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or by appointment

ENG 317: Advanced Poetry Workshop
Block 4: Nov. 23 – Dec 18, 2015
Van Etten-Lacey House

From: Paterson

Without invention nothing is well spaced,
Unless the mind change, unless
The stars are new measured, according
To their relative positions, the
Line will not change, the necessity
Will not matriculate: unless there is
A new mind there cannot be a new
Line, the old will go on
Repeating itself with recurring
Deadliness: without invention
Nothing lies under the witch-hazel
Bush, the alder does not grow from among
The hummocks margining the all
But spent channel of the old swale,
The small foot-prints
Of the mice under the overhanging
Tufts of the bunch-grass will not
Appear: without invention the line
Will never again take on its ancient
Divisions when the word, a supple word,
Lived in it, crumbled now to chalk.

—*William Carlos Williams*

What does Williams mean by “invention”? What is a line of poetry? And why does Williams suggest they are so important? Why is the old “deadly”? In this course, we will use Williams’s suggestion that poetic invention is tied to invention of the mind and the world as a starting point. We will play and experiment with our work, pushing at its subjects, forms, styles all in search of what Williams seems to mean by invention. We will also use Williams’s notion of the “line” as a centerpoint of our search: what is a poetic line? What is a line of thought? How does a line of poetry relate to the world, to behavior, to morals as Williams suggests it does?

This class will be equally divided between writing and reading. I will ask you to attempt a variety of approaches to your writing; please keep an open mind and be willing to experiment. We will do a good bit of in-class writing; I would like you to keep these

exercises together as a way of generating material and cross-fertilizing ideas. Please bring your notebook to every session.

Good writing inherently involves active reading. We will read a variety of poets, and our conversations will focus on “craft” issues rather than interpretive issues (although the two can not be so easily separated). In other words, we will try to discover how a poem achieves certain effects; how does a poem do what it does?

Required Texts:

The BreakBeat Poets: New American Poetry in the age of Hip-Hop. Kevin Coval, Quaraysh Ali Lansana and Nate Marshall, eds. Haymarket Books, Chicago. 2015.

Darktown Follies. Amaud Jamaul Johnson. Tupelo Press, 2015.

Many readings will also be posted on moodle. I expect you to print these readings before the assigned class and bring them to class. I suggest using a binder to keep these readings together—I will refer back to earlier readings as class goes on, so you should keep them together as a kind of anthology.

A journal to be brought to every class.

Objectives:

The following goals support the Educational Priorities and Outcomes of Cornell College with emphases on knowledge, communication, and intercultural literacy:

- You will be evaluated on your understanding of poetic techniques and your ability to evaluate and critique poetic discourse in both written and oral form.
- You will gain proficiency in the generation and revision of poetic forms.
- You will develop an understanding of relationships between poetic forms and cultural experiences and expressions.
- You will articulate, in both written and oral form, your own aesthetic goals and beliefs.
- By the end of this class you will have strengthened your reading and writing abilities as well as critical faculties which I hope will extend far beyond reading poetry.

Assignments:

- **Individual Works:** You will be turning in a new poem every weekday. Some of these poems will be a response to a particular exercise, but most of them will be whatever you are working on. If I haven't specified any particular exercise, turn in whatever new poem you want. The deadline each day will be 12 PM. Only 1 poem per day will be counted. If you miss this 12 PM deadline, whatever poem you turn in will be for the next day. In other words, you can't catch up with missed poems. I will not respond to each of these daily writings. Roughly once a week, you will re-submit one of the daily writings (I say resubmit because you ideally will have revised after

you originally submitted it) for which you would like feedback.

Every three or four days, you will be turning in one of these poems for group critique. What you submit for critique will be completely your choice. I only ask that a) it is work written this block and b) it is work that is still malleable: don't include work that you feel is absolutely finished because the discussion will likely not be as productive.

Daily poems will be submitted to me through moodle. Label documents with "LasnameDate.doc" using the date of the due date (not when you wrote it)

- **Participation:** Much of this class will be in a workshop format. As such, your participation is essential for your own and your peers' development. I will expect you to do any assigned reading and come to class prepared to discuss the reading. I will also expect you to be ready to engage with and discuss your peers' work.
- **Workshop Discussion:** When we meet in small groups, each of you will be assigned a peer's poem for which you are responsible to start discussion. You should give us your reaction to the poem—what you think it's trying to do, what its strengths are, what you think the writer might experiment with as he or she revises the poem. You are not responsible for leading the following conversation, but you should pose some ideas and questions for us to think about as we open the discussion up to the group. You will end up being responsible for 3 or 4 discussions over the course of the block.
- **Class Discussion/Reading:** Early in the block, you will be assigned a group of poems by a particular contemporary poet. You will turn in a roughly four page essay discussing the poet's style or technique. You will then use this paper as preparation to discuss what you see as the salient craft issues of the work with your peers. Discussions will be about 15-20 minutes.
- **Publication Presentation:** Each of you will research venues for publication and find one place that seems appropriate for *your* work. You will then find out the guidelines, restrictions, aesthetics etc. of the journal and present that material to the class. By the end of the class, then, we will all know 18 new places that we could possibly send our work if we're so inclined.
- **Reading:** On the last Thursday of the block, you will all read/perform your work to the group. Readings will be about 10 minutes and should present the work you feel most strongly about from the block. We will talk about different approaches to performance during the block to help you prepare for this.
- **Johnson Review:** On Dec. 10, Amaud Jamaul Johnson will be reading in the Van Etten-Lacey House, 7 PM. Unless you discuss a conflict with this time beforehand with me, I expect you to attend. Afterward, you will be writing a short review (about 3 pages) of his work and his presentation. If you are unable to attend, I will work out a separate assignment for you.

- **Portfolio:** At the end of the block, you will submit a portfolio of your work. The portfolio will contain three items: 1) a submission of your work to me as if I were an editor of a journal you wanted to be published in (we will discuss this process, but this will include up to 5 pages of poetry, a cover letter, an artist statement, and a Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope); 2) a sample of experimentation. I will want to see at least four **very different** versions of a single poem you have worked on during the block along with a brief commentary about these revisions. This component is about experimentation, not necessarily about your best work; choose a poem that highlights your willingness to push your work in new directions; 3) a 4 page commentary on the block, highlighting strengths and weaknesses, and where you see your work going from here. What successful strategies have you discovered that will keep you writing? Portfolios will be **due at noon on the last day of class. Late portfolios will not be accepted.**

Grading:

Workshop Discussion: 15%
 Class Discussion and Craft Paper: 20%
 Daily Poems: 20%
 Johnson Review: 10%
 Reading/Performance: 5%
 Portfolio: 30%

Please be aware that this is a *rubric* and not a strict guideline—I reserve the right to respond to your overall work on an individual basis (which most likely works in individuals' favor). Participation is not graded per se—it is simply expected. But particularly strong participation (which does *not* necessarily refer to quantity of comments, but rather to quality of engagement) or lacking participation can affect the final grade.

There are no “excused” absences—everyone has an absence to use however they deem appropriate. After that, absences (or excessive lateness) will affect the final grade.

Schedule:

We will meet daily from 9:00 – 11:00 and 12:30-3, but not everyone will attend each session. Each of you will be assigned to a smaller workshop group; most of the morning sessions will be with one small group rather than the full class. You will need to read the schedule carefully to follow what days you will be meeting in the morning. Please note that the class schedule is subject to change. If you must miss class, you are responsible for checking with me and/or your classmates to see what you missed. Because the schedule will vary day to day, I will give you a more detailed schedule weekly—please pay attention to each day's schedule!

Communication:

I will frequently send updates, thoughts about a day's discussion, reminders, etc. through e-

mail. You will need to check your e-mail *at least* once a day; twice is preferable. Similarly, e-mail is the best way to get in touch with me. You can stop by to talk at any time, but I respond to e-mails pretty quickly and can easily find a time to meet.

Accommodations:

Students who need accommodations for learning disabilities must provide documentation from a professional qualified to diagnose learning disabilities. For more information see <http://cornellcollege.edu/disabilities/documentation/index.shtml>

Students requesting services may schedule a meeting with the disabilities services coordinator as early as possible to discuss their needs and develop an individualized accommodation plan. If you have any special needs, please notify me within the first three days of the term.

WORKSHOP GROUPS:**Group 1:**

Stephanie
Elizabeth
TJ
Nadia
Nina
Sam

Group 2:

Hank
Lily
Jess
America
Robin
Faith

Group 3:

Jacob
Eliza
Maria
Clare
Katie
Kaylin