

T A B

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THE CENTER FOR POETRY AT CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY

T A B U L A
p o e t i c a

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Design Statement

The annual, distinctive print issue of *Tab: The Journal of Poetry & Poetics* engages the reader with poetry as a material object and asks the reader to negotiate between image and text. The design does not assume a traditional role of quietly framing content; instead, design actively shapes the reading experience and continues to experiment with and explore the intersections between form and content, object and space, and reader and reading.

This 2023 volume is *Tab Journal's* eleventh year, and its print issue draws from traditions of how reading materials are made available to readers. Certainly, text is contained in objects such as books, journals, newspapers—with their scale, weight, and page-turning demands. These objects take on their weight based on cover material, size of page, binding, and ink. A single volume of *The Compact Oxford English Dictionary (2nd Edition)* weighs 14.8 pounds and comes with its own magnifying glass.

And how are such objects themselves contained? The shelves where books and journals are stored are exclusive to people who can reach, grab, unstack, and navigate codex systems, all within the rooms and buildings that shelves—and readers—occupy. Henry Petroski writes in *The Book on the Bookshelf*, “Books and bookshelves are a technological system, each component of which influences how we view the other. Since we interact with books and bookshelves, we too become part of the system. This alters our view of it and its components and influences our very interaction with it.”

In Volume 11, *Tab Journal* questions access in relation to interaction and portability. With digital and audio formats of reading material, what is the place for print? *Tab Journal* strives for flexibility in a physical interaction yet defies the traditional anatomy of a codex—a spine, page signatures, an obvious cover. It is not waiting to be chosen from a shelf. Instead, the print issue

takes its storage with it in a form of a pouch where other things can join in its container, just as a phone or tablet is a portable container for poetry and much more.

To request one or more copies of the print issue, please use the Contact form on the *Tab Journal* website TabJournal.org.

Dustin Brookshire

Dustin Brookshire's (he/him) chapbooks include *Never Picked First For Playtime* and *Love Most Of You Too* from Harbor Editions and *To The One Who Raped Me* from Sibling Rivalry Press. He is the co-editor of *Let Me Say This: A Dolly Parton Poetry Anthology* from Madville Publishing. See more at www.dustinbrookshire.com.



When I Was Straight

—after Maureen Seaton

I stayed home
while my mother
drove to the grocery store.
Two hours alone to prance
in my mother's high heels,
wear her dresses and nightgowns,
and a white t-shirt as a wig.
I'd probe her jewelry box,
slip on a ring or two,
a necklace, and the bracelet
she only wore for special occasions.
Sometimes I even applied
her lipstick with a smile.
I'd sit back straight, legs crossed
directing the household staff
that we didn't have
on the tasks of the day:
vacuum, mop, polish the china,

and press the laundry—
a boss lady before
being a boss lady was a thing.
I'd twirl around the living room
with one hand extended,
an invitation to a man
who wouldn't enter my life
for another thirty-five years.

When I was straight,
my father would say,
*I'd rather one of my sons
blow my brains out
than tell me he is gay.*

On A Flight To Sacramento, Dolly Parton Speaks To Me

Her voice echoes
from a TV appearance
or maybe an interview I read.
We all need to love a little more.
Dolly, I'm trying to love more—
after all, love comes in many forms.

I pass the woman in first class,
tell her: *I love the silver sparkle around
the base of your shoes.* She smiles.
I tell the man across the aisle
that I like the vibrant colors
of his scarf, even though
I don't know why he's wearing it.
He shifts the scarf proudly,
says, *My wife made it.*
I tell the lady sitting beside me
that the strap of her purse
is pretty, the gold print
swirling and unfolding,

how I imagine our souls do.

I survived a narcissistic mother
whose love hurt
as much as it comforted.

Marilyn once told me—
*Poets always blame their mothers
in their poems.* All those years ago,
I didn't falter:
*Yes, but some mothers
earn the blame.* She nodded.

Oh, Mother.

Yes, this is yet another poem
with you sneaking behind its lines,
trying to reside in its heart.

I forgive you.

I do.

But that doesn't mean
I'll stop writing about you—
writing about us.



Jessica
Goodfellow

Jessica Goodfellow's (she/her) books are *Whiteout* from University of Alaska Press, *Mendeleev's Mandala*, and *The Insomniac's Weather Report*. A former writer-in-residence at Denali National Park and Preserve, her poems have appeared in *The Southern Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Scientific American*, *Verse Daily*, *Motionpoems*, and *Best American Poetry*.

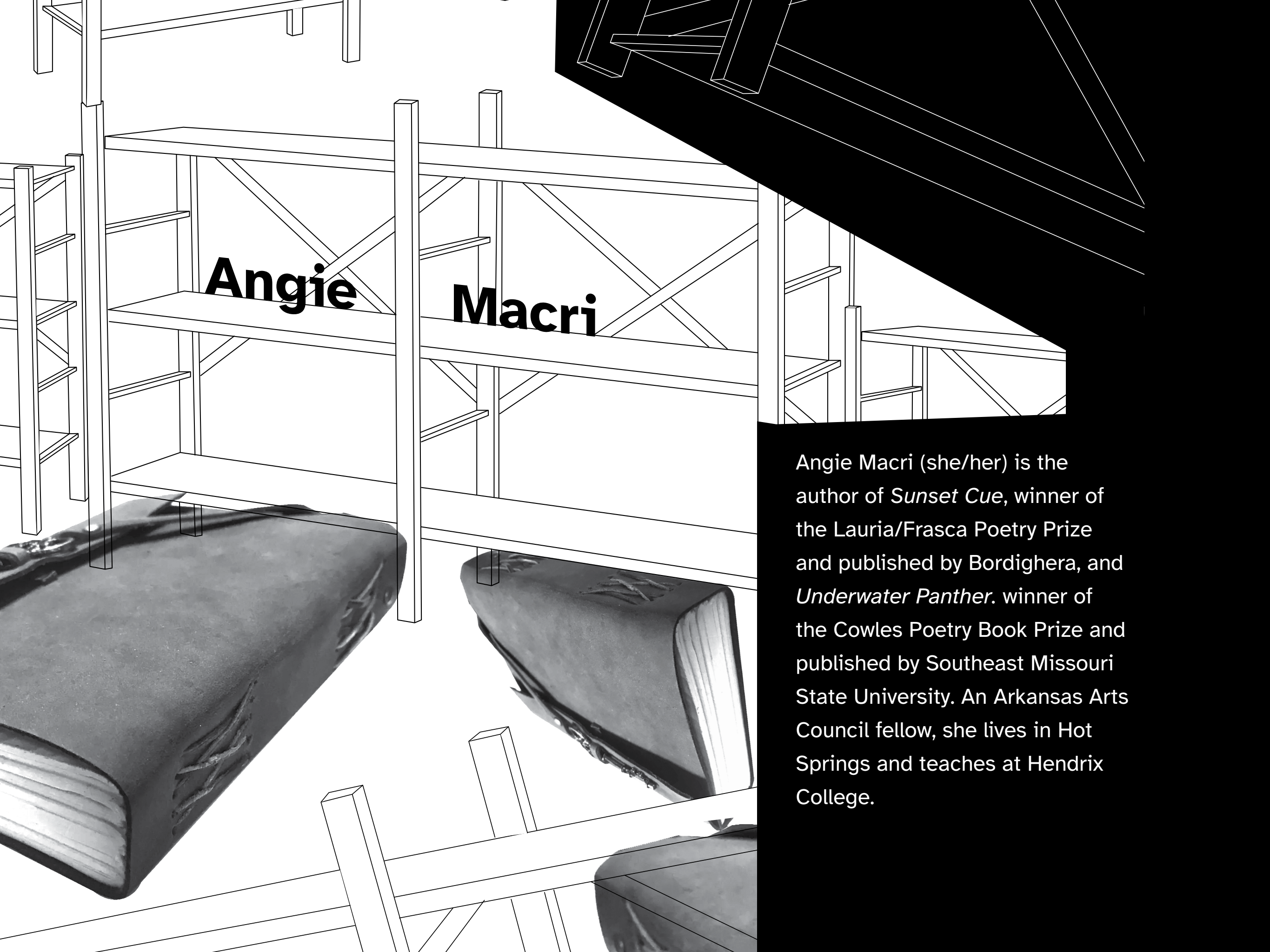
Secular Cubist

This morning I misheard *mascara* as
samsara. Last night it was *I want to drown*
my sorrows in margaritas that I read as
I want to drown my sorrows in marginalia.

Who put the greed in filigreed? Was it
the uneven net of van Gogh's darkly out-
lined almond branches, knotted in white
inflorescence, sieving us from blue sky?

I'm a secular cubist, meeting the diamonds
of customers as I cross the finch line.
I've got elegy energy. Someone didn't say
of me that I'm going nowhere perpendicular,

not unlike van Gogh's writhing cypresses—
deep green flames undulating like belly
dancers, hips waist and arms revolving
in separate but parallel orbits.



Angie Macri

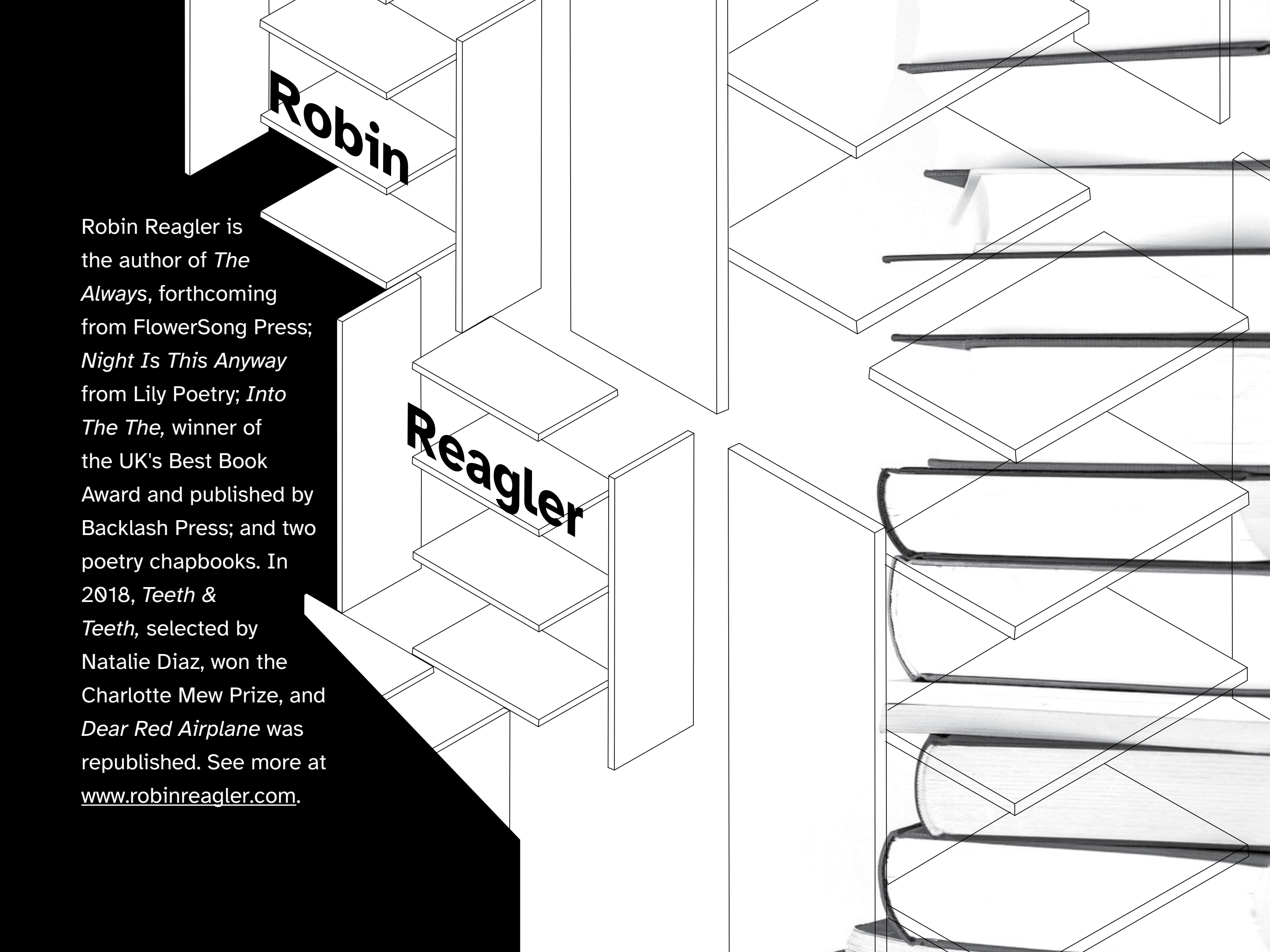
Angie Macri (she/her) is the author of *Sunset Cue*, winner of the Lauria/Frasca Poetry Prize and published by Bordighera, and *Underwater Panther*, winner of the Cowles Poetry Book Prize and published by Southeast Missouri State University. An Arkansas Arts Council fellow, she lives in Hot Springs and teaches at Hendrix College.

In Spring, through Buckeyes Blooming

Each year became fever of one kind or another.
Bees. Drought. Singing on each prairie,
in church pews of course
but also grasses themselves resurrected
with all old names forgotten.
Imagination. It spread like wildfire,
they said, in children
as if any fire was tame or obeyed
a person's commanding.
You know it by a child's eyes glittering,
the hours without sleep. The ceiling
buckled until post oaks cut
through drywall. Let me show you
what it is to burn
said the angels. Even the roads
rose to kiss the horizon.

Outside

They named the prairies but not the forests
and no one wondered why, even after centuries,
even as both disappeared, prairie and forests,
to become bedroom communities for the city.
No one slept well. Under foundations
was prairie drained and farmed, once oceans
of vegetation that swallowed people
and horses (we are tired
of such tall stories), once forests rich with diversity
(and such stories, too). Open to the horizon,
they began to feel a kind of heat they had forgotten
but were soon to remember. The angel's sword
in the story never stopped burning. We had to leave
as we'd been told in the first place.

The image features a black and white illustration of a bookshelf. On the right side, several books are stacked on the shelves. A white wireframe grid is overlaid on the entire scene, creating a geometric, architectural feel. The name 'Robin' is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font on a shelf in the upper left. The name 'Reagler' is written in the same font on a shelf in the middle left. The background is a solid black shape that tapers to the right, suggesting a shadow or a specific lighting effect.

Robin

Robin Reagler is the author of *The Always*, forthcoming from FlowerSong Press; *Night Is This Anyway* from Lily Poetry; *Into The The*, winner of the UK's Best Book Award and published by Backlash Press; and two poetry chapbooks. In 2018, *Teeth & Teeth*, selected by Natalie Diaz, won the Charlotte Mew Prize, and *Dear Red Airplane* was republished. See more at www.robinreagler.com.

Reagler

Romance

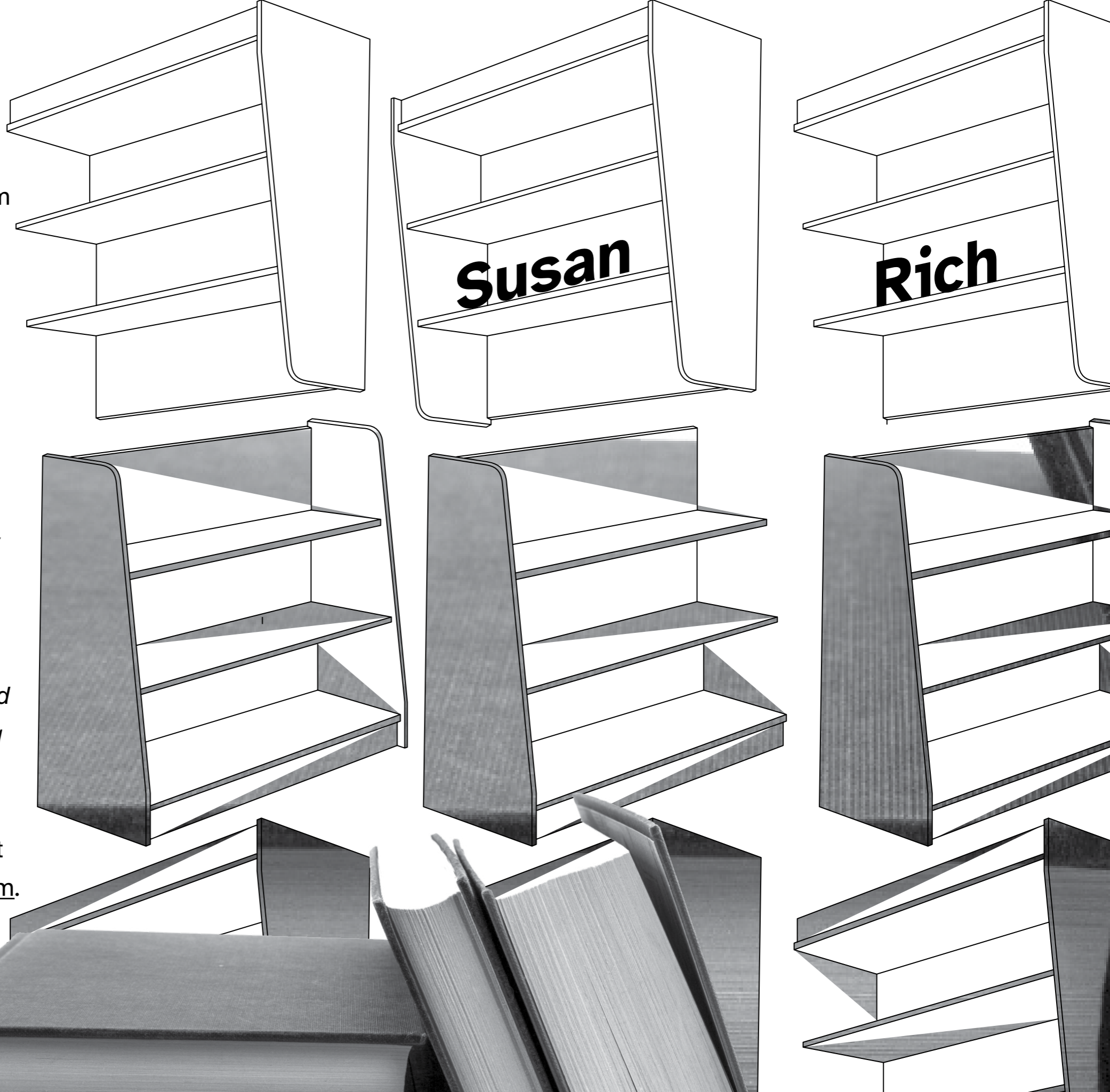
Now is the time of night I miss her most.
I stare at my wrists, feeling the pain pulse,
my life, her death, my life, her death,
and my ankles know the same old crippling.
Inevitably, I am falling. Now is the time,
and I'm this girl-boy-child groping for
a doorway in the dark. I remember feeling
the fabric of the dresses in her closet and moving
toward her too, although she wasn't like that
with me and her breath that smelled of scotch.
She didn't like being touched, I finally realize.
When I was in college, she'd come visit me
in New Orleans, and we'd drink in the bars
where my dad had courted her. We'd walk
through the quarter holding hands, laughing.
The porn stars and drag queens did their thing.
I loved it way too much, I guess. And towards
morning we'd drink black coffee at a café
near the Mississippi, and the caffeine woke
me up like a slap on the cheek, and I knew
myself and pretended it was going to be okay.

A Litmus Test for Faith

I ask for an alphabet,
but nobody hears me.
The singing children
navigate by instinct,
and their song spills
doubt into the atmosphere.
The sky is the problem.
The star, imprisoned
in glee, goes nowhere
for a million years.
Everyone knows that
beauty is temporary.
Sometimes I close my
eyes, pretending I am
blind, like my father
was back when he was.
The world's curtain
brightens inside
the mind's animate eye.
In this way I continue

to surprise myself.
A murmuration
of starlings. A chilly
breeze in June.

Susan Rich (she/her) is the author of seven books, including *Blue Atlas*, forthcoming from Red Hen Press, and *Gallery of Postcards and Maps: New and Selected Poems*. Her poems have garnered awards from the Fulbright Foundation, PEN USA, and the *Times Literary Supplement* (London). She is co-editor of *Demystifying the Manuscript: Essays and Interviews on Creating a Book of Poems* and director of Poets on the Coast. See more at www.poetsusanrich.com.



Questions of Home

And who decides what constitutes a home, a secure foundation?

My home is inclusive: two felines and a fireplace—
the death of my father paying the down payment.

Does every foundation begin with loss?

In Morocco, families prefer polygons, the six-pointed fountain.

Who built your house; can you afford the cost?

Is the children's story of *the three little pigs*
a tale of economic injustice, of not enough?

Do you know what your house is constructed from?

Held together with European tongue and groove,

or corrugated tin with a Red Cross tarpaulin?

In Kutupalong, Camp 5, each dwelling comes
with a flashlight, a radio, and a phone charger.

What luxury in 21st century displacement camps—
but why no window panes, no insulation?

Who owns your place, whose account

pays for estate taxes, a replacement roof?

Who gets crazy rich or perhaps evicted

like your realtor with her coke habit?

When you move, will you fill-in holes with toothpaste?

Do you have a pet? Do you pay pet rent?

And what predated your home: a small piece of land, a stand of willows?

Which indigenous tribe was decimated? Displaced?

Duwamish? Massasoit? Skokomish?

Nez Perce? Coquille? Nisqually? Cahuilla?

Is your home safe? What ghost cats does it hold?

What about the bones? The knob and tube?

Would you share your house with a mother,

a child, displaced from Somalia or rescued in Corfu?

Does your house cost more than your sister's?

Who is your landlord? Do you flirt with them? Do you have to?

How many houses do you own? How many shade gardens?

When you're not at home in your home on the sea

do you let someone else live there? Why not?

What if we un-jamb all the doors from their locks?

-- -. / --- ..- / / -.--- --- ..- .-. / --- ..-



Abu Bakr

Sadiq

Abu Bakr Sadiq [he/him] is a Nigerian poet living in Minna. He is the winner of the 2022 IGNYTE award for Best Speculative Poetry. His work was nominated for the Rhysling Award and appears in *Boston Review*, *The Fiddlehead*, *Mizna*, *Palette Poetry*, *FIYAH*, *Uncanny Magazine*, *Augur Magazine*, *Fantasy Magazine*, and elsewhere. He tweets @bakronline.

Uncensored Footage of the Cyborg in an IDPs Camp

every city my tongue had taught itself to call home
remains lost
in the endless shaft of my memories if i speak
about loss i know exactly which wound i would be waking
while the country crumbles outside my room i sit on a couch
pressing play to watch the cyborg walk through the gates
to watch women sitting on verandas whisper words
into each other's ears while pointing at the metals
on the cyborg's arms the evening sun warming their faces
i watch children play tag untouched by the news
miles away from their fences of many towns
being limbed by firearms of bloodied water
flowing into rivers on the edge of the city
in the footage the cyborg squats over a soldier's boot
rotting at the feet of a watchtower some women
in the camp came from towns where half the houses
have been razed to ashes others cannot speak
of their families without bruising the sheen
of their memories inside a tent a man with a disfigured
face offers the cyborg a journey through the ruins

of his past life where no one knew the dark days
of mourning looking away from the footage i stare
at my mother's photograph separated from its frame

Flight Theory

it's not in my place to question why they left
what more can i say that my silence hasn't
already given air to in their shoes i would
have done the same even the patriots
at some point get tired of waking to
smoke-filled cityscapes i know if i pretend
well enough to be winged i might live
the rest of my life in the sky yunno
somewhere god will not have to stretch
to hear my cry to ask where in my lineage
is bleeding whose body i'm searching for
in rivers which city i'd like to go to pour
my ache away why every departure opens
a hole in my memory i understand why
i am scared of leaving not everyone i've said
goodbye to made it past the lake chad basin
forty percent of the children are caught up
in the middle of refugee crisis and my lord
i am not done being a child and my lord
america is thousands of miles away

and i am still in love with the buzzing
of airplanes every night i go to sleep
thinking about where i can fly to without
the scars in my stories telling everyone
where i came from



Lynne

Schmidt

Lynne Schmidt (she/they) is a grandchild of a Holocaust survivor. They were the winner of the 2021 The Poetry Question Chapbook Contest and the 2020 New Women's Voices Contest. Schmidt is the author of the chapbooks *SexyTime*, *Dead Dog Poems*, and *Gravity*.

At Least This Time, It's Not Ours

After the fight,
I am laying on the couch trying to sleep.
Her footsteps are soft,
the way they become
when you don't want your parents to hear.

She whispers, "Are you awake?"
and I tell her I am.
She says there are sirens down the street,
asks if I want to go look.

We walk in the silence of aftermath,
and come upon a house engulfed in flames.
A family stands, huddled together, sobbing.
I don't know what they were able to salvage
before their great escape.

My sister and I find a spot on the curb,
sit down, side by side,
and watch another family's house
burn to the ground.

Alternate Universe Where Your Death Is More Gentle

In this poem, the money does not run out.

I am not forced to find a job,

not trying to save up money,

not trying to find a new place to live.

I can stay home.

Continue to take naps with you on the couch.

I have time to notice the lump

before it becomes marble-sized.

Before the spider web of cancer builds a nest
and spreads like spilled milk.

In this poem, because we find it early,

we can do the surgery.

The vet is competent and we figure out the right meds
so it's safe to also be on chemo.

In this poem, I do not flinch when they say

the chemo costs nearly \$800 a month.

The cancer does not spread through your chest,

create fluid in your lungs.

In this poem, you still die.

But my roommate does not call to say,

Come quick, something is wrong.

I do not have to leave work early.

I do not scream in my car as I drive home.

You do not bleed into my hands

while my roommate speeds to the clinic.

Instead, you are just tired.

One night, maybe a year or two from now,

I help you into bed.

You curl up beside me.

We fall asleep together.

And in the morning,

you don't wake up.



Mervyn Seiwright

Born in London to a Jamaican family, Mervyn Seiwright (he/him) is a Spalding MFA graduate whose work has appeared in *AGNI* and many other journals across six countries. His book *Stick, Hook, and a Pile of Yarn* is out now from Broken Sleep Books.

We Never Wore Tee-Shirts

I always looked for what wasn't there,
in a picture, aged red tint, burnt blemishes
around the edges, maybe '73 from our frames,
my brother and I held by my uncle.

Our clothes cris, Caribbean men and boys
wore ties back then, even at age three,
my tie-dye blue-and-white shirt, matching tie,
posed on roadside. I was not peering towards
the camera, face frowned, distracted, senses
switched on high sensitivity. At a school
conference, a teacher said my son is this way,
taking in sensory tension around him, tickling
his thoughts. Each time outside, the clouds
play hopscotch with prisms layered, pausing
my steps. I placed the panoramic sounds
like library books on shelves and scan
through lenses to the color map on the wall
behind my lids. Maybe, it is the smells, tints
mixed between rain puddles and snow slush
on the sidewalks, early bakeries floating

cooked steam from stoves, construction
workers refurbishing what scents will not
depart. Away from the city, I hunger for
the ocean, an isolated beach playing choir
betwixt the gulls and waves syncopated
in meditation, even the chilled breeze
heightens the life shifting on my wheatfield
skin hairs, Felixstowe's movements of grey
and bronze stones grinding in short squeals
under shoes until a flint-sparkle squints
my view. I wonder in the picture,
my young eyes piercing, focused,
a birth of wonder seasoned in me today.

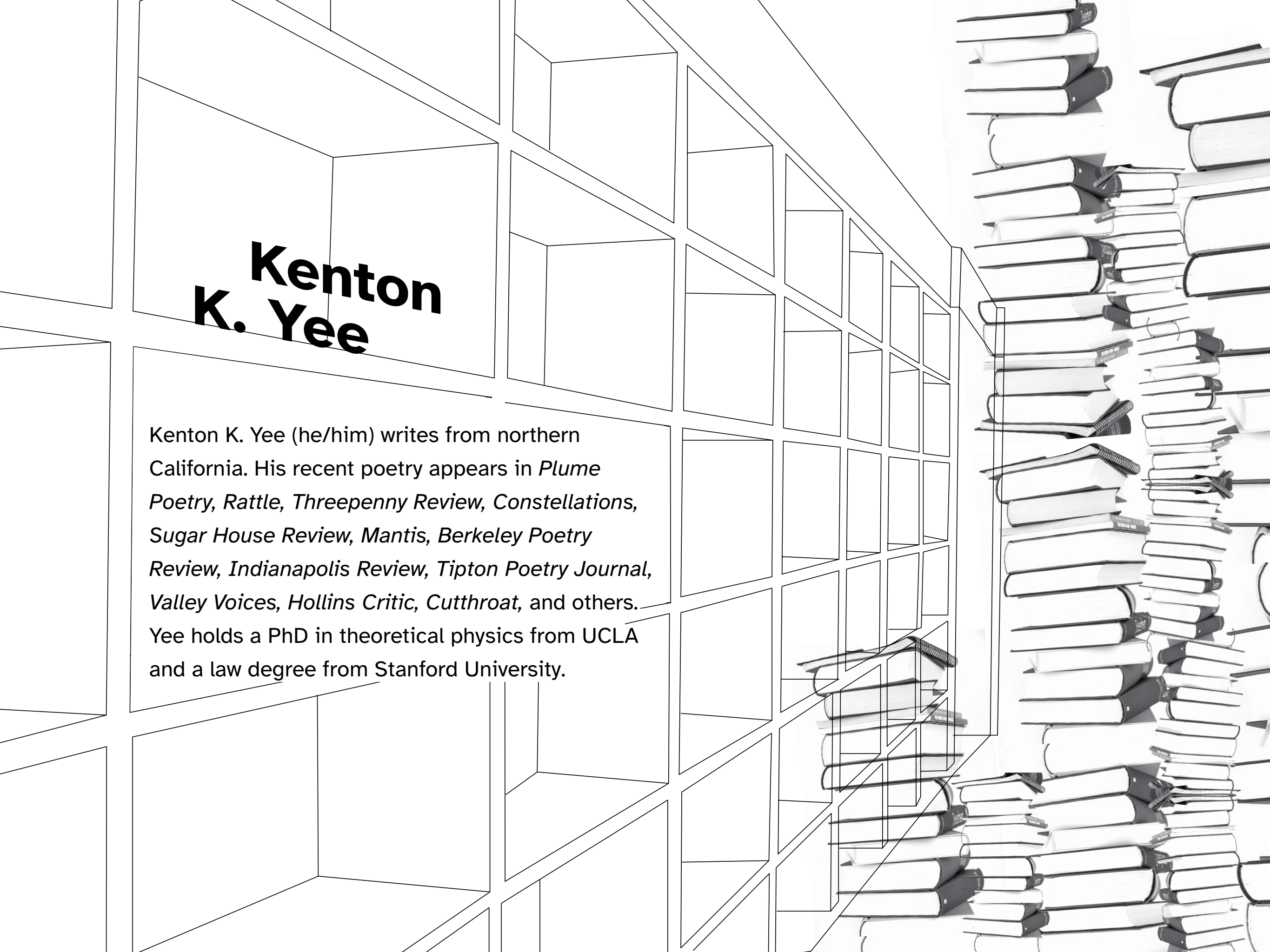
The Path in the River

Our choices are silent
 when footsteps trample
over our shadows,
 me existing betwixt
each flicker in a flame.

I am stubborn. Remembering
the moments in college
 sleeping to forget
how hungry I was, twisting
 my head when help
was offered. Not swimming
 with the current of the river.
Easy to be pinballed, clash
 against the staggered rocks
in the stream's rapids.

My father was stubborn.
He told me, "His course
 will not change," drinking
his John Crow Batty
 clear Jamaican rum bottle,

humming to his Country
Western tunes. There is no
Utopia. A fair is not fair for all.
Fair games as the rubber ball
knocking down weighted milk
bottles game, fair as a fair's fish
for the random marked
rubber-ducky hook game,
fair as life's hire who looks
comfortable, when their skin
matches in the mirror, and books
of struggle are stripped
from a girl, generations
connected to a plantation master,
from feeling shame. Should I
settle for the table in the rear
of the restaurant, not seen
in the window, a mannequin
of inclusion? I tell my son
to follow his dreams. A schoolgirl
calls him clumsy, tells him
he's stupid. I hug him. I am
the rock in the river.

The background of the page is a stylized, black-and-white line drawing of a library. It features a grid of rectangular bookshelves that recede into the distance, creating a sense of depth. On the right side of the image, there is a tall, vertical stack of numerous books, some standing upright and others lying flat, suggesting a vast collection of literature.

Kenton K. Yee

Kenton K. Yee (he/him) writes from northern California. His recent poetry appears in *Plume Poetry*, *Rattle*, *Threepenny Review*, *Constellations*, *Sugar House Review*, *Mantis*, *Berkeley Poetry Review*, *Indianapolis Review*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *Valley Voices*, *Hollins Critic*, *Cutthroat*, and others. Yee holds a PhD in theoretical physics from UCLA and a law degree from Stanford University.

If You Like Math 42% or More, You'll Hate This 93%

We all have to settle sooner or later.

I settled for being a quant 82% / poet 12% / novelist 6%.

If you like the pay, it's okay

to like your job only 39% and coworkers 22%.

But you should like the pay at least 68%

and your boss no less than 3% or the job will stress

you out, like when A.I. speed traps

sprouted all over town after you splurged

on a red Porsche. Pay can be tricky:

you might like the pay 72% your first year,

52% the second, and less than 10% as soon as

you learn Ewan makes 12% more than you do.

How much you like anything fluctuates,

which almost always means shrink.

94% of us need to like a hobby between 51% and 79%.

Under 51%, you might as well play Angry Birds

or become a foodie. Everyone likes eating at least 51%.

Over 79% means you are at 68% risk of diabetes

or heart disease, or paranoia.

I don't care how many '100 under 100' lists you made,

your pizza parlor conspiracy theories are 96% baloney.
Admittedly, circadian rhythm makes our numbers
fluctuate like penny stocks. Or nightmares.
Upon waking, you may feel 1% for Angry Birds,
5% for pizza parlors, and 88% for eggs—scrambled
in sardine-can olive oil with black pepper,
coffee and sourdough toast, 73% charred.
Then as you settle into your cube and hear Chen
boasting about her daughter's imminent Nobel Prize,
you surge to 98% for pizza parlors,
which may be mitigated by forty minutes of Angry Birds.
Level 84! I'm talented! I have value!
Still, if you like it more than 79%, you're risking
overspending / job loss / alimony / regret,
i.e., your red Porsche now sits in an impound lot.
Without the precision of numbers, truth is 96% hot air.
I 200% need a compliment. Don't quibble.

A black and white photograph of a library with white line-art overlays of bookshelves. The text "Roger Camp" is overlaid in white on the left side of the image.

Roger Camp

Roger Camp (he/him) is the author of three photography books including the award-winning *Butterflies in Flight* from Thames & Hudson and *Heat, Charta* from Milano. His work has appeared in numerous journals including the *New England Review*, *Witness*, and *New York Quarterly*.



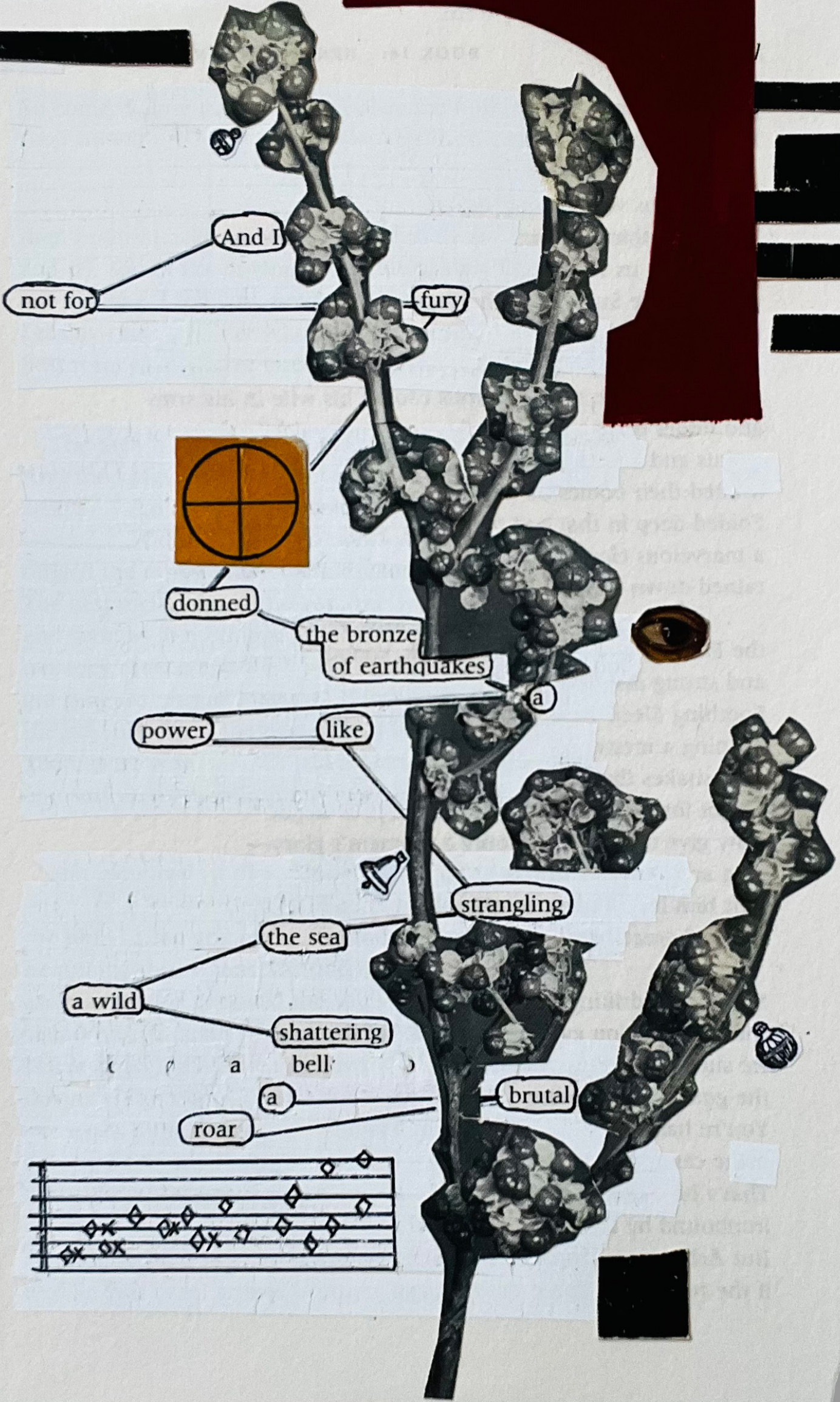
LE PASSÉ
EST PENSÉ,
LE PRÉSENT
EST À VENIR,
L'AVENIR
EST À PENSER.

@LaDactylo



**Ellen
Kombiyil**

Ellen Kombiyil (she/her) is the author of *Histories of the Future Perfect* and the micro chapbook *avalanche tunnel*. Her forthcoming book, *Love as Invasive Species*, will be released by Cornerstone Press in 2024. A BRIO Award recipient from Bronx Council on the Arts in 2022, she teaches at Hunter College.



And I

not for

fury



donned

the bronze of earthquakes

power

like

a



strangling

the sea

a wild

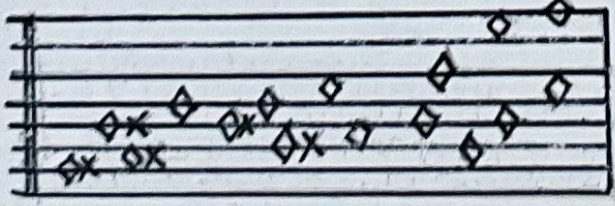
shattering

a bell

a

brutal

roar



[And I Not For Fury]

Book 14, lines 370-401

And I,
not for fury

donned
the bronze

of earthquakes
a power like

strangling
the sea—
a wild
shattering

(a bell)

a brutal
roar

His prayer

quiver slung

at

god

god

a

fly

circling

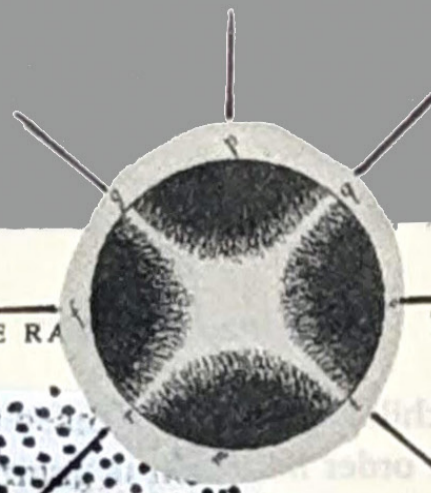
the corpse

holy

one

be

still



[His Prayer a Quiver]

Book 1, lines 43-73

His prayer
a quiver

slung
at god,

god
a fly

circling
the corpse—

O holy
one

be
still