The Anarchist Review

of Books

Issue #5 Winter/Spring 2023

The Squat by Adrian Ghenie. Oil on canvas 2021

Contents

About the Cover

Loitering gato (billo) by Shellyne Rodriguez. Linocut relief print/chine collé 2022. It's a common occurrence to see in New York apartment buildings, a sign posted by the landlord that commands tenants to not "loiter" in hallways. But fuck the landlords of course. This Bronx gato (cat) is in the spirit of Ralph Chaplin's and Emory Douglas' cat, in defiance of landlords, and ready to attack. The times are urgent.

About This Issue

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

The Situationist International believed that authentic human desire is inevitably in conflict with capitalist society, that increasing worker pay did not decrease worker exploitation. They believed in workers' councils, and fought to create spaces and situations where people could interact without the burden of spectacle and commodities.

Their critique of the effects of consumerism and alienation under capitalism, both at work and in Everyday Life, has been borne out. Raoul Vaneigem and Guy Debord presaged social media, artificial intelligence, and the smartphone, positing that a profound state of alienation was coming and that people would one day treat even themselves as commodities. Debord critiqued a media culture that provided cover for the oppressive nature of capitalism, and infiltrated the most basic aspects of living.

"Just as early industrial capitalism moved the focus of existence from being to having," wrote Debord, "post-industrial culture has moved that focus from having to appearing."

The Situationist International wanted genuine joy in a world drowning in advertising jingles, big-screen car crashes, and illusions of a better life though a better façade, a world where objects were protected over human life. "We must destroy the Spectacle itself," wrote Debord, "The whole apparatus of the commodity society...We must abolish the pseudo-needs and false desires which the system manufactures daily in order to preserve its power."

While they were primarily artists, writers, workers and social critics who worked to decentralize even their own power, the SI had no qualms with violence, to fight bosses, cops, or any restraint on the imagination. They knew what was at stake.

"The dominion of the concentrated spectacle," wrote Debord, "is a police state."

We bring this issue to print in the midst of a global rejection of this police state. More than four hundred large scale anti-government protests are happening world-wide.

These are not isolated events, but simply people pushing back against ubiquitous attempts by governments and corporations to steal or poison land; restrict freedom of movement and bodily autonomy; hasten climate change; exert hegemony by dividing us through ethnicity, race, and sex; penalize the poor with fines and restrictions; and murder in the name of the state. These protests are against the work of government itself—to control, extract, occupy, intimidate and divide. That there have been tens of thousands on the streets every day in cities throughout Europe, Africa, the Americas, the Middle East and Asia since last summer is good news. Banners are unfurling with messages of support as people stand with one another, whether they are forest defenders in Atlanta and Brazil; farmers in Uruguay and Peru; feminists in Equador, Alabama, and Iran; queer people in Warsaw and Uganda; or poor people in every nation.

In Exarchia, where the ARB Collective has its office in Europe, anti-authoritarian protesters have been fighting a police occupation of the historically autonomous neighborhood for seven months, enduring CS gas, beatings, water cannons, and arrests. Exarchia won its autonomy after the fall of the US-backed dictatorship in Greece and now thrives as an example of how people came together to rebuild and care for one another—to meet the needs of the people, to live without police presence. It has long been considered a heart of the international anarchist movement and the reach of its tactical approach has shown that what happens on the streets of Exarchia can determine the course of a nation or a continent.

In this issue we bring you reporting from resistance movements in the forests of Georgia and the streets of Exarchia; Marc Lepson reports on migrants in the Mediterranean; Peyton Alexandre examines Black exceptionalism in the work of William C. Anderson; Nick Mamatas writes about Jarett Kobek's revelatory investigations; Owen Hill brings us a dispatch from a Wobbly victory and Shellyne Rodriguez shows us how it's done. All of this, and the poetry of CAConrad, fiction by James Hannaham, the political abstractions of Carrie Moyer, incendiary drawings by Diana Settles, and collage by N. Masani Landfair, Michael Byron, and Scott Treleaven.

ALL POWER TO THE IMAGINATION

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE

Cara Hoffman, February 2023

The *Anarchist Review of Books* is published twice a year by an independent collective of working writers, artists and organizers.

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

The Anarchist Review of Books
Vol. 3, No. 1, Issue #5, Winter/Spring 2023

PO Box 6011
Astoria NY 11106

www.anarchistreviewofbooks.org

$6 USD newstand.
Subscriptions $12 yearly US
Free to those imprisoned

$6.00
ISBN 978-0-9998976-6-9
50600>
9 780999 897669

Printed by union labor

Sparks

Curated by Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore

"History is written by the victors, but diligent and continual silencing is required to maintain its claims on the present and future."
—Hazel V. Carby, "We must burn them," *London Review of Books,* May 26, 2022

"What is language if it doesn't move, if it doesn't open, if it doesn't complicate rather than regiment, or complicate rather than rule-make all the time?"
—Dionne Brand, on Between the Covers with David Naimon, October 1, 2022

"The state is never neutral. It's not a tool that you can just go pick up off the ground and say this is just a hammer, I'm going to go hammer some nails with it. It has blood on it. It has violence tied to it. In its foundation."
—William C. Anderson, in conversation with Dean Spade and Harsha Walia at "No borders! No prisons! No cops! No war! No state?," Barnard Center for Research on Women, November 15, 2022

"Promises of housing provide the legal and rhetorical cover for police to purge unhoused people from public space, while interim housing, on its surface a humanitarian project, functions as an arm of the prison system, used not to help unhoused people but to warehouse them. Aimed ultimately at clearance and containment, police sweeps and interim housing make up two sides of a single approach—the iron fist and the velvet glove—as the state hands itself over to the interests of real estate."
—Tracy Rosenthal, "The Homeless Industrial Complex," *The New Republic,* June 2022

"More market rate units decrease rents in the same way that more police increase safety."
—Eric Stanley, on Twitter, June 14, 2022

"I'm really against being the example that straight people or more normative people are pointing to and they're like this is the good one, this is the salvageable one—it's the bad ones, it's the pervert ones, those are the ones that are the problem. Any time you fall into that line of discourse, you've already lost, right, you're conceding to the other side, and I don't think that makes sense as any kind of strategy for building power and liberation for erotic and sexual freedom."
—Davey Davis, on NPR's It's Been a Minute, July 5, 2022

"I realized that I was being conscripted into a particular vision of intellectual institutional life in which diversity and equity didn't mean that I was freer, but rather that the institution looked better."
—Billy-Ray Belcourt, on Between the Covers with David Naimon, October 18, 2022

"Maybe desire is the monument to human society."
—Chloë Bass, at the opening for *Soft Services*, her art installation in Volunteer Park, Seattle, October 1, 2022

"I am not always writing a sentence to tell a story, exactly, but simply to be in the space of a sentence, to make things appear in it, to see what is possible."
—Amina Cain, *A Horse at Night: On Writing* (Dorothy Project 2022)

"The most violent act of my life has been recovery."
—Harmony Holiday, "Grief (Disarmament)," *Harper's Magazine*, November 2022.

***Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore** is the author, most recently, of* The Freezer Door, *and the editor of* Between Certain Death and a Possible Future: Queer Writing on Growing Up with the AIDS Crisis. *Her next book,* Touching the Art, *will be published by Soft Skull in November.*

Stop Cop City

Atlanta is burning

That Summer Feeling, detail by Dianna Settles. Acrylic and colored pencil on panel 2021

On January 18th, SWAT forces attempting to clear the Weelaunee Forest of protestors and tree sitters resisting the construction of an 85-acre police training facility known as "Cop City", shot and killed 26-year-old Manuel Paez Teran. "Tortuguita" as they were known by friends and comrades, was an indigenous anarchist, trained medic, and longtime organizer for IWW, Food Not Bombs, and mutual aid organizations in Florida and Georgia. A police officer was shot during the operation and nineteen other protesters were arrested, seven of whom were charged with domestic terrorism.

In April 2021, Atlanta activists uncovered plans between the Atlanta Police Foundation and the City of Atlanta for what would be among the largest police training facilities in the country—with a mock city where police would train with firearms, tear gas, helicopters, and explosive devices to repress protest and mass unrest.

"Cop City" would deforest up to 380 acres of the largest contiguous forest in the region. Scientists describe the forest as indispensible in protecting the area from flooding and ensuring the area's resiliency during climate change. The site is also less than half a mile from a tributary of the South River, already endangered by decades of neglect and pollution. The surrounding neighborhood, Gresham Park, is 73% Black.

The first phase of the facility, which would be twice the size of the New York Police Department's training compound and three times the size of the LAPD's, is scheduled to open in 2023. It has been touted by the Atlanta Police Foundation (APF) as a way of rebuilding Police Department morale and, according to ex-mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, enabling "21st century training for 21st century policing." The facility is slated to host police departments from around the country as well as Israeli Defense Forces as part of a program that exists now through the Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange (GILEE) funded by Georgia State University.

Cop City was overwhelmingly rejected by the public in September 2021 after 17 hours of public comments from more than 1,100 Atlanta residents imploring for the project to be voted down. "We were first able to blow the lid off the project, said N.N. a Forest Defender, "Ultimately, it was supposed to be a backroom deal that was pushed through and no one would know. This movement stopped that. It was an attack on the strategy of the APF and their corporate backers."

Defend the Atlanta Forest, a decentralized autonomous movement, has been fighting the construction of Cop City for nearly two years. Beginning in January 2021, Forest Defenders constructed and occupied tree houses to impede further destruction, and declared an autonomous zone and people's park, open to all and a site of regular demonstrations, raves, music festivals, and teach-ins on resistance tactics. Their complex strategies and diversity of tactics have proved effective on the ground.

Construction was scheduled to begin June 1st, 2022, but Forest Defenders estimate crews have managed less than a week of work up to this point. On May 17, 2022 the Atlanta Police Department field investigations team was recorded over a police scanner discussing justifications for the use of deadly force against protesters.

In December 2022, one month before the murder of Manuel Paez Teran, local and state police violently attacked Forest Defenders with chemical weapons, destroyed encampments and tree sits, and charged six arrested activists with domestic terrorism.

The current movement also focuses on attacking Cop City's corporate allies and contractors, including iBank of America, Wells Fargo, AT&T, Cox Enterprises (owners of The Atlanta Journal-Constitution), Delta Airlines, the Koch brothers, and Home Depot to name a few.

"The APF wants to build Cop City," said N.N., "but they rely on general contractors and subcontractors for planning and construction. Their general contractor is Brasfield and Gorrie, a $3.4 billion construction firm involved in border construction and gentrification all over the country. They're in charge of structural engineering, blueprint making, and zoning for Cop City."

"Reeves Young is another construction firm that was involved in the boring and soil sampling process of the development and there were a lot of demonstrations at their offices (in November 2021) and at the home of the CEO (on December 20, 2021)," says N.N., "There was sabotage of some of their equipment here and elsewhere and ultimately they did the right thing and they moved their money elsewhere.

"This movement isn't fighting against something that's coming. We're in the catastrophe right now, because the police kill someone every day, and if we don't stop them today, they'll kill someone tomorrow."

The fight to defend the forest, and prevent a military style training camp focused on attacking the civilian population may be happening in Atlanta, but it is not a local struggle.

"We're entering a climate crisis and a century of disasters and they intend to goosestep us into the apocalypse," says N.N. "They're going to prop up their dying system, the petroleum-based capitalist infrastructure, with tear gas. That's their plan and no one is coming to save us. We're going to have to do this ourselves and I don't want people to wait for an invitation. Don't wait for someone to contact you, don't wait for someone to reach out. Don't wait, because this is happening and we need all your help. And you need this too. You need our help and we need your help. Our fate is connected."

Agoraphilia

Ashlyn Mooney

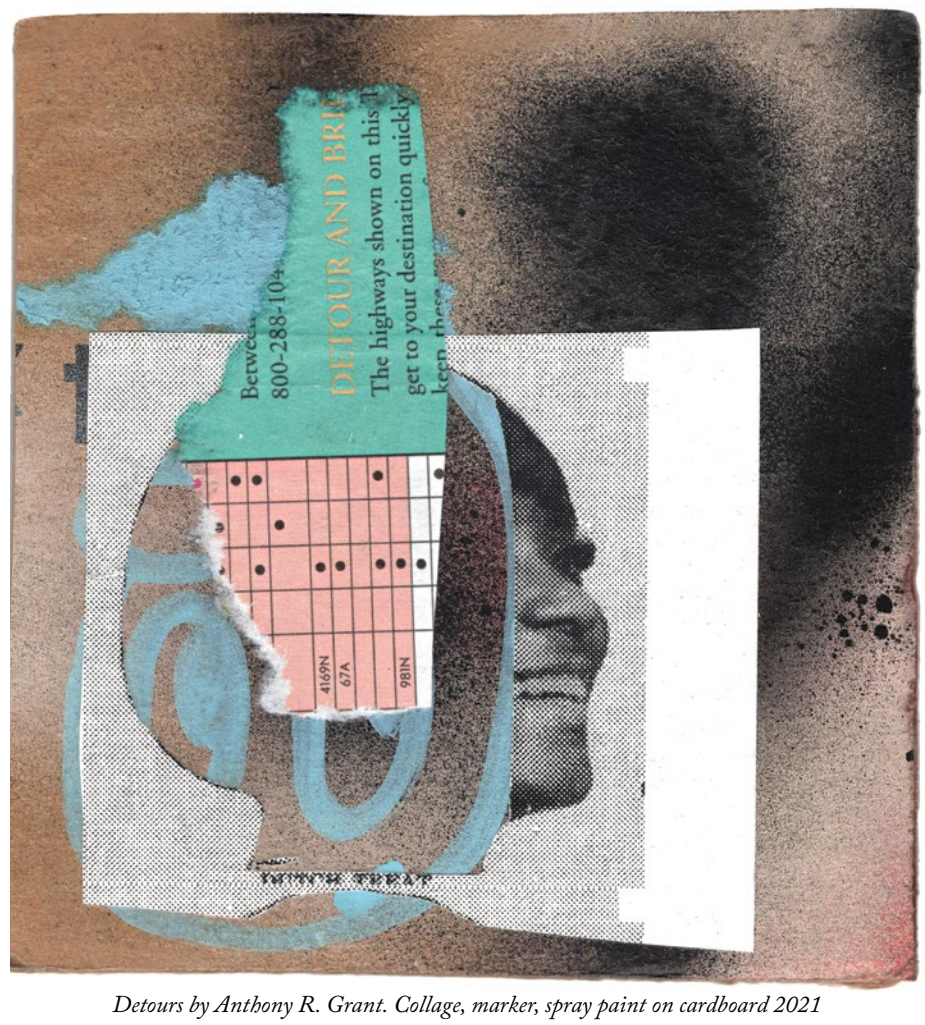
Participation
by Anna Moschovakis
216pp. Coffeehouse Press 2022

E, who narrates the opening pages of Anna Moschovakis' *Participation*, embodies a contradiction: she is a first-person narrator who is skeptical of narrative, an "I" suspicious of selves. She wonders whether we can really divide one person from people as a whole; she distrusts the urge to impose narrative order on chaos, to "invent airtight accounts." E's ambivalence speaks to broader tensions—between subject and system, individual and collective—and raises questions about the possibility of communicating within and despite those divides. How can the inner world speak to the outer? How can people, each of us a unique constellation of perceptions, biases, and memories, find mutual understanding? Or, as E puts it: "How can anyone gather in a world that is characterized by fantasy but also shared?"

These questions animate *Participation*: the novel's title is essentially its answer to them. Participation—that is, the active process of engaging, as a single entity, in something larger—is Moschovakis' subject, and an apt description of her narrative project. Inventive and experimental, the novel draws readers to the blurred edge where self meets other and part meets whole.

E opens the novel, though we don't know where, or when—and we are, she tells us, "without a beginning". Gradually, across short, impressionistic chapters, E and her circumstances emerge. Hers is a life divided across abstract and material binaries. She belongs to two reading groups: Love, which meets virtually, and Anti-Love, also billed as "resistance, revolt, revolution." She works three jobs and splits her time between the city and the village upriver, recognizable by their respective bodegas and reddening maple trees as New York and Upstate. A peripatetic reader, she flits from text to text on her reading groups' syllabi and dips in and out of the stack of books on her coffee table ("An archive of future attention, or else a morgue.") Other characters—a Greek poet, a translator, a colleague nicknamed "the capitalist"—surface briefly, then submerge. She nurtures a crush on S, a member of Love whom she has never seen or met. On her screens, the news brings reports of white supremacist violence. Outside, the weather veers between swelter and freeze.

E's narration is fluid and porous. The events she describes follow no clear timeline; her ruminations are permeable to other texts, other realities. Ours, for example: E often addresses the reader directly, to point out our expectations—of plot, say, or details to tamp down time and place—and to acknowledge her own tendency to withhold. Her chapters brim with quotes and allusions. Her sources range from Plato to intuitive mathematics to novels by Yuri Herrera and Hanif Kureishi, and the concepts she draws from them inform the novel's broader concern with dualities and contradictions. She mulls Aristophanes' definition of the romantic dyad as two halves of a primal whole; she later turns to chemistry, where a dyad is a divalent chemical, or "radical." E seeks not so much to resolve tension between the ideas she cites as to inhabit it, in ongoing conversation and exchange.



Detours by Anthony R. Grant. Collage, marker, spray paint on cardboard 2021

Midway through the novel, a tropical storm hits; the upriver region floods; the novel transforms. E departs: "I know it's sudden," she says, "but there are parts of this story that can't be told from the inside." The point-of-view flows between limited and omniscient third-person and second-person. Plotlines gather force, then trickle away. Cryptic postcards from S comprise several chapters, as do transcripts from a community liveblog that connects those affected by the floods. And as the novel's form grows more diffuse, the once-disparate elements of E's life merge. She and S meet. Love and Anti-Love convene together in the village upriver. There, they begin to put their theories into practice.

It is significant that these mergings (narrative, interpersonal) coincide with a storm. Faced with the particular crises of our particular era, plenty of writers have rejected what author Amitav Ghosh has called the "individual moral adventure"—that is, a story about a single narrator or protagonist moving in sharp relief against the backdrop of his social and physical landscape. The thinking is that one character's inner angst can't fully represent planet-level problems. Formal responses to this problem include multiple narrators, epistolary communications, fragmented narratives, meta- and intertextuality, all of which Moschovakis employs with deft eloquence in *Participation*. Her experiments point to the limitations inherent in finite stories and fixed selves.

But critique is not this novel's main concern. Moschovakis doesn't eschew the conventional first-person entirely; instead, she places it in confluence with fragmentation and polyphony. This is a book about mediation–between ideas, between people and ideas, between people and people. In the meeting of S and E, and of Love and Anti-Love, Moschovakis depicts a process of discussion and exchange by which a group of people–a few of whom are literally mediators–find shared meaning. The formal twists and surprises, meanwhile, engage readers in a similarly participatory process: the narrative exists because we construct it. As readers, we enter into a subjective exchange with the text. And as people, the novel insists, we are always already in subjective exchange with others.

What comes of this exchange? "Both a lot and not very much" is Moschovakis' answer. Love and Anti-Love try and fail to combine their syllabi, but they keep meeting anyway. S and E don't find a perfect union: instead, in a delightful series of chapters, figures appear before them—a squiggly line, a few hatchmarks—and they take turns describing what the figures look like, locating each other in their perspectives' overlap. Transcendence is brief and prosaic—Moschovakis maintains a reverence for the ordinary. In one scene, E has a kind of mystical experience in the lavatory of a commuter train. She struggles to express it: "Alive, alive, alive" I sometimes involuntarily whisper, but that isn't the whole story. "Of life" comes closer, though it rings less. Of; a part. No us without them; no this without me; no me without you. Increasingly, an added echo: "despite, despite, despite."

The train lurches; E pees; she goes back to her seat in the cafe car. But that sense of active participation in life—of sensing that you are alive, of; a part, despite–reverberates through the novel's extended contemplation of the difficulty and importance of relating to others. Later, in a letter, E suggests an antonym for agoraphobia: "agoraphilia," she writes, is "the love of crowds, specifically the love of the market, agora, not as a site of profit and profiteering, but as a site of mutual admission that any claim to self-sufficiency is a lie."

Moschovakis first novel, *Eleanor, or the Rejection of the Progress of Love,* followed a writer's struggle to author a book and her character Eleanor's struggle to author her own life. As Eleanor travels from New York to the French poet Rimbaud's residence in Harar, Ethiopia, the author realizes her book while Eleanor realizes a sense of herself as an agent, psychically present to her reality. Eleanor, in words Moschovakis borrows from a biography of Rimbaud, comes to "witness [her] invention by life." In many ways, *Participation* continues and extends Eleanor's journey outwards: E (short for Eleanor?) seeks not only to witness the world but engage with it. Reading this novel, I was reminded of Rimbaud's famous declaration, from an 1871 letter: "Je est un autre," usually translated as "I is someone else" or "I is another." It's a statement often interpreted as a declaration of self-articulation: when the poet writes "I," he makes himself a subject. But there's another meaning embedded in the grammar: the other is constitutive of "I." Before we can articulate ourselves, before we are even conscious, we are in relationship to other people—and are therefore responsible to them. Relation invents the self. To be a person, then, is to participate: is to be of; a part. Despite.

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

The Glitter From Her Bones

Agnes Borinsky

Hugs and Cuddles
by João Gilberto Noll
translated by Edgar Garbelotto.
240pp. Two Lines Press 2022

Porneia
by Eduardo Kac
200pp. Nightboat 2022

Brazilian author João Gilberto Noll's 2008 novel, *Hugs and Cuddles*, newly translated by Edgar Garbelotto, feels like a grotty romp, a provocation. It sloshes over you in one long endless paragraph, sentences that fall on top of each other like the accumulated smells of multiple lovers when you just stop showering and who knows what day it is anyway.

The novel starts with a childhood memory. Two boys wrestle in a hallway, fall down the stairs. They fight so they can keep touching each other. Then they grow up. One, our narrator, has a family and earns income from an inherited farm. The other becomes an engineer. Their lives separate, and then converge. The story, such as it is, is a tumble of fucking. The narrator fucks strangers, a goat, even his teenage son. Eventually he leaves his family and makes a life with the engineer. One central image involves a submarine full of Germans, traveling the globe, endlessly fucking.

Noll's language is lusty and explicit. Sentences careen between the bodily and the numinous. Even his abstractions feel like cocks fresh from some obscure ass, smelling like shit and cum. In the middle of a bathhouse encounter, the narrative will erupt into passages like this:

> The blackness could shelter lovers from the deprivation of sight. The darkness negated everything I needed to see. All that was left for me to do was to stick my hand inside a tantric body and gradually intoxicate myself with my soul's dispersions. There was nothing and nowhere I could fix my gaze besides the deepest dark of darkness... I wanted to present myself to the shadows with total availability... Bernardo brought his nose to my hand, which had just jerked off my dick.

Weird, right? And tasty? Shades of Genet, but hold the rosewater. All praise to Garbelotto's translation for bringing Noll's unrelenting, bucking tone through.

Meanwhile, deep in the shadows, we sense the ghosts of capitalism and Christianity. Panhandlers keep approaching the narrator like politicians, alluding to some unspecified national cause. Sexuality gets pitched as a series of "assets." Alternately sacrificial and all-powerful, the engineer becomes something of a Christ figure, and sex becomes the closest the narrator can get to a sacrament. He uses it to pin possible identities to himself, to imagine meaningful futures, to construct a true sense of home. But the national cause is never achieved, and the sacrament is never consummated. "I will not bring you paradise or sorrows," the narrator confesses. "I am the anonymous man, the one who can disappear without leaving any memory behind."

In the end, though, the queer convulsions of *Hugs and Cuddles* feel slightly macho. There's a particular combination of lassitude and sex-obsession that I recognize from writers as disparate as Michel Houellebecq and Philip Roth. These writers, generally male, act as if they are dragging themselves through the mud, but it feels, in the end, like a literary humble-brag, a swagger into worlds they have deemed abject and disgusting. Noll's narrator dies about halfway through the book, and is resurrected. And then he starts to become a woman. He tries on the role of housewife. Eventually, his once powerful cock melts away and out of the resulting anatomical "swamp" a vulva takes shape. I catch a whiff of misogyny, and it's not because the feminized narrator is actually abject. Abjection can be complex, musky, rich, human, real. Instead, this femininity feels abstract, cerebral, and sensationalized. It is an intellectual gesture, not a fleshy one. And that's where, for me, the novel starts to lose steam. I feel I am being poked with some man's idea of transgression.

Noll's book works, when it works, because it is one long edging session. The narrator speaks compulsively in the future conditional tense. He tips from one set of realities to another. Fears rise into desire which rises into disgust or exhaustion or violence which rises into a new reality. It's not a psychological novel, really; it's a book about capitalist exhaustion. But thematizing burnout is hard, and edging can't go on forever. At a certain point I was tired of it, of these narrative hands on my clit; I was ready for João Gilberto to leave, so I could make myself cum already, do the dishes, shower, read a little, and go to bed.

"A fuck," the narrator says, "once concluded, stinks."

Noll passed away in 2017, at age 70. He wrote *Hugs and Cuddles* in the first decade of the twenty-first century, and the end of a period of structural adjustment in Brazil, when American capital was forcing violent reconstructions of a number of economies in the global south. I feel that mood haunting *Hugs and Cuddles*. But Noll wrote, too, in the shadow of Brazil's long military dictatorship, which lasted from the mid-1960s until the early '80s.

Untitled by Adrian Ghenie. Oil on canvas, mounted on board 2019

Eduardo Kac's *Porneia*, out from Nightboat, collects the work that multidisciplinary artist Kac created under that dictatorship. Between 1980-82, Kac was at the center of the Movimento de Arte Pornô. At the time, the Brazilian Penal code of 1942 was still in effect, which held that it was still a crime to "make, import, acquire or possess, for purposes of trade, distribution, or public display, any obscene writing, drawing, painting, print or object." *Porneia* contains images of street performances, a series of manifestos, postcards sent through the mail (Pornograms), short poems meant for shouting (Yellpoems), graffiti, concrete poetry, typographic experiments, and scores, basically, for farting ("Flatographic Poems"). The book itself is gorgeously produced and the work feels thrilling, silly, and free.

Here is one of the Yellpoems, "Hot," in its entirety:

> boring lit doesn't light my clit
> ours is high lickerature
> throbbing text
> tit for tit
> that they wood stop
> stuff they could
> butt they cunt try ass they might

There's a density of wordplay in these, sonic and semantic, which is even more exciting when you look back and forth between Kac's English translation and his Portuguese original. And the joy of these poems isn't just the delight of a child yelling dirty words in the supermarket. The play is too dense, too complex, and they slip between too many points of reference. They are everything and nothing, deep and cheap. Even an awareness of the political stakes here—the thought of that penal code—doesn't eclipse the poems' gorgeous lightness of soul. I feel them crack me open, and "a haphazard happy girl / inside me awakens."

Kac's work gives language body. His energy feels restless and rigorous; tender, sexy, and deep. In what he calles the "Visual Works," Kac treats the materiality of the page—its texture, rips, curls—as part of a linguistic poem. There are other concrete poets I love: Norman Pritchard has his eerie spacial metaphysics, and bpNichol's charging of individual letters is almost theological. Kac's concrete poems feel different. They slip inside you like a finger. They make you feel implicated in their mischief as you decode them. And then there are the typographic experiments, versions of the then-nascent ASCII art, in which images are composed of standardized keyboard characters. Kac's experiments lean on the more textured layering that becomes possible on a typewriter. I can feel Kac's hands on the materials he has available, pushing, kneading, seeing how far he can take what he has.

As for the fart poems... I bow to their wild sublimity.

What makes me uneasy, though, is the way this work is framed in the present edition. Kac has written an introduction to the book, as well as a series of notes on each cluster of pieces. And his voice, now, feels stripped of all the lightness and play of the work he is framing. He speaks now in long catalogs of nouns: "In my series... I gave origin to a new form that mixes body art, design, political resistance, performance, activism, photography, and poetry." I have been rubbing up against a throbbing text, the work itself has given me an appetite for lickerature. And suddenly I find myself expected to honor this endless parade of dreary, self-important nouns. Nouns where any relation they might have to verbs, or to worldly transformation, is abstract and occluded.

It's disappointing, too, to realize how much of the context of the work Kac has left out. Kac gave the Porn Art Movement its name, and was at its center, but other accounts of the movement list multiple key members, across several cities. There was a group, after all, which called themselves the Gang: Kac, yes, and also Cairo de Assis Trindade and Teresa Jardim; others, including Glauco Mattoso, Ana Miranda, Cynthia Dorneles, Leila Míccolis, Sandra Terra, and Bráulio Tavares, participated, too. A few of these names appear in *Porneia*, but barely. "On February 13th, 1982, I presented collaboratively Interversão, a

multi-hour event…" I presented collaboratively? What does that even mean? The book contains images of a number of other people—collaborators, even—some of them naked—but Kac doesn't name them. He does meticulously note when an erect cock is his.

A friend recently shared the work of Bruna Kury, an anarchatransfeminist artist based in São Paulo. Kury includes herself in the underground "post-porn" movement. "Queer is no longer enough for us," she writes, in her Vomit Collective manifesto; "we want a trans, sudaka, mestiza, poor and precarious revolution." Looking at her work online, I find myself returning to Kac and Noll's work with a different set of eyes. In the photos of Kac's performance interventions in *Porneia* I see young, normatively attractive people, running, laughing on a beach. Their openness, their mischief, presents itself as natural, somehow. In Kury's work, I see an artist who has pierced, injected, suspended, transformed herself. She pushes her body to its limit to exorcise a force that seeks to discipline poor people and exploit racial difference to violent ends. I do not want to dismiss the joy—coded "natural"—of Kac's work. Sometimes joy, even silliness, is a powerful tool for slipping away from control. But for trans people, especially trans people of color, that "natural" is tricky. "Natural" too easily becomes its own regime, a position from which one person polices another's change. And if Noll is urging us to attend to a more contemporary form of capitalist exhaustion, his protagonist howls from a position of felt emptiness. Kury's work makes that emptiness feel like a luxury. "We vomit ourselves to reinvent ourselves," she writes, "we vomit our own flesh, our radioactivity, our viruses so that everyone gets infected." She is nauseous, she says, and refuses, now, to hold all that inside any longer. Capitalism depletes, yes. But Kury is hardly empty. She has been carrying too much for too long—beauty and grief, ungliness and joy. She wants to externalize the glitter from her bones.

Agnes Borinsky *writes prose and makes theater. She lives in Los Angeles.*

Are We Having Fun Yet?

Nick Mamatas

Motor Spirit: The Long Hunt for the Zodiac
by Jarett Kobek
316pp. We Heard You Like Books 2022

How to Find Zodiac
by Jarett Kobek
306pp. We Heard You Like Books 2022

From the series, Funny House (Speech Acts) by Arnold Joseph Kemp. 2019

"Zodiac is staging a public relations campaign," writes novelist and social critic Jarett Kobek in *Motor Spirit* of the infamous serial killer, who taunted the police and the public with frequent messages and coded ciphers in the late 1960s. "It's faltering." *Motor Spirit*, and its companion volume *How to Find Zodiac* were researched and written by Kobek during the days of shelter in place, and he self-published the titles to no little fanfare and scrutiny by legions of true crime readers and armchair sleuths. Spoiler: Kobek believes he has identified Zodiac as one Paul Doerr of Vallejo, California. Doerr was active in the world of science fiction/fantasy fandom: he corresponded with the fanzines of the era, read and collected comics, wore costumes while engaging in medieval recreations, and engaged in many of the weird libertarian folkways of fandom—tinkering; cryptography; détourned folk music called "filk"; wordplay and obscure references that are more tedious than clever; generalized animosity toward the post office, hippies, and kids today, etc.

Does that make Doerr the killer? In *Motor Spirit,* that is the least important question. In *How to Find Zodiac*, it is the most. The current fashion for true crime feels rather reactionary. It serves to stoke hysteria about the rates of violence, packages human misery for easy consumption, and often elevates the mere criminal to the status of cultural figure. But Kobek works differently. He seeks out Zodiac via a combination of literary and class analysis, and using Zodiac as a path to explore the counterculture of the 1960s and its discontents, and true crime today.

Zodiac wasn't always Zodiac. Despite the killer coining the name for himself—"Zodiac is the square's idea of the counterculture" Kobek says—the newspapers didn't cooperate at first, instead referring to him as the "cipher" and "code" killer. Zodiac's letters also made promises of carnage he didn't keep. No surprise that when the Manson slayings came along, Zodiac was pushed off the front pages.

What is "motor spirit"? For Kobek it is the impulse, the desire, to do something, to break through into the broader culture. The political or social or personal motivations come later, they're *ad hoc* justifications. The Weather Underground had motor spirit, and so did the acid-droppers on Haight Street. So too did the Minutemen, the far-right militia of which Doerr was once a member. The Minutemen recommended the purchase of untraceable mail order guns (Zodiac got his from Sears), engaged in cryptography (Zodiac's most famous trait), shared error-filled bomb-making plans (Zodiac made the same errors), and used as its symbol a set of crosshairs (just like Zodiac).

Kobek has motor spirit too. He didn't set out to write about Zodiac, and didn't set out to name the previously obscure Doerr as the killer. But the connection between the run-down Bay Area town of Vallejo and science fiction fanzines led Kobek to him. "Toilet literature consumed by the working-classes, freed from the pretensions of Literature," Kobek says of science fiction, more or less lovingly. (Kobek's novel *The Future Won't Be Long* features a tribute to SF writer Thomas Disch.) Zodiac's letters are full of references to comic books and science fiction, and in the 60s, before Comic-Con, before *Dungeons & Dragons*, before nerds with motor sprit came to dominate the multiplexes and streaming services, only a relative handful of people would grok (see what I did there?) what Zodiac was even on about.

And Doerr's dumpy car, lower middle-class animosity toward the left and the elites and the welfare state, and even his guns from Sears, hint at the kind of fascist class politics that could drive someone to kill in order to have slaves in the afterlife. Or maybe just to kill, and the slave stuff was another sci-fi put-on to get back into the news cycle. Class is a special sticking point in the analysis. Kobek spotted the car of the same make and model Zodiac drove in a Google search of Doerr's home decades later, leading detractors to sarcastically wonder how Doerr kept the car running all those years if he were The Real Killer. In San Francisco, people simply wave away their old vehicles when they secure the latest Tesla. In Vallejo and other lower-class burghs, dead cars are left to rust in driveways indefinitely.

Why does any of this matter at all? *Motor Spirit* matters because Kobek successfully captures something other than the Zodiac Killer. *Motor Spirit* is a book about the far-left and the far-right, and the great unwashed middle of the road that can point in either direction. It's a book about the peculiarities of the California Bay, which to this day has an outsize influence on the world's ability to self-consciously examine itself. (There's a reason the *Anarchist Review of Books* is not an online publication in the grip of Silicon Valley algorithms.) And it's a book about media creation and re-creation as *recreation*. Speaking of the Bay's influence on culture, remember Zippy the Pinhead and the interrogative slogan "Are we having fun yet?" *Motor Spirit* reminds us that no matter how hard the publishing and podcast and streaming industries attempt to jollify us with true crime stories, we are *not.*

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

BX third world liberation mixtape no. 1 (Wretched Freak to the Beat) by Shellyne Rodriguez. Color pencil on black paper 2021

Contradiction is the Rich Place

A conversation with Shellyne Rodriguez

Cara Hoffman

Shellyne Rodriguez is a radical thinker, militant, and artist who lives, works, and organizes in the Bronx. Her work, *Loitering gato (billo)*, is on this issue's cover. ARB sat down with Shellyne to talk about the work of community engagement, anti-authoritarian action, the role of art and artists in struggle, and the relationship between class and identity.

ARB: How did you get radicalized?

SR: When I was in high school, I was a member of the Universal Zulu Nation, which was partially a street gang, partially a political organization, partially a hip hop conservation deal. One of the important things about Zulu was political education. Now, the quality of the content was questionable: Zulu took a page from the Nation of Islam and there was some conspiracy theory stuff like Illuminati, this kind of shit. But it was a stepping stone into being a politicized individual. One of the main tenets of Zulu Nation was knowledge itself: knowing where you came from, studying about Africa, studying about the slave trade, about the history of Puerto Rico, all these things. That was the first outwardly facing radicalizing that happened.

I think life radicalizes us, you know. I'm a woman of a certain age, I grew up in the crack era. So if that shit don't radicalize you, I don't know what what does. I was in Zulu at sixteen, and during that time [the murder of] Amadou Diallo happened, and all these things came together. When I left, the politics stayed with me. I ventured out on my own, and not to be a cliché but I found Che Guevara's autobiography and Assata Shakur's biography, and the Cuban revolution and the Black Panthers. That was the year I went to D.C. to protest Bush's inauguration and I remember how we all were waiting to turn it up like the WTO protests in Seattle. There was always a kind of seeking on my own. I didn't formally end up back in a radical movement again until Occupy Wall Street.

I was just a regular chick from the Bronx, going down to Wall Street trying to help and take part in the assemblies. Then, when Occupy folded, a bunch of people from the Bronx found each other and formed Occupy the Bronx, which eventually developed into Take Back the Bronx. Because the Bronx is already occupied by the NYPD and slumlords. I was in that group for ten years. So, it's been kind of a collage of radicalizing.

ARB: What are you working on now?

SR: I work with my own cadre which I don't like to speak about too publicly. But I can say these two things. I think that in this particular political moment, as it pertains to New York City, it is very difficult to organize in a big extroverted way because the level of counterinsurgency we faced here during the George Floyd moment and after, has muddied the waters. There was a lot of cannibalism on the left that sowed distrust. The Ford Foundation had pledged one billion dollars to "support social justice initiatives" that summer and so there was also a tsunami of social-justice oriented NGOs on the ground that nobody had heard of, who had a lot of presence. Because people don't have militant study as part of their radicalization, they don't know the difference between an NGO and the grassroots—and the pros and cons of both. When that is the situation, and you're on the street with people with these different levels of commitment and understanding, it can be very dangerous. It makes it hard for coalition building. So what needs to happen now, needs to happen on a small scale.

Because of all of the counter insurgency and the dismantling of that moment—that crescendo that crashed—we're back to square one. There are things happening; NGOs are organizing around immigrants and essential workers, and the Amazon labor union organizing seems very exciting. Everything at its own scale, at its own gradient. But for grassroots organizing, it needs to be small. It needs to be quiet, without the spectacle of social media which invites unsolicited demands.

ARB: And surveillance from the state. Social media is talking to yourself—widely broadcasting a self-reflective presence, ideas and ideals that aren't connected to the reality on the ground.

SR: I agree, but I also think that exhibitions of resistance are important. Marches are important. But they're not the only thing that's important. I understand the use of social media. I think we need to fight the propaganda war. We need to be there. But it's a double-edged sword. Someone needs to do that work, but right now it's not for me. What I value right now is planting seeds.

I think that reality on the ground is where it's at. To call yourself a feminist or an abolitionist, because you believe in the values theoretically—I think "What the fuck does that actually mean?" How do you apply it?

So, you're like 'FREE THEM ALL,' and you're standing outside the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn, holding your sign and the guys inside are flickering their lights—and then you free them. They come outside, and the first thing they do is say, 'What's up bitch? Give me some pussy.'

And then what do you do?

ARB: Right, you're a feminist and an abolitionist—How do you deal with the contradictions?

SR: Yeah, contradiction is the rich place. It's that cream in the center. In all the places where change occurs, we have to deal with the dilemmas. Do you say 'Oh, never mind, forget it. Put them back in the cage?' Nobody wants to think about the reality of it. Then class comes into it—there's class implications. There's so many angles to thinking about the problem.

ARB: I taught in the Bronx for some years. Nearly every one of my students had been harassed because of Stop and Frisk but many students, even those who had experienced that harassment and violence, supported the existence of the police. They were often more angry about cops not showing up in time when they were called.

If you're talking about, "as a queer person," "as a black person," "as a Latinx person," as an "insert-identity-here" —I deserve these things, I want these things, but there is no politic attached to that, there's not specifically a politics shaped by anticapitalism, of anti-imperialism, of anticolonialism, then you are just clamoring to join empire. And you are an enemy.

SR: It feels unfathomable that we could have abolition in these neighborhoods and that's by design. Police literally manage all of our interpersonal relationships. That's why people think 'How could we possibly get along without police?' We always need a mediator to come and break up the fight and we've been conditioned to think he has to have a badge. It goes back to why political education in a public forum in the neighborhood is where it's at right now—because we don't know how to be neighbors to each other. The fabric is completely broken.

ARB: Can you talk more about counterinsurgency at work in the American left?

SR: One of the ways counterinsurgency is at work is through the control of political discourse in so called "movement spaces." Black Radical tradition teaches us that racial capitalism is what's for dinner. If you don't understand how race and capitalism work together, you're either a class reductionist, or you're a liberal identity politician. It's really like that. Americans hate to think about class. They don't want to talk about it because it's antithetical to chasing the dream. Like if I have to think about my class position, I can't be busy thinking about how I'm gonna be an entrepreneur. Unexamined bourgeois ideology.

My latest pet peeve observation is that nobody knows what the fuck neoliberalism is but everybody's getting hurt by it. Inside the United States, not just outside of the United States. I went to Ecuador this summer for the uprising, and literally anybody, any random person standing beside you, can break down neoliberalism like David Harvey, and be like 'Nope—Gasoline should not be this price, this is fucking austerity. You're not going to do this to us and we are coming.' Literally, anybody in the street will break down the economics. We are not educated here in the U.S. in this way, and it's by design. When you divorce class consciousness, when you divorce anti-colonial struggle and thinking, when you divorce understandings of empire, understanding what imperialism is, when you divorce all of that from conversations about identity, all you get is clamoring for representation. And what is it that you're clamoring for? For your identity to be represented. You want a seat at the table of empire.

This is why we need militant study. If you're talking about, "as a queer person," "as a black person," "as a Latinx person," as an "insert-identity-here" —I deserve these things, I want these things, but there is no politic attached to that, there's not specifically a politics shaped by anticapitalism, of anti-imperialism, of anticolonialism, then you are just clamoring to join empire. And you are an enemy.

We understand very clearly that the white cis hetero Christian body is in decline. They know too that this identity is in decline. So the monster, the spirit of all of that, knows it needs a new host. It needs a new fucking home, and so it's looking for it. There is no better representation of that image than the fucking, stupid U.S. President and Vice President.

You have this withering away, decrepit, senile President, literally being fucking propped up by a Black South Asian woman, who is a fucking cop. There is no better image than that, you know—out with the old, in with the new. And it is going to enter.

What are we clamoring for? Are we clamoring for a multi-culti fascism? Are we clamoring for rainbow capitalism? What are we clamoring for?

ARB: Yeah, we're clamoring to be let inside the cage.

SR: And this is again, by design. Look at every movement that we have had—I'm talking Black radical tradition right now. I'm talking Black Liberation struggle right now. The civil rights movement was a liberal reformist movement. Until the very end, when King said, 'reform to revolution' and launched the poor people's campaign—and they put a fucking bullet in the man.

We know this is what happens. Look at Black Lives Matter. Black Lives Matter was good for a year. Then it was all running on fucking fumes from the people who really believed and kept it going. People kept it going. But they NGOed that shit right away.

ARB: And where do we end up?

SR: We end up with BLM leadership trying to explain why they own a six million dollar mansion. Right now there's some other major exec at BLM that's been siphoning off ten million dollars in donor funds. This BLM fucking drama is happening at the same time that they're saying Mutulu Shakur has six months, and they will not release him so that he can die with his family. Mumia is still in jail with a whisper of a campaign for his life propped up by the hard work of MOVE and the Campaign to Free Mumia. Our freedom fighters are literally dying in jail and Black, liberal reformist motherfuckers are getting rich, using their identity to align with empire.

ARB: It's the same with gay rights. It's the same with the women's movement.

SR: Yeah. All of it is cooptable. I'm speaking from that position that's my own. As a Black woman, a Black Caribbean woman, born and raised in New York. And as a queer woman too—my experience is this one. It's all the same shit. Fanon told us.

Now you're seeing Citibank ads that say you can choose your pronoun on your debit cards. And one by one we're seeing people from the trans community who come from a soft left position, literally plucked out of these NGOs, becoming poster children, being in ads for Citibank. Lack of militant study leads you right into the mouth of the dragon, bro.

ARB: I want to make sure we get to talk about your art. What's driving the work? How do you bring all of this into your art practice?

SR: When Covid happened and we all had to shelter in place, it grounded all the planes so to speak. We had to get off the street and get in the house. I said, 'I guess it's time to really make art now.' Because before that, all of my energy was going into the organizing work.

I made some paintings, I kinda tried. And then I decided that I'm already an asthmatic, and I live across the street from the Cross Bronx Expressway, so I should probably not be breathing in mineral spirits. So I thought, let me take it back to the basics. Let me just make some drawings. And what am I going to make drawings about? What the fuck else am I going to make drawings about? The people. The people who I live near—the people I see every day. What other subject do I need? Simple, you know. It's place based. And it grew from that. Who is here? Who's around me? How are we living together? Representations of the Bronx as Black and Puerto Rican kids who invented hip-hop is dated. The children of that generation are middle aged folks now. In reality, if we look at the Bronx today without nostalgia, it rivals Queens in terms of being an immigrant enclave. My neighborhood is very Bangladeshi and very Mexican, and Dominican. It's a melting pot, but not in that liberal multicultural way. I think of it more as a kind of internationalism that is actually really localized. And that thinking was eventually sharpened through my collaborations with Strike MoMA.

ARB: What were some of the first things you focused on with Strike MoMA?

SR: Comrades from Strike MoMA, and comrades from Decolonize This Place, who I've collaborated with for some years now, looked into who's on the boards of these places, and found what they call 'interlocking directorates.' All of these assholes sitting on these boards form a governing body of influence over literally all of the institutions that we think are benevolent, neutral spaces.

To make a case in point; Paula and James Crown, who sit on the board of the MoMA—and also, just fuck MoMA, you know—they're on the board at MoMA, and they fund the education programs. Who are Paula and James Crown? Come to know they're also on the boards of JP Morgan and own General Dynamics.

General Dynamics is, for the folks who don't know, one of the biggest weapons contractors out there. At the time of the Strike MoMA actions in 2021, General Dynamics was providing the bombs that were getting dropped on Gaza, at the same time that they were dropping bombs on Yemen, at the same time as putting down uprisings in Colombia. So, you dig a little. It's very easy. You start digging, and you're like 'Oh, General Dynamics was awarded a contract with the US Military where they upgraded all of the surveillance technology in what's called the US Southern Command.'

You have a front line on the streets in Gaza and Bogota, and they're saying, 'we know that this motherfucker is over there.' In New York, we're here with our Colombian comrades, we're here with our Palestinian comrades, and we can touch them here because there is a proximity inside empire.

It provides the potential for that kind of interconnected struggle. That's the macro. Then I've been making what I call mix tapes that bring together, in a micro, my community: You've got the Bangladeshi woman next to some old Puerto Rican dyke that hangs out on my block, we call her India. So now you have India and Bangladesh next to each other. It's a play on words, but you got this Puerto Rican woman, and this Bangladeshi woman who don't speak to each other. There's a language barrier. There's a cultural barrier. But let that fucking heat and hot water stop working in the building, and all of a sudden there's a common denominator, and we're knocking on on each other's door, like 'do you have hot water?' Because come January ain't nobody trying to be without heat or hot water. And so how is it that our solidarities can be micro and macro, mobile and local, inside the same place at the same time? I think about that shit in my work. And this is a complete, hostile challenge to liberal multiculturalism—which again feeds back into what I was saying about identity politics without struggle.

ARB: How does it feel to have a coveted success in capitalistic terms, and to be connected with a prestigious gallery?

SR: You know, a gallery is a fucking gallery. They're merchants. I'm selling drawings, which is to say I'm selling my labor like everybody else. With some caveats. But what I liked about PPOW was its history in New York. I like that they represent the estates of David Wojnarowicz and Martin Wong, and that they were representing this work at a time when nobody gave a shit about their work. Now there's this look-back towards the eighties, and so it's popping. But I thought, because of how much I ground myself in this history—because I'm a fucking New Yorker through and through—this is a relationship that could work.

ARB: How do you feel about your art potentially hanging in MoMA or the Whitney where many PPOW artists end up?

SR: Listen, while I'm alive and can help it, my work won't be in those fucking museums. I'm not even physically allowed in the MoMA to begin with, so forget about my work going in there. But the real issue is that we don't have a space for these things to be stewarded in the right way, because we are not free. We live under empire. And so all of the so-called institutions—as I just finished talking shit about MoMA—are monsters. Universities too! So where does the work actually go once you make it? Now I could withhold; and I've withheld making work for a long time. I always make work, but I didn't do anything with it. It's just that once you want to show it, there are no mechanisms that I would be comfortable with. So, when PPOW came knocking, I said, Okay, this is a contradiction. I'm going to engage in a contradiction.

My grandmother used to say. If you've been poor in your life, you know how to live because you can survive on white rice. I always apply that thinking to myself as an artist—like it doesn't fucking matter what is happening, I'm always going to make art. I was making art before I even thought about a BFA in my mid 30s, I'm always going to make art. It's not about a career or PPOW. This is a lifelong endeavor, because it's who I am.

What I said to PPOW is listen, I have some stipulations about where my work can live and who it gets sold to. I know that you have collectors who don't cross my boundaries. That's fine. But for people you don't know, here's my list of what I want. I don't want my work sold to weapons manufacturers or contractors, investors in prison building, investors in the so called Puerto Rican debt and land grab, and absolutely no one having anything to do with Israel. This is a very small line in the sand, but its something. It self-selects who will even try to collect my work, and repels some of the assholes. It takes a position in a world that literally does not. No one else to their, or my knowledge has created these kinds of boundaries around the selling of their work.

Of course, they asked what about diversified portfolios. 'It's hard for us to know these things…blah blah, blah…' But, they were cool with it. They said 'This makes it difficult for us, selling art is really hard. But we can work with this.' I said, I'm not asking you to become investigative reporters. I'm not gonna say that I wouldn't put my work in some small museum, in some state university museum, but it depends. It's on a case by case basis.

Lucy Lippard said, artists are the only workers that really own the means of their fucking production. You know, if we don't make it, there is no market.

So, the least that we can do is create boundaries on our shit and hold a line, and have the impetus to create new spaces and new ways to show what we're doing now. This list for PPOW is a very small gesture, but you know what it does. We know this because we're organizers, and we know how to take the fucking street. Gain a few blocks up against the fucking barrier. You're pushing against the fucking barrier. You move the barrier back a couple feet. So more of us do that shit, and now we're negotiating from that place, and then what can we demand or take next? And then next? How do you affect change? Culture is to be shifted and changed. We know this as cultural workers, that we can change consciousness. So let's go.

Edna's Wagons by Jill Shoffiett. Gouache on paper 2019

Later, Folks

Jessica Lawless

Abolish the Family: A Manifesto for Care and Liberation
by Sophie Lewis
128pp. Verso 2022

Abolish the Family is a manifesto calling for radical possibilities beyond the "disciplinary, scarcity-based trauma machine" that is family. This 110-page polemic offers a lush and explicit feminist lineage full of pleasure and humor. Lewis manages to cover 19th century Marxism and European utopias, the impacts of colonization and chattel slavery on Indigenous and Black family systems, 20th century feminist and queer liberation movements, and contemporary Marxist trans feminism. I returned to the 22 pages of footnotes over and over, enjoying the eclectic history lesson.

Lewis argues that the family is a privatized system of harm, a neoliberal terrorist cell preventing liberatory, autonomous lives. Those who experienced a loving nuclear family are the lucky few, Lewis suggests, and these exceptions don't preclude family abolition if "to love a person is to struggle for their autonomy as well as for their immersion in care, insofar such an abundance is possible in a world choked by capital." Family abolition is not family separation, it is not privatized detention at geographic borders. Rather, it is breaking apart capitalism's base unit, "a method for cheaply arranging the reproduction of the nation's labor-power and securing debt repayments." Consider how "family values" rhetoric is deployed in marketing, elections, or tax laws that reward marriage and parenting. Consider family businesses and the coercive romanticism of mom-and-pop shops that, in reality, masks anti-union ideology and crappy wages without healthcare.

Shulamith Firestone is a key figure for Lewis. Firestone, a 1960s Marxist feminist, artist, and postal worker, wrote *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*. Shulie, as she was known, gets resurrected by feminists every few decades. In the late 1990s filmmaker Elizabeth Subrin made an experimental documentary, *Shulie*, bridging revolutionary impulses of the 1960s with third-wave feminisms and anti-globalization movements of the 1990s. In *Abolish the Family,* Lewis wonders if strategic alliances between Shulie (and other radical feminists of the 1960s), family abolitionist gay liberationists, and Black Power activists could have created a more intersectional approach to their respective struggles. For Lewis, this is a frustrating missed opportunity that leaves us with "largely disjointed genealogies of distinct oppressed communities' efforts to, as Audre Lourde would later say 'learn to mother ourselves'."

Lewis's historical reimagining is inspiring. My fan fiction has Shulie and Valerie Solanas rescuing each other from their later lives of terminal isolation and madness, joining together with Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson to smash the patriarchy and destroy white supremacy once and for all. I can't help but wonder what was happening between the lines of historicized narratives that insist there weren't overlaps between Black Panthers who organized after-school programs, lesbian feminists of color who declared that children belong to themselves, and gay male Effeminists who embraced traditional female roles in support of women achieving full social power. I imagine there are ways to point to relationships of care amongst those various revolutionaries outside the historical record. I imagine that, disintegrating in attics or basements, there are fabulous photo albums and faded, torn artworks from collective queer households and makeshift feminist galleries that reveal these intersectional family abolitionist stories. I imagine these artifacts from the 1960s and '70s because I remember their counterparts from the 1990s.

Abolish the Family jumps from the radical feminist/lesbian feminist/gay liberation era to the present, where "we, the exponents of 'transgender Marxism' and 'abolition feminism' are driving the resurgence of family abolition." Yes, let's create utopic queer, anti-racist abolitionist spaces and relationships configured as anything other than family. I'm in. Except for one thing that I think needs a lengthy consensus-building session. Lewis suggests that "There was a thirty-year lull in family abolitionism between 1985-2015." This doesn't make sense in context with the excellent research and convincing genealogy of this important call to arms. I'm admittedly biased since those are the years I came into and participated in organizing and art. In friendships, communities, and collectives, we struggled over how to expose the violence of the family and seek new possibilities of care (that we called safety) with each other. Most queer, and even most straight feminists I knew were disinterested in children/dependents as a part of the consciously radical relational configurations we created. I remember rants in myriad zines and on many songs released as 7-inch records, or painstakingly recorded onto cassette tapes for someone's latest crush, demanding a version of family abolition.

Though *Abolish the Family* misses this piece of history, I appreciate what Lewis is doing. Finding a "critically utopianist" position while developing "a shared language of abolition of the family as a decolonial imperative" is an exciting feminist project. Exploding narrow understandings of kinship that mimic nuclear family configurations can give us a multitude of possibilities to care for and love each other that aren't transactional or hierarchical. The manifesto even reminds us that the shelter-in-place phase of the Covid-19 pandemic meant many people had to return to, or stay, in a family home where battering, rape, and other horrors occurred. This is the danger of romanticizing the family. We cover up violence, we ignore harm, we don't recognize it as one of the root causes for our mental health crisis. *Abolish the Family* isn't a reactionary tantrum. It's a thoughtful, hopeful call to expand abolition's potential for new systems based on healing wounds rather than repeating traumas. As Lewis proposes, "We might be surprised by how much humanity becomes possible when we cease 'treating one another like family.'"

***Jessica Lawless** is working on a book about the collapse of higher education and the possibility for abolitionist unions, titled* Cultural Capital Doesn't Pay the Rent. *She lives in Sacramento, CA.*

Dangerous Crossings

Letter from the Aegean

Marc Lepson

In Greece, as in all of Europe, migrants are increasingly treated as criminals. New detention centers are replacing open camps for refugees, prosecutors wield anti-trafficking laws to imprison asylum seekers, and borders have become the site of violent pushbacks.

In 2015, the values of liberal humanism came into direct conflict with racism, classism, and xenophobia when a massive influx of people fleeing the Syrian civil war arrived in the EU. That year, over 850,000 refugees came by boat through the Greek islands of the north Aegean sea, some of which, such as Lesvos and Samos, are only a few nautical miles from Turkey. This route, through Turkey to Greece and then on to Western Europe, has long been a pathway for migrants from Africa and the Middle East.

Temporary Structure, Kara Tepe II refugee camp. Lesvos, Greece by Marc Lepson. 2022

Those who were able to leave Syria early were the educated, upper and middle classes. Stratis, a taxi driver on Lesvos, recalls not being able to make change for arrivals offering to pay for rides with 500€ bills—that being more than a month's wages for locals.

Eirini Koumpa, a doctor at Lesvos's only hospital, tells of an incident in early 2016 when a yacht docked near the port city of Mytilene. On board was a group of wealthy Syrians seeking asylum in Europe. They asked to be registered while still on the boat, as they would then continue on to mainland Greece. She recalls the reaction of the local chief of police. "How will I get their fingerprints? I will get them dirty just by touching them."

Western Europe welcomed this moneyed group with open arms, and Germany took in one million asylum seekers. But soon, Syria was emptied of its professional classes, and the northern European nations drastically reduced the number of refugees permitted entry. Border crossings between the Balkan states and Greece were closed, and an agreement was signed between the EU and Turkey giving the Turkish government more than three billion euros in exchange for help restricting refugee access to Europe—achieved by violently suppressing sea crossings and closing their land border with northern Greece along the Evros river.

The shift toward exclusion turned the EU's southern Mediterranean border states—Greece, Italy, and Spain—into Europe's enforcer and holding pen, ushering in an intensified era of criminalization. The policy also codified and amplified pushbacks. "In Greece, pushbacks at land and sea borders have become de facto general policy," writes Felipe González Morales, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, in his July 2022 Report.

After successfully navigating dangerous crossings, refugees have been hunted down by police tactical units—armed men in black wearing balaclavas—put into unmarked vans, and taken to disused municipal buildings where they were held for 12-24 hours without food or water. They have been strip searched, beaten and had their belongings taken away. Coast Guard agents then put them in inflatable dinghies without engines, tow them into Turkish waters and set the boats adrift—alerting the Turkish coast guard of a boat in need of rescue. At times people have reported being put directly into the sea and told to swim to the Turkish shore.

González Morales reports documentation of at least 687 incidents of Greek pushbacks over the last eighteen months, involving over 24,000 people. The report also states that during a six-month period in 2021, Greece deterred over 140,000 people from entering the country.

Maryam Sultani traveled over 2,400 miles from Afghanistan to Turkey's Aegean border, where she and her family made the sea crossing to Greece. "At two o'clock in the morning, we boarded an inflatable boat with a motor at the back," she said, in a video published by Aegean Boat Report in June 2022. "At six o'clock in the morning we were there [the Greek island Kos]. The Greek police were there. They pointed guns toward us to scare us. After that they took and imprisoned us in a room. They beat one of the men. We were there until midnight and they didn't give us anything to eat, even though we begged for food. We were hungry. After that they took us to the sea. They left us in the middle of the sea."

From 2020-2022, 18 people died as a direct result of Greek pushbacks, according to Forensic Architecture, an investigative journalism collective that uses first-hand accounts, geolocation forensics, and 3D modeling to verify evidence.

All along, Europe has been quietly funding and supporting Greek pushbacks. Frontex, Europe's border and coast guard agency, has the vast majority of its resources in the Mediterranean, with 600 officers deployed in Greece, and works hand in hand with national agencies.

Dimitris Choulis is a lawyer on the Greek island of Samos, less than two nautical miles from Turkey. Choulis sees personal motivation for Frontex officers' negligence regarding the Greek coast guard. "If these [pushbacks] were happening in the North Sea or some other unpleasant environment, Frontex would have left a long time ago," he said. "But for these officers, being here is a very good job. They are getting paid twice, once by their home country and once by the EU, and they get to have a vacation on a Greek island. They don't want to jeopardize their position. I have seen them taking their girlfriends out for tours on the coast guard ships. I have photos."

For several years Choulis, born and raised on Samos, has been representing asylum seekers who face charges of human trafficking for attempting to steer their boats to safety. The Greek government has even gone as far as prosecuting an asylum seeker in the drowning death of his six-year-old daughter, when the boat they were on capsized near Samos's shore.

Aegean Migrant Solidarity, an NGO that monitors court cases in the Greek islands, reported that, of 48 cases they observed between 2015-2020, the average trial time was 27 minutes, and the average sentences for migrants convicted of smuggling-related charges was 55 years.

"For me, the state should be accused," said Nefeli Belavia, a resident of Lesvos who also monitors government activities. "They are doing pushbacks, they are protecting the borders in ways that cause people's deaths—even if it is not their hand that does the killing."

For those who do manage to arrive safely and seek asylum, a new regime of detention awaits them.

In 2021, Dutch journalist Ingeborg Beugel visited the first 'Close Controlled Camp' (CCC) for asylum seekers on Samos. "When we first saw the camp, with three fences around it and barbed wire—we cried. It looked like Auschwitz," she said.

The newest CCC site, known as Vastria, is now under construction on Lesvos. Vanessa Muhlhausen, the European Commission's policy officer tasked with overseeing the project, uses cheerier language. She describes the facilities as "open camps", where residents can "come and go freely." In practice, however, residents have to show ID in order to come and go, are under 24-hour video surveillance, and the facility will be locked down from dusk to dawn.

Vastria is remote. Far from population centers, shops, and services, it is being constructed on environmentally protected land in the center of a pine forest, 20 miles from the port town of Mytilene. The site is adjacent to an active landfill. Greek law required that any new construction housing more than 500 people be subject to a full environmental impact study. But in 2021, that law was hastily amended—raising the minimum population requirement to 5,000, and exempting the camp. Permits were given without conducting soil samples or creating evacuation plans for residents in the event of a wildfire.

Closer to the port, a dusty road winds along the blue Aegean shoreline. Past a medieval castle built by the Ottomans, men ride bicycles tricked out with makeshift carrying cases loaded with fruit and clothing. The men are migrants—refugees cycling from Mytilene to Kara Tepe II—the current open camp for asylum seekers.

The road passes a seaside industrial ruin, where the words *Close Moria! Smash Fascism* rise in shaky letters four stories high. The first demand refers to the notorious Moria camp that housed refugees on Lesvos until 2020, when it burned to the ground. Before the fire, the camp at Moria held approximately 20,000 people in an area intended for 5,000. In the wake of the fire, thousands of displaced people walked toward the port, sleeping out on the roadside by the beach until Kara Tepe II was opened hastily on the site of a former army artillery range at the water's edge.

"I left Moria because of the fire," said Jesus Vondo Tsakala, age 40. "We stayed almost two weeks in the streets waiting for a new place." In order to arrive in Europe, Tsakala had traveled for three months in 2019 from the Democratic Republic of Congo, then made the sea crossing from Turkey. Three years later, a resident at Kara Tepe, he is still waiting for his asylum application to be completed.

Despite a heavy police presence at the entrance, and fences bordering the land perimeter, Kara Tepe II is an open camp where residents can come and go at all times. It is just two miles from Mytilene. A Dutch NGO has set up a bicycle repair/build shop at the edge of the camp and the able-bodied can make the trip with their own power.

Though frustrated with his position, Tsakala, who worked as truck driver before migrating, is more positive about Kara Tepe. "Moria was catastrophic. Very difficult. After we arrived here, things have gone better," he said. Tsakala was unaware that a new camp was being built in another part of the Island.

Nefeli Belavia is skeptical about the future for refugees on the island. "Until 2020 it was chaos here. There were migrants living by the port, attacks from local people, from fascist groups, and afterward the minister of migration said he would limit the number of migrants on the island. And he did. People don't care how he did it. They don't want to know."

***Marc Lepson** collaborates on layout and design for the* Anarchist Review of Books. *He reports on migration from Athens and the Aegean Islands.*

Kings and Queens, and Minstrels Too

Payton Alexandre

The Nation on No Map: Black Anarchism & Abolition
by William C. Anderson
189pp. AK Press 2021

There is no singular Black community; no one flag that encompasses a singular, Black nation. We are a complex ecosystem. And we're healing our fractured histories together alongside countless other colonized peoples.

In the wake of Queen Elizabeth's death, people around the world celebrated; chanting for the fall of the British monarchy. And yet, the myth of African royalty seems more pervasive than ever, leading some Black people to believe we're literally kings and queens because of our African ancestry. From *Black Panther*, to *The Woman King*, or half of the shit Beyoncé produces, this propaganda glorifying our mythic "heritage" and "culture" sometimes feels inescapable.

William C. Anderson's most recent book, *The Nation on No Map: Black Anarchism And Abolition* examines this and other tendencies of Black exceptionalism. While encouraging us to organize ourselves collectively, he challenges authoritarianism of all kinds; including that of kings and queens, and minstrels, too.

There aren't many Black Anarchists. At least not many of us who claim that title. Sometimes I feel crushed under the weight of that loneliness. But, as Anderson points out, "anarchism is just a name."

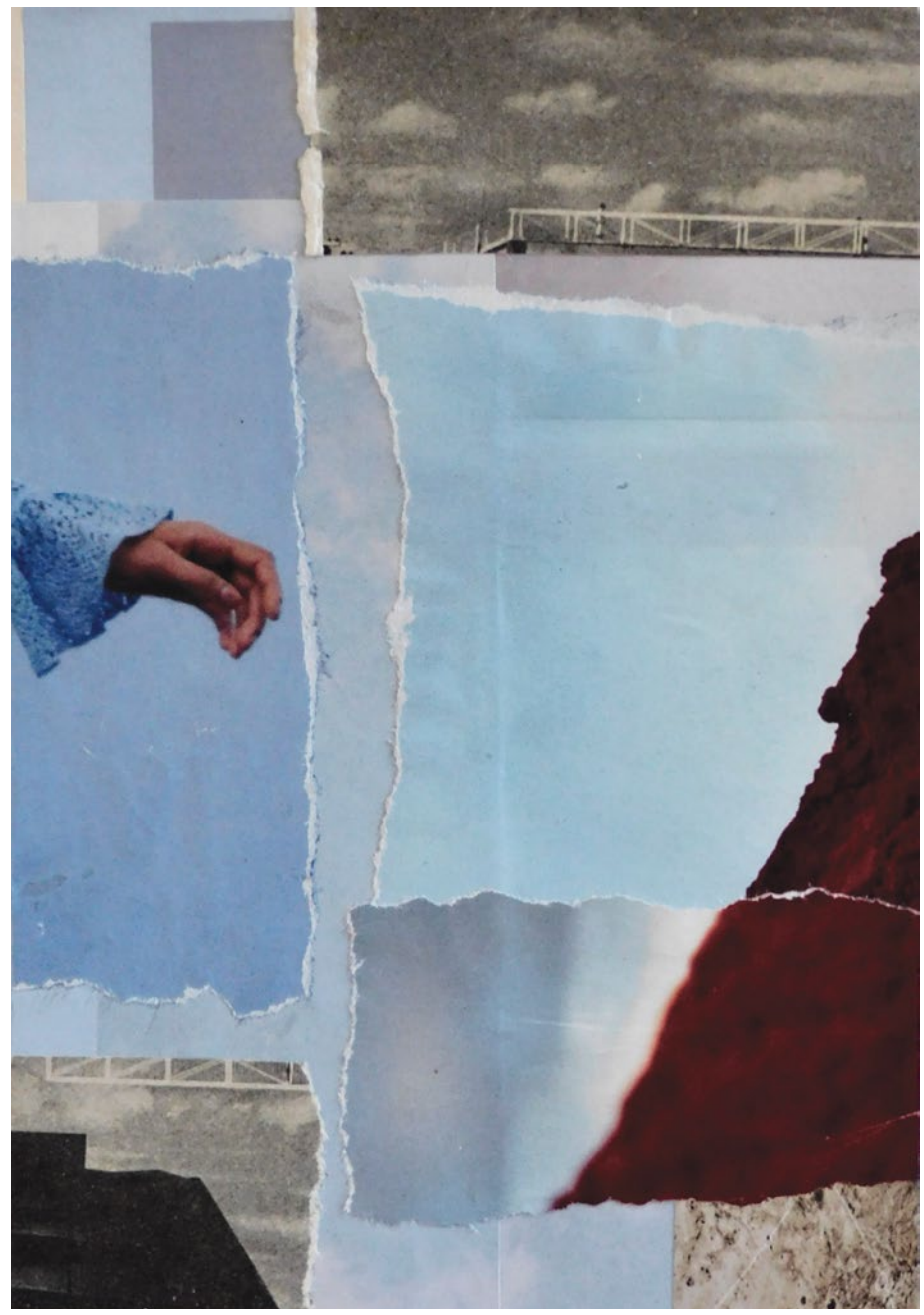
Around the time that I was reading *The Nation on No Map*, I had the pleasure of reading two related books - *Intimate Direct Democracy* by Modibo Kadalie alongside *Organization & Spontaneity* by Kimathi Mohammed.

Kadalie's work is founded on the idea that "our history is part of a broader human struggle to dismantle nation states entirely and to create more directly democratic institutions." In it, he explores histories from the bottom; of Maroons and North American indigenous communities as told by everyday resistors, instead of great leaders or the illustrators of borders.

Kimathi Mohammed's essay, published in 1974 (five years before Lorenzo Komboa Ervin's *Anarchism and the Black Revolution*) was drafted at a time when Black anti-authoritarians were leaving, or being purged from, Marxist-Leninist organizations. In it, he stresses the dangers of vanguardist politics and authoritarianism by analyzing and comparing the decline of the Black Panther Party and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers.

He warned that, "under the disguise of 'Blackness,' a number of Black 'militants' have tried to superimpose outdated feudal relationships upon the Black movement." As a response, he advocated for "spontaneous self-organization" among oppressed communities. This work in particular is a clear predecessor of the contemporary Black Anarchist, Black Autonomist, and Anarkata movements.

All these authors share a belief that



Sonorous Silenced III by N.Masani Landfair. Collage on paper 2020

authoritarianism, state-building, and cults of personality are where social movements go to die. Unfortunately, many people, of every color, are convinced otherwise. Some put their stock into charismatic figures like Chris Smalls of the Amazon Labor Union, despite him attending events like the Ebony Power 100, an awards show sponsored by P&G, Walmart, and Goldman Sachs where Black elites mingle and celebrate "the best of us"—influencers and capitalists.

Black capitalism is celebrated by the establishment—and marketed as revolutionary. *Judas And The Black Messiah*, for example, a blockbuster film about the Black Panther Party, was released alongside an "inspired" rap album. I did a deep dive into the lyrics and discovered that 60% of the tracks glorified Black capitalism, with one song literally called Rich Nigga Problems. Jay Z, who appeared on the album, recently said the term "capitalist" is the new "N" word. To him, it's hate speech used to shame Black men for making millions of dollars through extractive wealth. The real-life danger is that men actually believe him and see him as a revolutionary figure.

While reading *The Nation on No Map*, I craved an even deeper critique and exploration into the patriarchal conditioning that Black men in America are subjected to—one that would call out reactionary beliefs by groups like the Black Hebrew Israelites, who spread violent misogyny, anti-semitism, transphobia, and homophobia in our communities. These views aren't just on the fringes, they're pushed in the mainstream by figures like Kanye West and Kyrie Irving. More men need to read bell hooks.

In addition to the counter-revolutionary nature of Black capitalism, dominant Black culture often celebrates patriarchal, conservative, and outright fascist tendencies. Throughout the book, Anderson dissects this, citing historical examples like Marcus Garvey, who once argued that Mussolini was inspired by the Universal Negro Improvement Association; self-describing the pan-africanist group as "the first fascists."

Foundational to the book are condemnations of celebrity activism, party politics, and Black exceptionalism, but, more importantly, a chunk is devoted to exploring the failures of vanguardist politics in the Black Radical Tradition and the so-called "left". From the Civil Rights Movement to authoritarian communist states, and the broader anarchist movement itself, Anderson unpacks the allures and pitfalls of hierarchical programs, while making the case that liberation can only really be achieved outside the structures of state and colonial logics.

Anderson is careful to point out the tendency of some white anarchists to dismiss nationalist struggles in the global south. Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin has written a lot about this as well, and challenges the urge to superimpose white sensibilities on people's movements that are navigating contexts far beyond the scope and experience of most western leftists. Yet, at the same time, he carefully unpacks historic condemnations of state-nationalism, from C.L.R. James to Franz Fanon. "The map, the nation, and the state must go. We did not draw them, and they do not serve us. They never did. To exist on their map in any way can only diminish us and undermine everything that we're capable of."

Despite their promises, authoritarian strategies have never fully delivered because they adopt and reproduce the state form. A damning example is how some leftists will talk about abolition. ACAB!—at least until it's a red state. "While they may not admit it, and may not fully understand it themselves, authoritarian leftists in the United States don't necessarily want to abolish prisons, police, or militaries."

Think of the uprisings in Iran, where we see authoritarian communists downplay the violence of a state government on the basis of "anti-imperialism," while dismissing, generalizing, and discrediting the work of people resisting the regime. It's crucial that we develop nuanced understandings of how to fight western imperialism while also building an internationalist movement through deep relationships with people fighting on the ground in different contexts. Fuck intervention, and fuck theocratic despotism. We can fight both if we fight together.

Anderson is adamant about not confusing people with the states that have branded and confined them. "The people" are complex—far more so than any state or nationalist program can homogenize.

Finally, he urges us to actually do the damn thing. Liberation isn't theoretical. We cannot consider ourselves revolutionary based on our identities alone. Freedom will certainly not come by asking for it, and it won't come by just evading or even overwhelming our enemies. "Simply detaching ourselves from the state is not enough. We're charged with growing our own survival programs, institutions, and survival economies as a means of building a revolutionary movement that can effectively challenge the state."

The case for Black anarchism is not a case for separatism. It's a broad and deliberate challenge to white leftist, Black exceptionalist, and state capitalist hegemonies. It's an invitation to consider freedom beyond not only the state, but all authoritarianisms that dam the flow of intercommunal solidarity worldwide. Black Anarchism does not, and cannot, live in a vacuum. It is intimately connected to Diné Anarchism, Zapatismo, Democratic Confederalism, and other liberatory formations that invite us into a world in which many worlds fit.

***Payton Alexandre** is the producer of a four-part docuseries titled* The Elements of Mutual Aid *which focuses on the origins, infrastructures, healing ways, and logistics of collective, anti-authoritarian organizing.*

Push the Feeling On

James Hannaham

The yellow LED display in the window said CONEY ISLAND / STILLWELL AVENUE Coney Island…now, I ain't been there in a extra-long-ass time. Useta think it was Coney like Ice Cream Coney. I do got me some cash, maybe I could ride me some rides until shit blow over at home an maybe go back when it get late, see if the po-po outta there yet. Just stay the one night an figure somethin else out tomorrow. I member back when Ise a kid they useta take us down to Coney with the community-center summer day care, an on the train some li'l sumbitch puked on my leg, had the nerve to be makin fun a me behind that, so I smacked his li'l raggedy ass upside his head. I told him, You the puker. The puker don't get no laughin privileges. You can't be pukin on nobody an laughin at em. That ain't right. Better puke the other way next time, puker. If I saw him today, I'd call him Puker. Can't even member his real name. Shit, with that attitude, he prolly the mayor a New York City by now.

A bevy of Coney memories barged into Carlotta's brain: of turning over a cherry Italian ice to find gooey crystals below a crimson mess, like sweet blood; of shooting water into the mouth of a plastic clown in order to move a plastic racehorse down a track and getting…The fuck I ever win doin that? Anything? A giant stuffed Tweety Bird? A key chain? She remembered the tough clam strips from Nathan's even more vividly than the hot dogs, puncturing wavy French fries with wooden skewers and dipping them in bloodred ketchup What bout that funky Ferris wheel that didn't nobody never make no other one of? Wonder Wheel. Or the Hell Hole. Where the Skee-Ball at? Din't somebody used to live in the roller coaster? Or was that a movie? One time when her parents took her and her three brothers down there, she didn't want to leave, and they pretended to leave her behind But Ise old enough to call they bluff, I let em get good an far away, an Ise thinkin bout stayin, too, runnin away from home. How old I was? Seven? Stood by the cotton-candy man, watchin him twirl all the pink fluff, knowin I ain't had no money, hopin he gon take pity on me, gimme a free sample, an maybe I could live on that, sleep in the Haunted House.

Dreamland 16, by Jane Dickson. Acrylic on felt 2012. Courtesy: Alison Jacques, London. Photo: Paul Hodara

Her memories reached a crescendo as the train took the usual right turn after Neptune Avenue, where, like a curtain getting pulled back, the navy blue of sky and ocean came into view between the tall apartments of Brighton Beach whose windows glowed bright orange in the sun as it very gradually set behind her. When the train doors opened at the West 8th Street—New York Aquarium stop—the walls of the station blocked the view, and stifling heat rushed in with the sounds of the beach. The noise of the surf curling onto the sand mixed with the cries of seagulls, the laughter and shrieking of children, the piercing lament of sirens, growling engines, screeching brakes, a pop song thudding from an open car window Some dude singin bout he can't feel his face?

A few minutes later, as the train moved to the terminal stop, Carlotta spotted the whimsical structures of Coney Island between the high-rises and her heart gave itself up to the seductive trap of the amusement park and its plastic promises: fun and luck, empty calories and cheap thrills, and under it all, a carnival version of history dripping with sleaze. Then, on a brick wall, she caught a glimpse of the cartoon white man with Brylcreemed hair that the park used in all its advertising, his perverted smile summing up the entire experience He grinnin like somebody down there givin the motherfucker a blowjob, but you can't see cause the drawing don't go down that far, it just be his head. His espression like, Oh yes, honey, we gonna fuck, then we gon get on a roller coaster, have a ice cream, play some attractions, go on the beach, I'ma fuck you again, an then I'ma snatch yo purse an yo chains an book the fuck down the boardwalk fore you even know it. An bitch, you gonna love it.

When the train got to Stillwell, Carlotta disembarked, still in a trance, and once again found herself in a place she didn't recognize I looked up like, What all they done to this motherfucker? It's like I just got out and I'm in a Vogue fashion spread in Paris! I member this jwant useta was sad, like they ain't done nothin to it since the Dodgers gone to LA or whatever. Now it's like some kinda Emerald Palace! Still in her Diana/Beyoncé headspace, Carlotta slunk down the stairs and outside through the pink-orange tunnel that led to Surf Avenue All these crystal ceilings an shit, shiny glass bricks an whatnot—a mural? Who they spendin all this money on this shit for, cause I know it ain't no Black an Hispanic folks.

At Surf Avenue, she stood kitty-corner from the original Nathan's, where people formed long lines that stretched onto the sidewalk, bathed in the red light of the neon signs outside and the yellow interiors. For a second she thought about buying a beer Just to be cunty, it'd sure be a relief after all the fuckin stips but instead bought a Coke and two hot dogs with bacon and cheese, which she then smothered in ketchup and relish from the pumps. She didn't want to miss the last few rays of the sunset The sunset! on the beach The motherfuckin beach! so she carefully arranged everything in the cardboard box given to her by the sister behind the counter, wadded up the change, consolidated it with the other cash, and shoved the money into her underwear. She rejoined the constant exodus to the beach, from the train station down the street past the candy shops and souvenir stores, then beyond a series of rides she had never seen before, between still more remembrances of where things had once sat Guess the Hell Hole gone, an so's the Ghost Hole or whatever they useta call that lousy haunted house right there. Wonder Wheel, my God, that bitch ain't changed in a hundred-something years. Still there. At least some shit in this fuckin city don't never get teared down an turnt to a spensive-ass condo. Shoulda landmarked that Hell Hole!

Carlotta went up the short flight of steps to the boardwalk, and after marveling at the size of the bathroom complex A fuckin castle? on the sand, she hunted up and down the boardwalk for a park bench or picnic table where she could eat in peace. Around her the city unbuttoned itself Literally, my head bout to pop off lookin at these hairy-chested niggas wit cigarette-butt nipples, holdin hands with some chunky brown ladies in they neon-pink bikini tops tryna lick a ice cream cone down an walk a dog an yell at one chile right behind em an push a stroller, meanwhile the man on his cell phone talkin some language, don't got a care in the world.

An old Russian couple stooped over their walkers and shuffled like peasants who had never left the Old Country; a tattooed pierced white boy with disks in his earlobes chatted with his Asian manga partner, who had brown streaks in their hair and mascara around their eyes; ten members of a family from India strode down the boardwalk in formation, a rainbow bomb of traditional styles and fabrics; a large lady in a Rascal wearing a nervous expression bumped over the diagonal slats in the wooden walkway; a Latino father held the hand of his kid daughter, who had on a frilly yellow bathing suit and gripped a toy bucket the same color; stout cop types, one with an Italian flag T-shirt, laughed and shared plastic cups of beer around a picnic table; closer to Carlotta, groups of spandex-clad cyclists weaved recklessly through the crowd; the lights of the rides and the restaurants winked on and glittered everywhere as the sun disappeared, like they were trying to replace it; some wig-wearing Lubavitcher ladies whose style choices made them seem like apparitions from the 1940s pushed strollers behind pudgy men in shtreimels; red, white, and blue banners flapped in front of every storefront; the smell of hot dogs, burgers, and other fryables clouded the whole area; three tall blond foreigners in Crocs took pictures of one another, trying to get the Steeplechase in the background behind their smiling faces; a middle-aged white woman in a T-shirt that read supreme with a flannel shirt tied around her waist almost rode her skateboard over Carlotta's toe, and when Carlotta looked down at her foot she noticed a figure through a broken slat in the wood who, once she squatted and peered into the crack, she could see was masturbating, a sight that inspired her to move off quickly, holding her thighs together; delighted screams sailed over from Astroland, the loudest from the top of the Cyclone; everywhere, hip-hop songs overlapped with salsa and pop; in the distance, a fake palm tree sprayed water over an ecstatic group of Black teenagers, including two girls with white and pink hair; on the faraway pier, Carlotta could make out the silhouettes and fishing lines of sportsmen who had probably waited all day to catch a tiny sunfish that they would have to return to the ocean; and east of the park, at JFK, where planes leapt into the sky and swooped toward the runway, a long line of aircraft approached, their lights spread out above the Atlantic like a necklace of evening stars.

No bench had any vacancies; in fact, most of them contained more people in various configurations than they'd been built to hold. The moment she noticed someone leaving half of a park bench unoccupied, Carlotta scooted toward the opening, plopped herself onto the seat, and set her food box on her knees.

She devoured her meal with only occasional pauses, during which she savored the luxury not just of the meal itself but of the surroundings and how the chaos that had intimidated her at 42nd Street just the day before now felt celebratory and blissful, not only because of the holiday But just cause my ass outside, an I could breathe in this fishy breeze that's comin off the water like I done since Ise a baby, an everywhere motherfuckers just doin whatever the fuck an havin a ball, not givin no fucks bout what nobody think a them, that they too fat, too Black, too Chinese-lookin or green (an maybe that even could be a good thing that you weird as shit, like somebody wit a reality show could come down here an discover your sideshow-ready ass, put you on national TV, an you could be makin stupid phat money).

Don't nobody down here care who you wanna fuck or whether you think God be a blue motherfucker with twenty arms or a lady with a archery set who show up in your bed like a ghost or a fuckin octopus doin a Rubik's Cube, an the thrills is cheap, but that just mean that ev'body could afford em, an ain't nobody excluded outta no fun by not havin no money, not even my boyfriend who down there whackin his joystick under the boardwalk or nobody (is that what that song bout?—Under the boardwalk, down by the sea?), an the weather good an it's only my ass that got nine thousand stips to worry bout, can't even talk to nobody cause they might turn out to be a convict an maybe I should move farther down this bench cause I could see people with open cans a beer an shit, or maybe it's not just me, maybe it's half these motherfuckers out here is folks that been inside, I dunno, and I'on't wanna know, I just wanna be me, I just wanna be a human fuckin person like ev'body else, without nobody tellin me not to do who I am, holdin me gainst my will, don't wanna be no statistic or no tragedy or no symbol of nothin goin wrong in society. Cause I'm what's right, honey, I'm what's goin right.

Even before Carlotta finished eating, she heard it—the locomotive pulse of "French Kiss," a club hit she had forgotten existed despite having heard it every night she went dancing, which was almost every night, in the late summer of 1989. She reboxed her garbage and carried it with her as she walked toward the music, pausing on the way at a trash can overflowing with Nathan's boxes and soft-drink cups and teeming with yellowjackets that she had to twist her torso to avoid stirring up. Already the throbbing beat had her moving; when the synth trumpets came in, her shoulders shook by themselves. Several yards down, a DJ had cordoned off a space under a gazebo and put up a large pair of speakers on either side of it.

Closer, she found a sparse group of dancers and a few roller skaters bumping and spinning to the steady electronic thump, soon joined by the barely intelligible moans and groans that stood in for lyrics I ain't even had to think bout what Ise gon do, it was like, after all them years, my body just said, Get down, bitch, get down! An fore I knowed it, Ise, like, squattin and grindin my booty, twirlin my grandma bag, my hips had come unglued, an', chile, I needed to own that dance floor.

They was playin all the old club jams: "Push the Feeling On," "Where Love Lives," "The Anthem," "Deeper"—the Underground Diva mix, too, where Ms. Susan Clark be tearin her lungs out, not that other shit. This dude even played that one number where it sound like they singin Don't break the fax, an the other that go Foam! We want some foam! that I never found out what them jams was. Hell, it wasn't nothin on this motherfucker's playlist that had came out after I went in! It's like this man knew ezzackly when time an fun had stopped for me an he decided he gon go back to that fork in the road an lemme take the other path, lemme start livin the life I coulda lived, like time gone backwards. Last night a DJ saved my life! I felt the glory tinglin all through my fuckin chakras or whatever, baby, I was like Chakra Khan out there or, better yet, Chakra Ex-Khan, tastin the many flavors a the night air like it be a drug that make all that negative shit that had happened not had happened. Why'd we treat ev'thing like it was worthless when it was really so precious, when that shit was our lives?

An then it's like somebody ass had some fireworks that apposed to be for the next night that I guess they rehearsin for tomorrow wit out on the beach an I din't know that's even legal but Ise like, This my night right here, these my Welcome Home, Carlotta Mercedes fireworks, an it seem like most a the folks Ise dancin with, they bout the same age as me, look like they done been through some the same shit—the drugs, the prisons, the alcohol, the AIDS—an we was feelin the joy a makin it through all that, lookin at each other like, I see you! How you doin? Could you believe we made it? It's big fireworks, too, not no damn bottle rockets and Roman candles, it's some Grucci-ass bitches, makin a giant red Afro bove my head while I'm dippin an flowin an lovin an smilin with a hundred beautiful strangers!

Then I seen this old girlfriend a mines, Minerva, who I ain't seen nor heard from the whole time Ise gone, cross the dance floor, an she wearin this flowy maxi-dress full a gold threads, some gold sandals a little like my one, an a swingy turquoise necklace. She come right over to me like it ain't no thang, like it be the day fore I went inside, like she just jumped off the wing a one them planes up there, smilin like she won the Lotto jackpot. She put her hands on my shoulders, stared in my eyeballs, said my actual name, Carlotta—like, How she even know?—an hugged the mess outta me, just like my family shoulda did.

"I heard about all kinda things that was happening up there!" Minerva shouted. "Bad things!"

Carlotta checked out the bump on Minerva's neck Still there, look like she ain't had none a the surgeries or nothin. But she servin some mighty real realness.

"I kept in touch with Jasmine, and I had my eye on Ibe too. I kept telling that chile to go visit you on his own once he got to the right age. It sound like shit was real hard, I can't even imagine. But I knew you was gonna make it out, girl. Ise rootin for you. You real strong, even if you don't realize it your own self. Twentysomething years, gurl. Congratulations and welcome home! Let me introduce you to some folks!"

As they moved closer to the makeshift DJ booth, Frankie Knuckles's "Workout" came on, and Minerva told Carlotta that Frankie had died of complications from diabetes a year before, just shy of sixty, and that all kinds of tributes had popped up. Nobody considered this one of them, she said, still laughing, but it would do.

The practice fireworks came to an end, leaving wispy smoke to distort the high-rises of Brighton Beach. Carlotta knew a few of the five or six people Minerva brought her over to meet, in a tangential way; they were friends of friends or relatives of people she knew, she discovered after some small talk. She knew she should've backed away But Ise like, This been a rough day, ain't nobody gonna know. An what if the drug test don't come back false? Then I'ma be fucked. Gotta live in the moment. They all had Red Stripes and Budweisers on ice in a cooler, which Carlotta tried not to notice until everyone else had an open container in their hand. Minerva handed her a Red Stripe. She stared at it like a Magic 8 Ball This one li'l bottle could change my whole future. In the instant when the drinkers put down their alcohol and returned to the dance floor, now filled with hard-core club vets from Carlotta's early years, surrounded by a rectangle of less seasoned onlookers who only occasionally stepped into the fray and without the loopy enthusiasm of the true believers, Carlotta downed the whole thing. SIGNS POINT TO YES.

The night went on, and without a safe place to stay, Carlotta thought more of using Doodle's trick for getting what you wanted out of social interactions, wondering if someone there could save her, at least for the night. But when she sized the group up, nothing seemed promising. She had sucked down more than one more Red Stripe by the time the DJ lit a joint and passed it around Why the fuck not, how many time a day Lou DeLay could drop me? I know she ain't followed me out here! She gon drop my ass every day? If she do, maybe I don't care. I already done blowed it. The test ain't gon come back negative, I musta got contact high from that damn party. Shit, did I eat a poppy seed bagel? No. But fuck it. They called it super-weed, I ain't knowed that that meant nothin cept good weed. Miss Thing been out the loop a street talk less it had came from out the joint, an some shit they say at Ithaca they only be sayin up there, an some shit they said down here din't never make it up there, it's like two countries wit they own language.

So one minute I'm dancin with these folks and havin a good-ass time, best I had in two decades. Then, over the course a, like, a hour, I start feelin woozy, like I need a drink a water, somebody gimme some seltzer or what have you, my eyes start gettin funny, like all I could see is inside a TV from the '70s with the tint knob all the way up an it's on the fritz, you could even smell how it feel like the TV bout to catch fire, an the reception sucks cause it's even up on them VHF channels—an what the fuck was ever on them channels? In the side a my eyes it's some zigzags an patterns like on a crazy bulby outfit, like I accidentally had wound up on the runway of a Comme des Garçons show with a buncha angry supermodels dressed like they come from outer space, got some green Oompa Loompa hair an puffy pillows over they face, an they start chasin me off, an after a while I ain't got no kinda idea where Ise at or where I could go or who it's safe to be hangin out wit or nothin.

An the next morning, when I get waked up, I'm in the motherfuckin sand wit some kid's metallic HAPPY BIRTHDAY balloon stuck in my hair, li'l shiny flakes be comin off on my skin, an it's a police officer pokin my face wit his goddamn baton, tellin me, It's 9:30, ma'am, wakey wakey, an my ass don't member nothin happened since the Comme des Garçons show, an I realize (1) my ass under the boardwalk, like, Oh no, maybe I hooked up with that guy I seen under here, where he at? Don't even see him; (2) my wad a cash ain't in my underwears no more or nowheres on me, an, yes, the shit gone, oh, fuck; (3) I done missed my 9:00 a.m. appointment wit Lou DeLay, no chance I'ma even get there late this time, so I'ma have to deal wit that; (4) I don't got my grandma bag neither, just to pile some shame on top a ev'thing like some Cool Whip an a li'l maraschino cherry; an (5) it come to me that if my ass talkin to the po-po, Carlotta's headed back to D Block for damn sure. Did my stupid ass really just trade almost my whole life for one night a joy? I believe I did. Here I come, Frenzy. An, oh, hell no, Dave. First, I feel like I wanna dig myself so far down in the sand the cop can't take me nowheres. But then I start laughin my ass off cause I'm like Here it is, the Fourth a July holidays, an don't you know Carlotta bout to lose her damn independence, gotta get on that bus goin right back up to Ithaca an it ain't even been two damn days. But honey, the free world tasted oh so sweet. Even my li'l niblet.

James Hannaham *is the author of the multigenre collection* Pilot Impostor, *and three novels:* God Says No, *a Stonewall Book Award finalist;* Delicious Foods, *which won the PEN/Faulkner Award and the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award; and* Didn't Nobody Give a Shit What Happened to Carlotta, *from which this chapter is excerpted.*

Mercy, Mercy Me

Carrie Laben

The Pallbearers Club
by Paul Tremblay
288pp. William Morrow/
News Corp 2022

The Pallbearers Club revels in ambiguity. The surface question posed by the book—is Mercy Brown, best friend of main character Art Barbara, a vampire?—can be answered yes or no with equal fervor after you've read the last page. She might have sucked the life clean out of Art, or she might have immortalized him by turning his would-be memoir into a work of gonzo/gothic fiction. She might have done both. If this were all there was to it, it would still be a damn fun book.

But that ain't the half of it. Because whatever Mercy did, what Art set out to do was write a memoir, and the concern of memoir—whether it's about a vampire chick, or infertility, or homelessness, or hanging out with Martin Amis—is what the hell happened to us? To the narrator, to their family, to their community? If we take Art seriously as a memoirist, we can answer that question.

Begin with Art in high school. He's shy and self-involved, smart but not world-busting smart, and he's about to undergo surgery for scoliosis. Nevertheless, he sees his future typically for a kid of his time, a vaguely upwardish mobility. He founds the titular Pallbearer's Club, for the lonely dead who have been failed by that version of the American dream, because he needs an activity to put on college applications.

Art gets into college, and he likes it. But things go wrong. He drops out. Mediocre jobs come and go, so do romantic relationships, so do the only meaningful artistic, political, and community engagements of Art's life—his stints as guitarist in a variety of regional punk-adjacent bands. By the end he's back in the house he grew up in, orphaned, depressed, on (and then over) the verge of complete mental and physical breakdown.

Siblings by Carla Repice. Oil on panel 2019

Despite Art's best efforts in the text, Mercy's alleged vampirism can be blamed for little of this. She's absent from his life for long stretches while things are going awry. The real culprit, underneath any individual bad choices or bad luck or malevolence, is more terrifying because much harder to confront—the economic abandonment of the working class, the cruelty of Reaganomics and NAFTA and everything since. Remove the supernatural element, and this is a story of what Anne Case and Angus Deaton call a death of despair—a death whose underlying causes can be traced back to economic immiseration and perceived community/government indifference to that immiseration, a social sense of being drained and left for dead.

Remember that scoliosis surgery? Art acquired a dependence on painkillers afterwards, and never fully unacquired it. Which might have been manageable, but all those marginal short-term jobs meant that he didn't have consistent health care. Which also meant that he couldn't monitor his congenital heart condition. Which made it harder to find and maintain a job. And on and on, a spiral. Even the aborted college career is down to economics; Art's parents couldn't go on helping him with tuition after their divorce, and this was the era when college costs were beginning to sprint out of reach of a kid on his own.

Given this, Art's preoccupation with Mercy can be seen as an error made by even many nominally leftist men—in his misery he focuses blame on a personal relationship with a woman instead of facing the structural forces arrayed against him. Still, when he's finally ready to strike out against his fate he doesn't strike at Mercy. Instead it's a third member of the Pallbearer's Club, a classmate of Art's who has had a comfortable life thanks to generational wealth, who gets to see Art's terrifying final form.

Or maybe he doesn't. Ambiguity truly reigns here.

Which brings us to the last page of the novel, one that—if it came after the acknowledgements instead of before—could be mistaken for endpaper. It's a flyer, not for a punk show but for the crowdfunding effort that will result in the publication of the book we've just read. The story of the life of Art Barbara is now out of the hands of Art Barbara. For a moment, it is in the hands of Mercy Brown. And she—For love of her dead friend? For need of new blood?—throws it back into the hands of the community of the marginal and damned that Art was part of, challenging them (us) with the right and responsibility to make meaning of it.

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

Swallowed by the Sea

Jon Frankel

Follow the Flickering Down
by Theodore Shank
78pp. Thera Books 2022

The artistry of Theodore Shank's *Follow the Flickering Down* is subtle, sometimes elusive, even vanishing, but it is there in the bend of every line in the best poems. His method fits his purpose, a documentary and autobiographical account of the Santa Cruz area in the 80s and 90s. Shank tells stories about his childhood, especially the fraught and difficult relationship with his father, and of the music scene he comes of age in. He rides his skateboard and crashes on couches. Some poems carefully document the names and lineages of punk bands that would otherwise be lost to obscurity. The poems are interspersed with longer prose segments. Having a few pages and paragraphs to get the telling done allows for more detail, but the emotional power of the more compressed poems is greater. These poems are free of nostalgia even as they record what feels like the last glimmers of the pre-internet counterculture, when being a romantic outlaw was not fraught with irony. These are not the stories of tech entrepreneurs but of people who live hard. His work eschews most poetic effect, rhythm, rhyme, assonance, alliteration, metaphor. So the line breaks are the dominant formal feature, punctuating both sound and meaning. Shank speaks easily and forthrightly in these poems, but there is lyrical beauty and drama. This is from "Talking to Tombstones" (p.62). The poem recalls a trip to the cemetery for high school art class and a guy named Red Dog. While the class draws, Red Dog gets high behind a tombstone:

After a few minutes he emerged from the smoke
And approached a tall tombstone,
Which he grabbed with both hands,
And aggressively began to shake,
Dirty red hair swirling around his face.

"Fuck Jesus!" he yelled,

"Fuck Jesus!"

Mr. Wolters approached
Just as the tombstone was about
To topple.
"What are you doing?"
Red Dog stopped
And flipped his fiery hair from his face:

"I'm sorry, Mr. Wolters."

"Overdose" is straightforward, but aside from the title it approaches death and darkness from the oblique angle of a wave:

Overdose

On a cold winter morning
We sat watching large waves
Dangerously collide
With the rocks
Off the end of the jetty.
Dale ran up the beach
With his surfboard.
He was older than us,
In his 20s,
And we all admired
His surfing abilities.
We watched him slide
Through the shore break
With ease,
And within minutes
An ominous mountain of water approached.
Dale turned,

Caught the wave,
And drifted down
The dark face.

Then the wave closed over him
Like a thick curtain,
And he disappeared,

Swallowed by the sea

Theodore Shank reminds me most of the great Charles Reznikoff, who also told stories in poetry and prose—observations without editorial of the world around him, documenting life on the streets of NY in the first part of the last century. We don't know who his tailors, waitresses, cooks, plumbers, salespeople are, except through his fine eye and ear and ability to listen. Shank, like Reznikoff, is in love with his world and allows it to unfold on the eye and ear. The poem becomes a way to know, to remember. And then he wants you to know too.

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

Hands off Exarchia

Cara Hoffman

Exarchia, the central Athens neighborhood that won its autonomy and status as a law enforcement-free zone in battles against the state over the past fifty years, is in the midst of a battle against police occupation. At three in the morning on November 17, 1973, the U.S. backed military junta, which had rounded up, arrested and tortured more than ten thousand citizens suspected of having leftist sympathies, ended days of a student non-violent occupation at the Polytechnic Institute in Exarchia by driving a tank through its gates, crushing the students on the other side, murdering twenty-seven people and injuring hundreds. In the tumultuous grief-shocked days that followed, the military government carried out more mass round ups and arrests, but there was no corralling the population now. The junta fell, anti-communist laws were abolished, and the Sanctuary Law, which forbids police and soldiers from entering any university, was signed; protecting radicals, insurgents and petty criminals alike.
But then, last summer, police were deployed to the neighborhood to protect construction crews sent to Exarchia Square to break ground on a new Metro line.

Over the past two years, efforts to gentrify—and politically neutralize—Exarchia have escalated rapidly. In 2020 the Greek government used the pandemic as an excuse to clear out squats throughout the neighborhood, evicting migrant families who lived, worked and went to school there, to concentration camps in the north. With many activists suffering from Covid and strict state-mandated curfews, the traditional community response that would have normally pushed the police out, failed to materialize. Construction crews bricked up squats, and guards were stationed outside to prevent people from moving back in. The insurrectionary group Ruvikonas, which had previously organized a squatted space on Exarchia Square into K-Vox, a community center, café, and food distribution point, had been focusing on securing food and medicine to people experiencing the pandemic, and couldn't help reopen and reoccupy the buildings as they had done in the past. Suddenly, in a matter of months, the police had a presence in the neighborhood where they had been forbidden for half a century.

The Plataia Before The Fall by Molly Crabapple. Pen and ink on paper, July 2022

In 2022 when the city government announced they would start construction on a metro line in Exarchia Square, the political and social center of the neighborhood, the news was received with the usual skepticism. In the past, the city hadn't been able to send workers to put up a Christmas tree in Exarchia Square without it being burnt to the ground within minutes. The Athenian government had tried and failed to break the neighborhood via public works before, but this time, Athens mayor Kostas Bakoyanis, of the right-wing New Democracy Party, whose father served in the US backed dictatorship of the 1960s and 70s, announced a full military occupation of Exarchia. On August 9th, riot squads and construction crews descended upon Exarchia, stationed police on every corner of the neighborhood, fenced off the park, and tore down the famous statue of three cherubs that had represented Exarchia for decades. This was a purposeful provocation.

The proposed Exarchia station would replace trees, swing sets, cafes and bookstores. The lack of parking spaces and substantial connections with surface transportation would create traffic congestion and transform the square, which has long been a public gathering place, into a noisy and polluting automotive and locomotive snarl.

"Since the sheet metal fence was erected around the square, we have witnessed a series of irregularities concerning the project as a whole," the Open Assembly No Metro in Exarchia Square said in a statement released in early October. "The only response to our questions, protests and mobilizations has been brutal repression, strong evidence for us that the project lacks the acceptance and legitimacy of the world of Exarchia and beyond."

Weeks later came a full police occupation of Lofos Strefi sent by Prodea, a private real estate company that volunteered to "sponsor" the "beautification" and "reconstruction" of the park. The already beautiful park, collectively maintained by the neighborhood, is where people go to watch the sunset from high rocky bluffs, play basketball on the neighborhood's only court, picnic with their families, watch theater and concerts, practice Tai Chi and walk dogs. Residents were shut out of the park and forbidden to play there. On October 4, a man who violated the order by playing basketball was beaten with batons in front of his nine-and eleven-year-old daughters, sustaining a fractured skull.

After this, according to police stationed on the square, MAT troops, militarized combat units, were given two-year deployments in Exarchia. Anarchists have been battling military and municipal police in street fights since September. In November the national Mitsotakis government deployed another 5,500 police to the center of Athens.

"The dissolution of spaces for social solidarity and political expression, is not about a public transport that serves its users, but about a project that comes to burden the daily life of all of us," wrote the Open Assembly. "Exarchia Square is one of the few free public spaces in the region... We will not allow the destruction of our neighborhood. We will defend in every way our free spaces, our right to live with dignity where we have chosen."

What made Exarchia free were anarchists building the movement. Aided by the post-junta Sanctuary Law, the next two decades saw a cultural revival in the neighborhood from the bottom up. Car parks turned into gardens and playgrounds, publishing collectives cranked out radical journals, families took over vacant buildings together, started open air cinemas; there was an explosion of traditional music and public art, and punk. Readings and organizing meetings took over store fronts and cafes. The fighters in the '73 uprising were upheld as heroes. Thousands of records—audio from the Polytechnic Radio Station and the sounds from the street that day—were pressed. But no one from the dictatorship was arrested, or put on trial. No one went to prison for torture.

By the 1980s, ten thousand anarchists lived in Exarchia and built lives there. They had come from all parts of Greece, and all over the world. Those Anarchists—generations of them: grandparents, middle aged workers and shopkeepers, young parents with little children, college students and teenagers, still live there today. People still come to Exarchia from all over the world to fight repression and live without a boot on their back.

It was also anarchists, supported by the broader population, who evicted the police from Exarchia in December 2009 in an uprising that swept through every neighborhood and suburb of Athens, expanding through the mainland and then to the islands. The catalyst was the murder of a fifteen-year-old boy named Alexandros Grigoropoulos by two policemen. Grigropolouos, a young anarchist, spent his days in the neighborhood but still lived at home in the suburbs with his parents.

In the days following the murder, Exarchia exploded. Shops, banks and cars in the center of the city were torched. Public buildings around Syntagma Square, the seat of parliament, were set ablaze. The uprising lasted for weeks,with students occupying university buildings and masked gunmen attacking cops. But the heart of the protest was everyday people—women dressed for work in suits and heels lobbing cinderblocks through bank windows. Grandmothers spitting in the faces of the police.

The cop who shot Alexandros, Epaminondas Korkoneas, was sentenced to life in prison; his partner was charged as an accomplice and sentenced to ten years. The government condemned the shooting and police issued an apology. Christmas festivities in Athens were canceled.

Shortly after Grigropolous's murder two guerilla organizations rose to prominence in Exarchia. One, Conspiracy of the Fire Cells, carried out a dozen coordinated bombings on a single day. They attacked luxury car dealerships, banks, and the houses of the minister of internal affairs and the head of the armed forces. Over the next five years they carried out monthly fire bombings; attacking law offices, insurance companies, members of parliament. They also sent package bombs, to the Russian, Swiss, Dutch, Chilean, and German embassies as well as to Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. All were discovered except a bomb sent to the International Monetary Fund which detonated, injuring an employee. The second organization was Ruvikonas, a militant group who provide aid and necessary direct action interventions for residents.

Those weeks of rage in Greece were sparked by a teenager's murder, but they also came on the heels of government corruption, and they came from historical mistrust; a deep-seated understanding of the things of which unchecked authority is capable. The murder was an echo. And the response was a reminder that for a long time now, what happens in Exarchia can determine the course of the nation, or the continent.

"We know very well that in front of us we have an organized and cruel attack against our rights," writes the Open Assembly. "We know very well that this fight will take a long time, that it is difficult and painful. However, it concerns the lives of all of us, no matter where we are. That's why we continue and will continue until the end...until we get our square back! We will not leave."

Cara Hoffman *is a founding editor of the* Anarchist Review of Books.

Untitled (Hanging on the Wire Until They Remember You) by Lance Minto. Charcoal, coffee, house paint on paper 2022

Which Side Are You On

Erin Sroka

Fight Like Hell
by Kim Kelly
484pp. Atria/One Signal/S&S/
Paramount Global 2022

The predicament of the American worker has been a neon thread running through the pandemic. The nurses wearing plastic bags; working mothers doing all their jobs at once; the sharp rise in billionaires' wealth; the meatpackers getting sick in droves; essential workers lifted up as the rightful saviors of society, then forgotten, cordoned off in sacrifice zones. The way we just kept working. Through mass death, after learning that our system would select mass death over public health, after the acceleration of white nationalist terrorism. The way we watched a livestream of an authoritarian coup attempt in one browser window and logged on to our work meetings in another.

It takes time to build solidarity. Organizers have to meet people where they're at. And where American workers have been, until now, is on our bellies, crawling after the neoliberal dream of individual achievement. We became great at talking shit about work in private, while updating our LinkedIn profiles.

Fight Like Hell, the first book by labor journalist and VICE union founding member Kim Kelly, arrives at this pivotal moment. Kelly, who mainstreamed labor issues for a new generation through her writings in Teen Vogue, now fills in a profound silence surrounding worker dissent.

It's not just that labor history isn't taught in schools, it's that employers prefer worker silence and have the power to compel it. If our financial precarity isn't enough to convince us to keep our heads down, employers have NDAs, at-will employment laws, worker surveillance and union busting.

The silence around worker organizing in the US coupled with the scope of Kelly's project means *Fight Like Hell* can only go so deep. Still, important patterns emerge that help working people see ourselves as a class, see the nature of our relationships with the employer class, and learn the critical lessons of the labor movement.

Kelly unearths stories from women, Black, indigenous, immigrant, queer, disabled, and imprisoned workers who've faced off with power. Her work is a corrective to the enduring image of the American unionist as a white man in a hard hat, or the American leftist as an unwashed white academic. The working class that Kelly portrays jibes with reality, and the leaders she highlights look like our movement leaders now—giving a sense of a continuous lineage of the same folks showing up across the decades, to create the American left.

What a delight to meet Marie Equi, who made a name for herself in Portland in 1893 when she horsewhipped her girlfriend's boss for withholding wages. We know that Equi went on to become a radical doctor who provided sliding scale abortions, that she became a Wobbly and a World War I dissident and was jailed for it. Kelly gives us Equi crashing a pro-war protest with a banner that reads, "Prepare to die, workingmen, JP Morgan & Co. want preparedness for profit."

Kelly gives us the employer class, as a character, always using the most vulnerable workers it can find. As in the northern textile mills of the 19th century: when the white female workforce stopped being grateful for the opportunity for mill work as an alternative to neverending domestic labor on their fathers' farms, they started organizing. When public opinion turned against the mills, the bosses responded by hiring immigrants to replace them.

> These workers arrived malnourished, penniless, haunted by British colonial terror, and desperate for work; mill owners welcomed them with open arms and upturned noses. Tensions sometimes arose between the Irish workers and the remaining Yankee women, who had been engaged in protests and strikes over the same conditions the Irish accepted out of intense need and a profound lack of options.

The employer class is good at presenting itself as the only viable solution; at finding that sweet spot just a little better than the terrible situation one is currently in. Like the gig workers of today who join the ranks of app-based misclassified workers as a reprieve from the brutal precarity of unemployment, so it was with Black women workers in the post-Civil War South, who made a living doing laundry.

> For the newly emancipated, having the freedom to create their own work schedules and get through their daily labors without a white employer breathing down their necks was—almost—worth all the soiled diapers in the world.

Laundry was labor intensive and low paid, with racism driving down wages. White people who'd felt entitled to free Black labor for generations didn't want to pay a fair wage for clean clothes, and the washerwomen had few options aside from trying to find nicer clients. They wasted no time in organizing. A washerwomen's strike in Jackson, Mississippi enters the historical record as early as 1866, just one year after emancipation.

As the laundry workers movement rolled on, a strike coalesced in Galveston, Texas in 1877. It was a promising moment, fresh off some spectacular national and local strikes, and the washerwomen were militant enough to win. The strike fell apart when washerwomen turned their anger on the Chinese immigrants, excluded from most forms of employment, who began to run laundries.

Kelly exhaustively chronicles how racism weakens unions and spoils campaigns. The most critical and evident lesson here is that multiracial solidarity is everything.

Hawaii's sugar plantation workers in the 1940s, for example, understood that the sugar companies pitted the Indigenous, Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino workers against each other to maintain a blatantly exploitative contract labor system. When the workers organized across ethnic lines, the companies punished them with violence. When that didn't work, the companies tried to break the union by importing Filipino workers whose communities had just been painfully destroyed by the World War II Japanese occupation. The union got ahead of them, salting the ship that would pick up the workers with union organizers. By the time the Filipino workers arrived, they knew who to trust.

Around the same time in California (and decades ahead of their time), maritime service workers were ready to organize across race, gender, and sexuality. The Marine Cooks and Stewards Union was largely Black and Asian, and for a period beginning in the mid-1930s, a multiracial safe haven for queer workers and leftists. The MCSU negotiated workplace protections for LGBTQIA workers until they were destroyed by red-baiting. Years later, a movement leader named Frank McCormick described it:

> We did it in the labor movement as working-class queens with left-wing politics, and that's why government crushed us, and that's why you don't know anything about us today—our history has been totally erased.

It would be denialist of us to underestimate the extent to which punishment is used for disciplining workers. The employer class has quite the tradition of turning strikes into massacres, hitting protestors with cars, and sadistic one-offs, like the 1917 Bisbee, Arizona mine boss who forced 1200 striking miners onto cattle cars at gunpoint and stranded them in the desert almost 200 miles from home; most of them never made it back.

Punishment is woven into working class lives. Kelly takes us to where it is most blatant—prisons.

> What if your boss controls every aspect of your life, from when you shower to where you sleep to whether or not you can make a phone call or see your family? What if you have no option to walk out, no matter how bad your job gets, because you're locked in a cage?

Here is worker vulnerability exploited at scale. Able-bodied prisoners who do not pose a security threat are legally required to work for wages that typically top out at $1.15 an hour. In some states, they don't get paid at all.

Kelly calls out organized labor's lack of solidarity with incarcerated workers. She's right. Excluding prisoners carves out members of our own class. It's time to get rid of this carve out and to build solidarity with those we've been conditioned to abandon. It can change our whole story.

***Erin Sroka** is a writer from Durham, NC. She lives in Seattle.*

Making of a Middle School Anarchist

Molly Torinus

The summer I was thirteen, I read Emma Goldman to prove that I wasn't an anarchist.

My journey started when I saw a friend from my online school's queer liberationist collective tell the world (i.e., a 100+ member Skype chat) that he was an anarchist. Of course, we had no common ground ideologically, despite my having founded our queer liberationist collective. Following his declaration, he was met with the fury of a thousand suns (i.e., middle school cliques). Comparisons were made to the Anarchists from Marissa Meyer's Renegades series, apparently a cabal of supervillains. A girl expressed shock: could an actual human, not a sci-fi character, be an anarchist? A small group debated whether anarchism existed. Then, the Conservative Teen Brigade noticed he had, by way of a typo, fashioned himself an archist. Some joked incessantly about archy, while others insisted he was passionate about arcs. All this, simply because my friend had said that life was more than an endless, violent struggle for dominance. His faith in humanity was optimistic, maybe, but in line with basic decency. That's when I realized basic decency could get you mocked. You think statism and capitalism reward casual violence? They have nothing on middle school.

The worst part of seeing trolls come down on my friend was that a part of me—the part that had read a little David Graeber for the hell of it—wondered if I might agree. I couldn't let that happen. I was already being trolled because I read feminist theory for fun, listen to classic queercore, and quote issues of the Gay Liberation Front's magazine. The repressive uniformity capitalism rewards had influenced me, but like many a sad teenage lesbian, I'd rejected assimilation. If, on top of my homosexual-dumpster-fire personality, I was a freaking anarchist, my already-ailing social life would collapse like a dying star. To ensure I was only vaguely liberal with a slight anti-authoritarian streak, I decided to read anarchist theory. This scheme wouldn't have won any awards for strategic planning—but I'd heard of Emma Goldman online. Embracing the capitalist impulse to package one's identity, I intended to skim and vehemently disagree with a chapter of *Anarchism And Other Essays*, enough that I could tell the popular girls I'd checked and totally believed in hierarchy.

That…didn't happen. Goldman's argument turned out to be the logical conclusion of what I and my peers had learned in kindergarten. Her critiques of domination evoked my experiences of teenage queer antagonisms, the way trolls established a hierarchy with the girls, gays, theys, and thems at the bottom. Because I'm an outspoken lesbian, older boys had dubbed me bitch and whore. My community theater groups were plagued by toxic hierarchies, mostly due to teens' all-consuming desires to seem cool. I'd even seen representative democracy's failings during my short-lived run for middle school vice president. Obviously, my experience was far from unique: why else were there thousands of novels detailing the tortures of junior high? All Goldman believed was that society shouldn't operate on the same principles as that socially sanctioned hell known as middle school.

Destroy, Preserve, Destroy, Preserve...(Rainforest)by Tanya Gill. Crumpled found image, gel medium, oil paint. 2020

I kept reading to see if I could muster the intended outrage but instead found myself agreeing more and more. At my summer classic literature program, while other teens in my pod scrolled Instagram, I pulled up "Anarchism: What It Really Stands For." The classic text read like a romance novel without the romance; it was a dream of liberation, written in a reassuringly matter-of-fact tone, the occasional note of poetry thrown in. By the end, I couldn't help but wonder if this particular brand of common sense could also be beautiful and meaningful. I read "The Psychology Of Political Violence" all in one night after feeling like a social reject at the camp dance. It turns out I can't dance, but I definitely wanted to be in Emma Goldman's revolution—and as I read, I thought more critically about the brutality I'd always projected onto anarchism. It dawned on me that violence was a cycle perpetuated by a violent system; suddenly, I had a partial explanation for middle school BS. When I stayed after class to talk with our professor, I told him, almost confessionally, that I had been reading Goldman. As everybody else filed out of the room, he declared she was almost an anarchist. "That's not a bad thing," I responded, daring him to say something middle-school-esque. He smiled. It's not, but it's better to be in the minority if you're an anarchist. What the hell did he mean? Part of me wondered if he meant anarchism was only valuable because it shifted the Overton window to the left, legitimizing DSA-style socialism and other moderate ideologies without creating change. But maybe he meant having unusual politics made you different, the kind of different that most people shouldn't be, even if you had a shot at changing society or at least changing minds.

As the summer passed, I realized I couldn't let minority status stop me. When my family embarked on a month-long camping trip to California, I spent every waking hour in the backseat studying basic decency—reading Goldman and Bakunin, binging Kim Kelly articles, listening to Howard Zinn lectures on anarchist history, writing angsty poetry, my queer heart catching on fire as middle America rushed by. When I got to LA for my LGBTQ+ leadership camp, I knew I'd never again let any violent system go uncritiqued. When a counselor lent me her copy of *Days Of War, Nights Of Love*, I pulled an all-nighter to read it as my inner insecure teenage girl whispered her questions: would any girl even consider dating a tragic lesbian who became an anarchist in the back of her parents' car somewhere in Nebraska? But when I got home, I promised myself I would do more than read theory, blast anarcho-punk, and cry; I would fight for liberation.

The violence of eighth grade hasn't killed me yet. These days, I've been volunteering with Madison Infoshop, continuing to organize with my queer liberationist collective (now the first nonhierarchical organization in my school's history), and educating friends about anarchism. And as for being a minority? As Goldman said in the book that changed my life: "Ours is merely a more poignant repetition of the phenomenon of all history: every effort for progress, for enlightenment, for science, for religious, political, and economic liberty, emanates from the minority, and not from the mass."

I started the summer desperate to have normal politics but instead realized that anarchism made perfect, heartbreaking sense. Middle school is about conformity, hierarchy, and politically inaccurate science fiction. But even though middle school is not only a coercive institution but one built on assimilation and oppression, it isn't the worst thing to be a minority. In fact, it turns out middle school is one of the times when it's most meaningful to think outside the violent majority.

***Molly Torinus** is an anarchaqueer & xenofeminist organizer, performative poet and Laura Jane Grace fangirl.*

When I Say We, I Mean I

Heather Bowlan

Brown Neon
by Raquel Gutiérrez
232pp. Coffee House Press 2022

Americón
by Nico Vela Page
192pp. Wendy's Subway 2022

Ante body
by Marwa Helal
80pp. Nightboat Books 2022

Lately, considering the conversations I find between texts and readers, and even between texts themselves, I've been thinking about writing as a kind of cartography. Mapmaking is a messy business, an art and a science and a power move. How to locate, let alone delineate, a space—your body, the landscape around you, the ideals or memories you compare everything against? What is immediately excluded when the first line is drawn?

Drawing a map is a process of defining, declaring, naming. These are the boundaries, here's what I claim, here's how I represent density, green space, elevation, inhabited/uninhabited spaces. Here are the sites and locations that I deem important or relevant. Here's how much space all of this occupies according to a personal or collective scale.

Writing has always been occupied with its own kind of mapmaking, with identifying the open and closed spaces we circumscribe as humans. And so it's reassuring to encounter writing that complicates those boundaries and classifications, unavoidable as they are.

Three recent books explore the limits of how we define each other and ourselves in diligent documentation of experience, language, and physicality that comprise (or, perhaps, delineate) their narrator's identities.

The poet and critic Raquel Gutiérrez explores the layered process of crafting and surveying identity in their book of essays, *Brown Neon*, moving through different deserts in southwestern states and confronting the US/Mexico border. Gutiérrez is unsparing in considering the privilege of US citizenship and the complicated realities and choices for people working toward that privilege, alongside complex evolving discussions around queerness, love, and the impulse to find meaning and create community across location and identity.

From curating an art show in LA's rapidly gentrifying Boyle Heights neighborhood, to racing to cross the Arizona border into California before their car melts down, Gutiérrez continuously questions the reader and themself about the lines we draw between nations, between gender categories. After all, they ask, "…aren't all our identities imbricated by the sticky annals of empire and capitalism?"

This perspective informs their particular interest in visual art and land art, in the critique of the supposedly separate or neutral spaces of art galleries and museums, or outdoor spaces. Gutiérrez engages deeply with art and artists who build and perform within and without these spaces and demand viewers reassess the distance we are trained to assume when evaluating creative work, reframing it in terms of an abstract commentary on transitions through various "deadly terrains," as Gutiérrez calls them.

Walls come up again and again, from the horrific, (perhaps?) unintentional land art of US-Mexican border wall prototypes to an exploration of a truth wall in a former lover's home. In our homes, in our bodies, the truth, its whole messy story, is preserved in the changes: "An opening in a wall surface, the organic components within a wall, a century and its violences trapped behind spackle and stucco."

And, too, in our relationships. Gutiérrez's writing is deeply moving and vulnerable in their exploration of their evolving connection with butch lesbian culture and gender. In *Brown Neon's* first two essays, in particular, they both celebrate and question their own deep connection, recognition, and history with butch identity alongside how other loved ones are navigating these questions.

The essays in *Brown Neon* resist any straightforward conclusions, any lines to save the reader from sharing in the disorientation found in the margins. Marwa Helal's second full-length collection, *Ante body*, takes advantage of poetry's linguistic and spatial flexibility to make that disorientation an explicit, prolonged element of her project.

"The archive will be an outgrowth," Helal's narrator proclaims, challenging the idea of static or reliable histories. Helal, born in Egypt, brings Arabic's right-to-left writing to her poetry written in English, in a form called The Arabic. Her long central poem following this format begins with an image (also the poem's title), "People the We," from artists Adrian Aguilera and Betelhem Makonnen. This image offers a reversal of the US Constitution's opening phrase, "We the People," in the same baroque penmanship/font still used in many official documents, signaling the challenges to syntax, boundaries, and assumptions that follow in Helal's poem:

> astral i
> last i
> me qualify can test DNA no
> say to is which
> me standardize modern evr never will you

The form's extra step of reading right to left allows for another kind of defining—not just redrawing the lines of the narrator's identities, but, in fact, creating an opportunity for openness, for tenderness.

> :you for translate also will I this…
> Favored highly and blessed are who we
> See to yet have you whom we
> Other each find who we
> Be me letting for you thank

In many lines, but especially the above passage, reading right-to-left and left-to-right create a new resonance, a different way for the poem to locate itself on the page:

The Arabic is successful at its task. You'll be exhausted and exhilarated by the end of this section. Take in the discomfort and come back to it later; see what you remember and what you don't, and consider why.

An earlier poem in *Ante body*, "ante matter," poses its own spatial challenge to readers by bifurcating the poem into two columns. Do you read down one column then the next, bounce back and forth between staggered stanzas, or both? And within the columns, vulnerability is, again, often cloaked in a breathless battery of language:

> when i say we i mean i but even
> in language i say we or you to avoid
> intimacy with the self; myself i am the
> constant calculating distance between
> location and origin minus the velocity of

Helal's poems are a map of a self-reckoning, locating "chosen and given: families" and resisting any imposed dislocation. The archive, for too many of us, is not where we find our histories. And yet there's still much to learn from mining the archive, reveling in the sense of clutter and overabundance of details, the dislocation of information overload. What are the unexpected benefits of exploring a moment in time, a dream/project based on a map?

The most compelling poem in Nico Vela Page's *Americón*, "PanAmericana," explores the idea behind the Pan-American Highway and the 60-mile gap in the midst of it, known as the Darién Gap. Manifest destiny but make it car culture: The highway (minus this gap) runs from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego. Darien Gap, meanwhile, is the first recorded site of Spanish colonization in the mainland Americas.

This geographical resistance, intertwined with conquistador history and likely the first (modern) maps of the region, are mirrored in the poem's form, in part printed longways across the page, forcing the reader to turn the book sideways and re-register its space. (This formal choice also appears in another poem exploring travel and distance, "Lamy Station Cycle.")

> falda in
> cruz
> able
> donde selva
> se Vuelve pant ano
> between water
> and gr ass
> gap be comes
> mud mi

Page's choice to write in Spanglish, too, allows the poems to be a point of entry for some readers, and perhaps an opportunity to recenter the map for others.

> and I loved
> that shirt—felt
> me in a femin
>
> in way, in a plaid
> lin en way y el li
> no masculine ni fe me ni
> no ni mas fem me
> in linen ni masc en li
> no ni

In passages like these, reveries are located simultaneously in a childhood landscape and a growing awareness of one's body, of the gaps and connections between these spaces in an evolving understanding of home, of the spaces we inhabit.

We see this from another perspective in "Customs Declaration," another horizontal poem, in which the poem seems itself to be swimming through interrupted syntax, commas and backslashes arresting the "progress," but there's a self-awareness and embodied confidence that emerges:

> p,ape,r,r,are,,,p,in,points of sight, pricks,,,a milk,y,way spilt / split
> a cross the page,,,wh,ere,we,re,ad / we,da,re. / with eyes /
> drop,ping ,,,,, out / oursock/et/s,,,slithe,ring,,,s,mud,ging,,,down

This persistent boundary disruption reminds me of Gloria Anzaldúa's reflection at the beginning of *Borderlands/La Frontera*, that life on the margins, "keeping intact one's shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an 'alien' element."

Imagine finding a body of water and having to describe the entire experience: not just its depth, its tides, its ports or tributaries, but the full sensory experience,

the mental and emotional space, other memories of water that surfaced in that moment. Across their books, and especially reading them together, these writers pose themselves that challenge: to draw a map beyond current boundaries.

In these texts intersectionality (in Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw's original, explicitly political definition) verges on interstitial, as the authors push against categories like citizenship, "first" languages/cultures, and gender, rejecting them as distinct. They blur the lines of demarcations we've absorbed; boundaries that can be even more challenging to confront or challenge because, when categories of identity overlap, one tends to obfuscate the other(s).

In creating texts that inhabit complex identities on the margins, exploring how a person reckons with the maps they're given, or imagines a recentered map of their own making, these three books offer us an opportunity to connect. Are we willing to acknowledge how we uphold the systems that separate us by design? Perhaps this is the moment to explore the expansive nature of selfhood, to accept and explore the fluidity that exists within and without rigid identity categories that no longer serve us.

Heather Bowlan *lives in Philadelphia. Her poetry and criticism have appeared in* New Ohio Review, Interim, make/shift, SORTES, *and elsewhere. Currently, she's at work on a project exploring perspective and collaboration through poetry, photos/videos, and music.*

ADULT HEAD

Giada Scodellaro

And it's not what you believe it to be. It's blue, but also innumerably green. Innumerable, also yellow. Purple. Of course it's navy, black, cyan, royal and aqua, aquamarine, azure, baby blue, byzantine, celeste, cerulean, turquoise, denim, indigo, sapphire, but also teal, plus mint, kelly, olive, jade, army, artichoke—but colors can't describe a thing. More importantly, it's a mountain. It's a field in wind, or a mass, so big, pointy or rounded like laundry, warm like laundry, the sound's like an open hand to the cheek, or like broken glass, a pine cone crushing dry pasta, a splash/crash, sage. An adult head coming in and out of it, the largeness of the head against the innumerable hues, the shoulders, the neck praying. A crawl, a breaststroke, it hides and recovers the ear, the nostrils, the lips gathering and then holding breath, the eyelids closed, the hands like glass dropped from the counter, cutting completely into skin, or some other material, a lace curtain, and in the vastness of it there's this adult head, lapping up and down, in and out.

Giada Scodellaro *is a writer and photographer.* Some of Them Will Carry Me, *her first book, was published by Dorothy, a publishing project, in 2022.*

ARB DIY

Money Shot

Sara Gran's *The Book of the Most Precious Substance* is many things: a straightahead thriller; a bibliomystery, an intensely sexual novel of loss; an audacious, despairing noir; and a blow against the conglomeratization of the publishing industry. In it, former novelist and current antiquarian bookseller Lily Albrecht is put on the trail of the titular book, an exceedingly rare handwritten sex magic ritual guide—there are five rituals and five substances. It takes two people to perform the ritual, and only one may gain the benefits of the magical operation: a wish. Lily's husband is suffering from the final stages of premature dementia, and the new man in her life, one of those obnoxiously charming and clever literary types who would find an issue of this magazine, squint at the cover, and call it "...intriguing" has agreed to help her find it, sell it, and split the money. But certainly they couldn't try the ritual.

Lily cannot even "squirt", a necessary ability for the magic to work. Well, she cannot squirt as far as she knows.

The Book is dexterously written, compelling, and erotic without either being silly or self-important. On many levels, it's a perfectly commercial novel of the sort that would make book club members blush and then go to eBay on their phones to search out occult texts and sex toys. But in these days of commercial moralism perhaps noir is simply unpalatable for major publishing houses. So Sara Gran Did It Herself. Here's why:

Bather by Carrie Moyer. Acrylic and glitter on canvas 2019

ARB: So, the publishing industry! WTF?!

SG: I don't know man! For me, now that I've had some time away from it, I can look back and say, regardless of the larger pros and cons, the culture is just not a good fit for me—I really value precision and clear communication and being spoken to respectfully and publishing culture doesn't prioritize those behaviors. There's a lot of off-handed snark that I find hurtful and confusing. They do really excel at building a certain type of literary star, which some truly great writers have benefited from, but it wasn't working for me or making me happy.

ARB: You put some serious money into this project, unlike many Kindle-and-forget-it types. How's it going?

SG: It's going really well. I've sold about 13k books and made a profit. As a reference, my typical sales in my first six months of publication have been 2-10k. To be fair, this was also a more accessible, marketable book than I usually write, so increased sales can't be entirely chalked up to my publishing genius. And obviously I've benefited from seven previous books with established publishers.

I put a lot of money into the book because I could—I hired an expensive publicist, designer, etc. A lot of that money can be replaced with time and skill.

One reason why I did this was as a kind of test case to see if it was a viable path for other mid-career, mid-list authors who have a similar-sized readership—I can now safely say it is. So many writers I know are just miserable in their careers and now I can say, with proof, hey, here's another option.

ARB: What does esoteric wisdom have to offer to the contemporary political moment?

SG: I'm not very political. That being said, I used to be very much of the hex-the-Pentagon school. Now I feel like magic is unpredictable and not necessarily a great tool for achieving one's goals. THAT being said, the mystical path has to start and end with the point of view that all humans are radically equal, because we all have equal access to the divine. Every life is equally valuable. I try not to dehumanize anyone and I try not to live in a fantasy of villains and heroes. Jewish wisdom suggests that before you debate with someone you repeat their point of view back to them, to make sure you're arguing with what they're actually saying and not what you think they're saying. Everyone and everything is complicated.

The Unarchists

Libertarians, an-caps, and black bears

Glynis Hart

> The United States is off the spectrum of the main tradition in this respect: what's called "libertarianism" here is unbridled capitalism. Now, that's always been opposed in the European libertarian tradition, where every anarchist has been a socialist—because the point is, if you have unbridled capitalism, you have all kinds of authority: you have extreme authority.
>
> —Noam Chomsky, *Understanding Power*

If millionaires trading Bitcoin and doing coke in beachfront hotel rooms in Acapulco while calling themselves anarchists is your thing, the HBO miniseries "The Anarchists" will bring you down, because (spoiler) it pretty much ends badly. But as an exposé of anarcho-capitalism, or American libertarianism, the show totally works: some people die, some people make lots of money, and everyone ignores how shitty life is for the Mexicans.

Filmmaker Todd Schramke followed his self-described anarchist contacts for six years, filming the annual Anarchapulco conference in Mexico with about as much critical distance as a CNN reporter embedded with US troops. When it culminated in the violent death of one of his subjects, his personal film project was launched into the video stratosphere. The narrative fits well with mainstream branding of anarchy as chaos and violence, a bacchanal of selfish behavior: without an authoritarian government to guide us, it teaches, we will descend into murderous chaos as surely as the stranded boys in *The Lord of the Flies*.

Jeff Berwick launched the conference in 2015; the Anarchapulco website indicates it's still going strong—probably better than ever, with the extra attention from HBO. Critical minds might think twice about holding a conference in the murder capital of Mexico, but Berwick claims he saw the place's lawlessness as an advantage. (Not that working sewers and running water weren't important too, or else why not just hold the conference in Haiti?) Conference devotee John Galton (real name: Shane Cress) was shot to death outside his home mid-film, which immediately brought Schramke's shoestring video project big-money attention.

Anarchy not being a breakfast cereal, no one owns the right to its name. But as a public service, anarchists should try to publicize the difference between anarcho-capitalists like Berwick, and the sort of people, say, in the Neighborhood Anarchist Collective in Eugene, who hold Share Fairs and try to "build a society where neighbors support each other to meet basic needs." Many of the people who went to Anarchapulco expected to find a supportive community of like-minded freedom lovers – perhaps the type of anarchists who hand out water and antacids to protesters getting teargassed. Instead, Shane's widow and his friend who got shot at the same time found themselves out on the street because the other AnCaps didn't feel safe having them around.

Portraits of Unidentified Foley Artists #7 7.23.2013 by Michael Byron. Collage on paper 2013

Similarly, many of the people falling for Libertarianism in the USA are seeking and being sold an image of freedom and community that anarcho-capitalism will not deliver.

In 2004 a group of libertarians called Free Staters moved to the small town of Grafton, New Hampshire to set up an anti-government haven. Free Staters hope to move a critical mass of 20,000 people to New Hampshire, where their numbers will be enough to pass the Libertarian Party agenda. Free Staters elected to the NH legislature have floated bills to abolish child labor laws, dismantle the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and secede from the Union. In Grafton, pop. 1,385, the libertarians established a camp, bought a few houses, and set about dismantling the local government.

There isn't a whole lot of government to dismantle in Grafton. There's no sewage treatment, no municipal water, no school. What town employees there are mostly drive the plows and highway trucks. The town clerk's office is open 10 hours a week. So, once they'd established enough of a presence, the Free Staters worked on cutting the volunteer fire department budget, reducing road repairs, and trying to close the library (using, among other things, the library computer). The number of sex offenders in town rose from eight to 22, two people were murdered, and one of the Libertarian's homes burned down. The local black bear population, drawn to the free food provided by dozens of campers discarding garbage in the woods, attacked two innocent people. So the Libertarians formed a posse and shot a lot of bears, and then the New Hampshire winters drove most of them (the people, not the bears) away.

Matt Hongoltz-Hetling wrote about Grafton in his book *A Libertarian Walks into a Bear*, presenting it all as a series of anecdotes about oddball characters in a remote little town. It's meant to be funny, but some things just aren't: a prominent Free State leader with a conviction for 129 counts of child porn, the two murders in a town that had never had any before, and of course the two women being maimed by the bears. And while these stories present violence as the inevitable result of avoiding the authoritarian state, the violence wasn't caused by that. It came from gathering too many people in one place whose highest value was taking, not giving.

In their Libertarian utopia, you can buy as many guns as you want, and just ignore the fact that the bears were there first.

Glynis Hart *is a writer, journalist and editor who has received awards for agriculture, sports and editorial writing. ~~She is personally responsible for slanting the mass media to the left.~~ She lives in New Hampshire.*

Alive in a Dollhouse World

Joshua Calladine-Jones

Strega
by Johanne Lykke Holm
translated by Saskia Vogel
181pp. Lolli Editions 2022

There's something off about *Strega*, like a handful of film-slides from an attic-hidden box, clustered out of context. Through aloof directness, Johanne Lykke Holm withholds something key, giving everything else away. Bleeding through Saskia Vogel's transparent mutation from the Swedish, sparing nothing, there's the inkling of a loss.

Lykke Holm is a melancholic writer: her environments orderly to the point of sinister—her disorder expressive to the point of chaos. Everything has a grim meaning in the cosmos of her world, even if the meaning is its own absence. Strega, the town, within which the Wes-Andersonesque Grand Hotel Olympic becomes an emblem for all that's witchy in the book, and is hexed by multiple European languages. In Italy, the ostensible setting, *strega* translates directly to witch. In Polish *strzyga* is much the same. Lykke Holm, a veteran translator of numerous tongues, was surely aware of the net of duplicities her title casts, a pan-European omen of damned femininity: the hag, the female vampire, the witch.

> In the gleam of the lanterns, we looked like something in a department store window, something shiny in plastic packaging that money could buy. We walked through the empty streets letting our eyes absorb everything.

The girls of the novel are dolls come alive in a dollhouse world, one which clashes and merges with the real world in second-quick flashes of pain. Rafa, the narrator, is accompanied by Alba, her newest and closest friend, and among others, Gaia, Bambi, Cassie, and Lorca. Unease burns off into brilliant decay: the girls, like the Grand Hotel, are no more than simulacra, symbols obsolete of the reign and obsolescence of another era. A spell is cast. Doomed never to be, always to seem. An old world. A world of harsh expectations. And heaven forbid the expectations be their own.

One night, amid a riotous party at the hotel, Cassie goes missing. The disappearance is pursued in ghostly-lit scenes of grand-hotel-gothica, souvenir-esoterika and the feminine-surreal. Lykke Holm paces through these as if past the stained glass Stations of the Cross in a tastefully gaudy chapel filled with the patchwork sunbeams of some mid-European highland. Each gives a hint intractable as the previous, until macguffins and clues are interchangeable, culprit unknown. Strega isn't a detective story. Not unless the crime is the death of all girls ever, in all mysteries unsolved.

> One hears the surface of the water breaking and looks over. A dead schoolgirl emerges from the depths. Her hair flows out around her head in a beautiful way. And after her others follow. One by one they surface, all the world's missing girls, hundreds, thousands. Some in nun's wimples, others in uniform. They stretch their hands to the sky.

The enigma of Strega is unsolvable because it's not a mystery. It's the result of centuries of voices hushed and knuckles white, of accepted and expected violence. A world restricted to the implied, the veiled sob, the cloistered tut. The girls aren't symbols, but totems. They're toys, robbed of their development by a galaxy of traditions oriented on top of them. Their solar-system is the mobile above the cot, perennially condemned to infantile servitude. If the supporting characters can be criticised for being underdeveloped, look around. The world is full of such mysteries. Lykke Holm's novel is a microplanet of sickening beauty. And there are characters on that planet too, that are never allowed to develop at all.

Joshua Calladine-Jones *is a poet and literary critic in-residence at the Prague Writers' Festival. His work has appeared in* 3:AM, The Stinging Fly, Freedom, The Anarchist Library, *and* Minor Literature[s]. *He is the author of* Reconstructions [Rekonstrukce] *2022.*

Up With Workers

Owen Hill

In 2020 US workers had a rare chance to learn how the sausage is made. The employer class took advantage of the pandemic to increase profits through layoffs, schedule juggling, and strategic rehiring. Worker protections were minimal and often shoddy. This touched off the "great resignation", and an organizing groundswell. Anyone who follows the news knows about this phenomenon, but how did this influence a famous "radical" bookstore in Berkeley?

For over 60 years Moe's Books has anchored Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley, offering used and new books in a huge, four-story building. Founder Moe Moskowitz is described at *moesbooks.com* as having "a passion for progressive causes". He was briefly a member of the Young Communist League, and was an avid pacifist, even during the Second World War. Old Berkeleyites remember that Moe sheltered demonstrators on Telegraph Avenue during the sixties. Since his death in 1997 the family has owned the store, with his daughter Doris managing. The business continues to sell itself as a radical bookstore. In 2016 the store closed for a day to protest Donald Trump's inauguration. They have maintained an anarchist section, and, generally, the stock is skewed far left, with a strong emphasis on academic, scholarly books. And yet, soon after the Covid shutdown there was a sea change in management style. Operational decisions became unilateral. Up to that time veteran staff made most of the day-to-day decisions, but following the shutdown staff was informed, with little notice, when and how they were to be laid off. When the store reopened, staff had no input regarding Covid safety protocols. At one point workers refused to open the doors until certain policies were changed. An uneasy compromise was reached, but two employees were fired without cause (one was quickly reinstated without explanation), and others were subjected to frequent insults and microaggressions: workers were told that they "don't know how to check bags", even though previous workers had used the same procedure, were ordered to pick pieces of paper off of the floor, though a manager was standing closer to the paper, were told that they weren't properly trained, though they weren't given any training by management, were told to "stop standing around" even though they were working on a project. Supervision began to resemble a hazing for certain employees. In the wake of the pandemic, Moe's "progressive" policies were shelved. It became clear that the Moe's Books sausage factory was putting out the same tainted capitalist product that was produced elsewhere.

Workers, generally, would rather avoid unionizing. Most would prefer to put in a day's work, come home, forget the job. Some have belonged to unresponsive "business unions". The Moe's staff, especially the veterans (some with over twenty years of seniority) hoped that things could be worked out without joining a union. Workers drafted a "letter of mutual understanding" asking to be part of the decision-making process regarding Covid protocols and staffing. Their requests were ignored, then denied. What followed was a typical anti-worker campaign. Employees who were perceived to be involved in organizing had their hours cut, were sent home without reason, and were threatened with firing. It became obvious that union protection was necessary.

Only about 10 percent of American workers belong to a union. For most, including book workers, representation (let alone democracy) in the workplace is a foreign concept. We were, really, making it up as we went along. An ad hoc organizing committee was formed, although not named as such. Basically, we went union shopping. Although, lately, some bigger unions have shown interest in smaller "accounts", Moe's workers didn't find a lot of interest in an independent bookstore that employs less than twenty workers. A coworker with a connection to the Wobblies suggested contacting the IWW. Although the radical history of the IWW is probably well known, it is not merely a legacy union. They continue to be an active, worldwide organization. The Bay Area IWW represents, among others, small retail stores, and is known for working with smaller businesses. We were impressed with our first zoom meeting. This is a workers union, democratic, without a set template that would dictate how we wrote our contract. There were a few set policies (they will not sign off on a no strike clause), but mostly they listened to our needs and worked with us.

The preamble to the IWW constitution begins, "The working class and the employing class have nothing in common." There may be exceptions, but Moe's, despite pretensions, isn't one. The bosses used typical union busting tactics. Hours were cut, anti-union speeches were made on the shop floor, schedules were juggled without notice. Throughout the gray area, when union recognition hadn't been decided, the company made things difficult for the staff. But recognition was won relatively quickly when one hundred percent of the staff signed on with the IWW. By recognizing the union, the company avoided the public embarrassment of losing an election. Although we were recognized, and the company used that recognition to present themselves as good will negotiators, this was far from the truth. A series of microaggressions and outright harassment followed and still continues. When a new employee was subject to anti-union intimidation, then fired, the union filed an Unfair Labor Practices complaint with the NLRB, and won that suit, and a worker was awarded a cash settlement.

Workers took part in sixteen negotiating meetings before there was an agreement in November 2021. Although we studied other contracts, we had complete freedom to write proposals and negotiate for ourselves, with direction from the IWW. The new contract called for a $20 per hour starting wage, 3% cost of living raises each year, added holidays, partial payment of healthcare premiums, and full payment of dental insurance premiums. The agreement put an end to at-will employment. No more firings based on whim and favoritism.

At ratification, Moe's management sent out a press release that, on first look, seemed strongly pro-union. They called on other retailers to voluntarily recognize worker's efforts to unionize, and characterized the negotiations as "good faith".

Perhaps this was meant as satire? Or as a nod to Moe Moscowitz's lovably perverse sense of humor? In real terms, the current history of disrespect and intimidation continues. Union stewards are subject to ridiculous "performance reviews", management can be surly and insulting, workers' pronouns are disrespected. New employees are scheduled for less than thirty hours a week to avoid paying full time benefits. The level of not getting it is dismaying. Organizing is, as always, a work in process. "The working class and the employing class…"

*Poet/crime novelist **Owen Hill** is an IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) delegate. He was a buyer at Moe's Books in Berkeley for thirty-five years.*

Photocollage (studio wall, Toronto/interior, Paris) by Scott Treleaven. Torn 35mm negative prints 2021

Non-Prophet

Carrie Laben

In the river of words written for and about Mike Davis since his death on October 25, 2022, one notion that bobs up repeatedly is that of his supposed fatalism, a diffuse and indirect accusation. "The poet laureate of pessimism" according to the LA Times obit, quoting an unnamed source. "A prophet of doom" in The Nation, again uncited.

The Nation piece also mentions that he hated the title. It's not hard to see why. Davis's work was prophetic time and again, yes—his predictions about the dire human and environmental costs of urbanization under capitalism prefigured everything from the LA anti-police uprising of 1992 to the global pandemic that began in 2020—but he did not foresee doom, not as such; he foresaw change, and believed that change was not just possible, but inevitable. His prophecy was that if we didn't change the world to check the power of capital and empire, the world itself would change in ways that would create great suffering and death, first for the poor and the marginalized, eventually for all humankind. In this he was completely correct.

He did us a second service, beyond the work itself, by making it obvious how the powers that be would react to our attempts at necessary change. His essay "The Case for Letting Malibu Burn"—a chapter in *Ecology of Fear*, now freely available online at Longreads—has a title that contains a straightforward policy proposal. Malibu should burn. The resources spent to imperfectly protect an incredibly wealthy and privileged community from a natural process of renewal could instead be devoted to defending the inhabitants of poorer neighborhoods from structure fires caused by landlord neglect and shoddy infrastructure. The residents of Malibu reacted with such outrage that more than two decades later, when the Woolsey fire scorched the neighborhood once again, the interviewers who called on Davis had a ready-made hook: the prophet who had been without honor in his own land (for though Malibu might not have been Davis's home, the broader community of Los Angeles County certainly was).

In *Late Victorian Holocausts*, Davis showed us the reverse scenario. Malibu's burning was a natural event treated as a preventable anomaly; the famines that took place between 1876 and 1902 across multiple continents, killing tens of millions of people, have been treated as natural events arising from disturbed weather and 'overpopulation' when in fact they were in large part due to deliberate, and thus entirely preventable, policy decisions. The same was true of *The Monster at Our Door*, a slender 2005 book in which he made the case that global industrialized food systems and the effects of profound inequality on healthcare and sanitation would inevitably lead to a viral pandemic. He got to look both forward and back on that one; the book was updated and rereleased as *The Monster Enters* in February 2022 to reflect the emergence of Covid-19 (and was reviewed in these pages).

In short, Mike Davis was critical to leftist thought because he showed, in language that reached beyond the academic, how the supposedly rational, reasonable, and adult presumptions of the world's colonizers and capitalists were in fact childish fantasies that could lead to disaster—not grim truths that must do so. He rejected the title of prophet because he observed and reported what was to him simple cause and effect. No crystal ball required.

68 Shard

CAConrad

a shotgun above every
door where I grew up
I did not mean to
get her ashes
on my shoes
I will wait
to walk in
the rain
refusing
to exert the
stress of time
everyone envied
everyone's shotgun
behind their backs
our favorite game
when I was a baby
was to throw me
off the roof
then run
downstairs
to catch me
oh how we
laughed

CAConrad *has worked with the ancient technologies of poetry and ritual since 1975. They are the author of* AMANDA PARADISE: Resurrect Extinct Vibration *(Wave Books, 2021), as well as 9 other books of poetry.*