

The New Poetics of Race



In the last few years we've witnessed the emergence of a number of poets of color concerned with re-posing the question of race in American culture, including Rickey Laurentiis, Claudine Rankin, Solmaz Sharif, Ocean Vuong, and Monica Youn among others. Their vibrant reclamation of that too often lost classical symbiosis between poetry (or the lyric) and protest has re-set the stakes of American poetry.

Our focus will be two-fold. First, we will try to figure out just how they do what they do. How does a poem come to mean this rather than that to us? What turns of language, address, tone, example, description, and page setting create their particular worlds of desire, lament, and outrage?

Second, we will try to locate or situate our poems, when possible, in relationship to other expressive conventions, be they poetic or musical or merely, loosely linguistic. Students need not have any experience reading poetry but should come with a deep curiosity to learn about what's happening on the poetry 'scene' that has so many of us taking note.