



HEAR WE ARE

a RHAPSODY in view

THE ALTERNATIVE
NEW YEAR'S DAY
SPOKEN WORD / PERFORMANCE
EXTRAVAGANZA

2024 ANTHOLOGY

BACK OF COVER

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HEAR WE ARE (A RHAPSODY IN VIEW):

The Alternative New Year's Day / Spoken Word Performance Extravaganza

- ANYDSWPE 2024 Anthology
- The Rogue Scholars Collective
- First Edition.
- Volume X in a series.
- 268 Pages.
- Trade Paperback.
- American Contemporary Poetry Anthology.
- Original Publication Date: February 1st, 2024.

Through the collaboration of the Rogue Scholars Collective, established 1997:

Contact Information / Order Online:

<http://www.AlternativeNYD.org/>

Rogue Scholars Press

<http://www.RogueScholars.com>

Design and Layout: C. D. Johnson, Editor-In-Chief

Publisher: Rogue Scholars Press

Cover Art: "Rhapsody In View" by C. D. Johnson

ISBN-13: 978-1-942463-08-5

ISBN-10: 1-942463-08-1

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Published by Rogue Scholars Press
New York, NY - USA



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NEW YEAR'S DAY
SPOKEN WORD / PERFORMANCE
EXTRAVAGANZA

2024 ANTHOLOGY



www.AlternativeNYD.org

This is dedicated
to those who made it to
Paradise,
and those who are stuck in
Hell.

And for those of us
still waiting in
Purgatory,
there's plenty time left to rebel.

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Postscript

Imprint: ANYDSWPE

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*ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**hear we are,*

the 27th Alternative New Year's Day Spoken Word / Performance Extravaganza was, as past events have been, an effort on the part of many people.

Thanks goes out to Madeline Artenberg, Lydia Cortés, C. D. Johnson, Ptr Kozlowski, Tsaurah Litzky, Ellen Lytle, Su Polo, Robert Roth, and Thad Rutkowski — all of whom contributed as members of the Alternative staff; and to Douglas Collura and John Pietaro for their help with setting up the event.

Thanks to Pam and Sam Dickinson, our submissions editors at Rogue Scholars Press who had to take a lot of crap from the Editor-In-Chief for slave-wages, but who did their jobs expertly. Also, thanks to Westbeth Artists Housing for allowing us to use their community space in putting on the event.

Special thanks to events founders, Bruce Weber and Joanne Pagano Weber. And of course, thanks to all the poets and writers who not only performed but contributed to the labor of love that is the ANYDSWPE Anthology.

See you next January 1st!

- Pete Dolack

INTRODUCTION

the first day of 2024 saw a welcome return of the Alternative New Year's Day Spoken Word / Performance Extravaganza after four years off. Since our 2020 extravaganza, there were of course the years of the COVID-19 pandemic and then, when we thought we would return a year ago, the scourge of gentrification prevented us from securing a location. With our two previous sites again not available for 2024, we had work to do to find a suitable venue, but we did do so.

Seeing all the happy faces across the event's eight hours, it seems the New York City poetry world was pleased by the event's return. We certainly were. This year's was the 27th edition of the event, which has long-established itself as one of the year's premiere literary events. Where else could you see more than 150 readers and performers in one place in one day? As I like to say when announcing the start of the event each year, we're an institution.

But the Alternative is an institution thanks to those who read and performed at the event, some for many years. The event's founder, Bruce Weber, started it for New Year's Day 1995, holding it in a loft above the Pyramid Club. Bruce didn't know how the event would be received, but was pleasantly surprised when a packed house pronounced a success. It's been a success ever since, from those first years in that packed Avenue A loft and through several venues since. I have been a part of organizing the Alternative since the 2000 event and became director upon Bruce leaving New York City for upstate; and, having been a reader in the event since its second year, I always look forward to it. So do a lot of other folks in New York and the surrounding area.

The people who put together the Alternative every year do it as a labor of love. And so it is with the book in your hands, published by C. D. Johnson and Rogue Scholars Press. For the past several years, Rogue Scholars has

put together an anthology featuring the event's readers. In this year's edition, you'll find a tremendous range of voices, showcasing some of the outstanding writers of New York City with a bit of their artwork. For those of you who attended, I hope this anthology will enable you to relive the event. And for those of you who couldn't attend, I hope this collection will entice you to be there next year.

- Pete Dolack



prescript

From **Rachel Korn** — Translated from Yiddish by Michael Yashinsky
Speech given at the Montreal's Jewish Public Library
November 12th, 1977

in poetic creation, a formidable place is occupied by the word. Just like a person, every word has its fortune, its destiny. And though the poet may unite certain words in an indestructible bond, it is clear that they themselves had already been fixed to each other since ages ago.

Often the poet will take faded words, lying forgotten and cobwebbed. He shakes off their dust, collected over generations, and marries them off to new images. He conducts them to a new breyshis, a second genesis.

He also sets words as witnesses to the eternal struggle between justice and injustice, between purity and impurity.

At the same time, the poet is the executor of an estate, who comes to collect the debts that the people owes to itself. He has no inherited pedigree, no landed rights, no epaulets affixed to him through a formal nomination from the royal authority of literature and art.

וּיֵא טמענראָפֿ טראָ רעדנוזאַב אַ
טקנופֿ. טראָוו סאָד ופֿאַש ושירעטכיד
טראָוו סעדעי ריז טאַה שטנעמ אַ יוו
שזאַ ווא. טייקטרעשאַב ויז, לזח ויז
רעטרעוו יד טקיניאראָפֿ רעטכיד רעד
רילג, דנוב וראָבסירעצ טשינ אַ ויא
טמיטשאַב ועוועג וטלאָוו, ייז ראָג, ייז
אַ. מינומדק ופֿ ריז ראָפֿ

רעטכיד רעד טמענ טפֿאַן
עטעוועקאילבעגפֿאַ רעטרעוו
ווא וסעגראָפֿ אָגעלעג וענעז סאָוו
ייז ופֿ פֿאַ טלסיירט, טבעווינפֿשראַפֿ
ייז טגוויזראָפֿ, בויטש וקידסערויד מעד
וצ וצ ייז טריפֿ ווא, ושזאַמיא עינ טימ
תישארב מעינ אַ

תודע יוו רעטרעוו וויא טלעטש רען
רשוי ושיווצ פֿמאַק וקיבייא ויא
ווא השודק ושיווצ, טכערמוא ווא
האמוט.

אַ רעטכיד רעד זיא קיטיצכילג
יד ונאַמניא טמוק סאָוו ראָטוקעזקע
וילאַ ריז זיא קלאָפֿ סאָד סאָוו תובֿוח
רעטנשריעג וייק אָטשינ. קידלוש
וּפֿ טכער וייק ויאראָפֿ אָטשינ, סוחיי
סעפֿילש וייק אָטשינ, טפֿאַשרעוּפֿ
ועמוק וּלֶאָז סאָוו [?] אָט וצ מיא
וּיא עיצאַנימאַג רעקידנסוירד אַ ררוד
טסנוק ווא רוטאַרעטיל וּפֿ תוכלמ

Here, the inheritance left by a father or a grandfather counts for nothing. Here, the only thing that decides his rank is the living word of the writer himself. But a great poet or artist is no coincidence in the history of a people. He is the logical consequence of historical developments, a product of ceaseless labor that has lasted generations.

Centuries are spent toiling in the dark laboratory of the national subconscious in order to produce such a perfect individual who could become the people's memory, its tongue, and—its conscience.

His rise may not be attributed only to himself but rather, should be considered an answer to the nation's concealed questioning of its own fears, of its own dreams. Only then, when the people itself is creative, when it searches and struggles, when it collects its debts from itself alone, the answer comes—in the form of a tremendous poetic talent.

השורי וייק טשינ טליג אָדן.
 גנאַר רעדאָן טאַט אַ ופֿ עטיירגעגוצ
 גנאַר מעד נעמיטשאַב וצ טאַה אָד
 ופֿ טראָוו עקידעבעל סאַד זוילב
 רעטכיד רעסוירג אַ. אפֿוג רעביירש
 וייק טשינ זיא רעלטסניק רעדאָן
 ופֿ עטכישעג רעד ויא טייקילעפֿוצ
 ופֿ אצוילעופֿ אַ זיא רע. קלאָפֿ אַ
 רעכעלטכישעג רעקיסעמקעווצ אַ
 ופֿ טקודאַרפֿ אַ, גנולקיווטנאַ
 אַ. עינאַוועראַה רעקיידתורוד

וּיא טימעג ריז נבאַה תורוד עגנאַן
 עיראַטאַראַבאַל רעלעקנוט רעד
 וּיזטסוואַברעטנואַ סקלאָפֿ ופֿ
 וּטקעפֿרעפֿ אַזאַ וריצודאַרפֿוצסוּיא
 סקלאָפֿ מעד ורעוו לאָז סאַוו דיחי
 אַ. וּסיוועג ווא, גנוצ, וּורכז

וּיילאַ נעמוקעגראָפֿ טשינ זיא סאַדן
 רעפֿטנע וּאַ סלאַ טרעיינ, ריז ופֿ
 וּגערפֿ טעייטראַפֿ-סקלאָפֿ מוצ
 וּנעמוירט ווא וּטפֿאַשקנעב עניז
 וּיילאַ קלאָפֿ סאַד ועוו, טלאַמעד ראַנ
 טלגנאַר ווא טכוז, שוירעפֿעש זיא
 ריז יב וּענאַמניאַ וּיא טלאַה, ריז
 רעד וּיא רעפֿטנע רעד טמוק, אפֿוג
 טנאַלאַט וּסוירג אַ ופֿ טלאַטשעג

HEAR WE ARE

└Ln.Brk - Indicates New Stanza

Austin Alexis

Austin Alexis: work in American Book Review, Crosswinds Poetry Journal, Westchester Review, Long Island Sounds Anthology, Maintenant #17, Poets Wear Prada Website, Nassau County Poet Laureate Society Review, Brevitas Anthology, Brownstone Poets Anthology, White Rabbit, The Covid Poetry Files (anthology), The Arcade of the Scribes (anthology). Award from Nassau County Poet Laureate Society. Finalist for Blue Light Press Poetry Book Award. Recent Pushcart and Best of the Net nominations.

The Chamber ||

A room without a door,
yet it remained lightless.
A place not to enter, ever.
Yet, Grandma never said "Don't go in there."
Grandpa failed to utter a toot about the chamber,
didn't even acknowledge it existed.
But we, my siblings and I, were drawn to
and repelled by that off-kilter space.

Down the long hallway of my grandparents'
drawn-out shadowy railroad apartment,
on the far left, the room sat,
no, brooded, like a sinister monster.
As the world turned, the room appeared unchanging.
Even during the day, it hovered
on the edge of night, like a cloistered hospice ward.
Similar to a corpse, it issued a secretive spell,
a gloomy yet charismatic draw.

It must have been windowless;
I imagined it as airless.
How was it possible that light never pierced
its exposed inky entranceway?
Like the dark unknowables of life,
the room exuded an air of timelessness.

A place of mystery, its only sound was muteness,
the voice of fate we hear when it's too late.

After sticking our heads into the room,
the days and years of our lives
became eclipses squatting over us.
My siblings and I each had one life to live
but now our world had been tainted
by knowledge of a dimension
beyond our games and toys and fun.
That chamber was the forbidden fruit
foreshadowing the fallen adult world.
Even though we saw nothing in the darkness,
we had trespassed; that was enough.
Now we would never be totally innocent.
Now we would be followed by bad luck.
Never again would we see sunlight without shadow.



Bumped-Off ||

Mass shootings:
a rash on the nation's skin
erupting
like welts that bleed
when we itch them,
like bumps that taunt us —
the beginning of a fatal disease.

Mass shootings:
they tease us
with visions of flashing pop-pop-pops,
with dead-animal asinine smells of discharged bullets,
with the possibility of dying —
as if death isn't forever
around the corner.



'002

Joel Allegratti

Joel Allegratti is the author of, most recently, *Platypus* (NYQ Books, 2017), a collection of poems, prose, and performance texts, and *Our Dolphin* (Thrice Publishing, 2016), a novella. He is the editor of *Rabbit Ears: TV Poems* (NYQ Books, 2015). *The Boston Globe* called *Rabbit Ears* "cleverly edited" and "a smart exploration of the many, many meanings of TV."

Happy Birthday Blues ||

With his morning tea, no sugar,
he swallows metoprolol tartrate
to countervail the hypertension.

With his lemon-basil chicken
he takes a dose of lovastatin
to tame the LDL cholesterol.

With his three o'clock espresso,
decaffeinated, he has doxazosin,
for benign prostatic hyperplasia.

With his vanilla cupcake, with
hazelnut frosting, he listens to
"Within You Without You"

And tries to recall the colors
he saw when he dropped acid
for the first time at Berkeley.



A Scene From An Imaginary John Waters Film ||

A ten-year-old boy
in cargo shorts and
a *Mighty Morphin
Power Rangers*
T-shirt clenches
his Chiclets teeth
and grunts as he
pushes a denim-
blue baby carriage
along West Street
on a nice summer
Monday morning.
“What do you think
you’re doing?” asks
an old man waiting
for the 10:25 bus.
“I’m taking Mom
to the food store,”
says the huffing
and puffing child.
“Come again?”
the old man asks.
“Leave my son
alone, or I’ll have
you arrested!”
a woman’s voice
screams out of
the carriage.



'003

Madeline Artenberg

Madeline Artenberg was a photojournalist and street theatre performer before falling for poetry. After the first poem popped out, she sold all her cameras. She is a well-known performance poet in the NYC area. Her work appears in many publications, such as *Rattle* and *MacQueen's Quinterly*. She was semi-finalist in *Margie*, *The American Journal of Poetry* contest, and finalist in *Mudfish 2020* contest. One of her poems was nominated as *Best of the Net 2020* by Poets Wear Prada. Her first full-length poetry book, *Naming a Hurricane*, was published in 2023 by Pink Trees Press.

Blessed Work ||

It's come my turn at the soup kitchen
to make me a sleepin' bag.
Good thing my aunt taught me the 3Rs
and sewin' and cookin' too, 'though
these days I'm rootless, Lord,
like one of them thrown away
Christmas trees cut off at the knees,
blowin' from corner to park.

Sure's a long needle
the 'min'strator lady's handin' me,
already's got thread.
There's cloth scraps on the long table.
The lady's sewin' at one end;
I plunge the needle in at the other end.
It springs outta my hand, starts puttin' down
a long straight stitch with a top loop,
like the letter "p." What's that for —
poor? Sure, I begs a little,
I'm no thief, no tramp.

-Ln.Brk

The 'min'strator's tellin' us,
"Keep the stitches clean, the rows
even — be diligent." Guess that means
finish before the snow come.

I try again — feels good to go deep into layers
like the needle's sproutin' roots.
Wherever I lays me down to sleep,
I'll be bound to the ground.

The lady's stitches comin' to meet mine.
How large I want the sleepin' bag opening?
Better try it out: I lift one foot — wings
graze my face! "Go away!"
"I can still hear the wind,
still feel some o' my toes."



Geer Austin

Geer Austin's poetry has appeared in *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Fjords Review*, and other journals. His chapbook *Cloverleaf* was published by Poets Wear Prada.

Time ||

It's 93 degrees Fahrenheit,
the heat index must be 110.
We go to an opera projected
into moist air on the plaza
outside the Met, sip Pinot Grigio
from paper cups & eat Cambodian —
us four guys who didn't fight in Vietnam.
It was sad visiting the memorial
in DC last month, viewing names
incised in black granite, finding a boy
from my hometown, the older brother
of a girl in my class. Another brother
of another classmate entered the priesthood.
Such a waste, my sister said —
because he was so cute. Is his name
on some memorial? Or is he
with us on the plaza, sweating
through a film of an opera. I'm
with my boyfriend, his ex-boyfriend
& his boyfriend, the four of us living life
imperfectly. People no longer pursue us.
Employers don't recruit us. But we're here,
together in this moment, and it's dazzling.



'005

Oliver Baer

Oliver Baer was the editor for *Cthulhu Sex Magazine* and *Two Backed Books*. He mostly writes dark poetry and horror stories with the occasional blog post, review, essay and play. His poetry can be found in a Halloween card and on the back of a theater seat as well as in various collections including *The Arcade of the Scribes*, *Paper Teller Diorama* and *Goodreads Best Poems 2020*. He has two books out, *Letters to the Editor of Cthulhu Sex Magazine* and *Baer Soul*.

Untitled #68 ||

68. Words condense in front of me
 Shot from your mouth as you walked out
 Putting distance between us
 Sound blood splatters my face
 Verbal staccato defense to an empty room
 Deafening echoes dancing a damask masque to nothingness
 No longer now that was then
 Syllabic footstep fossils crunch the years
 The tundra's hoary hodgepodge frames your silhouette
 Interminable polar plain snow falls across the world
 Dried broken eggshell sky flakes over the path to me
 A blizzard of mismanaged memes jigsawing time further
 Clockwork susurrations distorting memory's scabrous tentacles
 Straining to hear what we could be
 Waiting for you to come back
 I try to figure out your lexicon



Untitled #88 ||

88. The night owls in my head are throwing a house party
Screeching and hooting to the sparkle grunge
Electricity of synaptic stars
Their wing flappin' and claw scratchin' dance kicks up
The spider dust of memories
Uninvited ghosts reminding me of you
I was bewitched and bewildered
Not bothered by being in the sidecar
of our atheistic motorcycle ride
Through midnight city streets
Never questioning the walls erected
No matter how wrong or weirdly angled
I just let you think like you did
Hear what you heard we were
Perhaps this is why we crashed
Or perhaps it was that damned cat
Doomed to be disruptive to the traffic of wild things
Wintering through the dread of day's end
Burning through the heart of us
The only charm to calm the vampiric thrill
Rearview mirror thoughts will resurrect us
The party's spoiled.
The owls come home to roost.



'006

Ronald H. Bass

Ronald H. Bass is the author of *To My 25th Century Biographers: Selected Poetry and Prose 1970-2022*, published by Approximetrix Press in 2023. His previous book, *The Velveeta Underground*, is a collection of short stories and one-act plays published in 2006 as part of the Erotic Authors Association's Signature Series. He is currently assembling *Talk of the Town*, a collection of short stories with a tentative early 2025 publication date.

The Secrets Locked In Chiron's Brain ||

Attach a lien to Nestor's flaming coil;
Who is the lead, who is the comic foil?
A talent for deception cannot vary
But for the raging thrust and tragic parry
Of penitents tricked into chains of gloom
That lead directly back into the womb.
Can we defy the gods who seem to blink
When creatures they created dare to think
And gaze on planets in a distant realm?
You stand unshaken, steady at the helm,
To scry the secrets locked in Chiron's brain
And make them dance and sing in our terrain:
Without evidence pointing to the contrary,
It behooves the prudent poet to be merry.



postscript

From **C. D. Johnson**, *Editor-In-Chief*

this has been one of the most trying books for me to work on to date, even if it is one of the prettiest. Not because of the work itself. Not that difficult. But because of unusual scads of a consociation of poets who decided to just not follow the guidelines, or even bothered to read them. My submission editors had to refer back to me far more than they usually would when those poems came pouring in. Or not. Lowest contributor "product" numbers we've had in five years.

My 9th-grade English teacher said to me once, she said, «Poets are jerks!» — and encouraged me not to become one. «Become a novelist, instead. Novelists are GOOD people. Poets are psychotic.»

All of them? Put a pin in that...

I would assume she thought that poetry would make me mentally ill, or something. Though, as a vindication of her, a lot of it does drive me crazy.

The point of the Postscript is to

summarize my experience taking on this particular project, with the anticipation that someone reading this, if anyone bothers to read it at all, gathers something of use from it. Something that at the very least makes them think about what has happened. I mean, ALL of our names and artistry has been entered into the record of human history through page and ink. Something that very few people ever experience, even if it seems as though it's a regular occurrence in our culture. These days, far fewer of those people are poets. After all, what does a poet know that they need to share with such clever people in the world?

This analysis is what brought about a remembrance of Rachel Korn.

When I was growing up, my mother had more Jewish friends than she did Black friends. I think it was because she always felt that she was being judged by other people in her "tribe" unfairly because of her choices in life. She didn't care much about family, or religion, or culture. She really only cared about money. And I think,

in her somewhat broken and, yes, ignorant way, she thought her wealthy Jewish friends would understand that better than her poorer extended family would. It also made her somewhat prejudiced against poor Blacks; but that's another poem for another day.

At eight, I was already writing poetry; and on one particular day, my mother and a Jewish friend of hers were having a conversation at the kitchen table about Rachel Korn, the poet. And them mentioning that she was a poet perked my ears. A real, live poet! Not a long-dead one. I don't remember most of the conversation because it went over my head. But somewhere around that time, 47 years ago, I had become somewhat morally conscious as a result of having seen Star Wars that year, and my cousin Terrell and I getting into a big fight over who had the best ethical strategy, or "swank" as we called it: the Empire or the Rebels. For me, the rebels in Star Wars were "awoke", back when that phrase actually meant something. It meant not just being self-aware, but aware in a way in which you understood what was going on around you, the good, the bad, and the ugly.

And here I was, a few months later, listening to a conversation about a poet who said: The poet struggles

«...between justice and injustice, between purity and impurity...» — As does the Jedi Knight!

In my eight-year-old mind's eye, what a hero, the Poet! They fight not with lightsabers, but with words. A different kind of "Force".

Anyway, weird things make up the adolescent conscience, for sure. All I know is, much later when my English teacher said that poets are jerks (and I know she wanted to say something worse, for whatever reason), I was ready with my comeback:

«Poets aren't bad, Mrs. Farina. The ideologues are.»

She had nothing else to say after that. For fear that, at eight years old, I might use another big word like "ideologue" — that she didn't understand.

And with that, I kind of understand why poets don't follow the rules. But... my teacher was right. We ARE all jerks! And jerks are good people.



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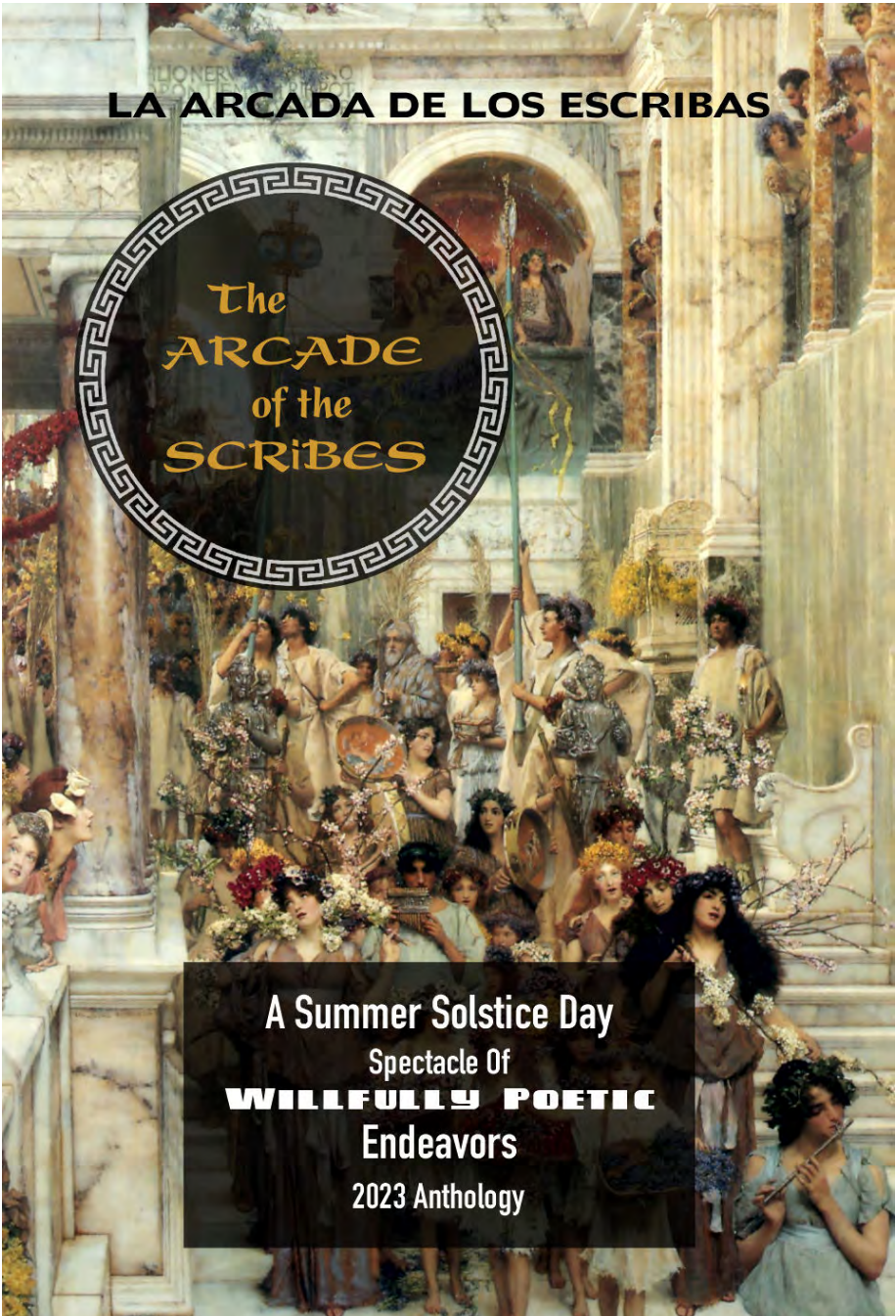
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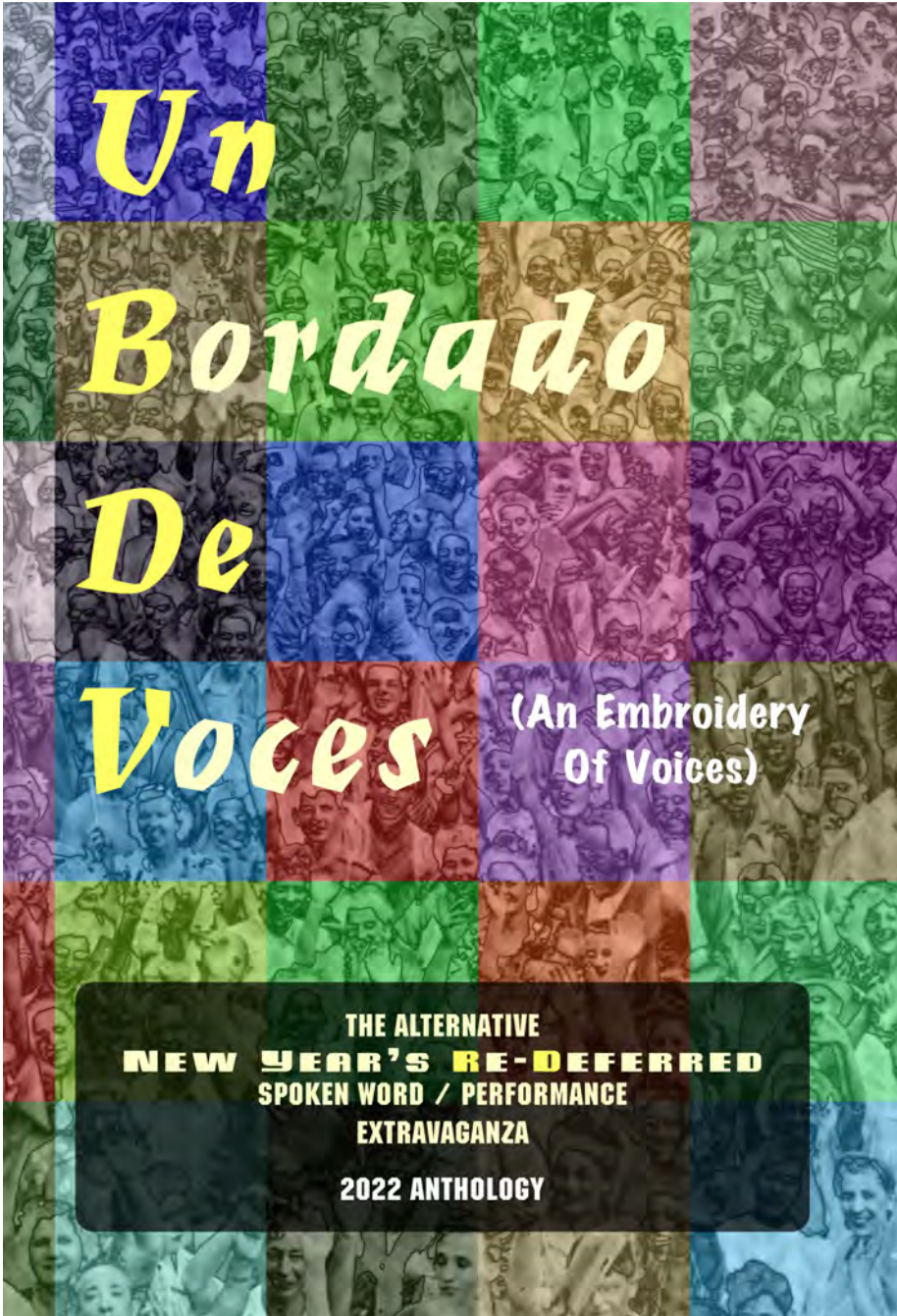
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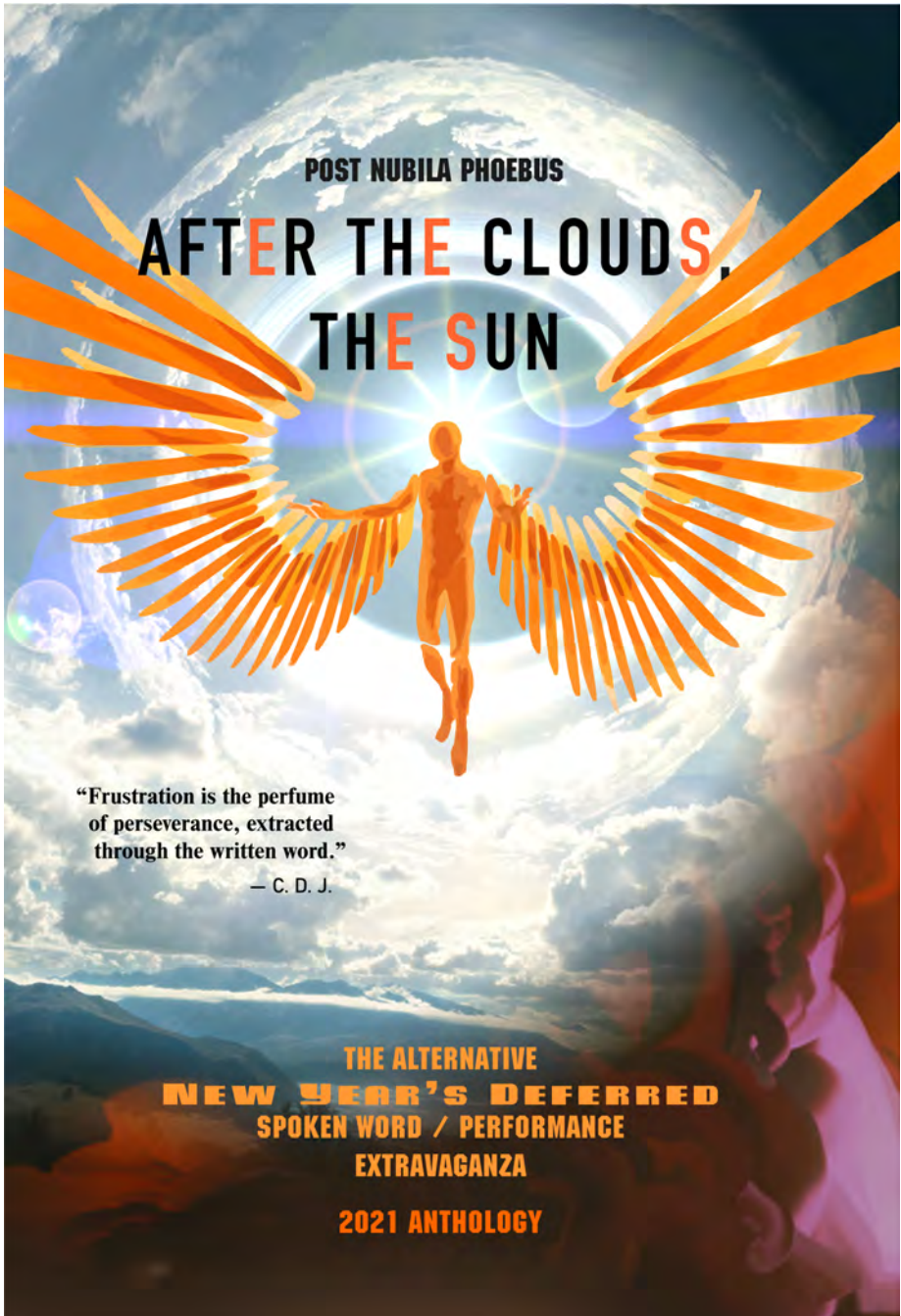
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Mild blushing goddess,
hail!”**

- William Somerville

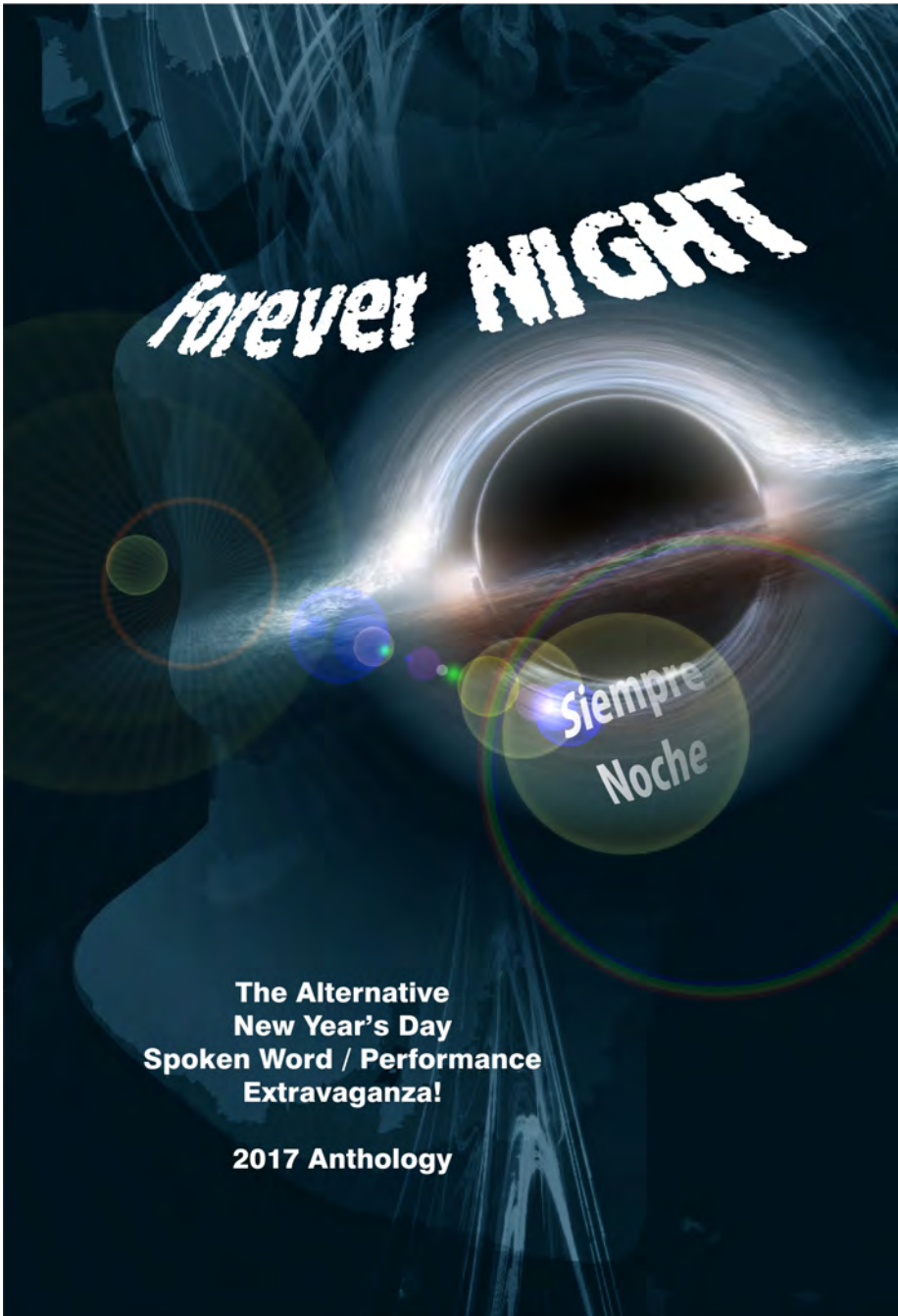


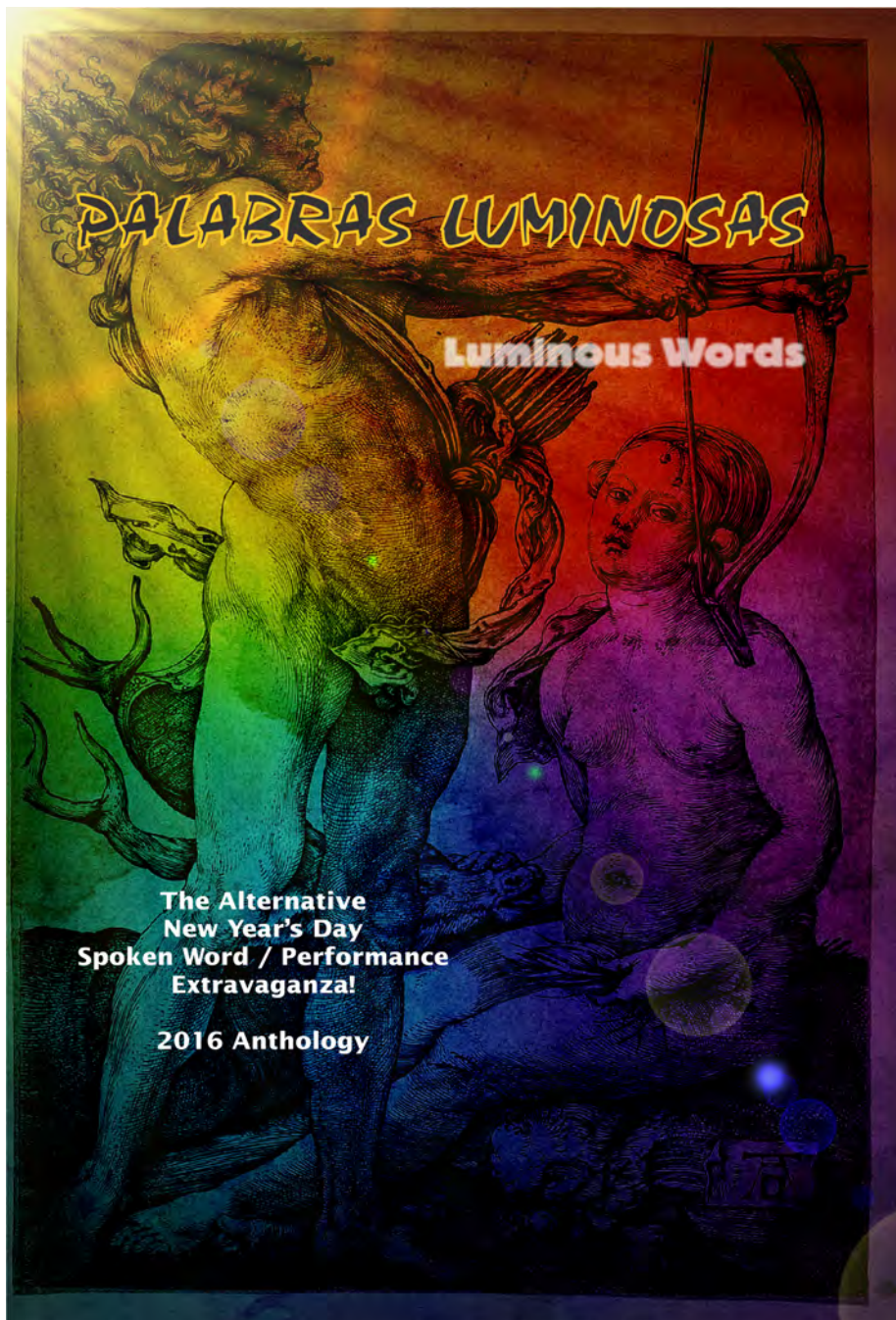
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