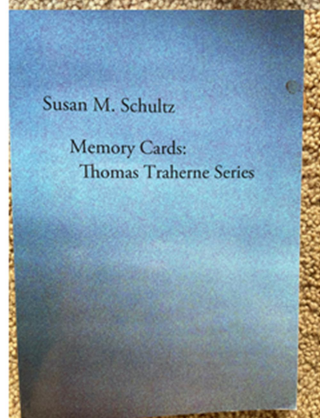
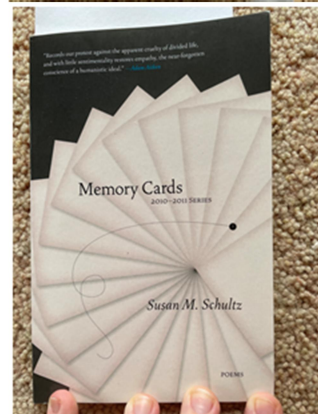
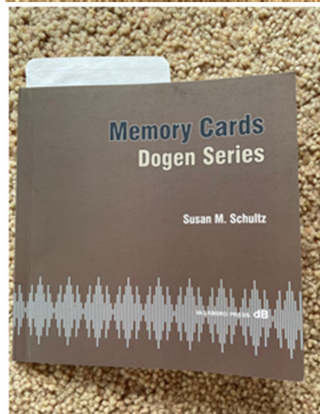
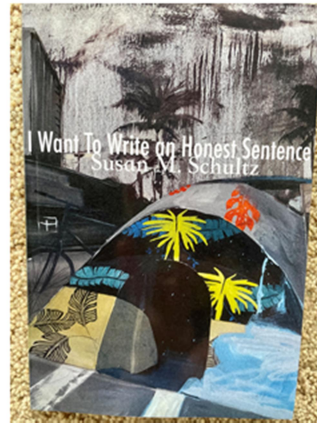
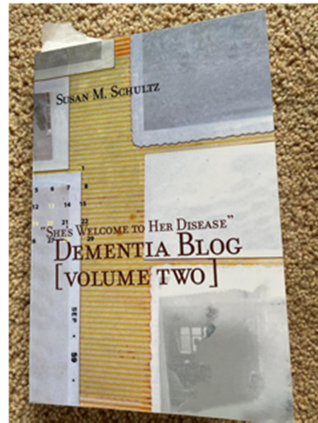


Selected Poems

Susan Schultz

[read for The MUD Parcel Reading Series, May 15, 2022]

Covers of books read from



Lenin on a bench beside a lake disturbed Adrenaline-drenched vet on a bench at Waikīkī calls in airstrikes on an imaginary phone. The youngish man in Bob Marley shirt at Zippy's carries a cane; a scar runs below his right ear down to his shoulder. (Lyndon Johnson's appendectomy.) But for the tourists, no low-tech genocide museum. The bucolic field that once was Dachau, before Dachau became the local industry. The first symptom of PTSD is often a TRO. I was astonished by a man with gray hair on a moped in Siem Riep. *He was not the man for* egrets, or egress. No matter what, sentences cohere, bunch, refuse to budge, resist the lack of transition. A Vietnam vet tore all the yellow ribbons off a hillside in Kailua. *I enjoy my anger management classes.* The doctor told me to take it out on my pillow. When I tried to vent, she said I was complicit, didn't like my sense of humor. My friend heard the shots in Makiki. *Don't take this wrong, but he was a nice guy.*

FOR ADAM AITKEN

22 AUGUST 2010

DeBaggio/Oppen: An Alzheimer's Writing Experiment

never the chess game the checker game
The words are under control but letters squirm.
Juggler, why need I invent so much
I have searched for potent words

in the back yard tongueless
Words dance away seductively
on the beach in the hissing surf
I don't know don't know I have to be careful

Tyger still burning in me burning
I can spell the word "dying" but I do not know what it means
to become old the innocence I am someone else looking
at me The old man In the mirror Startles Me

But the young man In the photograph
Is stranger Still.
I struggle to spell the word "hour."
And cannot bear to speak Cut my legs off but don't

take away my ability to write. --'You cannot Imagine',
he said, 'What has Been happening To me--'
I am unconsciously mixing words: our and out,
would and wood, me and be.

the saving ray of strangeness
saving ray of exile
ray of darkness
I will sing until no word is left.

Lost and fearful. I wake up hiccupping with fear.
I dreamed one night I was in a house near here
tho I cannot find it. I was lost
and they could not guide me wandering foreigner

Alzheimer's is like trying to describe air. the finches
yell us us us does their language contain them
I must now be done with writing and lick words instead.
whereupon curious archangels begin to watch

--Saturday, January 29, 2011

Note: Arial text comes from Thomas DeBaggio's *Losing My Mind: An Intimate Look at Life With Alzheimer's* (NY: The Free Press, 2002). Oppen's Courier words come from *New Collected Poems* (NY: New Directions, edited by Michael Davidson).

Is the heart of poetry a stillness? At the telephone's other end, I'm here and then she's not. Just shut up and listen!

Jimmy Stewart yells on her television.

—Have you eaten, Mom?

—

—How's the weather?

—

—Are you there, Mom?

—

—I love you, Mom. I love you, Mom. I'll call back soon.

26 APRIL 2011

There is a world of sentient beings in fire. He approaches from the basketball courts, across the parking lot, calls out to us. What are your names, he asks, his right hand stuck out. Just the first, I won't remember the last. His shirt as open as his eyes. We shake his hand, offer up our names. I turn to see him kneeling in the parking lot behind me, forehead to the asphalt, singing to Jesus. Ecstasy, Glenn suggests, or meth. Bipolar, says Bryant. Assign them a name, his wide-open eyes. We see every day what we fail to notice: cloud, sky, red gas can. Title the poem so it can be hand-held, like a dog's rubber toy or a video cam. The dog eats dirt, pees on the deck. We forgive him because he's old.

— 24 JUNE 2014

40

Socrates: *"who would have thought there were so many things in the world which I do not want!"* Our cat lurches a zigzag jig from maroon blanket to kitchen to carpet. Restlessness is a sign, I read. He propels himself toward the door, as if momentum were a kind of direction. It's raining, so he can't find his sun spot. He peers out the louvered window beside our shoes. I do not want him to die. I do not want him to live. I do not want for not wanting.

~20 February 2015

44

For all Eternity is at once in Him, both the empty durations before the World was made, and the full ones after. Between before and after is this last day. There's a round stain on my meditation cushion where the cat peed. It forms a perfect circle, a knot of black thread precisely at its center. A tuft of his orange fur shows at 9 o'clock, a wisp of dead grass just past noon. There is no calendar for poems, I write, only artifice. But this day will end when the vet comes with her needle. These will be your traces, body elements, the odd fruits of your dying. In Lawrence, an admirer preserved William Burroughs' turd and put it on display. Matter matters, but not in that way. Om mane padme hung.

*For Tortilla, with love
~28 February 2015*

12.

Time does us violence; it is the only violence. Near Disney World, her father screamed they were going to die if they didn't get the exit right. It's not time that confuses us, but place. There's no telling the squares apart, the one where you visit Mickey Mouse, or the other where your soldier gets blown up by an IED. Mickey lives in a safe house on the perimeter. Children rush to him as if he were the Pope in velvet slippers, gently touching the hems of his costume. But her father walks the Kingdom's streets knowing each house hides a man with a gun. Memory is a protectorate he left long ago. When she says she wants to write about this, he asks why. To save our family, she says. It's a small world after all.

--8 May 2016

I want to write an honest sentence. Somewhere in Pennsylvania, men and women embrace AR-15s, wear golden Burger King crowns as they renew their vows. A white dress signifies lack of wound, virginity in the anthropocene. The building where a massacre unfolded will be torn down, boost to the local economy. Doing and undoing participate in the same dance, making harm in order to unmake mortar, as if to replace the building were to take away its history. (My mother asked where the Bastille was, and someone pointed to the ground.) I wonder about the flowers left on H3 beside the drop. When a woman at the retirement home said none of the windows opened, another-an Englishwoman with a French name-muttered, "they don't want us committing suicide." Her name means "flower." I saw a young man on the shoulder at that spot, his eyes broken, but I can't read words written on the pole in black marker. To wound is to make blossom; the exit from an AR-15 is the size of an orange. I take this gun to be my legally wedded spouse. I take it in my bed and perform erotic feats, nuzzling it as it warms to my touch. The spawn of my gun will have trigger finger and a perpetually open mouth. It will suck my teat until I run out of magazines, then point its tiny head at me and explode. What a sicko.

~1 March 2018

6/12/20

The lotus bud is nearly as lovely as the blossom-to-be. Flowers, too, have their practice; our sunflower came out petal by petal, and none were yellow. The brown-orange flower winked at us, until it showed its full surprise at having opened. Its inner circle filled with bright dots, the outer like bird feathers, but no cape. The flower is not a royal plant, but ordinary. I like the dailiness of this work. The struggle to get inside the moment that hangs like water droplets on a brown railing after hard rain, to hear the petal's hinge as it opens, or the cat that scratches to get in, this is a poetics. Or a poem, and then another poem. I'm supposed to widen my focus, zooming back from a yellow dot on the flower's face to a garden of pots to mountains to island. But macro feels better at 61, like finding a droplet in the ocean, held fast by water pressure. The foam is either salt or detergent; you don't want to know because it scares you. Scab torn from skin, we see fresh blood beneath it. Everyone's freshly converted; long lines to pull on the rope around Stonewall Jackson's neck. The question of where in history we are, inside or outside or in the salt wound of it, means little. Little became X, escorted by cops from the scene of his assassination. We want our martyrs to be saints. The lives of the saints are in their absence.

Love in the Time of Alzheimer's

[Ed & Gloria snuggle on the couch:]

Ed: Arm in arm & hand in hand!
I must stay with you.

Gloria: If you get too affectionate, they'll speak to me. They did before. Maybe I should take you to your room.

[Ed murmurs in Gloria's ear, fondles her]

Gloria: We're in a public place. You're very special to me. Can I take you to your room so you can lie down? That might help.

Ed: [holds her hand and arm] It's you. You're my babe. You're the one. No one can take you.

Gloria: No one's going to take you away from me.

Ed: I have the right to love you.