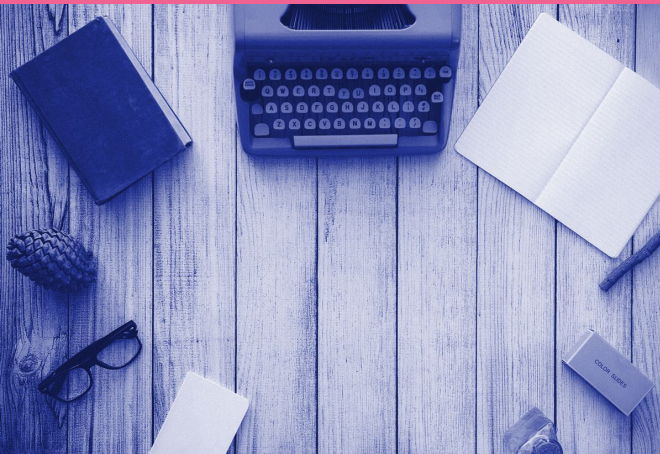


Archive of Work Curated in the 2022 and 2023 Sessions of *Poetry Matters*

by Anushree Joshi, Research Assistant
with supervision and guidance from Dr. Miranda Hickman, Director



For any queries and suggestions about the materials published here, please feel free to reach out to us:

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[Contact Us at Poetry Matters](#)

FRIDAYS ON FORM

When it comes to poetry, form can simply be understood as the poem's physical structure such as its rhyme scheme, meter, and rhythm. It can also be seen in the visual pattern a poem makes in the space of the page. Thus, the senses of listening and seeing accompany any interpretation of form and how the poem is recited, changes the form it takes. But recent conversations in the academy on 'form' have prodded the question: is form something more than the patterns that a poem falls into? Conversations on form and content have often seen form as the method, a vessel for conveying the meaning of the content, but our weekly series, *Fridays on Form*, interrogates this notion through interviews, essays, and letters of contemplation by poets and critics.

For instance, Patrick Flannery speaks of form through its relationship with lyric and tradition in Hoa Nguyen's poetry, when he writes in "Why try / to revive the lyric": "Mobilizing the lyric as form and tradition, Nguyen sings of moving through and beyond loss to arrive at a moment in which the only concrete remainder of the past is the archive of everything we can no longer touch." In another piece from the series, poet Nicole Sealey shares how form as shape is crucial to the process of poetic creation for her: "For me, a poem's shape is structured out of necessity (what does the poem require?), not out of my own need to be innovative. In this way, my decision to write in form, I believe, wasn't of my own volition."

And the common relationship between form and genre is described by Philip Meter in his essay, speaking of the poet's role as journalist, historian, and agitator: "The successful documentary poem withstands the pressure of reality to remain a poem in its own right: its language and form cannot be reduced to an ephemeral poster, ready made for its moment but headed for the recycling bin."

Such contemplations on the multiple potentialities of form echo the academic discourse concerned with 21st-century movements like New Formalism and the recent questions on the aesthetic, socio-political, and organizational associations of form, as Levine discusses form can be both aesthetic and political, containing and plural, and situated and portable.

In this series started by former Research Assistant, Hadas Blum, the curated pieces attempt to thread together these conversations and intervene theoretically in the discourse on the political form of the poem, how form changes and transmutes through translation, what the interactions between the visual form of art and the poetry-writing bring to its final form as it happens in ekphrastic poetry, as well as the ways different processes of poetic creation impact its form, among other things.

Organic Formalism and John Witte's *The Hurtling*

Scott Knickerbocker | Essay [\(link\)](#)

KENYON*review*

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Organic Formalism and John Witte's *The Hurtling*

Scott Knickerbocker

Artifice, whether artistic or technological, comes naturally to humans; moreover, artifice is what paradoxically connects us to the rest of nature. Thus, poetic language, although distinct from nature, nevertheless has an analogous relationship to it; both language and nature occupy a complex middle ground between what Wallace Stevens calls “imagination” and “reality.” Language and nature, that is, are both culturally constructed (imagined) and wildly autonomous (real). The artifice of poetic form foregrounds the most “real” relationship we have with the rest of nature, which is simultaneously distinct and inseparable from us.

The Places Bodies Can't Reach

Mia You | Essay [\(link\)](#)



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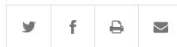
EVENTS

POETRY MAGAZINE

The Places Bodies Can't Reach

The South Korean poet Yi Won blurs the boundaries between the virtual and the real.

BY [MIA YOU](#)



Everyday Mojo Letters to Yusef

Terrance Hayes | Essay [\(link\)](#)



From Reznikoff to Public Enemy

Philip Metres | Essay [\(link\)](#)

From Reznikoff to Public Enemy

The poet as journalist, historian, agitator.

BY [PHILIP METRES](#)



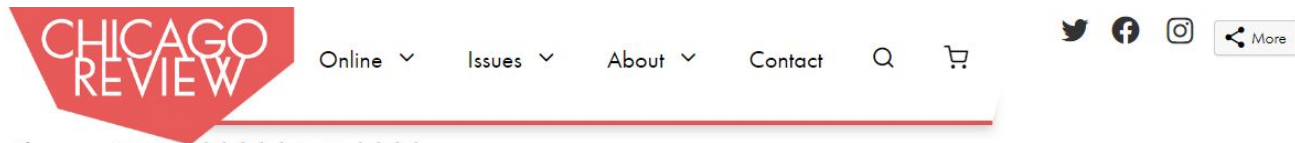
3 Contemporary Poets on Identity, Form, and Politics

Ruben Quesada | Interview [\(link\)](#)



Bob Holman's Ekphrastic Performances

Mark Silverberg | Essay [\(link\)](#)



FREEDOM of speech-ifyng poetics tralalalalalotratalalalala

FREEDOM of lemonade

FREEDOM to remember what you are doing in Montana

FREEDOM to adjust the height of the floor

FREEDOM to eat an all-poetry diet

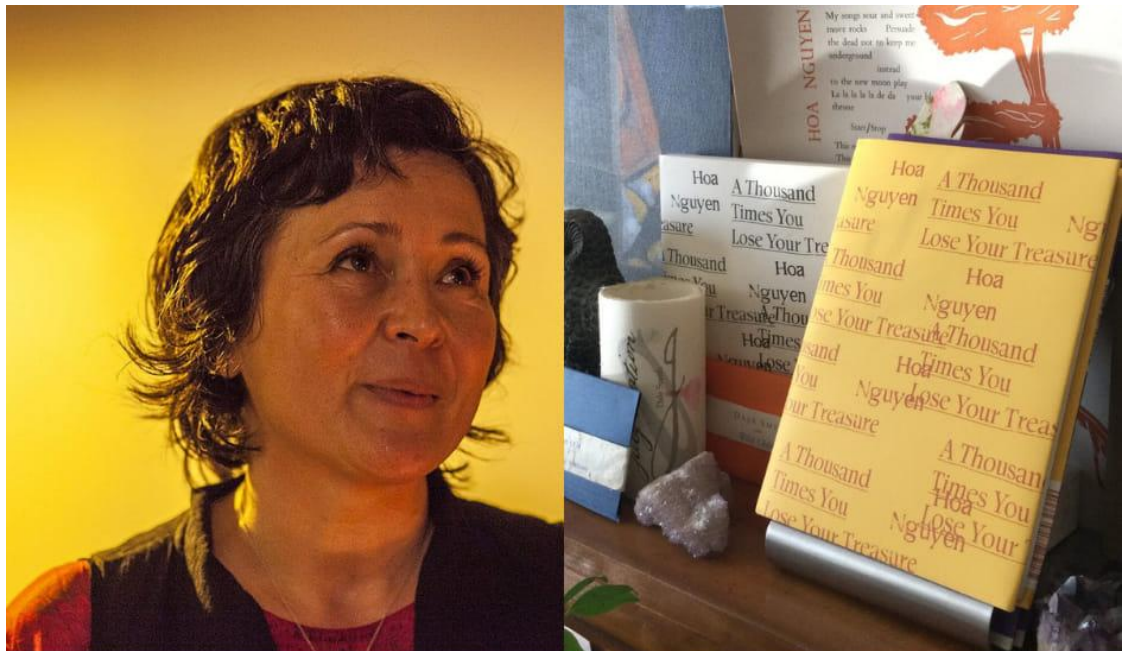
FREEDOM to not write the poem, write the Other poem

(Holman, "Freedom")

Bob Holman has been writing "the poem" and the "Other poem" (the poem that expands the text visually, orally, concretely, and in other dimensions) for over fifty years. Holman is best known as a poetry performer, publicist and provocateur—in a word (one he uses advisedly), a bard. A bard is a poet with a vocation to keep moving beyond the page: into song, performance, and other forms of "exploding text" as Holman calls his multiple collaborations. The tradition of the bard, troubadour, griot, *jeli*, and other traveling singers is intimately connected to the mythos of the journey.

“Why try / to revive the lyric”: Hoa Nguyen and the Singing of Loss

Patrick Flanery | Essay ([link](#))



The Job of a Poet Is to Witness: A conversation with Patricia Smith, winner of the 2021 Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize

Saeed Jones | Interview [\(link\)](#)



Photo by Rachel Eliza Griffiths

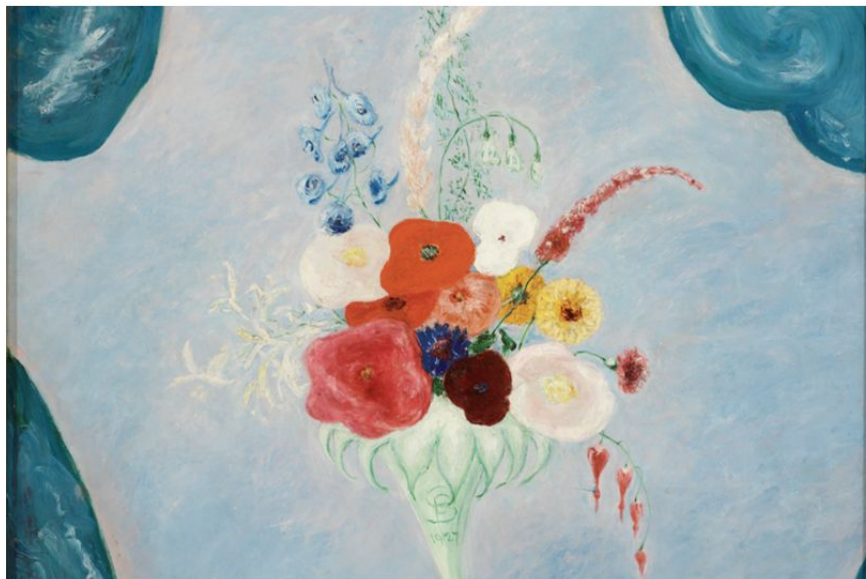
You Wonderful Hot-Cold Thing

Lucy Ives | Essay [\(link\)](#)

Florine Stetthelmer was a brilliant American painter of the 1920s and '30s. As a new biography reminds us, she also wrote poems that share the idiosyncratic charm of her visual art.



BY [LUCY IVES](#)



Art by Florine Stetthelmer. Detail of *Bouquet for Ettie* (1927). Courtesy of Rhode Island School of Design.

It Don't Mean A Thing: The Blues Mask of Modernism

Kevin Young | Essay [\(link\)](#)



It Don't Mean A Thing: The Blues Mask of Modernism

The blues contain multitudes. Among the last mysteries, blues music resists not only sentimentality, but also easy summary: just when you say the blues are about one thing—lost love, say—here comes a song about death, or about work, about canned heat or loose women, hard men or harder times, to challenge your definitions. Urban and rural, tragic and comic, modern as African America and primal as America, the blues are as innovative in structure as they are in mood—they resurrect old feelings even as they describe them in new ways. They are the definitive statement of that new invention, the African American, though when [Langston Hughes](#) first wrote on them and through them in the 1920s, he felt as much resistance from black folks as white. Known by black churchgoers as "devil's music," the blues are defiant and existential and necessary. Blues singers describe walking with the devil, or "Preachin' the Blues" as Son House did—

Diane Wakoski Rides Again

Daniel Nester | Essay [\(link\)](#)

Written in the aftermath of an epic breakup, *The Motorcycle Betrayal* Poems captured the early '70s zeitgeist. How does a new edition read?



BY [DANIEL NESTER](#)



Art by Jess Suttner.

How poet and essayist Maggie Smith is carrying me through in these uncertain and jagged times

Sophy Chaffee | Essay (Fridays on Form)



Field of Power: Interview with Palestinian Poet and Translator Fady Joudah

Alex Dueben | Interview [\(link\)](#)

Fady Joudah is known as much for his own verse as for his translations of Palestinian poets.

BY ALEX DUEBEN



For Fady Joudah, “All life is an act of translation.” The Palestinian American poet and translator is known as much for his own verse as for his translations of the late Mahmoud Darwish. Joudah is also a practicing physician of internal medicine; he says communication with patients can be complex, and, like his translation work, it can also be “a troubled field of power.”

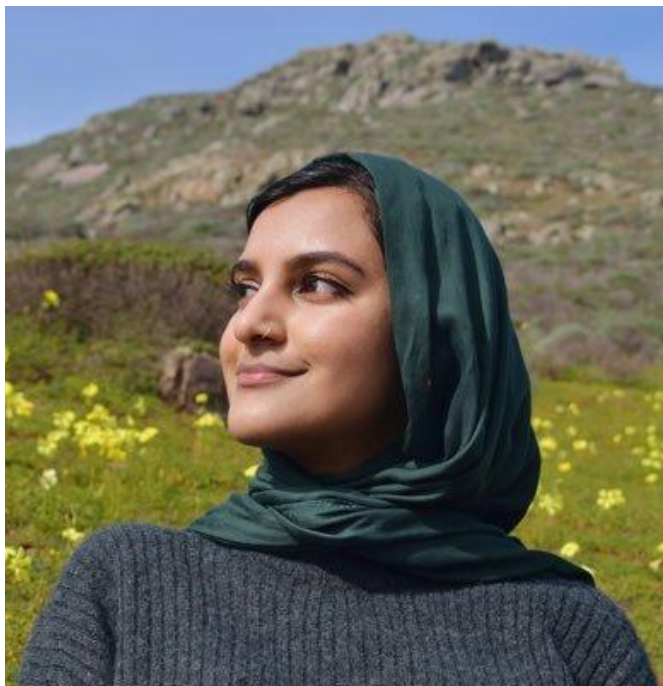
The Pen, the Throat, the Ear: On Ghazals

Sarah Ghazal Ali | Essay [\(link\)](#)

This is true for many South Asian, Persian, and Arab poets—the ghazal is first an auditory immersion, propelled by the *matla* (opening couplet), *radif* (refrain), and internal *qaafia* (rhyme). My mother, after attending my first undergraduate poetry reading, crinkled her nose in distaste. *Musha'ira ka beda gharag*, she muttered, unimpressed. She likened my polite, quiet, American reading to a sunken ship, while a *musha'ira* in Karachi would set sail for a far more interactive poetry *performance*. At a *musha'ira*, audience members are expected to actively participate, to clap, and shout, and affirm. Who does the ghazal belong to: the pen, the throat, or the ear? What is written is spoken is shared is sacred. After Mehdi Hassan shot to fame for his rendition of “Gulon Mein Rang Bhare,” the poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz is said to have stopped reciting it at his *musha'iras*—*it's no longer mine*, he'd say fondly, *it's Mehdi's ghazal*.

گلوں میں رنگ بھرے بادِ نو بہارِ چلے
چلے بھی آؤ گے گلشنِ کاروبارِ چلے

Let the blossoms fill with color, let the first breeze of spring flow.
Come (beloved), so the garden can get on with its business.
—Faiz Ahmed Faiz, tr. by Sarah Ghazal Ali



Tracking the Traffic of Glyphs across Oceans: A Dialogue with Divya Victor

Michael Nardone | Interview [\(link\)](#)

South Asians and Middle Eastern folks became embodiments of this awful Rumsfeldian interpretive range: on one hand, the model minority, the known knowns; on the other hand, the known unknowns, the monstrous other, the terrorist, or the various slurs that are used to identify us. The equivalence drawn between the bodies of my kith and the speculative void of the weapon of mass destruction was key in defining that generation's self-knowing.

As a poet, Michael, I don't want to perform as a "known known"—writing poems with all of the exotic tropes, writing to assuage American guilt or ignorance. You know this. It's a horrific obligation. I'm refusing that. In *Kith*, I wrote about my refusal to italicize myself and what I know. So, I refuse this performance of being a "known known"—this kind of safe entity that can be brought into literary festivals to present an experience of South Asian identity. But I also want to be able to refuse being a "known unknown": this kind of nebulous darkening at the horizon, this horde, an undefinable mass, this "dusky peril" swarming in. I think *Curb* is trying to refuse both of these formulations for our weaponized condition as brown immigrants.

Performance artist Alok Vaid-Menon on why identity categories don't work — but stories do

KT Hawbaker | Interview [\(link\)](#)

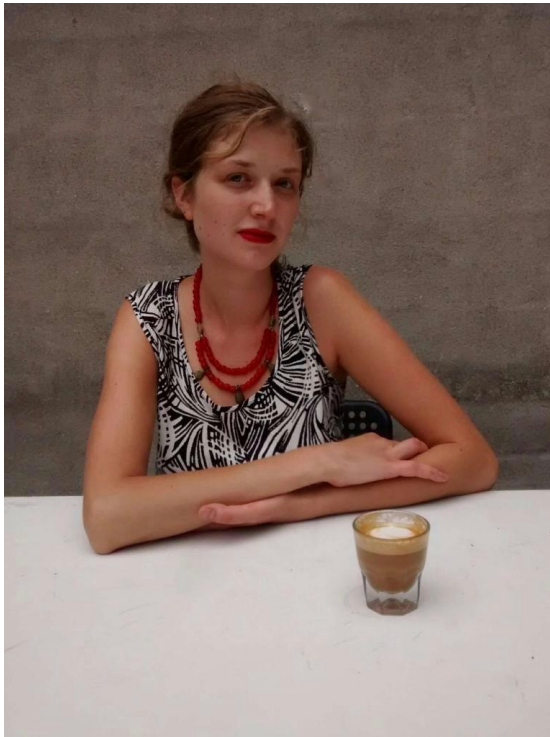


Q: Do you feel that poetry suits your work because it is an inherently queer genre?

A: I think everything is inherently queer. I am so done with people trying to pretend like queer culture is fringe. Queer is the mainstream. We built it. Contemporary pop music? Comes from us. Contemporary fashion? Comes from us. Contemporary beauty? Comes from us. Queer culture is the experimental template from which mainstream culture resources itself. People ask me where I learned to write or where I learned to perform. I grew up a gender non-conforming person of color in the South, girl. I learned how to do this on my own. This is why queers are so good at art, because our first art projects were our bodies and our selves.

An interview with Klara du Plessis

James Lindsay | Interview [\(link\)](#)



Aesthetic Choices Are Political Choices: An Interview with Meena Kandasamy

Torsa Ghosal | Interview [\(link\)](#)



Spoken Like a True Poet

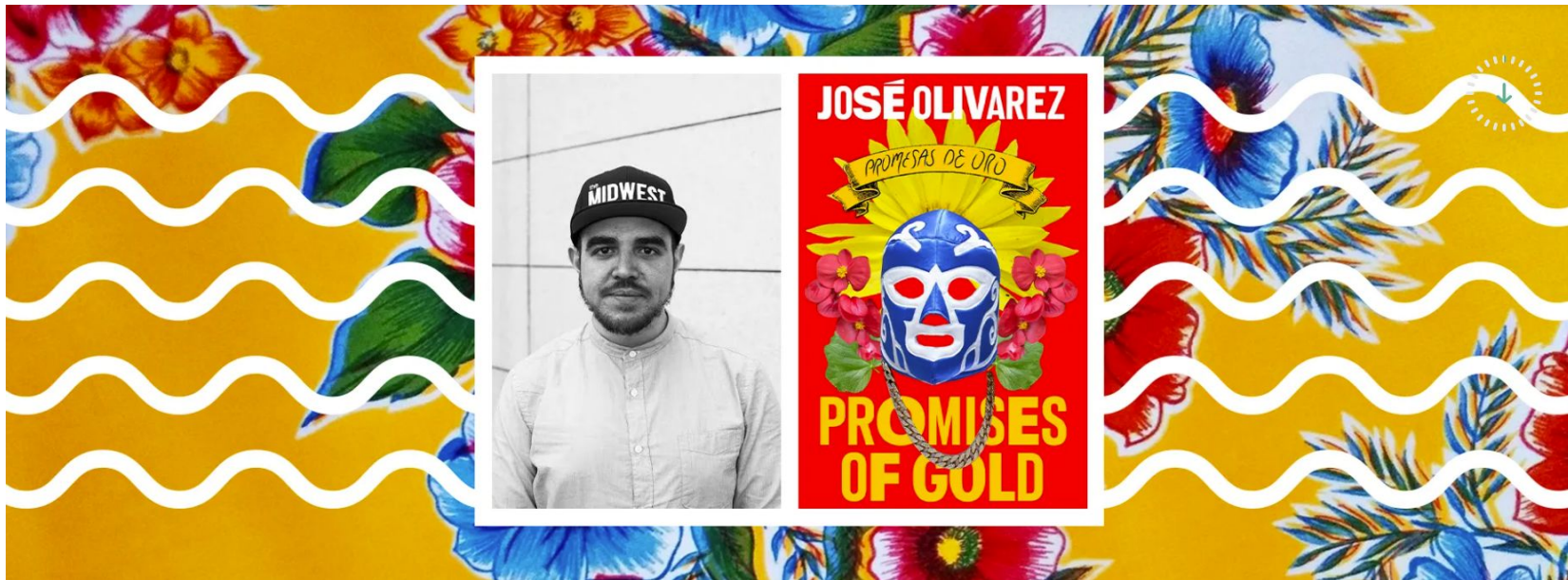
Stephen Kearse | Essay [\(link\)](#)



Art by Adeshola Makinde.

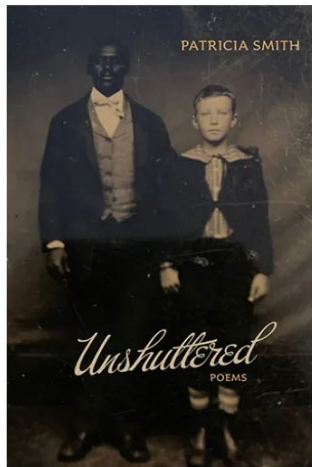
Love, Language, Silence: An Interview with José Olivarez about “Promises of Gold”

Aviya Kushner | Interview [\(link\)](#)



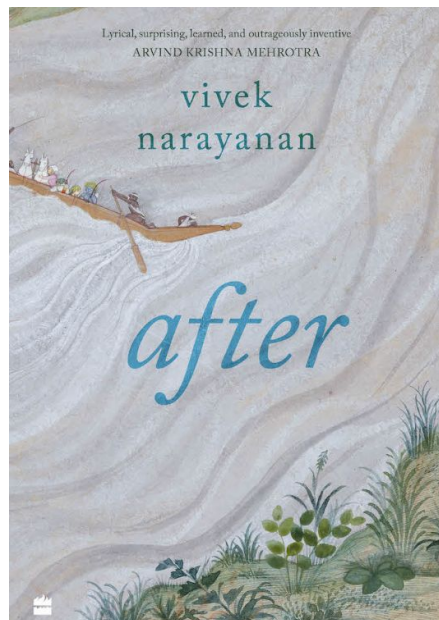
Summoning the Past Through Words and Images: A Conversation with Patricia Smith About “Unshuttered”

Mandana Chaffa | Interview [\(link\)](#)



In conversation with the world: Three poems & an interview with Vivek Narayanan

Leeya Mehta | Interview [\(link\)](#)



Pretty Birds Past the Strip Mall

Kathleen Rooney | Essay [\(link\)](#)



Detail of Untitled (cutout of bird in flight), 1970, by Joseph Cornell. Courtesy Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Extending the Image

Shayla Lawz | Essay [\(link\)](#)



BLACK HISTORY MONTH

For the 2022 Black History Month in February, the *Poetry Matters* team focused upon sharing works by Black poets or those that engaged with an aspect of their resilient and revolutionary history against racism, colonialism, and all forms of oppression.

Langston Hughes: “Harlem”

Scott Challenger | Essay [\(link\)](#)

This short poem about dreams is one of the most influential poems of the 20th century.

BY [SCOTT CHALLENGER](#)



Poet Langston Hughes in Harlem. (Photo by Robert W. Kelley/The LIFE Picture Collection via Getty Images)

Incident

Countee Cullen | Poem [\(link\)](#)



(For Eric Walrond)

Once riding in old Baltimore,
Heart-filled, head-filled with glee,
I saw a Baltimorean
Keep looking straight at me.

Now I was eight and very small,
And he was no whit bigger,
And so I smiled, but he poked out
His tongue, and called me, "Nigger."

I saw the whole of Baltimore
From May until December;
Of all the things that happened there
That's all that I remember.

Countee Cullen, "Incident" from *My Soul's High Song: The Collected Writings of Countee Cullen*.
Copyrights held by the Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, administered by Thompson and
Thompson, Brooklyn, NY.

Source: *My Soul's High Song: The Collected Writings of Countee Cullen* (Anchor Books, 1991)

Consider the Hands that Write this Letter

Aracelis Girmay | Poem [\(link\)](#)

For years, I have come to sit this way:
one hand open, one hand closed,

like a farmer who puts down seeds & gathers up;
food will come from that farming.

Or, yes, it is like the way I've danced
with my left hand opened around a shoulder,

my right hand closed inside
of another hand. & how I pray,

I pray for this to be my way: sweet
work alluded to in the body's position to its paper:

left hand, right hand
like an open eye, an eye closed:

one hand flat against the trapdoor,
the other hand knocking, knocking.

Aracelis Girmay, "Consider the Hands that Write this Letter" from *Teeth*, published by Curbstone Press. Copyright © 2007 by Aracelis Girmay. Reprinted by permission of Northwestern University Press.

Source: *Teeth* (Curbstone Press, 2007)



This Is Not a Small Voice

Sonia Sanchez | Poem [\(link\)](#)

This Is Not a Small Voice

by Sonia Sanchez (1934-present)

This is not a small voice
you hear this is a large
voice coming out of these cities.
This is the voice of LaTanya.
Kadesha. Shaniqua. This
is the voice of Antoine.
Darryl. Shaquille.
Running over waters
navigating the hallways
of our schools spilling out
on the corners of our cities and
no epitaphs spill out of their river mouths.

This is not a small love
you hear this is a large
love, a passion for kissing learning
on its face.
This is a love that crowns the feet with hands
that nourishes, conceives, feels the water sails
mends the children,
folds them inside our history where they
toast more than the flesh
where they suck the bones of the alphabet
and spit out closed vowels.
This is a love colored with iron and lace.
This is a love initialed Black Genius.

This is not a small voice
you hear.



We Real Cool

Gwendolyn Brooks | Poem [\(link\)](#)

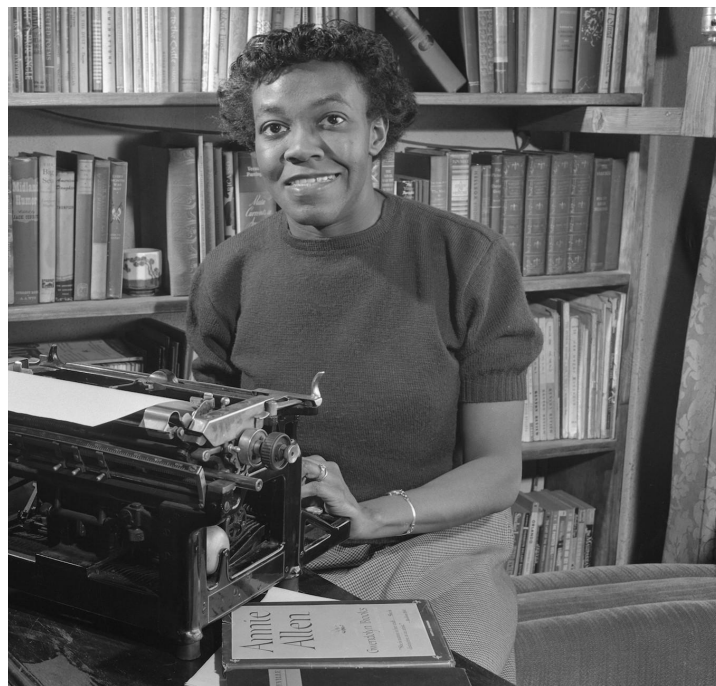
THE POOL PLAYERS.
SEVEN AT THE GOLDEN SHOVEL.

We real cool. We
Left school. We

Lurk late. We
Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We
Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We
Die soon.



Black History Month 2022: A Reading List

Curated by Anushree Joshi for Poetry Matters [\(link\)](#)

A Reading List for Black History Month

Title	Writer	Genre
<i>All About Love: New Visions</i>	bell hooks	Non-fiction
<i>Beloved</i>	Toni Morrison	Novel / Fiction
<i>Black and Blue</i>	Fred Moten	Non-fiction
<i>Collected Poems</i>	Robert Hayden. Edited by Rampersad and Glaysher	Poetry
<i>Guidebook to Relative Strangers: A Journey into Race, Motherhood, and History</i>	Camille Dungy	Memoir/Essays
<i>In the Wake... On Blackness and Being</i>	Christina Sharpe	Non-fiction/Afropessimism
<i>Last Chance for the Tarzan Holler</i>	Thylas Moss	Poetry
<i>Pleasure Dome: New and Collected Poems</i>	Yusef Komunyakaa	Poetry
<i>Redlining Culture: A Data History of Racial Inequality and Postwar Fiction</i>	Richard Jean So	Non-fiction
<i>Your Silence Will Not Protect You</i>	Audre Lorde	Non-fiction
<i>The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening</i>	Jennifer Lynn Stoeve	Non-fiction
<i>The Underground Railroad</i>	Colson Whitehead	Fiction
<i>Time's Unfading Garden: Anne Spencer's Life and Poetry</i>	Spencer and J. Lee Greene	Poetry
<i>Tropic Cascade</i>	Camille Dungy	Poetry
<i>Women, Race and Class</i>	Angela Davis	Non-fiction

Title	Author	Source	Genre/Format
<i>All About Love: New Visions</i>	bell hooks	https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/1021178827	Non-fiction
<i>Beloved</i>	Toni Morrison	https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/70823318	Novel / Fiction
<i>Black and Blue</i>	Fred Moten	https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/982502669	Non-fiction
<i>Collected Poems</i>	Robert Hayden. Edited by Rampersad and Glaysher	https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/34188239	Poetry
<i>Guidebook to Relative Strangers: A Journey into Race, Motherhood, and History</i>	Camille Dungy	https://www.morton.com/books/Guidebook-to-Relative-Strangers	Memoir/Essays
<i>In the Wake: On Blackness and Being</i>	Christina Sharpe	https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/940520601	Non-fiction/Afropessimism
<i>Last Chance for the Tarzan Holler</i>	Thylas Moss	https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/7374781280	Poetry
<i>Pleasure Dome: New and Collected Poems</i>	Yusef Komunyakaa	https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/869281841	Poetry
<i>Redlining Culture: A Data History of Racial Inequality and Postwar Fiction</i>	Richard Jean So	https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/1159506674	Non-fiction
<i>Your Silence Will Not Protect You</i>	Audre Lorde	https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/1006460992	Non-fiction
<i>The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening</i>	Jennifer Lynn Stoeve	https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/959980189	Non-fiction
<i>The Underground Railroad</i>	Colson Whitehead	https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/933420484	Fiction
<i>Time's Unfading Garden: Anne Spencer's Life and Poetry</i>	Spencer and J. Lee Greene	https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/2912188	Poetry
<i>Tropic Cascade</i>	Camille Dungy	https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/962303904	Poetry
<i>Women, Race and Class</i>	Angela Davis	https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/8907158	Non-fiction

The Black Poet as Canon-Maker

Elizabeth Alexander | Essay [\(link\)](#)

ESSAY

The Black Poet as Canon-Maker

Langston Hughes, *New Negro Poets*, and American poetry's segregated past.

BY [ELIZABETH ALEXANDER](#)

Introduction

Langston Hughes was as influential an anthologist as he was a poet; the collections he edited shaped African-American culture. The story behind his final anthology, *New Negro Poets*—created posthumously from his notes—offers a case study of how even the clearest cultural vision can become distorted on its way to the marketplace. By **Elizabeth Alexander**.

POLITICS & POETRY

Initiated by Anushree Joshi, this section aims to foreground the relationship between politics and the poetic form, tracing how poetry affects resistance, solidarity, and expression against various marginalizations in the society.

Poetry Is Not A Luxury

Audre Lorde | Essay [\(link\)](#)

Poetry Is Not a Luxury (1985)
Audre Lorde

The quality of light by which we scrutinize our lives has direct bearing upon the product which we live, and upon the changes which we hope to bring about through those lives. It is within this light that we form those ideas by which we pursue our magic and make it realized. This is poetry as illumination, for it is through poetry that we give name to those ideas which are, until the poem, nameless and formless—about to be birthed, but already felt. That distillation of experience from which true poetry springs births thought as dream births concept, as feeling births idea, as knowledge births (precedes) understanding.

As we learn to bear the intimacy of scrutiny, and to flourish within it, as we learn to use the products of that scrutiny for power within our living, those fears which rule our lives and form our silences begin to lose their control over us.

For each of us as women, there is a dark place within where hidden and growing our true spirit rises, "Beautiful and tough as chestnut stanchions against our nightmare of weakness" and of impotence.

These places of possibility within ourselves are dark because they are ancient and hidden; they have survived and grown strong through darkness. Within these deep places, each one of us holds an incredible reserve of creativity and power, of unexamined and unrecorded emotion and feeling. The woman's place of power within each of us is neither white nor surface; it is dark, it is ancient, and it is deep.

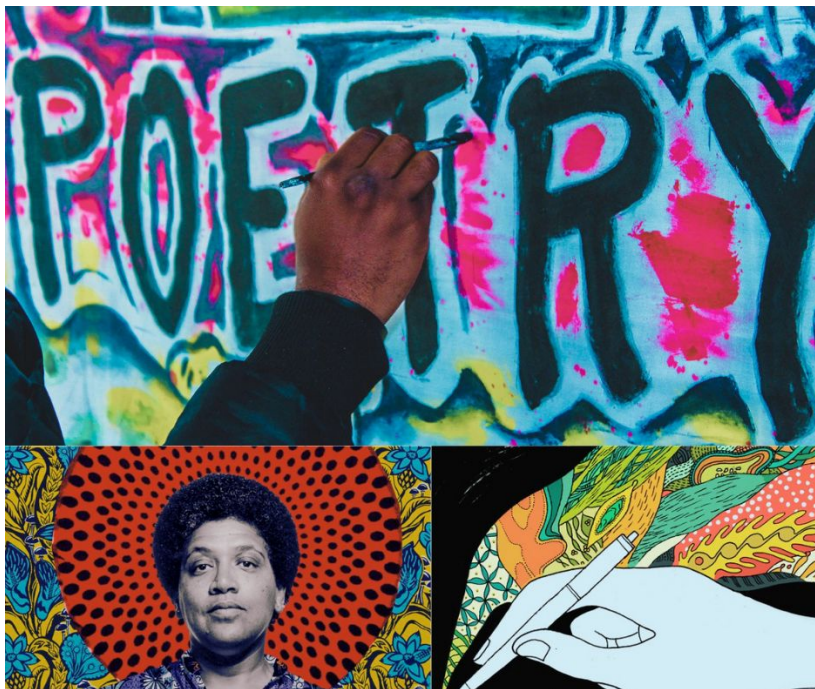
When we view living, in the European mode, only as a problem to be solved, we then rely solely upon our ideas to make us free, for these were what the white fathers told us were precious.

But as we become more in touch with our own ancient, black, non-European view of living as a situation to be experienced and interacted with, we learn more and more to cherish our feelings, and to respect those hidden sources of our power from where true knowledge and therefore lasting action comes.

At this point in time, I believe that women carry within ourselves the possibility for fusion of these two approaches as keystone for survival, and we come closest to this combination in our poetry. I speak here of poetry as the revelation or distillation of experience, not the sterile word play that, too often, the white fathers distorted the word poetry to mean—in order to cover their desperate wish for imagination without insight.

For women, then, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action.

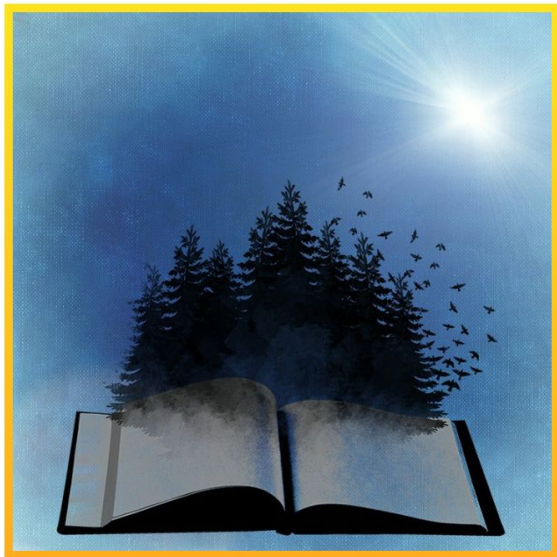
Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. The farthest external horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives.



Why All Poems Are Political

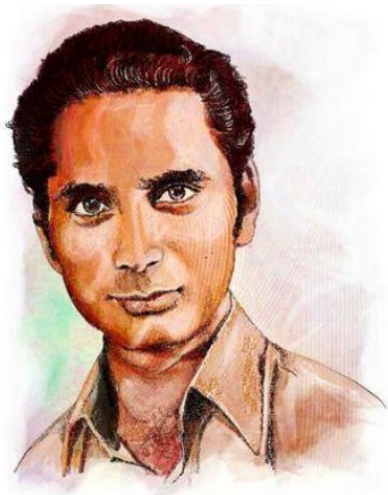
Kathleen Ossip | Essay [\(link\)](#)

Unregulated and innately radical, poetry is
an urgent expression of freedom



Revolution is a Poem: Why a Punjabi poet killed by Khalistanis is ruffling feathers in contemporary India?

Nirupama Subramanian | Essay [\(link\)](#)



On the highway from Jalandhar to Nakodar, Talwandi Salem village declares its link to one of Punjab's most famous poets through the Pash-Hansraj Memorial Complex that comes up just ahead of the village. "Complex" is an aspiration for this dusty open ground, a raised platform at the far end, and a small room to each side of the dais. Behind it is the village where Avtar Singh Sandhu, the poet better known as Pash, was born and lived most of his life. In one of its fields, now lush green and fragrant with rice, he was shot dead by Khalistanis on March 23, 1988.

In recent months, Pash's work has come under a cloud over alleged plagiarism. The charge, mainly on social media, is that Sab Ton Khattarnak mirrors Neruda's Die Slowly.

On Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin

David Wheatley | Essay [\(link\)](#)

Ní Chuilleanáin's narrative poems are tales of 'life with the lid on', to echo Elizabeth Bowen. Her protagonists are typically nameless: a woman on her way to join a convent, a swineherd, a group of traveller women cooking round a campfire. Her style, with its absence of rhyme and its angular line breaks, is correspondingly muted. Compare her translation of 'The Old Woman of Beare' to Derek Mahon's version of the same Old Irish text. His woman is urbane, garrulous, much like Mahon himself, and his translation has after-echoes of the palatial Yeatsian stanza. Ní Chuilleanáin's version is stonier and unsparing, insisting that 'I don't join in sweet chat.'

Well for islands at sea,
their high tide follows low
water; I do not hope
my tide will turn and flow.
Hardly a harbour now
seems familiar to me;
all that the high tide saw
low water drags away.



Ilya Kaminsky reads "We Lived Happily During the War"

Ilya Kaminski | Poetry Reading on *Ours Poetica* ([link](#))



Why We Need Revolutionary Poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz More Than Ever

Rajat Singh | Essay [\(link\)](#)



Why We Need Revolutionary
Poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz More
Than Ever

Rajat Singh on the Tangible Power of Political Poetry

When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision

Adrienne Rich | Essay [\(link\)](#)

ADRIENNE RICH

When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision

IBSEN'S "WHEN WE DEAD AWAKEN" is a play about the use that the male artist and thinker—in the process of creating culture as we know it—has made of women, in his life and in his work; and about a woman's slow struggling awakening to the use to which her life has been put. Bernard Shaw wrote in 1900 of this play:

[Ibsen] shows us that no degradation ever devised or permitted is as disastrous as this degradation; that through it women can die into luxuries for men and yet can kill them; that men and women are becoming conscious of this; and that what remains to be seen as perhaps the most interesting of all imminent social developments is what will happen "when we dead awaken".¹



'America Is a Myth': A Conversation with Natalie Diaz

Natasha Hakimi Zapata | Interview [\(link\)](#)



"I AM BEGGING: Let me be lonely but not invisible," writes Natalie Diaz in "American Arithmetic." This poem — like so much of Diaz's extraordinary work — becomes a radical act of making visible through verse not only the poet, but many of the people whom America has tried to erase from the pages of its history. From her first book, When My Brother Was an Aztec, to her latest,

Postcolonial Love Poem, Diaz's poetry declares through a rich range of forms what it is to be Mojave and Mexican in today's America, as well as what it is to be a sister, a lover, a friend, a poet, and the multitude of other identities Diaz, like so many of us, holds within her. At the same time, she requires her readers to interrogate the myths we grew up with as Americans, now that many of the questions surrounding race and oppression that have plagued the country's past and present are becoming central to conversations about the future.

Part of Your America

Kevin Okoth | Essay [\(link\)](#)



DANEZ SMITH's prose poem 'Dear White America', published in *Don't Call Us Dead* (2017), brought Allen Ginsberg's 'America' into the present and gave it a more urgent register: 'we did not build your prisons (though we did & we fill them too). we did not ask to be part of your America ... i can't stand your ground. i'm sick of calling your recklessness the law. each night, i count my brothers. & in the morning, when some do not survive to be counted, i count the holes they leave.' In the poem the rejection of white America becomes a rejection of life on Earth; only a fantasy of intergalactic escape can free the narrator from the history and daily reality of being Black in America:

i've left Earth & i am touching everything you beg your telescopes to show you. i'm giving the stars their right names. & this life, this new story & history you cannot steal or sell or cast overboard or hang or beat or drown or own or redline or shackle or silence or cheat or choke or cover up or jail or shoot or jail or shoot or jail or shoot or ruin

this if only this one, is ours.

Billy-Ray Belcourt on Poetry as Protest

Devon Murphy | Interview [\(link\)](#)



I think so. If nothing else, poetry has made me loathe the world more. There's a line in my new book where I say "prove to me that she who despises the world is not also transfixed by it," and I think that is more autobiographical than it would suggest. Maybe that's how I think about my poetic practice, my artistic practice—as a sort of dialectical clash between loathing and transfixing, or fixation. In order for one to hate something you have to know enough about it to be able to have that sort of emotional orientation to it. And so, similarly, poetry has given me a sense of criminality that is not about the law but about a more fugitive or furtive sense of being in the world.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

A collection of writings by women from a diverse range of races, sexualities, ethnicities, classes, and life experiences, who used the medium of the poem to interact with and document women's histories.

Revealing all the Secrets: Julie Enszer on reissuing Sapphic classics and lesbian-feminist poetry

Nuria Sheehan | Interview [\(link\)](#)



Minnie Bruce Pratt, photo by D. Alexander, 1990 | Julie Enszer,
photo by Charlie T. Photography, 2010

“Tongues of ice break free, fall, shatter, / splinter, speak. If I could write the words,” Minnie Bruce Pratt writes in “Justice, Come Down.” The poem appears in her groundbreaking *Crime Against Nature*, first published in 1990, and in it Pratt found a way to write the words, exploring how she lost custody of her children after coming out as a lesbian in the 1970s. In awarding *Crime Against Nature* the Lamont Poetry Prize, the Academy of American Poets selection committee wrote, “She makes it plain, in this masterful sequence of poems, that the real crime against nature is violence and oppression.”

Empress Dowager Boogies

Tina Chang | Poem [\(link\)](#)

Empress Dowager Boogies

by Tina Chang

Last night I found my face below
the water in my cupped hands.

The mask made of copper and bone
criss-crossing to make a smirk,

a false glamour, a plated glaze.
I unwound myself from the heavy

machinery of my body's burden.
The lute, the light, chime.

I'll get up and partner myself
with music, the purple moon

peeling itself like a plum.
Men stand in a circle and

they will ask and ask again.
I want to pick the thick bud,

to lose myself in the body's posture
bending in or away, to let

my majesty and birthright go
and gesture toward a waking life.



Insha'Allah

Danusha Lameris | Poem [\(link\)](#)

Insha'Allah

BY DANUSHA LAMÉRIS

I don't know when it slipped into my speech
that soft word meaning, "if God wills it."
Insha'Allah I will see you next summer.
The baby will come in spring, insha'Allah.
Insha'Allah this year we will have enough rain.

So many plans I've laid have unraveled
easily as braids beneath my mother's quick fingers.

Every language must have a word for this. A word
our grandmothers uttered under their breath
as they pinned the whites, soaked in lemon,
hung them to dry in the sun, or peeled potatoes,
dropping the discarded skins into a bowl.

*Our sons will return next month, insha'Allah.
Insha'Allah this war will end, soon. Insha'Allah
the rice will be enough to last through winter.*

How lightly we learn to hold hope,
as if it were an animal that could turn around
and bite your hand. And still we carry it
the way a mother would, carefully,
from one day to the next.



Sound of the Axe on Fresh Wood: Eavesdropping on Edna St. Vincent Millay's diaries

Declan Ryan | Interview [\(link\)](#)



Art by Sally Deng.

No One Gets Sylvia Plath

Emily Van Duyne | Essay [\(link\)](#)



This image of Plath trying and failing to reach her crying babies tore me apart, initially. But then, I thought of the ways “Edge,” Plath’s poem that begins, “The woman is perfected./Her dead//Body wears the smile of accomplishment...” is quoted at the end of almost every biography written about her, presented as the work of someone already dead who came back to tell the tale. The idea of the woman who is perfect in death begs us to read Plath’s life and death as static. The poem “Edge,” Clark writes, is almost like a frieze—I would agree. But Plath’s life is not. It’s not a frieze, or a poem. Sylvia Plath did not make her life into a work of art—*we did*. No curtain fell when she died. The scene—which I had to admit to myself was, up to that point exactly that, a scene in my head with a creaking character always condemned to commit the same dramatic act—became, upon reading Clark’s rendering of it, not just the end of someone’s life, but a part of that life: with the possible still present, the present still possible.

ON THIS DAY

An initiative to mark moments of poetic history and significance, including the birth and death anniversaries of poets, as well as tributes to recently deceased writers by remembering their work.

Emily Dickinson's Singular Scrap Poetry

Dan Chiasson | Essay [\(link\)](#)

EMILY DICKINSON'S SINGULAR SCRAP POETRY

On letters, envelopes, and chocolate wrappers, the poet wrote lines that transcend the printed page.



By Dan Chiasson

November 27, 2016

The poems of Emily Dickinson began as marks made in ink or pencil on paper, usually the standard stationery that came into her family's household. Most were composed in Dickinson's large, airy bedroom, with two big windows facing south and two facing west, at a small table that her niece described as "18-inches square, with a drawer deep enough to take in her ink bottle, paper and pen." It looked



Appalachian Elegy (Sections 1-6)

bell hooks | Poem [\(link\)](#)

listen little sister
angels make their hope here
in these hills
follow me
I will guide you
careful now
no trespass
I will guide you
word for word
mouth for mouth
all the holy ones
embracing us
all our kin
making home here
renegade marooned
lawless fugitives
grace these mountains
we have earth to bind us
the covenant
between us
can never be broken
vows to live and let live



Joan Didion, The Art of Fiction No. 71

Linda Kuehl | Interview [\(link\)](#)

INTERVIEWER

You have said that writing is a hostile act; I have always wanted to ask you why.

JOAN DIDION

It's hostile in that you're trying to make somebody see something the way you see it, trying to impose your idea, your picture. It's hostile to try to wrench around someone else's mind that way. Quite often you want to tell somebody your dream, your nightmare. Well, nobody wants to hear about someone else's dream, good or bad; nobody wants to walk around with it. The writer is always tricking the reader into listening to the dream.

INTERVIEWER

Are you conscious of the reader as you write? Do you write listening to the reader listening to you?

DIDION

Obviously I listen to a reader, but the only reader I hear is me. I am always writing to myself. So very possibly I'm committing an aggressive and hostile act toward myself.

Don't Ask Me, Sweetheart

Faiz Ahmad Faiz | Poem [\(link\)](#)

Don't Ask Me, Sweetheart

Don't ask me, sweetheart, for the love we've had before.

I had then thought --

As long as you're here, my life would flourish;
when I had your grief, grief of the world didn't matter.
You were the one who kept the world in eternal bloom,
but for your eyes, what else is there for me in the world?
If I have you, I'd have the destiny in my hand.
That was not to be, though I wanted it so.
Many other woes in the world besides love,
many other comforts, besides our togetherness ...

Translation by Agha Shahid Ali



Tonight

Agha Shahid Ali | Poem [\(link\)](#)

In the heart's veined temple, all statues have been smashed.
No priest in saffron's left to toll its knell tonight.

God, limit these punishments, there's still Judgment Day—
I'm a mere sinner, I'm no infidel tonight.

Executioners near the woman at the window.
Damn you, Elijah, I'll bless Jezebel tonight.

The hunt is over, and I hear the Call to Prayer
fade into that of the wounded gazelle tonight.

My rivals for your love—you've invited them all?
This is mere insult, this is no farewell tonight.

And I, Shahid, only am escaped to tell thee—
God sobs in my arms. Call me Ishmael tonight.

"Tonight" from *Call Me Ishmael Tonight: A Book of Ghazals* by Agha Shahid Ali. Copyright © 2003 by Agha Shahid Ali Literary Trust. Used by permission of W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

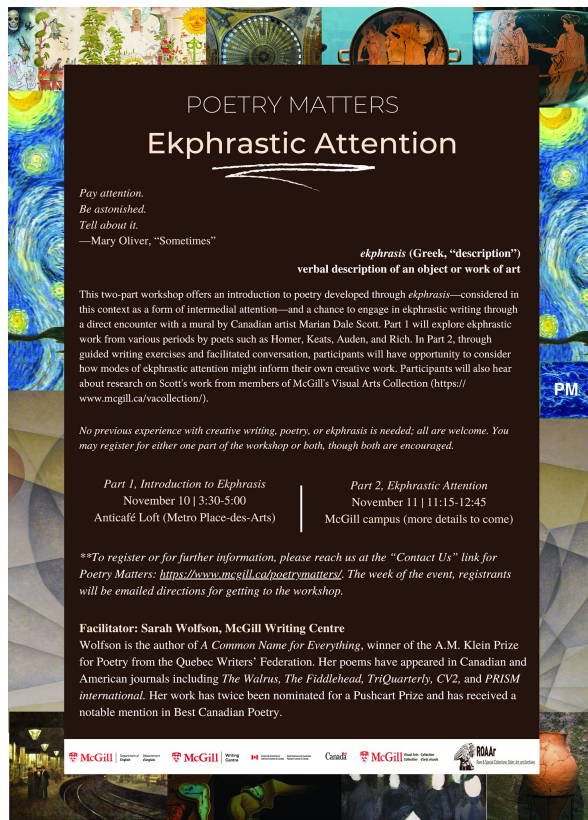
Source: *Call Me Ishmael Tonight: A Book of Ghazals* (W. W. Norton and Company Inc., 2003)



EVENTS

A repository of posters and publicity material designed and developed for the 2021-2022 workshops and other sessions organized by *Poetry Matters*.

Ekphrastic Attention



POETRY MATTERS
Ekphrastic Attention

*Pay attention.
Be astonished.
Tell about it.*
—Mary Oliver, “Sometimes”

ekphrasis (Greek, “description”) verbal description of an object or work of art

This two-part workshop offers an introduction to poetry developed through *ekphrasis*—considered in this context as a form of intermedial attention—and a chance to engage in ekphrastic writing through a direct encounter with a mural by Canadian artist Marian Dale Scott. Part 1 will explore ekphrastic work from various periods by poets such as Homer, Keats, Auden, and Rich. In Part 2, through guided writing exercises and facilitated conversation, participants will have opportunity to consider how modes of ekphrastic attention might inform their own creative work. Participants will also hear about research on Scott’s work from members of McGill’s Visual Arts Collection (<https://www.mcgill.ca/vacollection/>).

No previous experience with creative writing, poetry, or ekphrasis is needed; all are welcome. You may register for either one part of the workshop or both, though both are encouraged.

Part 1, Introduction to Ekphrasis November 10 3:30-5:00 Anticafé Loft (Metro Place-des-Arts)	Part 2, Ekphrastic Attention November 11 11:15-12:45 McGill campus (more details to come)
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****To register or for further information, please reach us at the “Contact Us” link for Poetry Matters: <https://www.mcgill.ca/poetrymatters/>. The week of the event, registrants will be emailed directions for getting to the workshop.**

Facilitator: Sarah Wolfson, McGill Writing Centre
 Wolfson is the author of *A Common Name for Everything*, winner of the A.M. Klein Prize for Poetry from the Quebec Writers’ Federation. Her poems have appeared in Canadian and American journals including *The Walrus*, *The Fiddlehead*, *TriQuarterly*, *CV2*, and *PRISM international*. Her work has twice been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and has received a notable mention in *Best Canadian Poetry*.

Logos for McGill, Anticafé, and other partners are at the bottom.

Wednesday, November 10, 3-5:30 pm (ET) | Thursday, November 11, 11:30 am - 12:45 pm (ET)

—Details



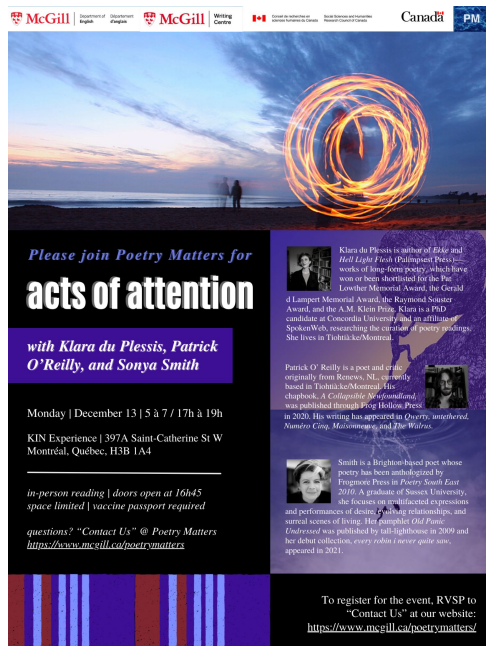
This two-part workshop offers an introduction to poetry developed through **ekphrasis**—considered in this context as a form of intermedial attention—and a chance to engage in ekphrastic writing through a direct encounter with a mural by Canadian artist **Marian Dale Scott**. An introductory session will explore ekphrastic work from various periods by poets such as Homer, Keats, Auden, and Rich. Through guided writing exercises and facilitated conversation, participants will then have opportunity to consider how modes of ekphrastic attention might inform their own creative work.

Part 1, Introduction to Ekphrasis - November 10: 3:30-5:00 **Anticafé Loft (Metro Place-des-Arts)**
 Part 2, Ekphrastic Attention - November 11: 11:15-12:45 **McGill campus (meet at Strathcona Anatomy and Dentistry Building, McGill)**

Facilitator: Sarah Wolfson, McGill Writing Centre

Wolfson is the author of *A Common Name for Everything*, winner of the A.M. Klein Prize for Poetry from the Quebec Writers’ Federation. Her poems have appeared in Canadian and American journals including *The Walrus*, *The Fiddlehead*, *TriQuarterly*, *CV2*, and *PRISM international*. Her work has twice been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and has received a notable mention in *Best Canadian Poetry*.

Acts of Attention: In-person poetry reading with Klara du Plessis, Patrick O'Reilly, and Sonya Smith



McGill University of Quebec
 McGill Writing Centre
 Canada

Please join Poetry Matters for
acts of attention
 with Klara du Plessis, Patrick O'Reilly, and Sonya Smith

Monday | December 13 | 5-7 PM
 KIN Experience | 397A Saint-Catherine St W
 Montréal, Québec, H3B 1A4

in-person reading | doors open at 16h45
 space limited | vaccine passport required

questions? "Contact Us" @ Poetry Matters
<https://www.mcgill.ca/poetrymatters>

Klara du Plessis is author of *Ekke* and *Hell Light Flesh* (Palimpsest Press), works of long-form poetry which have won or been shortlisted for the Pat Lowther Memorial Award, the Raymond Souster Award, and the A.M. Klein Prize. Klara is a PhD candidate at Concordia University (PhD in alliteration) and a research fellow at the University of Montreal. She lives in Tiohtià:ke/Montreal.

Patrick O'Reilly is a poet and critic originally from Renew, NL, currently based in Tiohtià:ke/Montreal. His chapbook, *A Collapsible Newfoundland*, was published through Frog Hollow Press in 2020. His writing has appeared in *Overturn*, *amphibian*, *Numbro Cinq*, *Maisonneuve*, and *The Walrus*.

Smith is a Brighton-based poet whose poetry has been anthologized by Frogmore Press in *Poetry South East 2019*. A graduate of Sussex University, she focuses on multifaceted expression and performances of desire, of intimacy, relationships, and surreal scenes of living. Her pamphlet *Old Pains* (Underworld) was published by tall-lighthouse in 2009 and her debut collection, *every robin i never quite saw*, appeared in 2021.

To register for the event, RSVP to "Contact Us" at our website: <https://www.mcgill.ca/poetrymatters/>

Monday, December 13, 5-7 pm (ET)

—Details



About the poets

Klara du Plessis is author of *Ekke* and *Hell Light Flesh* (Palimpsest Press), works of long-form poetry, which have won or been shortlisted for the Pat Lowther Memorial Award, the Gerald Lampert Memorial Award, the Raymond Souster Award, and the A.M. Klein Prize. Klara writes in English, Afrikaans, and translingually, and lives in Tiohtià:ke/Montreal.

Patrick O'Reilly is a poet and critic originally from Renew, NL, currently based in Tiohtià:ke/Montreal. His chapbook, *A Collapsible Newfoundland*, appeared through Frog Hollow Press in 2020.

Sonya Smith is a Brighton-based poet whose poetry has been anthologized by Frogmore Press in *Poetry South East*. Her debut collection, *every robin i never quite saw*, appeared in 2021.

A New English Grammar, and Other Poems



Department of
English



Centre de recherches en
études nord-américaines et canadiennes

Centre de recherches en
études nord-américaines et canadiennes

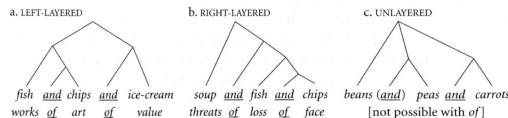
Canada



A New English Grammar, and Other Poems

Please join Poetry Matters for a poetry reading
by Spector lecturer Jeff Dolven

Thursday, January 20
5:30 pm
via Zoom



Questions on Poetry Matters?
miranda.hickman@mcgill.ca
Contact us
<https://www.mcgill.ca/poetrymatters/>

For the Zoom link, please register by
completing the "Contact Us" form, accessed
through the Poetry Matters website:
<https://www.mcgill.ca/poetrymatters/contact-us>

Thursday, January 20, 5:30 pm (ET)

-Details

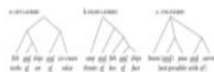
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Questions on Poetry Matters?
miranda.hickman@mcgill.ca
Contact us
<https://www.mcgill.ca/poetrymatters/>

Dr. Jeff Dolven is the author of three books of criticism, *Scenes of Instruction*, *Senses of Style*, and the admittedly hasty *Take Care*, as well as essays on a variety of subjects, from Renaissance metrics to player pianos. His poems have appeared in magazines and journals in the US and the UK and in a volume, *Speculative Music*. He is also an editor-at-large at *Cabinet* magazine and was the founding director of Princeton's Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program in the Humanities (IHUM).

He read from his collection-in-progress, "A New English Grammar," along with his published works. The audience, along with Dolven, contemplated questions of the politics of attention and how it is crafted through the poetic medium.

Poetry Matters and the Maude Abbott Medical Museum present

ARTICULATING THE BODY

Ekphrasis in the Maude Abbott Medical Museum

FACILITATOR: DR. SHANE NEILSON

Shane Neilson is a poet, physician, literary critic, and scholar of Canadian literatures. His work includes poetry collections such as *Complete Physical* and *Exterminate My Heart*, as well as essays on his experience as a physician, *Call Me Doctor and Gammel Blue*. Awards for his poetry include *Arct Poetry Magazine's Poet of the Year*, the Hamilton Literary Award, *The Walrus Poetry Prize*, and the shortlist for the Montreal International Poetry Prize and the Trillium Poetry Prize. Shane is a SSHRC Postdoctoral fellow from the Department of English, University of Ottawa. He is currently an assistant professor of Family Medicine at McMaster University, and he continues to practice medicine in Guelph, Ontario.

The Maude Abbott Medical Museum is a repository of materials dating from the early 19th century that documents the study and practice of Medicine at McGill University and its associated teaching hospitals.

This in-person workshop engages the resources of the museum to support students in creating ekphrastic poetry — i.e. poems developed in response to visual images and objects. Guided by poet and physician Dr. Shane Neilson, participants will have an opportunity to create new written work and practice new ways of seeing in the context of museum's medical exhibits. **All welcome — whether you have engaged in creative writing before or would like to start now.**

Please register through the "Contact Us" form on the Poetry Matters website:
<https://www.mcgill.ca/poetrymatters/contact-us>

MAUDE ABBOTT MEDICAL MUSEUM

*Strathcona Anatomy & Dentistry Building
3640 University Street, Room 362
Montreal, Québec H3T 1G7*

THURSDAY | MARCH 10 | 5 TO 7 PM

*Please stay tuned to the Poetry Matters Facebook
page for live stream options for the event:
<https://www.facebook.com/PoetryMattersMcGill>*

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McGill

McGill

– Details

The Museum is home to exciting ekphrastic possibilities in their collection, which speaks to us across time, anatomy, and sometimes even species. We're grateful to offer this workshop in collaboration with Dr. Richard Fraser, Professor of Pathology and Director of the museum. Registration is required and space limited.

Shane Neilson is a poet, physician, literary critic, and scholar of Canadian literatures. His work includes poetry collections such as *Complete Physical* and *Exterminate My Heart*, as well as essays on his experience as a physician, *Call Me Doctor* and *Gunmetal Blue*. Awards for his poetry include *Arc Poetry Magazine's Poet of the Year*, the Hamilton Literary Award; *The Walrus* Poetry Prize; and the shortlist for the Montreal International Poetry Prize and the Trillium Poetry Prize. Shane is a SSHRC Postdoctoral fellow from the Department of English, University of Ottawa. He is currently an assistant professor of Family Medicine at McMaster University, and he continues to practice medicine in Guelph, Ontario.

Attending to Sound: Ekphrasis and Music

Attending to Sound: Ekphrasis and Music

with Earth World and Samara Garfinkle

In-person workshop | KIN Experience, Wednesday, March 30, 5 à 7

The theme for this year's Poetry Matters workshops in creative writing is ekphrasis -- broadly defined, descriptive writing in response to a work of art or other object. Although ekphrasis often suggests writing in response to visual art, it can apply to other media and fine art as well. This guided workshop with the Earth World Collaborative and singer/poet Samara Garfinkle offers opportunity to develop ekphrastic poetry responsive to music, both heard and unheard. Here, Earth World will introduce one of their recent projects featuring poetic responses to "imaginary music."

The Earth World Collaborative was founded in 2018 by composers and organists Joel Peters and Adrian Foster. Its activities are centred on immersive story concerts, which integrate electronics, original compositions, projection, lighting, and special effects.

Samara Garfinkle is a Canadian soprano, voice teacher, and poet. In 2022, she became the new host and co-coordinator of *SpeakUp: The Montreal Interactive Poetry Exchange*.

All are welcome -- whether you have pursued creative writing before or are new to the experience.

With thanks to the Linda Fernandes Fund.

Register through the "Contact Us" page on the Poetry Matters website at this link:
<https://www.mcgill.ca/poetrymatters/contact-us>

Windows on the Future



WINDOWS ON THE FUTURE

Please join Poetry Matters for an in-person workshop on ekphrastic poetry featuring a sculpture on McGill University's campus, Marcel Barbeau's *Fenêtre sur l'avenir* (1992), which many of us pass every day.

FRIDAY, APRIL 22, 11-1 (ET)
JAMES TERRACE, MCGILL CAMPUS

This year's theme for Poetry Matters' workshops in creative writing is ekphrasis – broadly defined, descriptive writing in response to a work of art or other object. This guided workshop with poet Sarah Wolfson and curator Gwendolyn Owens provides opportunity to develop ekphrastic poetry in response to sculpture.

All are welcome – whether you have pursued creative writing before or are new to the experience.

Gwendolyn Owens is Director of McGill's Visual Arts Collection and former Assistant Director of the Canadian Centre for Architecture.

Sarah Wolfson is author of *A Common Name for Everything*, which won the A.M. Klein Prize for Poetry from the Quebec Writers' Federation. She teaches at the McGill Writing Centre.

With thanks to the Linda Fernandes Fund.

Register by completing the 'Contact Us' form on the Poetry Matters website here:
<https://www.mcgill.ca/poetrymatters/contact-us>

Friday, April 22, 11 am - 1 pm (ET)

—Details



We are delighted to invite you for "Windows on the Future," an in-person workshop on ekphrastic poetry featuring a sculpture on McGill's campus, Marcel Barbeau's *Fenêtre sur l'avenir* (1992), which many of us pass every day. This year's theme for Poetry Matters' workshops in creative writing is ekphrasis – broadly defined, descriptive writing in response to a work of art or other object. This guided workshop with poet Sarah Wolfson and curator Gwendolyn Owens provides opportunity to develop ekphrastic poetry in response to sculpture.

Venue: James Terrace, McGill campus

About the facilitators

[Gwendolyn Owens](#) is Director of McGill's Visual Arts Collection and former Assistant Director of the Canadian Centre for Architecture.

[Sarah Wolfson](#) is author of *A Common Name for Everything*, which won the A.M. Klein Prize for Poetry from the Quebec Writers' Federation. She teaches at the McGill Writing Centre.

How Objects Speak: A Poetry Workshop



Canada | McGill | Department of English | McGill | Writing Centre

Wednesday, May 18, 3:30-5:30 pm (ET)

HOW DO OBJECTS SPEAK?

A Poetry Workshop.

IN-PERSON WORKSHOP
WEDNESDAY, MAY 18 | 3:30-5:30

SENIOR COMMON ROOM, BIRKS
BUILDING AT THE MCGILL
DOWNTOWN CAMPUS

Please join Poetry Matters for an in-person workshop on ekphrastic poetry with a focus on Medrie Purdham's *Little Housewif* (Véhicule Press, 2021).

This year's theme for Poetry Matters workshops in creative writing is ekphrastic – broadly defined, descriptive writing in response to a work of art or other object.

Little Housewif (2021) delves deeply into the world of domestic miniatures, with the fine-grained signatures of her poetry—close observation, exact detail, and precise sounds.

Poet Medrie Purdham is Associate Professor of English at the University of Regina. Her work has appeared in publications such as *The Fiddlehead*, *The Antigoneish Review*, and *The New Quarterly*. Research interests include prosody, twentieth-century drama, and modern and postmodern Canadian literature. She is currently at work on another collection, provisionally entitled *Miniatures*.

With thanks to the Linda Fernandes Fund.

All are welcome – whether you have pursued creative writing before or are new to the experience.

Register by completing the "Contact Us" form on the Poetry Matters website here:
<https://www.mcgill.ca/poetrymatters/contact-us>

—Details



An in-person workshop on ekphrastic poetry with poet Medrie Purdham, University of Regina, at the Birks Building, Senior Common Room, McGill University downtown campus (3520 Rue University, Montreal, Quebec H3A 2A7).

Drawing from her recent book, *Little Housewif* (Véhicule Press, 2021), Purdham will share insights about her poetry and lead a workshop on poetry inspired by objects.

Medrie Purdham is Associate Professor of English at the University of Regina. Her work has appeared in publications such as *The Fiddlehead*, *The Antigoneish Review*, and *The New Quarterly*. Research interests include prosody, twentieth-century drama, and modern and postmodern Canadian literature. She is currently at work on another collection, provisionally entitled *Miniatures*.

How Objects Speak: A Poetry Workshop

CLIMATE, WAR & OYSTERS

Please join Poetry Matters and The League of Canadian Poets for a two-part event with acclaimed political poet, non-fiction writer, and playwright **Gary Geddes**

THE VENTRILOQUIST
Poetic Narratives from the Womb of War
GARY GEDDES

THE OYSTERS I BRING TO BANQUETS
Gary Geddes

Register through the "Contact Us" form on the Poetry Matters website: <https://www.mcgill.ca/poetrymatters/contact-us>

Gary Geddes is the recipient of many national and international literary awards, such as the E.J. Pratt Prize, the Commonwealth Poetry Prize (Americas Region), and the Gabriela Mistral Prize (Chile). In both a reading from older and newer work and a workshop considering the meeting points between criticism and creative practice, Geddes will draw from *The Ventriloquist*, featuring powerful anti-war narratives, and *The Oysters I Bring to Banquets*, with its ludic poems about building a greenhouse and elegies for lost friends and disappearing species.

READING | WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26 | 3:30-5:30
IN-PERSON | BIRKS READING ROOM, MCGILL UNIVERSITY

WORKSHOP ON CREATIVE AND CRITICAL PRACTICE
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 28 | 3:30-5:30

McGill | Department of English | Department of English | Canada | Canada | Canada

We are delighted to invite you for our first event of the season with acclaimed Canadian poet **Gary Geddes**, who will give an in-person reading and lead an in-person workshop in late October.

ABOUT THE POET

Geddes is the recipient of many national and international literary awards, such as the E.J. Pratt Prize, the Commonwealth Poetry Prize (Americas Region), and the Gabriela Mistral Prize (Chile). In both a reading from older and newer work and a workshop considering the meeting points between criticism and creative practice, Geddes will draw from *The Ventriloquist*, featuring powerful anti-war narratives, and *The Oysters I Bring to Banquets*, with its ludic poems about building a greenhouse and elegies for lost friends and disappearing species.

How Objects Speak: A Poetry Workshop

CLIMATE, WAR & OYSTERS

Please join Poetry Matters and The League of Canadian Poets for a two-part event with acclaimed political poet, non-fiction writer, and playwright **Gary Geddes**

THE VENTRILOQUIST
Poetic Narratives from the Womb of War
GARY GEDDES

THE OYSTERS I BRING TO BANQUETS
Gary Geddes

Register through the "Contact Us" form on the Poetry Matters website: <https://www.mcgill.ca/poetrymatters/contact-us>

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READING | WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26 | 3:30-5:30
IN-PERSON | BIRKS READING ROOM, MCGILL UNIVERSITY

WORKSHOP ON CREATIVE AND CRITICAL PRACTICE
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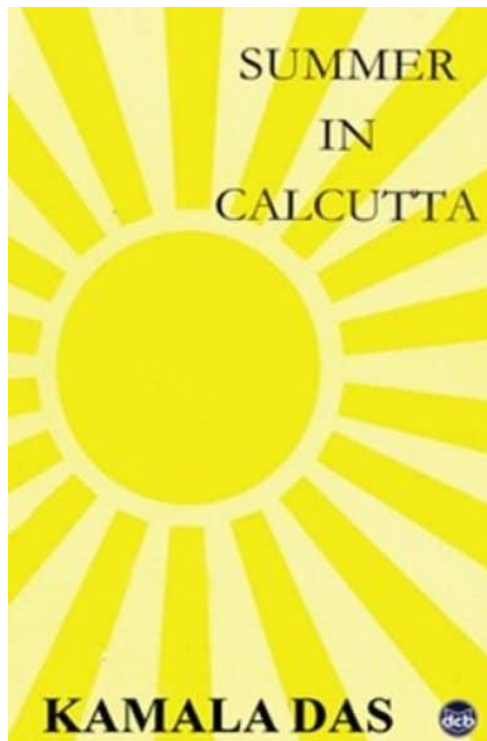


OTHER FOCI

A collection of poems, interviews, reviews, essays, poetry readings, announcements, and red-letter day writings shared by *Poetry Matters* on its Facebook and website platforms.

An Introduction

Kamala Das | Poem [\(link\)](#)



An Introduction

I don't know politics but I know the names
Of those in power, and can repeat them like
Days of week, or names of months, beginning with
Nehru. I am Indian, very brown, born in
Malabar, I speak three languages, write in
Two, dream in one. Don't write in English, they said,
English is not your mother-tongue. Why not leave
Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,
Every one of you? Why not let me speak in
Any language I like? The language I speak
Becomes mine, its distortions, its queeresses
All mine, mine alone. It is half English, half
Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest,
It is as human as I am human, don't
You see? It voices my joys, my longings, my
Hopes, and it is useful to me as cawing
Is to crows or roaring to the lions, it
Is human speech, the speech of the mind that is
Here and not there, a mind that sees and hears and
Is aware. Not the deaf, blind speech
Of trees in storm or of monsoon clouds or of rain or the
Incoherent mutterings of the blazing
Funeral pyre. I was child, and later they
Told me I grew, for I became tall, my limbs
Swellled and one or two places sprouted hair. When
I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask
For, he drew a youth of sixteen into the
Bedroom and closed the door. He did not beat me
But my sad woman-body felt so beaten.
The weight of my breasts and womb crushed me. I
shrank
Pitifully. Then . . . I wore a shirt and my
Brother's trousers, cut my hair short and ignored
My womanliness. Dress in sarees, be girl,
Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,
Be a quarreller with servants. Fit in. Oh,
Belong, cried the categorizers. Don't sit

On walls or peep in through our lace-draped win-
dows.

Be Amy, or be Kamala. Or, better
Still, be Madhavikutty. It is time to
Choose a name, a role. Don't play pretending games.
Don't play at schizophrenia or be a
Nympho. Don't cry embarrassingly loud when
Jilted in love . . . I met a man, loved him. Call
Him not by any name, he is every man
Who wants woman, just as I am every
Woman who seeks love. In him . . . the hungry haste
Of rivers, in me . . . the ocean's tireless
Waiting. Who are you, I ask each and every one,
The answer is, it is I. Anywhere and
Everywhere, I see the one who calls himself
I; in this world, he is tightly packed like the
Sword in its sheath. It is I who drink lonely
Drinks at twelve, midnight, in hotels of strange
towns,
It is I who laugh, it is I who make love
And then, feel shame, it is I who lie dying
With a rattle in my throat. I am sinner,
I am saint. I am the beloved and the
Betrayed. I have no joys which are not yours, no
Aches which are not yours. I too call myself I.

Crying Online Like a Normal Person

BD McClay | Essay [\(link\)](#)



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Crying Online Like a Normal Person

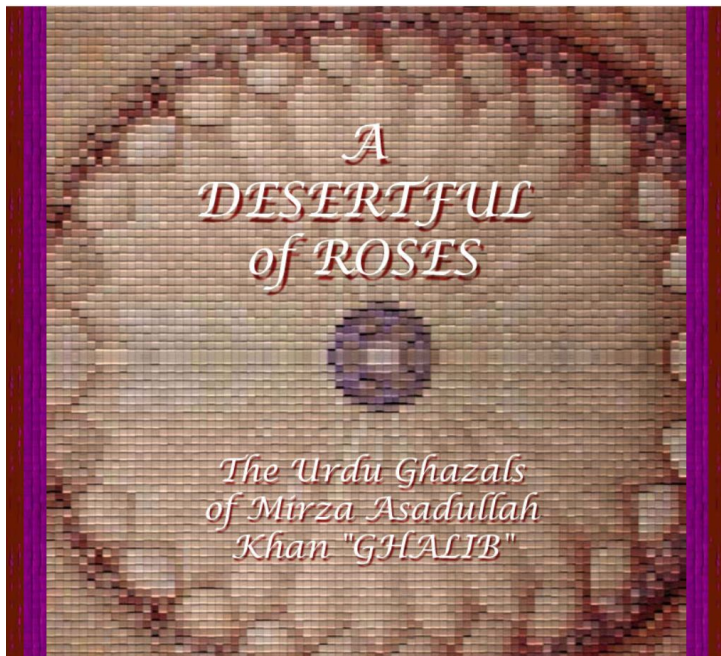
Melissa Broder's poems share the exaggerated candor of her popular Twitter account, but they obscure as much as they reveal.

BY [B.D. MCCLAY](#)



A Desertful of Roses: the Urdu Ghazals of Mirza Asadullah Khan "GHALIB"

Frances W. Pritchett | Digital Project [\(link\)](#)



'I don't always recognise the border between prose and poetry'

Prathyush Parasuraman | Interview [\(link\)](#)

'I don't always recognise the border between prose and poetry': Abdulrazak Gurnah



Prathyush Parasuraman

JANUARY 01, 2022 16:00 IST

UPDATED: DECEMBER 31, 2021 12:18 IST

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The chronicler: Abdulrazak Gurnah with his 2021 Nobel Prize for Literature diploma on December 6, 2021.

Agha Shahid Ali Reading From *The Country Without A Post Office* (1992)

Agha Shahid Ali | Poetry Reading on *With Kashmir* ([link](#))



Craig Santos Perez's *from unincorporated territory*

Timothy Otte | Review [\(link\)](#)



But Perez isn't simply attuned to the page as space; he is attuned to language itself and to the "traditional" formal elements of lyric poetry. Take the following from *[guma]*:

remember just
at dinner

the power
goes out—

a length of
rope—plummet—

mom lights
candles—

—*"ginen* sounding lines [*date: 8/8/93*][*epicenter: 12.982° n 144.801° e*][*depth: 59km*]
[*strength: 8.2*]"

The poem tumbles down the page, no more than three syllables per line, words breaking to accommodate the form: "dad care / -fully por- // tions fish." The poem's central theme is memory ("*remember just*") and the final image is of fish scales and broken picture frame glass shimmering in the light when the power returns after an earthquake. It's a poem in which the form enacts the image and the earthquake that precedes it, syllables and broken words mirroring the fish scales and broken glass.

Prac Crit Interview of Jeff Dolven

Sarah Howe | Interview [\(link\)](#)

We're Going to Get Married

by Jeff Dolven

We're going to get married, married, she said,
going to get married, me and my sister,
and I don't care what it looks like, she said.

A sister like mine is harder to find
than a needle lost in the high cactus-desert,
than a hay-colored camel lost in the haystacks.

We mustn't let go! We're going to be richer
together than any old rich man, and truer,
true to each other, and damn the beholder:

he gets the needle, right in the eye,
and then she and I will be left free to wander,
wander right through the eye of the needle:

ring-fingers first, we'll meet in the middle,
and there we can linger, sister and sister,
properly married, not lying together

like camel and camel, like nickel and quarter,
like hayfield and haystack and hay-harvest weather,
like mistress and master, beheld and beholder



Guggenheim Launches First-Ever Poet-In-Residence Program in Collaboration with the Academy of American Poets

Poets.org | Announcement [\(link\)](#)

Taylor Johnson

read poems by this poet

Taylor Johnson is from Washington, DC. He is the author of *Inheritance* (Alice James Books, 2020), winner of the Norma Faber First Book Award from the Poetry Society of America, and named as one of the best poetry books of 2020 by the *New York Times*. Taylor has received fellowships from Cave Canem, Yaddo, The Nicholson Project, *Callaloo*, and the Conversation Literary Festival, among other organizations. He is the winner of the 2017 Larry Neal Writers' Award from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, the 2021 Judith A. Markowitz Award for Emerging Writers from Lambda Literary, and a 2021 Pushcart Prize for his poem "Trans is against nostalgia." His work appears in *Poetry*, *The Paris Review*, and *Scalawag*, among other literary journals. Taylor is a student of the percussive architecture of go-go music. In 2022, Johnson was named the inaugural Poet-in-Residence at the Guggenheim Museum in New York City.



Beyond Language: Joy Harjo on writing her life in poetry

Layli Long Soldier | Interview [\(link\)](#)



I first met Joy Harjo more than a decade ago, during my undergraduate studies at the Institute of American Indian Arts where she was a visiting poet. I remember an intimate gathering in the campus hogan with Joy and my fellow creative writing students. I remember a lit fire in the wood stove. And more than anything, I remember Joy talking about her writing process: “I don’t do linguistic gymnastics,” she said confidently, so matter-of-factly. It’s important to write poems with a sense of purpose, she explained to us. Those words made a lasting impression. I took her words to mean, *Don’t waste your time or mess around. Make it count!* But Joy’s work as a poet not only counts, it is necessary and vital. She gives voice to those who are often unheard, through poems that are personal and revealing; loadstones to pull us close. All the while, there’s an openness, a radiation, a reaching out to future generations. In her own words, “I know there is something larger than the memory of a dispossessed people. We have seen it.”

Learning Image and Description

Rachel Richardson | Essay [\(link\)](#)

Learning Image and Description

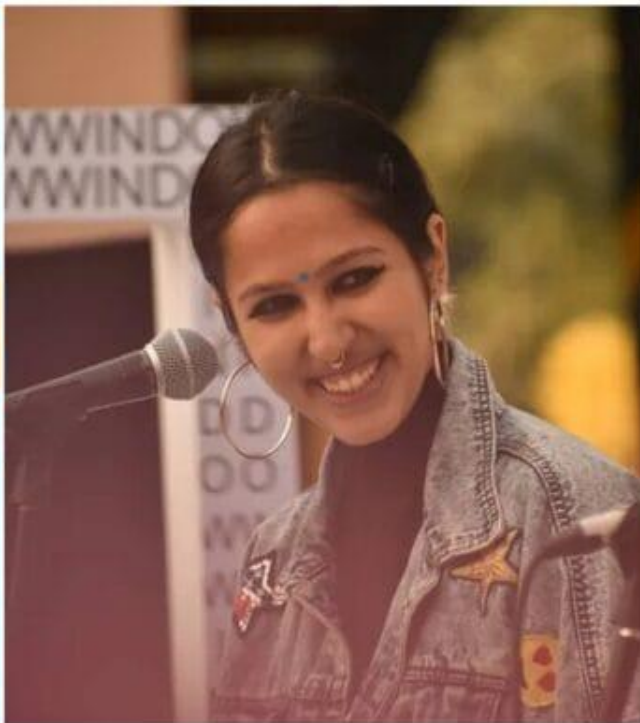
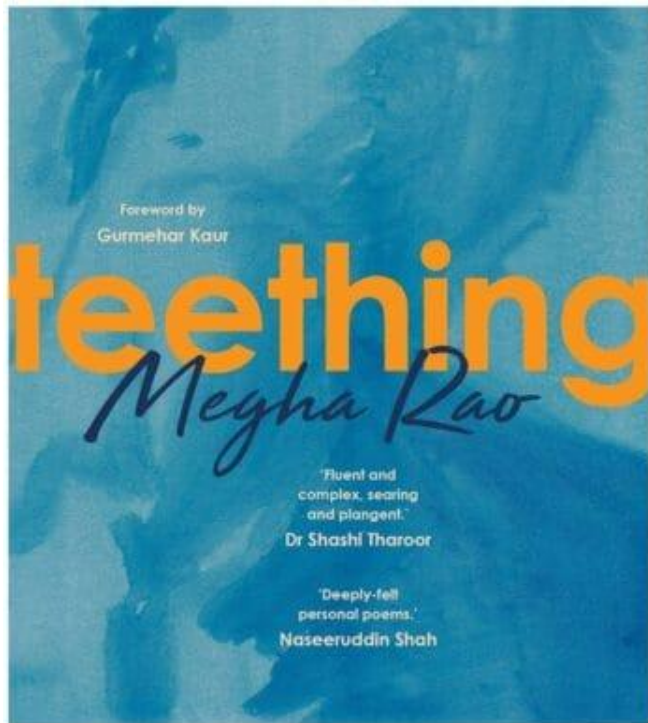
Opening the luminous door in your writing.

BY RACHEL RICHARDSON



Teething: A Story told in Verse

Megha Rao | Currently Reading [\(link\)](#)



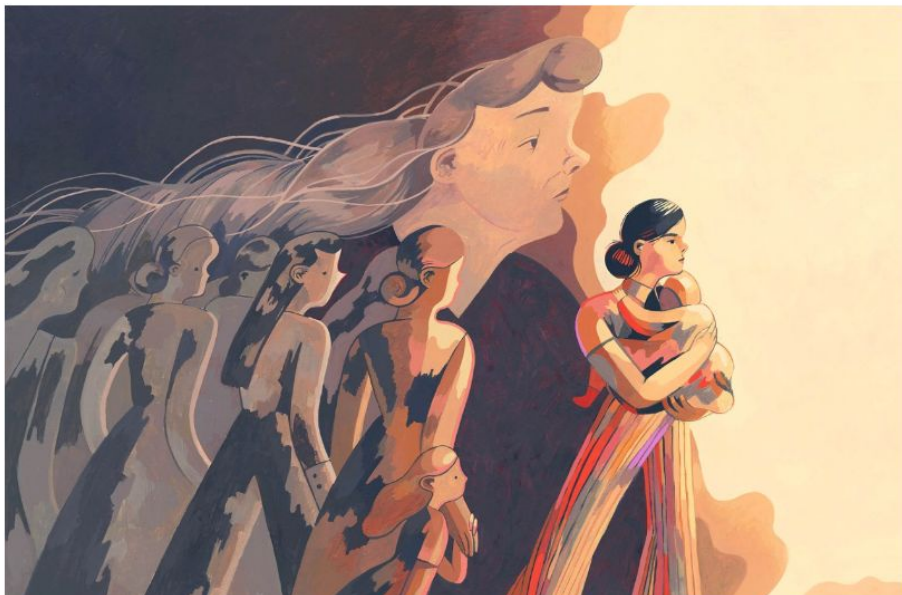
Descend in Daughters

Sandra Simonds | Essay [\(link\)](#)

Descend in Daughters

Blanca Stone's new collection is an unflinching portrait of motherhood and the grief of her family's famed matriarch.

BY [SANDRA SIMONDS](#)



The Purpose of Time is to Prevent Everything from Happening at Once

XJ Kennedy | Poem [\(link\)](#)

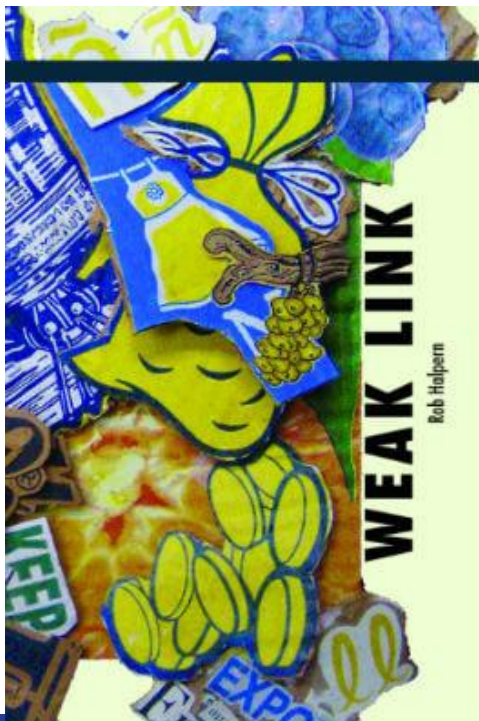


Suppose your life a folded telescope
Durationless, collapsed in just a flash
As from your mother's womb you, bawling, drop
Into a nursing home. Suppose you crash
Your car, your marriage-toddler laying waste
A field of daisies, schoolkid, zit-faced teen
With lover zipping up your pants in haste
Hearing your parents' tread downstairs-all one.

Einstein was right. That would be too intense.
You need a chance to preen, to give a dull
Recital before an indifferent audience
Equally slow in jeering you and clapping.
Time takes its time unraveling. But, still,
You'll wonder when your life ends: Huh? What
happened?

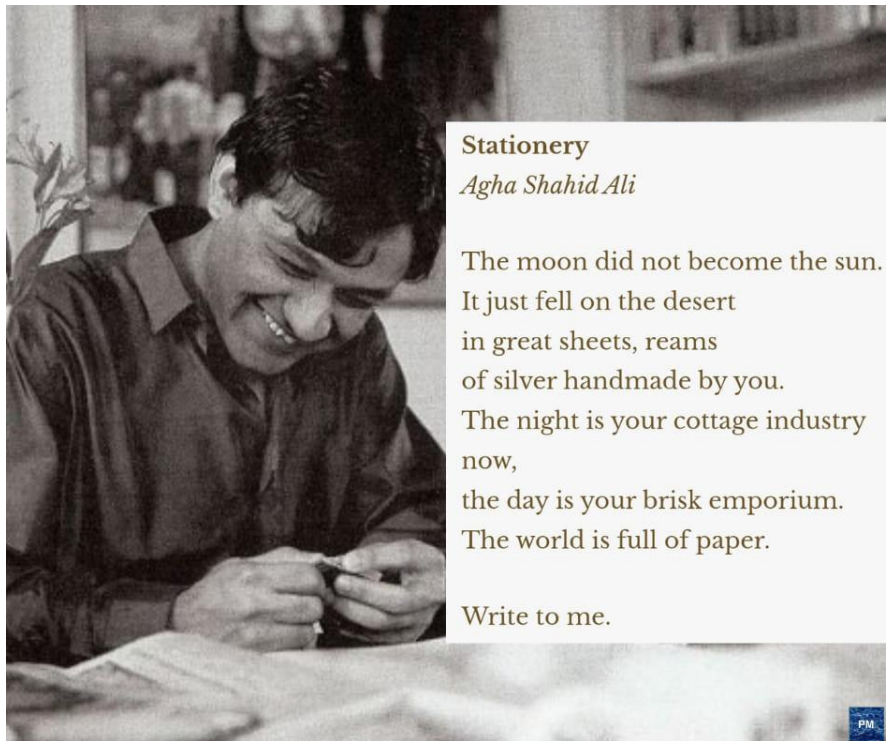
The Rhetoric of Blood

Rob Halpern | Essay [\(link\)](#)



Stationery

Agha Shahid Ali | Poem [\(link\)](#)



Stationery

Agha Shahid Ali

The moon did not become the sun.
It just fell on the desert
in great sheets, reams
of silver handmade by you.
The night is your cottage industry
now,
the day is your brisk emporium.
The world is full of paper.

Write to me.

Good Bones

Maggie Smith | Poem [\(link\)](#)



Good Bones

BY MAGGIE SMITH

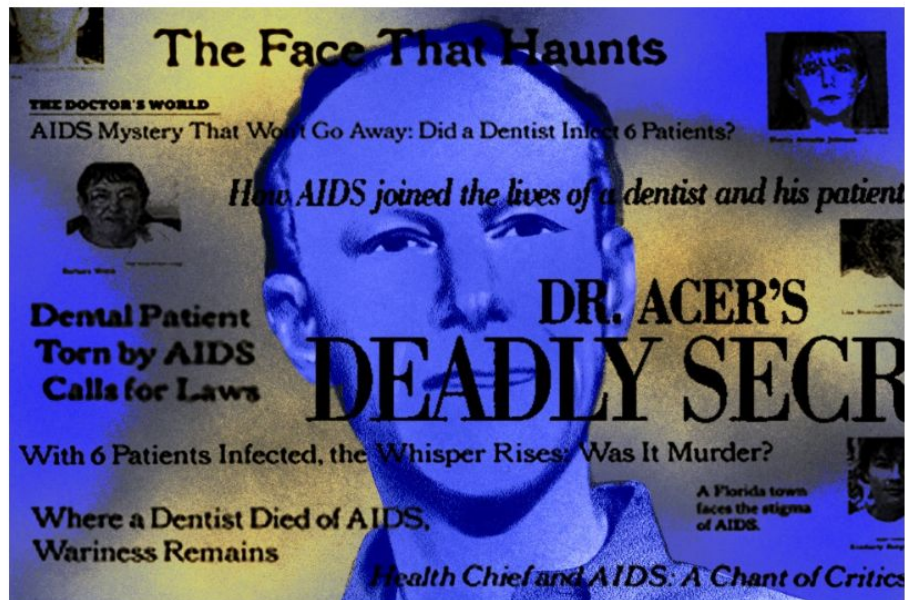
Life is short, though I keep this from my children.
Life is short, and I've shortened mine
in a thousand delicious, ill-advised ways,
a thousand deliciously ill-advised ways
I'll keep from my children. The world is at least
fifty percent terrible, and that's a conservative
estimate, though I keep this from my children.
For every bird there is a stone thrown at a bird.
For every loved child, a child broken, bagged,
sunk in a lake. Life is short and the world
is at least half terrible, and for every kind
stranger, there is one who would break you,
though I keep this from my children. I am trying
to sell them the world. Any decent realtor,
walking you through a real shithole, chirps on
about good bones: This place could be beautiful,
right? You could make this place beautiful.

He Stood Alone

Tausif Noor | Essay [\(link\)](#)

Steven Reigns's documentary poetics point to the vexed relation between the poetry of the ongoing HIV/AIDS crisis and the official record.

BY TAUSIF NOOR



Art by Laura Lannes.

The Patience of Ordinary Things

Pat Schneider | Poem [\(link\)](#)



It is a kind of love, is it not?
How the cup holds the tea,
How the chair stands sturdy and foursquare,
How the floor receives the bottoms of shoes
Or toes. How soles of feet know
Where they're supposed to be.
I've been thinking about the patience
Of ordinary things, how clothes
Wait respectfully in closets
And soap dries quietly in the dish,
And towels drink the wet
From the skin of the back.
And the lovely repetition of stairs.
And what is more generous than a window?



The Needs of Humans

Sarah Wolfson | Poem [\(link\)](#)

I am in need of a manicure.
A manicore. A man to cure.
A cure-all. A curiosity. A
costume shop. A wholesaler
of the sea's calcic treasures.
A pair of puddle jumpers, size four.
An extra U-lock. A vampire
metaphor. Some zebra stripes
to describe an angry octopus.



Nothing to Hide Under All This Sun

Paul Mendez | Review essay [\(link\)](#)

In *Time Is a Mother*, Ocean Vuong puzzles over language—and his own history.

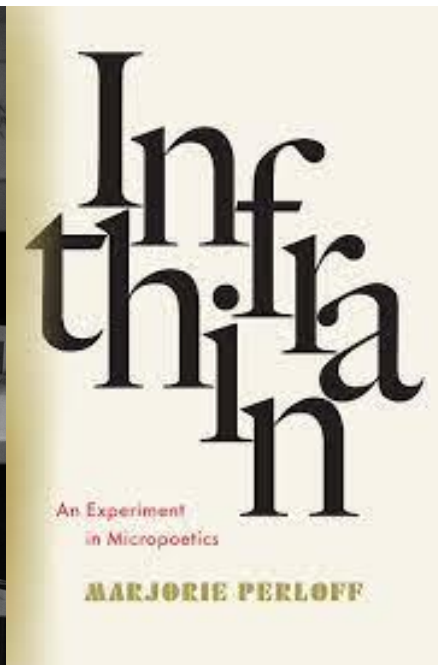
BY PAUL MENDEZ



Art by Danlin Zhang

Super-Close Reading: On Marjorie Perloff's "Infrathin: An Experiment in Micropoetics"

Tal Goldfajn | Essay review [\(link\)](#)



A Poem (and a Painting) About the Suffering That Hides in Plain Sight

Elisa Gabbert | Essay [\(link\)](#)



Auden has been writing about real paintings, but because he doesn't name them, for years I never tried to look them up; I thought the first stanza represented some kind of Old Masters amalgam.

Literary scholar and poet Lucy Alford on Poetry and Attention

Stanford Humanities Center | Interview [\(link\)](#)



What drew you to this topic?

I was drawn to studying the relationship between the cultivation of attention and the practice of reading and writing poetry after completing my first doctoral dissertation, in which I wrote about the moral foundations for ethics that grew unstable and porous in modernity and postmodernity. I argued that cultivating one's capacity for attention might enable one to approach complex ethical situations of human, ecological, and systemic violence with a more multidimensional awareness of consequences beyond the self.

Thinking about how much the quality of our attention shapes the way we perceive the world and how we relate to others made me start wondering about the areas in which we practice the art of attention. As a reader and writer of poetry, it seemed to me that poetry offered a uniquely concentrated and cross-cultural tool for training our attention and exploring its limits within our language. As I delved into the project, however, I found that the relationship was far more primary—and more complex—than I had ever anticipated.

The Poetics of Disobedience

Alice Notley | Essay [\(link\)](#)



It's necessary to maintain a state of disobedience against...everything. One must remain somehow, though how, open to any subject or form in principle, open to the possibility of liking, open to the possibility of using. I try to maintain no continuous restrictions in my poetics except with regard to particular works, since writing at all means making some sort of choices. But NO DOCTRINES. Rather I tend to maintain a sense that a particular form or set of rules at a certain point might serve me for a while. Like many writers I feel ambivalent about words, I know they don't work, I know they aren't it. I don't in the least feel that everything is language. I have a sense that there has been language from the beginning, that it isn't fundamentally an invention. These are contradictory positions but positions are just words. I don't believe that the best poems are just words, I think they're the same as reality; I tend to think reality is poetry, and that it isn't words. But words are one way to get at reality/poetry, what we're in all the time. I think words are among us and everywhere else, mingling, fusing with, backing off from us and everything else.

The Poet and the Reader: Nobel Lecture 2020

Louise Glück | Lecture Transcript [\(link\)](#)

The poems to which I have, all my life, been most ardently drawn are poems of the kind I have described, poems of intimate selection or collusion, poems to which the listener or reader makes an essential contribution, as recipient of a confidence or an outcry, sometimes as co-conspirator. “I’m nobody!” Dickinson says. “Are you nobody, too?/Then there’s a pair of us—don’t tell!” Or Eliot: “Let us go then, you and I,/When the evening is spread out against the sky/Like a patient etherized upon a table...” Eliot is not summoning the boy scout troop. He is asking something of the reader. As opposed, say, to Shakespeare’s “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?”: Shakespeare is not comparing me to a summer’s day. I am being allowed to overhear dazzling virtuosity, but the poem does not require my presence.





Close Readings

Seamus Perry and Mark Ford | Podcast [\(link\)](#)

Close Readings

Seamus Perry and Mark Ford discuss the lives and works of 20th-century poets through the lens of pieces written about them in the LRB, and Irina Dumitrescu and Mary Wellesley consider the lives and voices of women in medieval literature.

SUBSCRIBE FOR FREE [Apple Podcasts](#) [Spotify](#) [Google Podcasts](#)

The Pop Song That's Uniting India and Pakistan

Priyanka Mattoo | Essay [\(link\)](#)

The writer and musician Ali Sethi has created an unconventional hit with "Pasoori."

By Priyanka Mattoo May 09, 2022



The Triggering Town

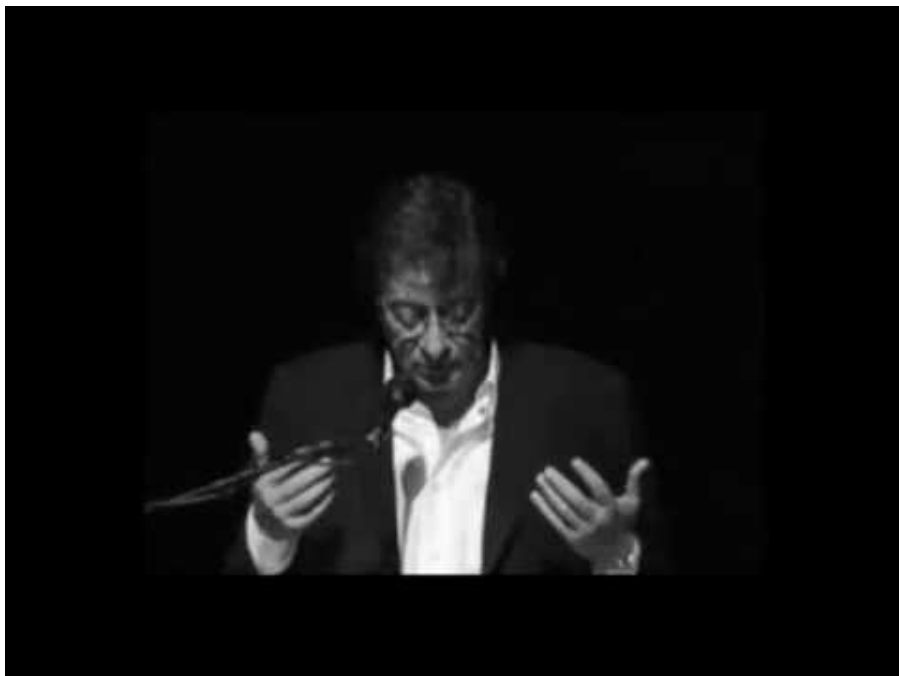
Richard Hugo | Essay [\(link\)](#)



You found the town, now you must start the poem. If the poem turns out good, the town will have become your hometown no matter what name it carries. It will accommodate those intimate hunks of self that could live only in your hometown. But you may have found those hunks of self because the externals of the triggering town you used were free of personal association and were that much easier to use. That silo you never saw until today was yours the day you were born. Finally, after a long time and a lot of writing, you may be able to go back armed to places of real personal significance. Auden was wrong. Poets take some things far more seriously than other people, though he was right to the extent that they are not the same things others would take seriously or often even notice. Those chorus girls and that grain really matter, and it's not the worst thing you can do with your life to live for that day when you can go back home the sure way and find they were there all the time.

Mahmoud Darwish reads "Tibaq / Antithesis" - Homage to Edward Said

Mahmoud Darwish | Poetry Reading on *Poetic.com* ([link](#))



We've Always Been Here, Fighting

Christopher Soto | Essay for Pride Month ([link](#))

Queer poets on the meaning of Pride.

BY [CHRISTOPHER SOTO](#)



I turn often to the writings of [tatiana de la tierra](#), in particular her poem “[Dreaming of Lesbos](#),” from *For the Hard Ones/Para las duras: A Lesbian Phenomenology*: “I can / send letters to the women who loved me in my sleep // we are in a world that is not ours. what do we do with the dreams ...” To survive, queerness is a kind of “world building” endeavor—the act of authoring our bodies and our bedrooms out of reach from all that doesn’t want us here. I keep with me these words from [Cherríe Moraga](#)’s poem “Loving in the War Years:” “We’re all we’ve got. You and I / maintaining / this war time morality / where being queer / and female is as bad / as we can get.” Pride meant that we didn’t have to sneak into the world. These poems are threaded into that lineage; they invite us to live our love out loud.

These Queer Poets Are Reimagining Resistance In Southeast Asia Through Poetry

Thodasarum| Essay for Pride Month [\(link\)](#)



Poetry retains the essence of self, who we are, whom we wish to be, what we try to conceal. Even in the most absurd and oppressive realms of our lives, resistance and reclaiming identities remains a spectacle in poetry, while finding new means of articulating the connection to self, culture, and language.

Bible Belt

Alok Vaid-Menon | Poetry Reading on *Button Poetry* ([link](#))

