



# THE POETRY PROJECT

December 2018/January 2019

Issue #257

# The Poetry Project

## December 2018/January 2019 Issue #257

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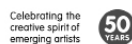
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**Cover image:** courtesy of Stacy Szymaszek

# DISPATCH FROM MISSOULA: Stacy Szymaszek

Charles told me to write a poem today. It's 12:45pm and so far the only honorable things I've done are write back to Charles, eat breakfast, and take a long bath. I put on clean clothes and laced up my boots. All of my other actions were intended to keep me from writing a poem. Look at how much I love Charles, to confront the notion that I have nothing more to say in the manner of the poem.

I read recently (in a library book "due a year from today") that Adam and Eve only spent three hours in paradise. And that Adam lived 930 years and was 90 feet tall. Olson (another Charles) said there is no limit to what you can know. I think I can no longer know anything. How about I just be kind to animals. The bible rarely mentions the deaths of women, except for Jezebel, who was defenestrated and eaten by stray dogs. You can look up "How bad was Jezebel?" for the history (history, what Olson calls the function of any one of us). If Adam lived to be 930 I have to entertain the belief that he was never born.

I remember a photograph of Olson at Black Mountain with a poncho on but when I look for it I find one of him writing shirtless with a bottle of wine covered in woven straw on his desk, a blanket over his left shoulder, and another of him wearing a suit with a blanket over same shoulder. Did I invent his poncho as an authoritative vestment? "WOT 'APPENED?" To get at the density/not so easy. The man who declares he will not solve any problems or answer any questions is nearly extinct, as is the mountaineer whose intent is across and not up. I misread a sign with a mountain's name as WOOL WIND. A solution and my problem presented hand in hand, hateful of wind blowing against my body. I'd like to don a wool poncho to exemplify my vocation in its westward iteration. I wander in wool, tho unsure.

A nun could strike a bell for nocturne and I'd be there. I'd run up the fire path and leave the phone behind, I want to say "off the hook." What of life before 1850,

pre-telegraph, don't tell me human consciousness wasn't different then, and before then... and lost to us. The pink and yellow Petite Gerberas I presented Charles with when she was here one week ago still have their life force. When I want to get a message to her I remember those to whom smuggling was second nature, and what patience. Her boots are by the door for next month's walk.

A student from the east coast introduced himself to me the other day in my office. I felt the need to tell him I was just borrowing it from a poet on sabbatical. These are definitely not my books. I miss my books. I printed my name in blue marker on an index card and taped it to the door. We talked about being surrounded by mountains for the first time. He said he felt embraced by them. Being from the Midwest I don't like to feel surrounded, not even by the skyscrapers of the city I most love, but once I'm up in the range I realize that I am surrounded by nothing. When I think I'm alone, usually it's because I'm not paying attention:

tops of ears visible in the wheat

a golden stance in new air.

14 September 2018

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**Stacy Szymaszek** is the author of *Journal of Ugly Sites & Other Journals*, *hart island*, *Emptied of All Ships*, *Hyperglossia*, and many chapbooks. She has worked at Woodland Pattern Book Center in Milwaukee, WI and was the Director of The Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church in New York City from 2007 to 2018.



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