

see to see—

"You Can Do Anything"

A Review of the 2016 American
Electoral Zeitgeist, Plus a Poetry
Kit for Coping

Colin Smith

1. "Shut up, America!" (Andrews 198)
Which for some folks constitutes foreplay,
the theatricalized porking, and the smoking
—of *anything*—after.

2. So it's President The Donald. Stunned
but not surprised might be our prevalent
feeling. After the mean idiocies of the
Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush
regimes, we should have been braced for
any colour of retrograde. Somehow, this
outcome feels worse. As though the limits
of our political incredulity have been
scooped upside down by the ankles then
dropped Ka-Kronch on the head.

Compression of all six cervical discs.
Permanent vertigo.

3. "el em en (uh)oh. deuces trump by salute
and by overtrouncing. wham" (Markotić 72).

4. How many *others* will we be trained
to hate?

Some fearful social obligation.

5. "Waves of rage police the objects."
(Perelman 67) "Go fuck yourself, therefore
I am. / Every line, entitlement?" (Cabri 115)

6. "the mock in democracy / the pain in
campaign" (Gilbert 61).

Zero vs. zero.

"send me no more / candidates dreaming
/ but darlings / come a little closer / that I
may kick you / a little harder" (Collis 83).

7. “Buyer’s remorse”—but they’re talking about votes!

They speak at us like this.

8. “Money tends to inherit itself.” (Davies 58) Which I read as synonymous with money *re-electing* itself.

9. If it becomes poetry’s business to excoriate the obvious because “no one else” is doing so.

10. Increased impoverishment of the middle classes on down. Increased gerrymandering that prohibits poorfolk and people of colour from voting, or dilutes their votes’ power. Increased financial inequality between the rich and everyone else (how much is it possible for a CEO to make?). Massive transfer of \$\$\$ from social programs into military and security spending.

Prelude to a permanent rebellion, or a failed state.

11. The Donald’s cabinet of caustic reactionaries makes the never-elected Bush–Cheney administration seem like a liberal feel-good project.

Republicans control—although delicately—both houses of Congress.

They’ll try to ram through whatever heinousness they want.

Stack the Supreme Court with their holy dinosaurs.

Fear *should* equal loathing.

12. Fantasia: Donald John Trump swaggers out onto the sidewalk before 725 Fifth Avenue. He’s waving a revolver around. Before he can plug someone, we—(we’ve liberated a police helicopter, we taped the cops to each other and to the heliport, a grander courtesy than what they usually dish out, especially to black people)—drop a skid of books on him.

The skid contains copies of only one title.

Citizen: An American Lyric by Claudia Rankine.

13. Testosterone 441.6.

14. Should we feel consoled that more eligible citizens didn’t vote than cast approval for either The Hillary or The Donald?

Tallies from the Associated Press and the *New York Times* rest as follows: Clinton 65,844,610; Trump 62,979,636; Didn’t Vote 92,671,979 (Levine).

(Voter *suppression* lays outside these numbers. Votes flipped electronically are of

course included, because we don't care to acknowledge such cheating shenanigans, *say what?*)

Why not read this as a sign of boycott rather than apathy?

15. Sadly, one is still voting for capitalism.

16. It would be *funnier* if they weren't making harm.

17. In the unlikely event that President Permanent Conflict of Interest is frogmarched out of his Oval Office occupancy, here are two words to consider: Mike Pence.

Who's a blandly smooth operator of the social-conservative evangelical-Christian type. Who's spearheaded some harsh anti-abortion and antigay legislation. Who's held public office since 2000 and knows how to get things done.

What's more dangerous, an incoherent empire or one run tidily?

18. By the time you read this: President Drumpf is dead, his rosuvastatin somehow stops working and his ancient heart absorbs one steak slathered in ketchup too many; President Drumpf is impeached, hauled out of the empirical realm of doing damage; you won't get to read this because you'll be dead—some benighted wide-scale nuclear

belligerence has occurred; World Citizen Bobbi McBoatface has taken charge of all realpolitik on Planet Earth; therefore Cool, a balanced steward, we can relax.

19. "And today 'polls indicating / that 63% of the public / supported the invasion' / of somewhere" (Derksen 27).

A horrifying number of *somewheres* will need to batten or gird.

Now might be a good time to cry.

Ixnay Rusadesca!

20. "hey // let's make a sandwich // a hero sandwich /// it goes // rescuer / victim / victimizer" (Eng 32).

21. On days when I can't bear contemplating any empire or governance, I wander off-trail, only to fall into a deep trench of irony. "I put lots of really nice and smart people / who are religious in my pipe and smoke it." (Holbrook 40) "Why must I sing this // Non-stick brand of policy?" (Stewart 20)

22. I'm heartened by the width, depth, and frequency of resistance shown this administration right from Inauguration Day. Both in the United States and beyond. Out in the streets and occupying public spaces every week. It's included a lot of people who've never rallied about

anything. It's included judges who would be castigated as "activist" for their actions. It's included a few theoretically appalled and nakedly embarrassed Republican honchos, although it's obvious they're trying to preserve their political butts.

Still, much more is necessary.

No number of eggs thrown at Trump International hotels and no amount of Antibalas music blasted at the White House will be enough.

23. Green power vs. a windowless corporatism.

24. "If you know what the poem's job is you should ask who the poet's boss is" (Mancini 12).

25. We can do anything. Let's grab neoliberal capitalist patriarchy by its rancid balls and arsehole, clean and jerk, spin heavily then fling it into the exosphere, where it shall perish.

26. Sunday 29 January 2017, 8 p.m. The foul noise made by an assassin I refuse to name as he coldly opened fire inside the Centre Culturel Islamique de Québec.

Six people slain on the spot; nineteen wounded (two critically).

Killer's actions can only credit his own sentence, but his sentence, by numerous accounts, took inspiration from Drumpf and Marine Le Pen.

While at prayer, all these men — Mamadou Tanou Barry, Abdelkrim Hassane, Khaled Belkacemi, Aboubaker Thabti, Azzedine Soufiane, and Ibrahima Barry — were shot in the back (Valiante A1, A3).

A pig's head run up a flagpole.

Bullets foreclose on anything resembling conversation.

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Reading *Reading Sveva* A Review of Daphne Marlatt's *Reading Sveva*

Julie Joosten

In *Reading Sveva*, Daphne Marlatt engages with the work of Sveva Caetani, a painter and writer born in Rome in 1917 who grew up in Vernon, BC. Marlatt draws on the paintings, writings, and biography of Caetani to narrate her emergence as a powerful artist and visionary in her later life. Marlatt first encountered Caetani's

work in a short article she found in a waiting room; later, a friend gave her a book containing *Recapitulation*, Caetani's paintings of her modern re-imagining of Dante's *Divine Comedy* with events from her own life and times.

Reading Sveva begins with a short essay, "Introduction to a Gifted Life," in which Marlatt narrates Caetani's biography and traces the gifts that led to Marlatt's "intimate engagement" with Caetani's work. Marlatt writes: "The generosity of gifts—the gifts we inherit and the gifts we are subsequently given—prompts us to offer further gifts to others." The implicit question that opens *Reading Sveva*, therefore, is a question of giving and receiving: how do we recognize, receive, honour, and extend what has been gifted to us?

The epigraph to the first poem "Between Brush Strokes" is written by Caetani: "I breathe with something of your life, and think with something of your mind." The line possibly describes many things—love, desire, grief, solace—and certainly, in the world *Reading Sveva* creates, it describes the intimacy of reading, of being read. Reading becomes an "*extension and abbreviation*" of the reading mind as it moves through time, carefully accompanying text and image and the thoughts, feelings, insights, and visions of the mind creating them. *Reading Sveva* emerges from this engagement: it is a book tracing the sometimes belatedness