

POETICS



Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.



FREEDOM OF THE PRINTING PRESS

On this, our 250th Anniversary, we reflect on the progress we've made as a nation. The American experiment has always been steeped in a struggle, a push and pull, of the body politic between state and culture. As we, the people, evolve our culture we inevitably demand that our state evolve along with us, however these two estates move at very different speeds, and rightly so. Cultural change is not a linear forward march but a slowly rising pendulum that swings too far this way and then back too far the other, in the aggregate we find a compromised middle that is an arrangement better than the former but nevertheless compromised. When the pendulum swings in the direction of our personal biases we are pleased, when it swings violently back the other direction we are dismayed. Even so, the trajectory of our great nation is ever improving, decade by decade, in a slow but unrelenting grind. Our greatness is defined by our determination to continue to press forward and to continue to fight and never to settle. In our hearts, like Scarlett O'Hara, *"I can't think about that now. If I do, I'll go crazy. I'll think about that tomorrow. After all, tomorrow is another day."*

The righteous struggle is framed in our Declaration, Constitution, and most especially guaranteed by the First Amendment. 'Freedom of the press' is oft misinterpreted as 'Freedom of Journalism', which is a consequence of that freedom but not its root. Our framers carefully articulated our right to express ourselves in both verbal and written form, and the power of Gutenberg's press and movable type as a means to disseminate that expression.

On our cover we pay homage to the great Lawrence Ferlinghetti (publisher, City Lights Books) and Allen Ginsberg (beat poet, *Howl*), as a reminder of what happens when we ban books and infringe upon our freedom of the press. Although the cultural pendulum may please some and outrage others through that act of banning an inadvertent spotlight is shone upon its object saying "Look at this, this is bad" and then we, as a people, examine, debate, and ultimately evolve. Yesterday's banned book is today's classic. And rightly so.

Happy Birthday America.

Ben & Tamarah

Ben & Tamarah Rockwood
Bainbridge Island Press
July 4th, 2026

COYOTE ENVY

Collier Brown

There are worse problems
to have than this. I'll try
to explain: a child grows up
in a typical southern town,
family (good), woods and river,
lots of dead hymns and tithes,
friends, a Christmas dinner.

And yet, no sense of home
or place, no stories of
ancestral fires or the sister
rain or brother in the wild boar.
No trickster at the journey's
edge with a riddle and a lore.
Nothing on the other side.

Coyote, if you're listening,
I am not of any tribe,
I belong to no one's tale,
there is no blessing I believe,
there is no spirit I can hear.

But I've loved the dirt for all
my days, have planted flowers
ten million ways. I'd give you one,
if you'd come near.

POETICS



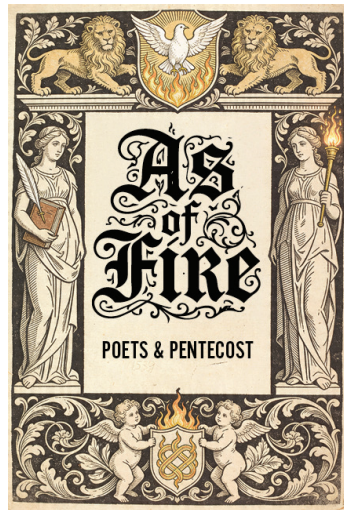
Coyote

Featured in *POETICS: Coyote* (Bainbridge Island Press, 2023).

BONEKINDLED

Amit Majmudar

Rub some gravel between your palms. Sapphires!
You, too, will hold no God above fire
when the tinnitus gives way to a roar
and your hands start typing, gloved in fire.
You can't shape the tongues that speak you.
You might as well try to shove fire
away from its carrion wood.
Only one law governs fire,
the same law that ungrammars joy.
A forest that can't get enough fire
springs tongues where its leaves used to be.
Bodies are mostly water, but minds? Starstuff, fire,
and speech, as poets learn when they lose theirs,
straw men stubbornly in love with fire.



Featured in *As of Fire* (Bainbridge Island Press, 2026).

LESSON

Meredith Bergmann

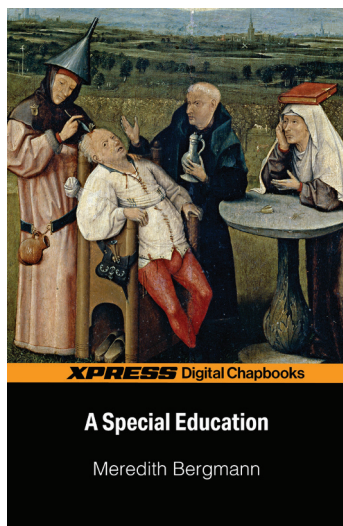
*with Soma Mukhopadhyay,
who has taught hundreds of autistic children
to communicate by pointing to letters
July, 2008*

We learn that love and worry cannot cure.
There must be some dispassionate insistence,
some standard fixed
some distance
from which to see the slightest hint of turning.

A tiny woman in a tiny room,
she leads you, wailing, yet not quite rebelling,
to break your spell
by spelling.
She knows her love must be the love of learning.

You learn your self a letter at a time.
And all your teachers wish they'd been the one
and wonder what
she's done
that they have not, for all their love and yearning.

How can your breakthrough be that swift and sure?
What did you understand? What do you know?
We are left stunned
and slow
to learn to see beyond her first discerning.



Featured in XPRESS Chapbook: *A Special Education* (Bainbridge Island Press, 2025).

I.

Tamarah Rockwood

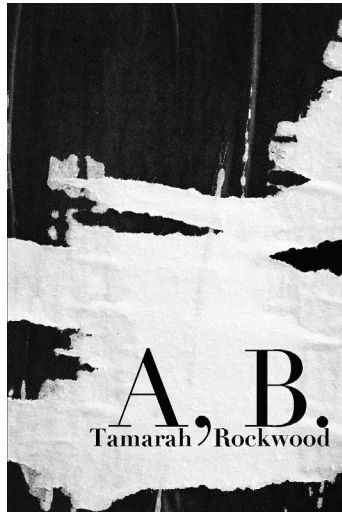
Speak, girl.
Speak with your tongue.
With these voices you have heard,
Tasted, eaten, spit out, berated,
Joined, feared, admonished,
Grasped and understood-

The voices in the forest
which have raised you
from worm to woman;

Speak, of all
That you have seen
In the keyholes of the canopy:
Of the woodpecker's grit,
Of the coyote's howl,
Of the wasp's territorial nest in the stump,
And of the time when they followed you home and stung you
A thousand times, and how
You killed them all
In the bathroom,

And then

Stood outside on planks of gopherwood,
And stared the forest in its face,
And continued to breathe.
Speak this.



**Featured in A. B. (Bainbridge Island Press, 2023).
Notable mention, Oregon Poetry Association, 2018.**

SAY IT

Jameson Faber

He said it. Not me. Love
you, buddy.
I wasn't going to. Not this
time at least. I always have to limber
up before telling my dad I love
him at the end of a phone call.
Those last few minutes spent stretching.
Walking down the frozen driveway
to the word and starting it up. Leaving it running.
Letting it warm up for a bit
before I pull out of there.

But I wasn't doing that this time. Didn't
even consider it. I don't know why,
I truly don't,
but I only say it to him a few times a year. And
him to me even less. So my engine
was cold when he said it.
Right at the very end.
Love you, buddy.

For the rest of the weekend, those words
hung around. Some kind of unseen fuel
burning at the edges of my life. Igniting
me. Clean. Reusable.

I promised myself at the end
of that weekend that I'd limber up
more. Stretch out. Start that car up
more often.
Tell him I love him. That
I would say it.

That I would
say it.
Say it.
Just fucking say it before
it can't be heard.



Featured XPRESS Chapbook: *Ikejime* (Bainbridge Island Press, 2026).

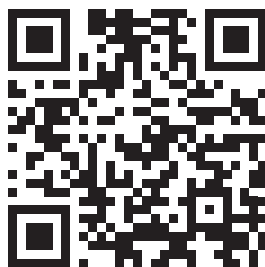
**“I MAY NOT AGREE WITH WHAT YOU SAY,
BUT I WILL DEFEND TO THE DEATH
YOUR RIGHT TO SAY IT.”**

This sentiment has been broadly adopted by Americans and is attributed to Voltaire but is in fact a misquoting of a line written by Elizabeth Beatrice Hall (under the pen name S. G. Tallentyre) in her book *The Friends of Voltaire* (1906).



POETICS: The Zine (Vol. 6.26)

<https://bainbridgeisland.press>



POETRY LIVES HERE
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Bainbridge Island, WA