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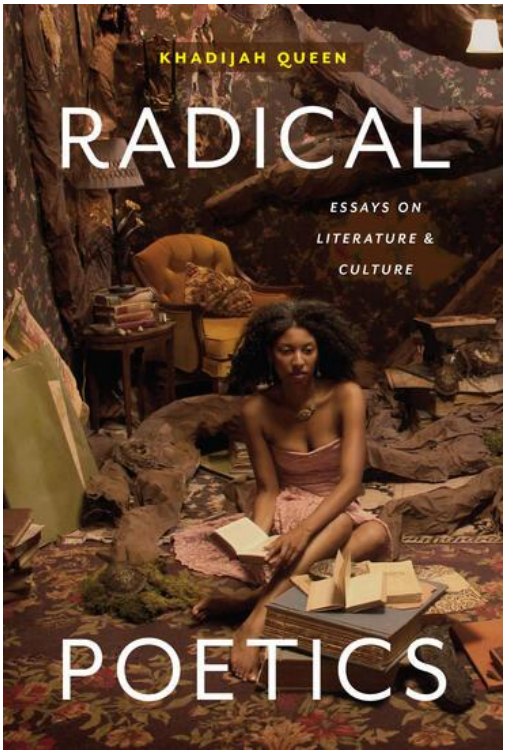


Radical Poetics: Essays on Literature and Culture, by Khadijah Queen

University of Michigan Press, 2024

Like Muriel Rukeyser, I want a poetics—i.e., a theory, a practice—that spills into everyday life.

Khadijah Queen's collection of essays calls for more humanity in poetics--the making and study of literature. Frustrated by the continued divisiveness of literary discourse that mirrors the clashes and divisions of the world we live in, she wants to transform the institutions in which literature is produced, received, criticized, celebrated, judged, and analyzed.

Queen, a Black woman, poet, disabled war veteran, single mother, and currently associate professor of English at Virginia Tech, recalls entering the world of writing and literary study in environments often indifferent to her inquiries and hostile to her very presence. Despite her professional success, she finds academia and literary communities mired in hierarchy and stagnant methodologies, too often at the expense of connection, respect, integrity, and truth. These are the qualities she considers essential for fostering inclusive communities—communities that might help us recapture what is radical about literature: its power to transform lives and, as Queen insists, challenge destructive systems of thought.

Queen's visionary argument is not new. I was reminded of my graduate student days in the 1980s and collective feminist efforts to transform the study and teaching of literature. Confronted with what was, at the time, an overwhelmingly white and male canon, we too sought to remake literary study and create classrooms and programs that fostered collaboration and treated emotions and intuition as valuable forms of knowledge. Queen's account, however, makes clear how much of

that earlier promise remains unfulfilled, despite diversity initiatives that created new departments and programs dedicated to the study of race, gender, sexuality, and class—many of which have recently been dismantled by the Trump administration.

The culture itself, Queen implies—the ways we behave toward one another, the ways we approach difference in people or in texts—has not changed enough. What's been missing? Queen has a simple answer: **love**. She wants us to infuse "active conscious love into our work and lives,"[1] including our analysis of literary works. Instead of the hermeneutic of suspicion most of us have learned (and taught) to wield against texts and each other, she calls for a hermeneutic of love: a way of reading grounded in a desire to connect, prioritizing compassion and emotional truth over critical antagonism.

In developing her vision of radical poetics, Queen draws on politically engaged writers and thinkers who supported her own flourishing—Toni Morrison, Audre Lorde, June Jordan, Edward Said, and Muriel Rukeyser among them. Indeed, she returns repeatedly to Rukeyser's path-breaking meditation, in *The Life of Poetry*, on poetry as the kind of writing that allows us to reach into the truth of emotion. Like Rukeyser, Queen views literature as an unused cultural resource—trivialized or idolized but rarely recognized for its true power to shape emotion, thought, and behavior. "A radical poetics," Queen asserts, "acknowledges how thoughts become beliefs which drive human actions which in turn become entrenched as social norms. A radical poetics strives, through literature explicitly, to influence social norms through the same mechanisms by which poetry creates meaning: through feeling-based knowledge, which, given enough repetition, then becomes translated through mind and body as action" (xvii).

What, then, are the core tenets of this radical poetics, and what do they mean in practice? Here is where things become intriguing, thought-provoking, and complicated. The central principles, as Queen explains in the preface, are Love, Trust, Intuition, Integrity, and Self-determination, human values we expect to encounter in pedagogy, moral philosophy, psychology, and parenting, but rarely in literary theory. And that is precisely Queen's point. Even if such values strike us as naïve or idealistic within literary theory, most of us would defend them as foundational to the kind of world we want our children or students to inhabit—the kind of world, Queen insists, that literature is equipped to help bring about.

Applied to reading, these tenets ask us to take our feelings seriously, to trust our instincts when something feels off—not in order to dismiss a text, but to enter more deeply into it, its author, ourselves, and the social or personal context of the encounter. Queen advocates "reading for feeling" as fostering a "physical understanding or deep thinking instantly felt" (xxx) and daring to create "a record of feeling as an analytical method" (xxxii).

continued on page 7

[1] Queen found much inspiration in *A General Theory of Love*, co-written by psychiatrists Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini, and Richard Lannon (Random House, 2000).

Wilderness Journeys: 6/19/25, by Kat Graff

A crucial question for the study of Jewishness is the relationship between identity and environment. Diaspora, scattering, conventionally refers to a "group of people who have … become dispersed beyond their traditional homeland or point of origin" (OED).[2] *In other words, diasporic identity locates itself in the experience of living the difference between the present "host" place and the point of origin, the "mother" place, which is geographically and temporally absent. We find this theme also in feminist discourse, for instance in Alicia Ostriker's unanswered question, "Does there exist, as a subterranean current below the surface structure of male-oriented language, a specifically female language, a 'mother tongue'?" (69-70).*[3]

In this paper, which I presented at a symposium in 2025,[4] *I attempt to engage Jewishness and gender through a consideration of environment, not in terms of homeland or lost point of origin (mother land, mother tongue), but in terms of passage itself: the wilderness. As I will argue, wilderness is precisely that which cannot be claimed as a lost point of origin. It is the place of torment and suffering and movement, unlivable to the point of belonging to no one. It is in the writing of this unclaimable space that the self-referential ipseity of identity can open out onto that which it conventionally excludes.*

* * *

I want to talk about Muriel Rukeyser's poetics of the wilderness. Introducing Rukeyser can sometimes be hard because there are still many people to whom she's not well known and her work is quite hard to taxonomize. Unproblematically, we can say she was a poet, a woman, an American, and a Jew (I should add secular Jew), which is how she described herself in 1944 at the "Under Forty: Symposium on American Literature and the Younger Generation of American Jews" (34);[5] and also how Adrienne Rich memorialized her in 1990 in the first issue of the Jewish feminist journal *Bridges* (23).[6]

I'm going to talk about Rukeyser as a writer of Jewish identity and as a writer of woman identity. Something quite prescient and generous about her poetics is her refusal to ground these identities in a recognizable essence. She wrote as a woman and as a Jew without making it clear what she meant by those terms. In a 1968 lecture on Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," Rukeyser remarked on the inclusion of her 1944 sonnet "To Be a Jew In The Twentieth Century" in a British edition of Jewish prayers, saying, "I thought of Jews and the Jewish people as not perhaps a thing you can

[2] "Diaspora," in *Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <https://www.oed.com/dictionary/diaspora> [Accessed 24/01/26].
[3] Alicia Ostriker, "The Thieves of Language: Women Poets and Revisionist Mythmaking." *Signs*, vol. 8, no.1, 1982, pp. 68-90.
[4] This paper was originally delivered at the (Un)Habit Symposium, organized by Dominic Gilani at the University of Bristol in June 2025. The symposium brought together early career researchers working across different areas of the humanities to talk about habitability and environments on a scorching day in a poorly ventilated room. Elsewhere, war was and is being waged, not on armies or even nations, but on environments themselves, on the very possibility of survival in a particular place.
[5] Rukeyser, Muriel, "Author's Introduction." *The Muriel Rukeyser Era*, edited by Eric Keenaghan and Rowena Kennedy-Epstein, Cornell University Press, 2023, pp. 30-35.
[6] Rich, Adrienne, "Muriel Rukeyser, 1913-1978: 'Poet…Woman…American…Jew.'" *Bridges*, vol. 1, no.1, 1990, pp. 23-29.

say anything about, in a way" (262).[7] We see this refusal to say anything about Jews in the poem itself:

> To be a Jew in the twentieth century
> Is to be offered a gift. If you refuse,
> Wishing to be invisible, you choose
> Death of the spirit, the stone insanity.
> Accepting, take full life. Full agonies:
> Your evening deep in labyrinthine blood
> Of those who resist, fail, and resist; and God
> Reduced to a hostage among hostages.
>
> The gift is torment. Not alone the still
> Torture, isolation; or torture of the flesh.
> That may come also. But the accepting wish,
> The whole and fertile spirit as guarantee
> For every human freedom, suffering to be free,
> Daring to live for the impossible.[8]

Rather than tying Jewish identity to its associations with tradition, heritage, religion, custom or any other positive element, Rukeyser identifies Jewishness as the gift of "torment." Jewish identity is no more and no less than a gesture of resistance which defies power for the sake of "suffering to be free, / Daring to live for the impossible." Charlotte Mandel has already teased out this complicity within Rukeyser's identities as a poet and as a Jew in her reading of Rukeyser's "Akiba Inheritance": the legend of her descent from Rabbi Akiba, the 2nd century rabbi and biblical scholar who recited the *Shema* prayer in defiance as he was tortured to death by the Romans. For Mandel, the link lies precisely in this gesture or gift: "Writing poetry is the form of 'torment' that can fulfill the self; this pattern continues throughout her lifetime."[9] I will return to Akiba, but, as I shall argue, in Rukeyser's poems, there is nothing especially Jewish about this gift of torment. We find it everywhere, associated with anyone who refuses to be invisible.

The gift of torment does not, cannot, belong to anyone in the same way we conventionally understand an identity to belong to the identified: *my* identity, the ipseity of myself, belonging to me and only me. And, critically, the gesture involves the element of choice, of agency. The gift can be refused or accepted. And it's this element of choice, linking the unchosen circumstances of birth to a gesture of resistance, that enables Rukeyser to say in her address to the Under Forty

[7] Rukeyser, Muriel, "Poetry and the Unverifiable Fact." *The Rukeyser Era*, pp. 252-266.
[8] Rukeyser, Muriel, "To be a Jew in the twentieth century." *The Collected Poems of Muriel Rukeyser*, edited by Janet Kaufman and Anne Herzog with Jan Heller Levi, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005, p. 243.
[9] Charlotte Mandel, 'Muriel Rukeyser's Rabbi Akiba Inheritance' (2015), *Muriel Rukeyser Living Archive* <https://murielrukeyser.org/2015/05/03/charlotte-mandel-muriel-rukeysers-rabbi-akiba-inheritance/> [Accessed 24/01/26].

symposium: "if one is free, freedom can extend to a certain degree into the past, and one may choose one's ancestors, to go on with their wishes and their fight" (34).[10]

To whom does the gift of torment properly belong? In his poem, "The Hoopoe," Mahmoud Darwish wrote,

> There is nothing left of us in the wilderness
> save what the wilderness kept for itself:
> a skin's tatters on the thorn, a warrior's song for his homeland,
> and a mouth of emptiness.[11]

To whom, then, does the gift of torment belong? Rukeyser gives this collectivity many names. In her "Orpheus" sequence, they are "The faceless and the unborn" (294).[12] In the "Akiba" sequence, which I'll turn to shortly, she addresses them as "All those who together are the frontier."[13] But usually when Rukeyser invokes this collectivity, it is in the form of a catalogue or a list, a heterogeneous multitude which evades nomination. From the very beginning of her career, working as a journalist, Rukeyser saw the role of the poet as that of a witness to this multitude. This address to an unqualifiable collective is a generative paradox within Rukeyser's poetic, thoroughly bound up in the documentarian, witnessing impulse; the address differs from the inclusive "We," which would lay claim to alterity under the banner of, say, a shared humanity. One assumes responsibility as oneself: this is what is "generative," as Catherine Gander suggests in her reading of "Worlds Alongside": "Rukeyser theorizes that 'work' may be 'done on the self' via the assumption of 'responsibility' for something outside the self" (44).[14]

But, even so, as Gander suggests, "[w]hilst she avoids speaking for the other, the imagination governing ["Worlds Alongside"] represents the other as a poetic image" (49). Always an effort to move out to an Other, bound with the risk of representing suffering as an image, making it available for an illegitimate claim to alterity. More recently, Vivian Pollack has wrestled with the vagueness of this address in "The Book of the Dead":

> "These are the roads to take when you think of your country."
> Your country? To whom is Rukeyser speaking? Is she speaking to Vassar grads […]; or is she speaking to miners' wives like Emma Jones, who lost three sons, including her youngest, Shirley, aged seventeen, who said, "Mother, I cannot get my breath"? (609)[15]

[10] "Author's Introduction." *The Muriel Rukeyser Era*, edited by Eric Keenaghan and Rowena Kennedy-Epstein, Cornell University Press, 2023, pp. 30-35.
[11] Mahmoud Darwish, "The Hoopoe." *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise: Selected Poems*, University of California Press, 2003, p. 32.
[12] "Orpheus." *The Collected Poems of Muriel Rukeyser*, edited by Janet Kaufman and Anne Herzog, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006, pp. 287-296.
[13] "Akiba." *The Collected Poems of Muriel Rukeyser*, p. 454-460.
[14] Catherine Gander, *Muriel Rukeyser and Documentary: The Poetics of Connection*. Edinburgh University Press, 2013.
[15] Vivian Pollak, "Walt Whitman and Muriel Rukeyser Among the Jews." The Oxford Handbook of Walt Whitman, Oxford University Press, 2025, pp. 606-626.

Pollak attributes the form of this address in Rukeyser to the "bad influence" of Whitman, a way out of a closed conception of Jewish identity that could not co-exist with the poetic self: "Whitman fortified her in her youth as she struggled with a past that began in her flight from a bourgeois Jewish family" (609).

Out of the bourgeois Jewish family into what? In *The Life of Poetry*, Rukeyser writes, "On work gangs, prison gangs, in the nightclubs, on the ships and docks, our songs arise" (90).[16] For Rukeyser, the source of poetry is this buried music. "Buried," she says, "in that it never touches its full audience." The obligation of the poet as witness to this collectivity which exceeds nomination is what grounds the writing of Jewish identity as "not perhaps a thing you can say anything about." In her 1968 lecture, speaking about her sonnet, "To be a Jew in the 20th century," Rukeyser said,

> [T]hey have used a sonnet of mine in this Prayer Book, and it is so strange to see this, you know, unsigned, assimilated, absorbed into the body of poetry, in a way. And it is what one hopes for in general for the best of anything one can do—that it simply be taken into the body of poetry. (262)[17]

Rukeyser's approach to gynocentrism runs in parallel. Rukeyser once said, pointedly, to Cynthia Ozick, "I write from the body, a female body" (130).[18] She was not interested in the idea of a gender-neutral writing. But Rukeyser also wasn't interested in defining a female subjectivity in opposition to a male subjectivity. In 1982, Alicia Ostriker gave us this definition of feminist revisionist myth-making: "In all these cases the poet simultaneously deconstructs a prior 'myth' or 'story' and constructs a new one which includes, instead of excluding, herself" (72).[19] Rukeyser frequently fails to do this and the "Akiba" sequence is an example of this supposed "failure." Her feminist revisionist project is not based on resituating the contemporary female poetic subjectivity within the canonical text. The value of tradition will be the possibility of using it to reach a place where experience can be shared.

For Rukeyser, woman identity, like Jewish identity, is a way in, a witnessing perspective that opens onto the collectivity of the buried exceeding all nomination. Identity is necessary here, but always as a means of reaching what exceeds it. In Rukeyser's poetic, the poet is called to witness the other as themself and the imaginative effort of poetry is built around this fact. But this self is not the ipseity of a single self I would possess; It is many identifications put to work through the poetic, in a movement toward another, with a prayer to be transformed. Shira Wolosky has referred to this structure as "mutual figuration":

[16] Muriel Rukeyser, *The Life of Poetry*. Paris Press, 1996.
[17] Rukeyser, "Poetry and the Unverifiable Fact." *The Rukeyser Era*, pp. 252-266.
[18] Quoted in Lorrie Goldensohn, "Our Mother Muriel." *How Shall We Tell Each Other of the Poet?*, edited by Anne Herzog and Janet Kaufman, St. Martin's Press, 1999, pp. 121-134.
[19] Alicia Ostriker, "The Thieves of Language: Women Poets and Revisionist Mythmaking." *Signs*, vol. 8, no.1, 1982, pp. 68-90.

> Rukeyser's poetic offers her both method and model of negotiating her different identities. It is in poetic terms that her different identifications become figures for each other, standing for and also with or against each other. Such mutual figuration itself deeply defines Rukeyser's poetic. (202)[20]

I would argue that the negotiation of Rukeyser's different identities in her poetic depends as much on a negotiation of identities not her own. When asked about Rilke's comment in his Letters to a Young Poet that "There is only one single way. Go into yourself," Rukeyser responded, saying, "The going into oneself is a curious relation with something else. If you dive deep enough and have favorable winds or whatever is under the water, you come to a place where experience can be shared" (120).[21]

[*The full essay, including Kat Graff's intriguing discussion of Rukeyser's "Akiba," can be found at the Muriel Rukeyser Living Archive:* https://murielrukeyser.org/2026/02/28/kat-graff-wilderness-journeys-6-19-25/. *Kat Graff is a high school English teacher based in Bristol, England. Her academic writing centers on experiences of intergenerationality, Jewishness, and gender non-conformity in 20th century American literature. She is particularly interested in issues surrounding autobiographical writing, especially where it concerns relationships between women and children. She also blogs about education, literary criticism and her mother.*]

Review of Radical Poetics by Khadijah Queen, cont'd

In individual chapters, Queen examines the works of writers for whom literature has been a site of deep thinking about how race, class, gender, and disability are seared into America's cultural memory—through stereotypes, fragments, absences, or gruesome imagery, such as Isidro de Villoldo's 16th-century painting The Miracle of the Black Leg, which depicts the "miraculous" attachment of an amputated Black leg to a white body. Always attentive to the ways craft intersects with imagination and content, Queen explores how authors' aesthetic and narrative choices enable or obstruct their efforts to create works that might compel readers to feel and see beyond accepted cultural narratives.

Melville's *Confidence Man* draws on the language of prejudice to expose its insidious absurdity, yet by centering whiteness, Queen argues, his satire perpetuates damaging stereotypes. Frances Harper's emotional attack on slavery in *Iola Leroy* remains beholden to "white notions of civilization," validating the othering of Native Americans even as it creates sympathy for enslaved Africans. Natasha Trethewey's ekphrastic poems in *Thrall* draw readers into and beyond the image, asking them to imagine alternate histories for those marginalized or only partially visible in public memorials or artworks such as The Miracle of the Black Leg. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* cannot envision emerging from the psychological devastation of racism because he cannot imagine authentic love—a lack reflected in his stunted depictions of women.

[20] Shira Wolosky, "What Do Jews Stand For? Muriel Rukeyser's Ethics of Identity," *Nashim*, no. 19, 2010, pp. 199-226.

[21] "Muriel Rukeyser." *The Poet's Craft: Interviews from the New York Quarterly*, edited by William Packard, Paragon, 1987, pp. 116-136.

These are only some examples of Queen's subtle probing of artistic attempts to expose racial and economic injustice. (Other authors include Canadian poet Dionne Brand and Mexican poet Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.) Notably, when Queen identifies contradictions or limitations, she does so to open questions and deepen inquiry. Rather than castigating or dismissing "flawed" efforts, she creates sites for generous critical exploration that foster conversation and trust, moving us beyond destructive divisions.

Her commitment to reading generously—and with love—is especially evident in her chapter on Muriel Rukeyser. There is much that delights me about this chapter. I appreciate the wide range of Rukeyser's writings Queen engages: her fictionalized memoir of the Spanish Civil War, *Savage Coast*; her long poem "The Outer Banks," published in 1965 at the height of the Civil Rights Movement; several poems in her final collection *The Gates* (1976); her musical *Houdini* (1973); and, surprisingly, her children's book *More Night* (1981), illustrated by Symcon Shimin. I value Queen's thoughtful examination of how Rukeyser grappled with social injustice, especially as it pertains to race.

Applauding Rukeyser's willingness to take on subjects other white writers avoided, Queen also notes where Rukeyser stumbles, whether by using a roach as a metaphor for otherness, or referring to "dark people" in ways that are reductive, romanticizing, or otherizing, even when she sought to intervene in white racism.

I found Queen's extensive critique of "St. Roach"—the opening poem in *The Gates*—especially instructive. How effective is Rukeyser's use of the problematic vermin metaphor to dramatize the speaker's struggle to overcome deeply ingrained bias against people she was taught to despise? Having taught this poem at Eastern Michigan University, I witnessed firsthand how troubling it was for some students of color, who felt the poem's "you" referred to them and who were unconvinced by the poem's ending: "I reach, I touch. I begin to know you." One student asked why the speaker assumes the "you" wants to be touched.

Queen speculates that Rukeyser might have used the "roach" to reference other "despised" people—Jews like herself, who have long been otherized in damaging ways. And yet, if the point of the poem is to help readers challenge destructive forms of thinking and feeling, its centering of the "I," Queen argues, "prioritizes the witness's feelings over the 'observed' other, creating a tone of pity and presumptiveness…." Questioning the poem, she concludes, "allows the reader to grapple with serious questions of how we address each other, how we think about and articulate the positions we assume in discourse" (95).[22]

For Queen, what kept Rukeyser from "completely dismantling racial hierarchies in her work" (84)—an admittedly steep task—is "the whiteness of the imagination," an unconscious tendency

[22] Aware of the title's directive force, I began to omit it from students' initial encounter with the poem, and that helped us explore more freely who the "I" and "You" might be and where we find ourselves in the poem. When we did discuss the title, we would ponder the roach as a metaphor *and* as the actual animal, which almost universally evokes disgust in humans. Rukeyser was always interested in how we learn to despise so many things, often by being told, as children, not to touch (see "Despisals") and how in learning to despise others we are also taught to despise parts of ourselves, our bodies, our emotions, our sexuality.

to center whiteness in her representations of racially distinct, darker-skinned people. While Rukeyser's Jewishness did not make her immune to such centering, I do think it complicates the analysis. I wonder, for example, whether Helen's desire in *Savage Coast* to "open herself to an array of stories," combined with her slightly romanticized depictions of brown-skinned Catalans—filtered, as Queen suggests, through a well-intentioned "layer of whiteness" (90)—also reflects a growing recognition of her own tenuous position as a young Jewish woman in fascist Europe. Protected by an American passport, Helen's whiteness is precarious at best and cannot conceal her otherness or the "forbidden" nature of her relationship with the German runner Hans. Reading Queen makes me want to sit down with her and dig deeper into *Savage Coast*. I would love to hear her thoughts on "Ballad of Orange and Grape" or Rukeyser's rarely discussed poem "Judith," from *A Turning Wind* (1939), in which a young Jewish woman—a "dark woman" with a heritance of "brown blood"—fears for her life and that of her unborn child in a "blond country."

The informal fluidity of Queen's prose is not always easy to follow, but it is refreshing in its disregard for academic proprieties. In the chapter on "The Poetics of Disability," Queen protests the often absurd demands of academia—from teaching in poorly ventilated, windowless rooms to byzantine requirements for proof of productivity—that make living a reasonably healthy and creative life exceedingly difficult, especially for a Black woman navigating disability while caring for loved ones. How is it, she asks, that we accept such working conditions as normal, even when they endanger the physical and mental health of our students and ourselves?

To some, this chapter and the subsequent one, "A Sea of Troubles," which addresses sexual harassment and abuse in literary and academic workplaces, might seem like outliers in a book calling for a new literary theory. I disagree. But I do think that if Queen had been more personal in her discussions of literary texts—showing how she draws on her own feelings and intuitions in response to particular texts, or how she engages her students' emotional responses—her outrage at the institutional and physical spaces in which such feeling-knowledge is cultivated would resonate even more immediately.

What Queen's radical poetics seeks to repair is precisely this rift: the dissonance between what we value in the humanities—creativity, emotional expressiveness, experimentation—and the ways we are asked to practice them.

Elisabeth Däumer

RUKEYSER NEWS

Eva Baron, of *Publishers Weekly*, had an interesting conversation with **Maria Popova**, whose Marginalian blog (originally Brain Pickings) is entering its 20th year. Popova has created a new imprint, Marginalian Editions, in collaboration with McNally Jackson owner Sarah McNally, for the express purpose of bringing back into print some of her favorite books. She tells us: "The Muriel Rukeyser biography of scientist Willard Gibbs is the reason why we started this imprint. It's an extraordinarily challenging book, but it's easy in the sense that the prose embraces you. It has

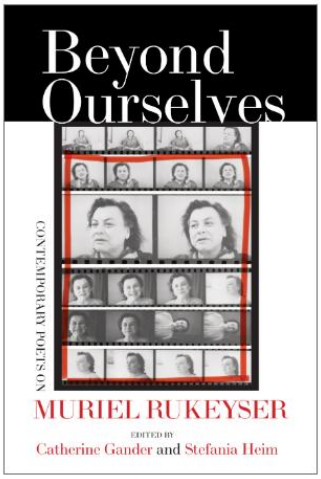
serious science and history in it, things that aren't comfortable to read, and yet I know that for those who choose to read it, it will change their lives. Being taken out of your comfort zone is important, and you'll be rewarded for it. I see it as a little gift to the future."

> Eva Baron. "A Little Gift to the Future: PW Talks with Maria Popova." http://ezproxy.emich.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/little-gift-future-pw-talks-with-maria-popova/docview/3227325114/se-2.

Sophie Ward's fascinating new novel, *Our Better Natures*, takes place in the 1970s and features three women: Muriel Rukeyser, Andrea Dworkin, and a fictive woman, Midwest home maker Phyllis Patterson. We meet Andrea in Amsterdam, spending an evening drinking and arguing with Michel Foucault and Noam Chomsky, and in New York City as Muriel's assistant. We meet Muriel at lunch with Monica; getting ready for a "die in" at the Capitol Building petitioning for an end to the Vietnam War; and in Seoul, as emissary of PEN protesting the imprisonment of Korean poet Kim Chi Ha. And Phyllis in White Plains Illinois, startled by her inquisitive ten-year old Korean-American granddaughter Soozie. The novel is filled with surprises and delicious details. Certainly worth a read!

Peter Trachtenberg's new book, *The Twilight of Bohemia: Westbeth and the Last Artists of New York* (Black Sparrow Press, 2025) is described as "an intimate history of America's first publicly funded artists' housing project and its residents that casts light on the precarious place of art-makers in a changing New York." Craig Werner will review the book for our next issue of the *Rukeyser Biannual*.

Christina-Marie Sears's essay "The Unfinished Resistance of Moving Texts: Resonance and Witness in the Works of Martha Graham and Muriel Rukeyser" (*Modernism Revisited: Texts and Contexts*, edited by Amitayu Chakraborty, Bloomsbury, 2026) explores both artists' creative contributions to modernism. Sears explains: "Creative journeys into inner life, paired with prescient interest in the significance of place and the transformation of personal material generated radical practices for each woman."



Two forthcoming books will be of special interest to Rukeyser readers:

Catherine Gander and Stefania Heim's eagerly awaited edited collection *Beyond Ourselves: Contemporary Poets on Muriel Rukeyser*, will be published in April from West Virginia University Press. For more information: https://wvupressonline.com/beyond-ourselves

Anne Fernald's *Her Own Voice: Eight Women Who Rewrote Life and Art*, forthcoming from Beacon in August 2026, has a chapter on Rukeyser. More information at https://www.beacon.org/Her-Own-Voice-P2504.aspx.

GRATITUDE

A new donation! **Vivian Pollak** donated the Arthur MacGillivray Papers to the Muriel Rukeyser Collection at Eastern Michigan University's Archive. Reverend Arthur MacGillivray created a loose scrapbook of material related to Rukeyser, including biographical information, reviews of her work, and poems authored by Rukeyser. In 1985, after Rukeyser's death, MacGillivray gave the papers to Kate Daniels who was then working on a biography of the poet. Daniels presented them to Vivian Pollak, author of *The Erotic Whitman*, *Our Emily Dickinsons: American Women Poets and the Intimacies of Difference*, and many other publications, who then offered them to EMU. We are thrilled!

Thanks to EMU's English Department, we now have two new web assistants: **Ayah Awada**, a first-year Graduate Student in the Literature Program, and **Aimee Fisher**, an undergraduate student in Professional Writing. Both bring new energy, fresh perspectives, and a love for literature to the Living Archive. You'll spot their impact on the website and new Rukeyser-related events in weeks to come. (Check out their bios at https://murielrukeyser.org/about-us/)

And readers! Thank you for your continued interest in the Muriel Rukeyser Living Archive. Please disseminate this newsletter to students, colleagues, and friends who might be curious. We always welcome new contributions to the website—whether in the form of blogs, essays, reviews, creative works, or pedagogical ideas.

The *Rukeyser Biannual* is produced by the Muriel Rukeyser Living Archive at Eastern Michigan University. For contributions, corrections, questions, or suggestions, contact us at https://murielrukeyser.org/.
We thank Casey Hale for the design.