain. Even now, writing about it, I am emotionally detached from it, as if it were all a bad dream and I might wake any moment.

I arrived in class and the students said, "We just want to lie on the floor." I said, "That seems like an appropriate emotional response." I let them lie on the floor of the library, on its blue carpet squares. I lay down with them. We all stared up at the ceiling. We looked at our phones. We looked at each other. We did not make erasures that day. I said, "Sometimes having an emotional response to something is enough work."

On November 10th, we resumed our normal class activities. Working from a page of Thomas R. Kelly's *A Testament of Devotion*, Issy Schwiebert illustrated a poem in colored pencil á la Tom Phillips. Her drawing shows the moon, stars, and the Earth. It reads, "humility / empties / our / intentions / we as nothing / but / desire / to have / status as / pride in our own / Earth." As in Phillips' text, Schwiebert's meaning is more impressionistic than direct. My sense is that she calls attention to the need for humility and that this ethos has global implications for ecology.



They are the passion for personal holiness and the sense of utter humility. God inflames the soul with a craving for absolute purity. But He, in His glorious otherness, empties us of ourselves in order that He may become all.

Humility does not rest, in final count, upon bafflement and discouragement and self-disgust at our shabby lives, a brow-beaten, dog-slinking attitude. It rests upon the disclosure of the consummate wonder of God, upon finding that only God counts, that all our own self-originated intentions are works of straw. And so in lowly humility we must stick close to the Root and count our own powers as nothing except as they are enslaved in His power.

But how slick and weasel-like is self-pride! Our learnedness creeps into our sermons with a clever quotation which adds nothing to God's glory, but a bit to our own. Our cleverness in business competition earns as much self-flattery as does the possession of the money itself. Our desire to be known and approved by others, to have heads nod approvingly about us behind our backs, and flattering murmurs which we can occasionally overhear, confirms the discernment in Alfred Adler's elevation of the superiority motive. Our status as "weighty Friends" gives us secret pleasures which we scarcely own to ourselves, yet thrive upon. Yes, even pride in our own humility is one of the devil's own tricks.

But humility rests upon a holy blindness, like the blindness of him who looks steadily into the sun. For wherever he turns his eyes on earth, there he sees only the sun. The



conservatism. As we have seen, however, some very "old-fashioned" religious and ethical ideas have the potential to support radical views on substantive issues and change-facilitating aims in implementation issues. The criticism of our present economic order that is sometimes grounded in these old-fashioned ideas does not emerge simply from lagging behind the march of modernity and therefore wanting the social order to return to what it was when one's values and worldviews were dominant.

Evolutionary thinking is also imbedded in some of the thinking and terminology of the Left, especially the term *progressive*, with its overtones of progress, of the assumption that as time goes on things are getting better. People on the left have often thought that they were on the side of the future, and of course one does hope, and want to assert, that one has the values that will be most conducive to abundant life under the actual social and economic conditions emerging in the world. The themes and images of Christianity, too, can be appropriated relatively easily in a way that is highly compatible with the idea of progress. But in addition, liberals who feel themselves to be on the side of "progress," and equally Marxists, are heirs to nineteenth-century evolutionary thinking, involving considerable faith in future movement in a desirable direction, not just in technology (where an evolutionary perspective seems most plausible) but in social structure and culture as well. This legacy clouds views of the political role of religion.

Evolutionary thinking can contribute to our understanding, if formulated and used cautiously. But the statements of the depth-interview respondents indicate limits to its usefulness and it appears to be an important source of the assumption that conservative politics and religious traditionalism are strongly linked.

Josy Gray erased a page from *What Does the Lord Require? How American Christians Think about Economic Justice*, by Stephen Hart. Her page features bright red, hastily colored marker in diagonal lines with the words "thinking / conditions / in the world / appropriated / views of / useless / traditionalism." Her artistic style, a single color, a square frame, and a direct message, echoes Make Blackout Poetry. Her message is clear: With the election of Trump, our sociopolitical space clings to and celebrates outdated ideas.

With a similar aesthetic, Elizabeth Hunt's polka dotted American blue and red square text, erased from an outdated text about race relations in Africa, also carries a clear message: "Violence / is / the / future." The most unambiguously anxious of the students' submissions, Elizabeth's text expresses the fears we have that violence will increase as our society fragments.

HOW DOES THE WHITE MAN?

Violence in the "model nation" of Nigeria and an uncertain future in Rhodesia are drawing attention to the plight of the white man in still another of Africa's new nations—Kenya.

Here, where a handful of white residents live in a country of millions of Africans, an experiment in "multiracialism" is under way. It is a system that the white government of nearby Rhodesia rejected when it seceded from Britain to try to go it alone.

In theory, Kenya people—white, African, Arab and Asian—are all equal. In reality, what is happening is a steady retreat by white men who have lived and worked here for years.

Yet to be determined is whether, in the end, a white minority can survive in a country dominated by backward and primitive Africans. So far, there have been more disquieting than encouraging signs.

Economic problems are mounting as farm production—basic to Kenya's national income—drops. Government and other services are deteriorating. The political future is far from certain.

The biggest complication, however, is the flight of white farmers and civil servants since this former British colony became free two years ago.

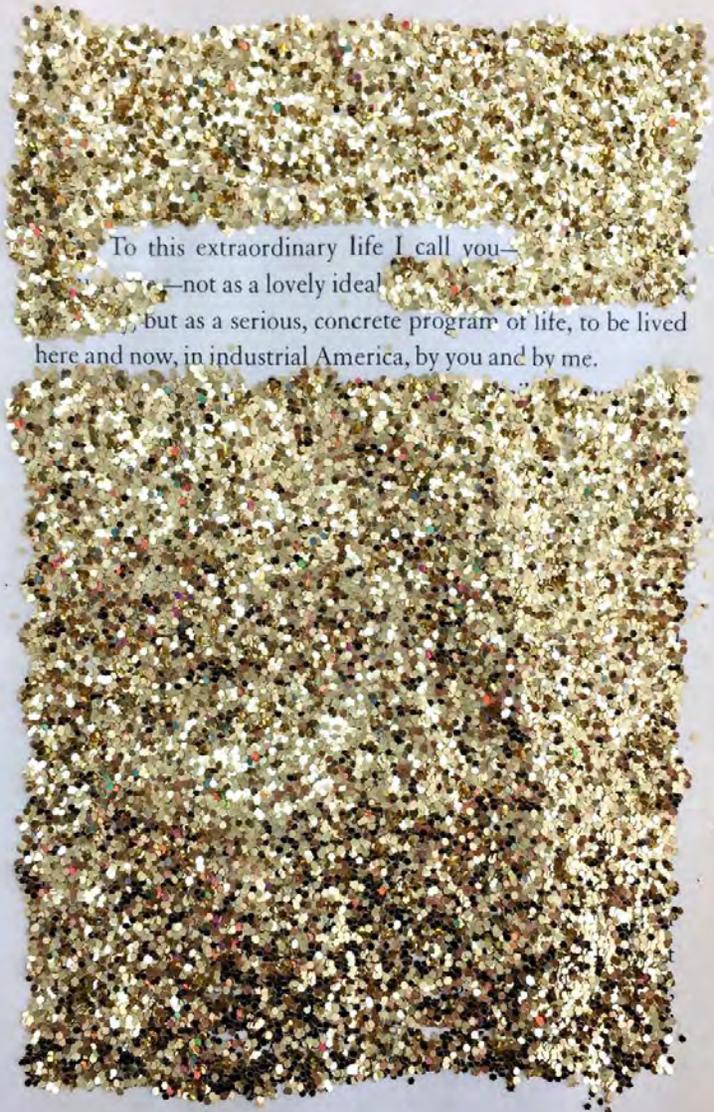
* From article "Whites in Kenya: What's Their Fate?" by Albert J. Meyers. Reprinted from *U.S. News & World Report*, 60:82-3, p. 14, '66.

As I took up the erasures alongside my students, working with them instead of just instructing them, I used a number of pages from *A Testament of Devotion*. My initial erasure process was fast and almost automatic. The words that would remain on the page stood out to me as if illuminated. The process of embellishing the pages with glitter took many more hours. I decided to use gold glitter because one thing that has always bothered me about Donald Trump is his use of gold leaf in his home décor.

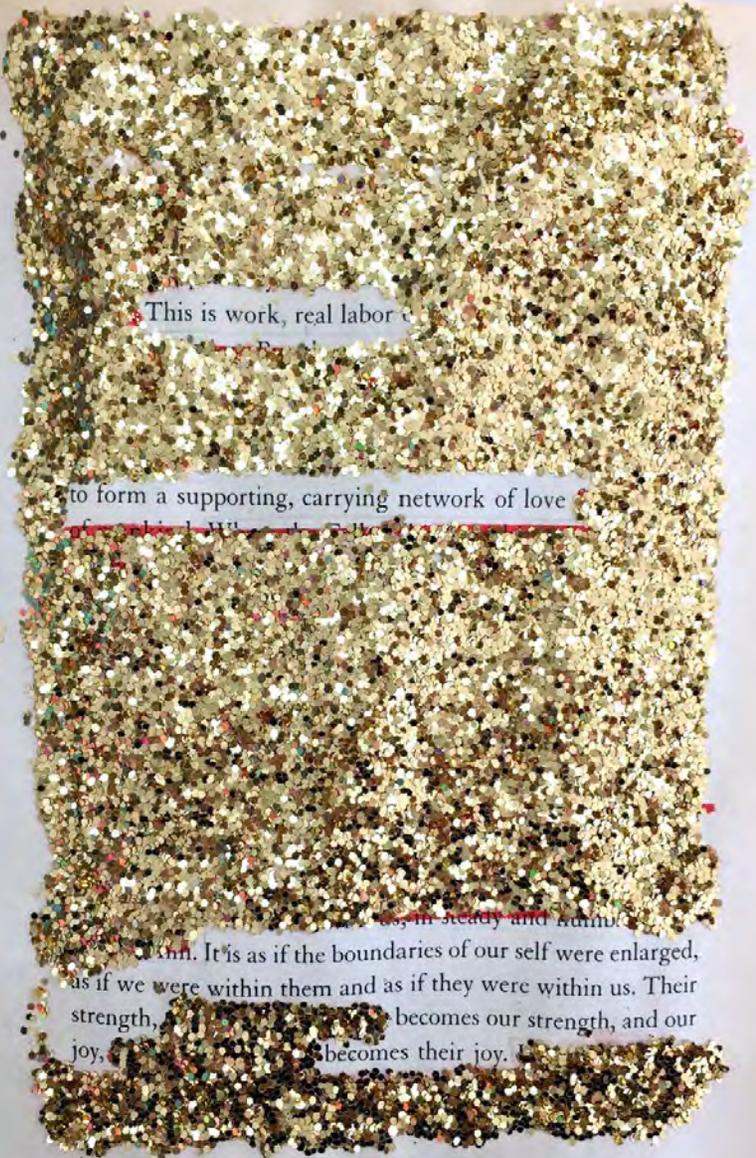
I was thinking of two things while erasing Kelly's work. First, I was thinking of *agape*—the Greek word for social love, or as Martin Luther King, Jr., explains, it's "an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return." *Glazed Glitter* is about the political efficacy of such love, which Martin Luther King, Jr., recognized, and which might be one glimmer of hope in the face of the abusive narcissist, Donald Trump, as he takes over the country. I would like to imagine that by loving one another privately, we can imagine all the threads of love that bind us to each other, and that once comfortably enmeshed in these threads, we will harm each other as little as possible.







To this extraordinary life I call you—
—not as a lovely ideal
but as a serious, concrete program of life, to be lived
here and now, in industrial America, by you and by me.



This is work, real labor
to form a supporting, carrying network of love
in steady and humble
It is as if the boundaries of our self were enlarged,
as if we were within them and as if they were within us. Their
strength, becomes our strength, and our
joy, becomes their joy.

NICOLE WALKER

Dead Dog Haired Democracy

Dog hair. I didn't grow up with any. We had cats. Or at least we had cats until my dad became allergic to them and then we sent them to the farm in Henefer, Utah, where my great uncle sheared and then slaughtered sheep and my great aunt, my mom's aunt who was only a year older than my mom, grew larger and larger in a worn and cluttered kitchen as she ate lamb chop after lamb chop. We'd visit my great aunt and her sheep but only catch a glimpse of a cat out in the field, out of the corner of our eye, maybe.

Inevitably, my dad would screw up, usually by getting another DUI, and we would get another set of cats. The last batch of cats lasted longer than my dad but eventually my mom had to move and Yoda the cat went to live in my uncle's warehouse where he housed swizzle sticks and bar napkins, thick-rimmed wine goblets, highball glasses, maraschino cherry swords. Koshka went with my mom to her new boyfriend Carl's condo until one day, two kids were walking down the Condo Lane and Carl said to the girls, "Hey, do you want a cat?" and he handed Koshka to them. My mom almost left him, but, having just divorced and then buried my dad, couldn't quite summon the energy for another parting. She would, eventually, but not because of a cat.

When I got my first dog, my mom shook her head. She did not like dogs and their slobber or their licking. The way my sister Val's dog,

Jala, jumped up on her or the way the spillover from the dog's water bowl slicked the tile floor.

When I got my first dog, my mom was unhappy. "You're a cat person," she said. And I was a cat person. I had four cats. I was possibly a one-percenter in the animal department. One percent of the population owns 50% of the animals. I was not like the people who bought their cats shirts and bow ties, but I did feed them Fancy Feast every morning. A quarter can each. When we got the dog, she got to lick out the can. My mom, sitting on my couch, pulled a dog hair from the sofa cushion and held it up to inspect. "See what happens? You let one in, it will end up in your food."

I took to vacuuming before she came over in an attempt at bipartisanship, but at some point I moved away from home and from her, taking some of the cats and all of the dog and its hair, leaving her fur-free but also one-daughter less. When she visited, the dog was allowed to sit on her lap. This was the new normal, I announced. Love the dog or don't come over. We'll get by fine on eight Supreme Court Justices. I don't need your approval.

But then bad things began to happen. My dog started shedding. Bucketfuls of hair. Our housesitter, John, whose name is now Zoe, which is the same name as my daughter's, brushed an entire black garbage bag full of hair off the dog. The provost came to dinner, pulled a black hair from his chicken pot pie. We couldn't eat lamb chops because the dog drool became more than a slick on the floor—it was an ocean of slobber that, without some bridge, we could not cross the floor.

That first dog died. We got two more. Plenty breeds plenty and we have enough fur now to cover our floor. A woman at the market spins wool made of pet hair. We have hats made of our dogs' fur and scarves made of our dogs' fur and we are really warm this season.

It didn't occur to us that at some point, we wouldn't be able to sit anywhere without dog hair, that we wouldn't be able to walk across

a dog fur-free floor, that with our hats and scarves we were becoming not dogs, but their sheddings, cast-offs that accumulated in corners. The dog hair, collected, staves off the possibility of new. It hunkers in corners, cowering from the broom, the vacuum. It's afraid of being swept up and away so it masses and collects but it just sits there—opposing any change at all.

At first you won't notice. One hair is negligible. The next, you can barely see. At some point, though, the clumps in the corners become obvious, but by then you have hair on your pants, in your jelly, in your hair. The new normal has set in and it is soft and furry and reminds of democracy, but this one, out of check, out of balance, is dead.

There's a solution for this and it is called your mother. Invite her over at least once a week. The new normal is not her normal. Your mother knows two things: fairness and cleanliness. They are each one part of the other. It's not fair to let the dogs eat all the lamb chops but it is fair to give them the bone. It is not fair to keep old useless dog hair on the couch and on the kitchen floor because you need to be a good host—invite someone new in, let them sit on sofa without worrying some animal parts will ride home with them on their jacket. If you keep the fur to a minimum, you'll keep the guest coming in—the provost and the railroad engineer, the preacher and the leader from the Hope Community Center, the teacher, and the Safeway grocery bagger. Dog, like democracy, is great, but the fur of democracy needs the prospect of your mother to keep it clean and dog hair detritus free. It's a lot of work. You might have to vacuum/call your senators every day.

JOSEPH HARRINGTON

Theses on the Eighteenth Brumaire of Donny Napoleon

1. The first time I vote for president, and the winner is who? A mentally-impaired right-wing former media celebrity who proceeds to pack his cabinet with free marketeers and war hawks.
2. And why would history spare us?
3. We braced ourselves to be drafted to fight in civil wars in Latin America, on behalf of rightist dictatorships. Anti-“minority” sentiment surged. Social programs were flayed. It was Morning in America.
4. Americans always think it is earthshattering, if it happens to happen to us. As the death toll on 9/11 rose, the radio told us “Everything Has Changed.”
5. But it was what, in the third world, they call Another Shitty Day.
6. Everything hadn't changed. It hadn't even changed for us. We're at war, but we've always been at war, declared or undeclared, covert or overt. Google “Iran-Contra.” The robber barons were in control in the late 19th century, too, and many Americans—and others—died of unrestrained capitalism.

7. He called the Contras “Freedom Fighters.” Not to be confused with “Freedom Fries,” which came later.
8. Why would history spare us? Because we haven’t read it, of course. First comedy, then farce, then a show that never gets cancelled. Because Americans produced it, it’s a feel-good romantic comedy that plays like a dark, violent action flick.
9. So of COURSE a billionaire who was raised in a rich family can sell himself as the candidate of the working class. This is America—you can be anything you set your mind to be! The original Populists didn’t have television. Or have to deal with it.
10. The real Populists back in the day knew exactly who their enemy was: Wall Street and the big banks. Nowadays people either identify with rich people (“That’s going be *me* someday. Hell, if it wasn’t for all these minorities, I’d be a millionaire by now!”) or they’re so beat down and desperate, they’ll try quack cures they don’t believe in (“Yeah, I know he’s full of shit. But maybe he’ll do some of what he says. What have we got to lose?”).
11. Trump is a hell of a salesman. It helps to have no fixed beliefs. He’d peddle socialism, if it were selling. He’d read the funny papers on live TV. He’s more Babbitt than Buzz Windrip. He’s always been in it for the money, and the presidency will be a hell of a boost to his brand. He’s always lived in America. It’s always morning for him.
12. Reading *Berlin Diary* by William Shirer. He rarely mentions his home country in the 1930s. It’s as though the madhouse of Europe made us look sane by comparison. After all, the Berlin papers carried fake news. And the Germans didn’t see through it.
13. Nowadays 20-year-old Czechs and Austrians would shrug. And do. And why would history spare Americans? [shrug]
14. If you just wait long enough, it will bowl you under. It’s a *disgrace*.
15. Most of those lovely welfare states in Europe were under fascist governments within living memory and are giving rise to volkish movements again today. And their former colonies are impoverished, many of them war zones. Mass murder affects people there no less than here. Things have not changed there, either.
16. He recounted his memories as though they were scenes in movies, which they were.
17. neoliberalism, footloose capital, advanced technologies, postfordism, corporate control, armament expenditures, society of the spectacle, there I’ve nailed it
18. And the writers continue to do what they have to do to get tenure to shelter their kids from the fallout they know they can’t control. People try to hunker down and wait for the Angel of Death to pass by. Until one day they can’t solve their own problems by themselves.
19. “Something’s got to give.” We’ve been saying that since the early 80s. Jimmy Carter saw it: he cried when it started.
20. History isn’t sparing us, even though we’re special of course.

21. Barack Obama started as a community organizer in South Chicago, and he's been one ever since. Knocking on doors, cold calling, going to fish fries. It is how you win re-election when you're unpopular. It is how you do anything. But it is very hard, very time-consuming, and often uncomfortable. And most of us are comfortable enough. In the meantime, we write our lyrical laments and wait for the clouds to lift in the Center.
22. Act as if there is no use in a center.
23. What is it that history teaches. History teaches.
24. It has no time for us.
25. Carthage really was a place where people lived their lives and they were ended.
26. I have outlived my mother, her sisters, and their father. I have lived long enough to have voted in the 1980 election. And I know the Earth for the speck of light that it is. Am I already a ghost? Or do I have substance—and if so, do I act the part?
27. Why not? What would a spare history save?

Contributors

SUSANNE PAOLA ANTONETTA's most recent full-length book is *Make Me a Mother*. She is also the author of *Body Toxic, A Mind Apart*, the novella *Stolen Moments*, and four books of poetry. Awards for her poetry and prose include a New York Times Notable Book recognition, an American Book Award, a Library Journal Best Science book of the year recognition, a Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize finalist recognition, a Pushcart Prize, and others. She lives in Bellingham, Washington.

[EP 68: *Curious Atoms: A History with Physics*]

DIANA ARTERIAN is the author of *Playing Monster :: Seiche* (forthcoming, 1913 Press), the chapbook *Death Centos* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2013), and co-edited *Among Margins: Critical & Lyrical Writing on Aesthetics* (Ricochet, 2016). She is a Poetry Editor at [Noemi Press](#) and a Managing Editor at [Ricochet](#). Her work has been recognized with fellowships from Caldera, Vermont Studio Center, and Yaddo. Born and raised in Arizona, she currently resides in Los Angeles where she is a Doctoral Candidate in Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Southern California.

[*With Lightness and Darkness, and Other Brief Pieces*
forthcoming spring 2017]

DAN BEACHY-QUICK is a poet, essayist, and occasional novelist. His most recent books include a new collection of poetry, *gentleness*, and a chapbook, *Shields & Shards & Stitches & Songs* (Omnidawn, 2015). He teaches at Colorado State University, where he directs the MFA Creative Writing Program.

[EP 23: *A Quiet Book*]

STEVE BENSON keeps tabs on his online writing and other projects [here](#). His previous chapbooks include *Steel Idea* (Miami), *The Busses* (Tuumba), *Briarcombe Paragraphs* (Moving Letters), *Dominance* (The Coincidence), and *the ball* (ubu). His 36-live-internet-improvisatory-chats collaboration with Suzanne Stein will appear in 2017 from BlazeVOX as *Do Your Own Damn Laundry*. He collaborated over a 10-year period with 10 friends to write *The Grand Piano: An Experiment in Collective Autobiography / San Francisco, 1975-1980* in 10 volumes. Since 1996, he has co-parented two offspring and worked as a clinical psychologist in Downeast Maine.

[EP 49: *What Are These Signals From?*]

LAYNIE BROWNE is the author of twelve collections of poetry and two novels. Her most recent collections are *PRACTICE* and *Scorpyn Odes*. Forthcoming collections in 2017 include: *You Envelop Me* (Omnidawn), *Periodic Companions* (Tinderbox) and a collaboration with Bernadette Mayer, *The Complete Works of Apis Mellifera* (Further Other). She is a 2014 Pew Fellow and teaches at the University of Pennsylvania and Swarthmore College.

[EP 27: *Deciduous Letters to Invisible Beloveds*]

JULIE CARR is the author of six books of poetry, most recently *100 Notes on Violence*, *RAG* and *Think Tank* (Solid Objects, 2015). She is also the author of *Surface Tension: Ruptural Time and the Poetics of Desire*

in *Late Victorian Poetry*, and the co-editor of *Active Romanticism: The Radical Impulse in Nineteenth-Century and Contemporary Poetic Practice*. Carr was a 2011–12 NEA fellow and is an associate professor at the University of Colorado in Boulder, where she teaches in the Creative Writing MFA program and the Intermedia Arts Writing and Performance PhD program. She regularly collaborated with dance artist K. J. Holmes. She lives in Denver and helps to run Counterpath Press and Counterpath Gallery.

[EP 19: *The Silence that Fills the Future*]

NICOLE COOLEY grew up in New Orleans and now lives outside of New York City. She has published six books, including the forthcoming poetry collection *Girl After Girl After Girl* (LSU Press, fall 2017). She is the director of the MFA Program in Creative Writing and Literary Translation at Queens College-City University of New York, where she is a professor of English.

[EP 61: *Frozen Charlottes, A Sequence*]

MATTHEW COOPERMAN is the author of, most recently, *Spool*, winner of the *New Measure Prize*, as well as the text + image collaboration *Imago for the Fallen World* (with Marius Lehene), *Still: of the Earth as the Ark which Does Not Move*, and others. Five chapbooks exist in addition, including *Little Spool*, winner of the 2014 Pavement Saw Chapbook Prize. *NOS (disorder, not otherwise specified)* (with Aby Kaupang) is forthcoming in 2017 with Futurepoem. A founding editor of *Quarter After Eight*, and co-poetry editor of *Colorado Review*, Cooperman teaches at Colorado State University.

[EP 52: *Disorder 299.00*]

THOM DONOVAN is the author of *The Hole, Withdrawn: a Discourse*, and *Withdrawn* (Compline, forthcoming spring 2017). He co-edits and publishes

ON Contemporary Practice. He is also the editor of *To Look At The Sea Is To Become What One Is: an Etel Adnan Reader* (with Brandon Shimoda) and *Supple Science: a Robert Kocik Primer* (with Michael Cross). He is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor of Literary Studies at Eugene Lang College.

[EP 33: *Occupy Poetics*]

LEORA FRIDMAN is the author of *My Fault*, selected by Eileen Myles for the 2015 Cleveland State University Press First Book Prize, in addition to *On the Nature* (The New Megaphone, 2014), *Obvious Metals* (Projective Industries, 2014) and *Precious Coast* (H_ngm_n, 2013), among other collections of poetry, prose, and translations.

[EP 65: *Make an Effort: communiqués*, forthcoming February 2017]

ANNA GURTON-WACHTER is a writer, editor, and archivist. Her chapbooks include *Blank Blank Blues* (Horse Less Press, 2016) and *CYRUS* (Portable Press @ Yo Yo Labs, 2014). She edits and makes books for DoubleCross Press and lives in Brooklyn, NY where she was born and raised.

[excerpts from *The Abundance Acts* forthcoming spring 2017]

JOSEPH HARRINGTON is the author of *Things Come On (an amneoir)*, a mixed-genre work relating the twinned narratives of the Watergate scandal and his mother's cancer. It was a Rumpus Poetry Book Club selection. He is the author of the chapbook *Earth Day Suite* (Beard of Bees, 2010), as well as the critical work *Poetry and the Public*. Harrington is the recipient of a Millay Colony residency and a Fulbright Chair.

[EP 20: *Goodnight Whoever's Listening*]

[EP 21: *Tracking/Teaching: On Documentary Poetics*]

H. L. HIX's most recent poetry collection is *American Anger*.

[EP 15: A&Q] [EP 22: *The World Over*]

[EP 37: *Bound to the Past*]

[EP 45: *Uncoverage: Conversations in a New Poetic World*]

ABY KAUPANG is the author of, most recently *NOS, disorder not otherwise specified* (with Matthew Cooperman, Futurepoem, 2017), *Little "g" God Grows Tired of Me*, *Absence is Such a Transparent House*, and *Scenic Fences | Houses Innumerable*. She holds masters degrees in both creative writing and occupational therapy from Colorado State University, and lives in Fort Collins where she currently serves as the Poet Laureate.

[EP 37: *Bound to the Past: Poetry (out from) under the Sign of History*]

[EP 52: Disorder 299.00]

JENNIFER KWON DOBBS (이허수진) is the author of *Paper Pavilion* (recipient of the White Pine Press Poetry Prize and the New England Poetry Club's Sheila Motton Book Award) and *Interrogation Room* (forthcoming). She has received grants from the Daesan Foundation, Intermedia Arts, and the Minnesota State Arts Board for her writing. Currently, Kwon Dobbs is associate professor of English and program director of Race and Ethnic Studies at St. Olaf College. She lives in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

[EP 24: *Notes from a Missing Person*]

JH PHRYDAS is the author of *Levitations* and curator of the long-term project *X21REQ*, which calls for artists and writers to answer the question: "What does the twenty-first century require of you?" After three years of failed attempts to gain admittance to universities to continue his research, Phrydas became a rogue scholar. Armed with library cards from local universities, he researches, writes, and creates collages for a future novel called *Against*

Daylight. He conducts his research within the analog and digital divide: in the hopes that, by reconfiguring memory through embodied narrative, queered history, and alchemical ancestries, we might, as a culture, grind towards a new type of knowledge. One based in bone and written in the stars. He lives in Los Angeles with his partner, artist and DJ Stanley Frank.

[*Empire in Shade* forthcoming spring 2017]

B.T. SHAW's work includes *This Dirty Little Heart* (recipient of the Blue Lynx Prize for Poetry from Eastern Washington University Press) and *The Manual of Small Wars, Volume 2* (PressBoardPress, forthcoming February, 2017). Shaw's writing has received support from Oregon Literary Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts and recently was included in the anthology *Red Sky: Poetry on the Global Epidemic of Violence Against Women*. She lives in Jakarta, Indonesia.

[EP 63: *Shake it up & throw it at something hard*]

JESSICA SMITH, founding Editor of *Foursquare* and *name* magazines, serves as the Librarian for Indian Springs School, where she curates the *Indian Springs School Visiting Writers Series*. A native of Birmingham, Alabama, she received her MA in comparative literature, and her MLS from SUNY Buffalo, where she participated in the Poetics Program. She is the author of numerous chapbooks, including *The Lover is Absent* (above/ground press, forthcoming), and two full-length books of poetry, *Organic Furniture Cellar* and *Life-List*.

[EP 18: *The Women in Visual Poetry: the Bechdel Test*]

SASHA STEENSEN is the author of four books of poetry, most recently *House of Deer* and *Gatherest*, forthcoming from Ahsahta Press. She lives in Fort Collins, Colorado, where she tends chickens, goats, bees and children.

Steensen serves as a poetry editor for *Colorado Review* and teaches Creative Writing and Literature at Colorado State University.

[EP 40: *Openings: Into Our Vertical Cosmos*]

SOPHIA TERAZAWA is a Vietnamese-Japanese poet and performer working with ghosts. Her work has recently appeared in *Hematopoiesis Press*, *Tayo*, *Anthropoid*, and elsewhere.

[EP 56: *I AM NOT A WAR*]

TONY TRIGILIO's most recent collection of poetry is *Inside the Walls of My Own House: The Complete Dark Shadows (of My Childhood), Book 2*. His other books include, most recently, *White Noise*, and, as editor, *Elise Cowen: Poems and Fragments*. He teaches poetry at Columbia College Chicago, where he is the interim chair of the Department of Creative Writing.

[EP 77: *Dispatches from the Body Politic*]

NICOLE WALKER is the author of four books: *Microcosm* (forthcoming), *Egg*, *Quench Your Thirst with Salt*, and *This Noisy Egg*. She edited *Bending Genre* with Margot Singer. She is nonfiction editor at Diagram and associate professor at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona, where it rains like the Pacific Northwest, but only in July.

[EP 81: *Microwine*]



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