


Empire Wasted: Poems

By Becca Klaver

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In *Empire Wasted*, Becca Klaver fashions a poetry of digital upheaval, dystopian feminism, and political theater.

Think of the empire waist as a dress with a lot of breathing room, in which the body can move within ample space while still remaining hidden. A comparably generous poetics suffuses Becca Klaver's *Empire Wasted*, a collection that aims to fashion for the world new space to move inside. Using technology as an instrument to stitch together materials as disparate as tweets and autobiography, this book pays homage to schools it has inherited while thrusting dizzily into its own brainy vortex.

Empire Wasted metabolizes the twentieth century into the fashionable neons of a numbing regime. In a fit of collage, the Internet speaks from its most comfortable of media troll outfits, Manhattan gleams in apocalyptic shine and false prophecy, and the 90s deploy a feminist artillery of bell-bottoms, Discmans, and snapping barrettes. As readers, we witness a poetry that shimmies away from its capitalist, patriarchal heirs in favor of a feminist documentary lyric, a poetry that opts to stay in its room all night with Frank O'Hara, Bernadette Mayer, and *Reality Bites* rather than reenter the party booming below.

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Editorial Review

Review

Empire Wasted is an astonishing book, anthemic in its catchiness and the power of its arguments. From the suite of "Decade Zero," the years so vacant they don't even have a name, and the concomitant attraction of the very dreariest productions of the 90s, through to the neo-di Prima fervor of the revolutionary letters, it hits all the right notes. While this historical drift, this gathering political consciousness is one we see around here in the SF Bay Area every day, the difference in the NYC version is fascinating-especially with that Midwestern twist in the narrative-the Gatsby twist. Becca Klaver has written a book for her generation that manages, through its direct appeal, to speak to many older and younger than her years. -Kevin Killian Get out your Ozymandias hot pants and your Warhol tote bag: Becca Klaver is throwing a rooftop party for the end of the world. Everyone's there, scrolling through the Pentagon's Instagram feed and moshing to the sound of TV going digital. These poems whiplash through the last three decades, through the American landscape, through the songs stuck in your head, Klaver taking us from the last nostalgia to the New Quotidian. These are our anthems, bitches. Turn them up. -MC Hyland What is America? And what is New York City? Where are we in history, and how will these days, years and decades live on? With Empire Wasted, Becca Klaver asks these impossible-to-answer questions and more, taking us on a road trip across America and across the shaky threshold from the last century to the present one. Recalling Notley and Didion, Klaver gets "bad directions" that lead through a portal "to a small-town / diorama of America Past." In "At Night the States," Notley writes, "at night the states / I forget them or I wish I was there." In a decade in a century in a country when we were told to "never forget," Klaver remembers more than what she's instructed to. Like pictures in a shoebox or a Facebook album, she shuffles through memories and snapshots both personal and country-sized, looking for truth, looking for home, finding it nowhere and everywhere. -Marisa Crawford Becca Klaver's Empire Wasted is an ode to a forever evolving and surviving New York City. These poems waltz with nostalgia. Along with Klaver, we slouch back towards the 1990s. We get drunk in dark bars when all the electricity goes out. We count down to the year 2000. Dead cell phone in hand, Klaver celebrates the writers and revolutionaries who inhabited the city before her. The television has gone to static and we're out on the fire escape, the whole world heating up below our dangling feet. -Lily Ladewig"

About the Author

Becca Klaver is the author of the poetry collections *Empire Wasted* (Bloof Books, 2016) and *LA Liminal* (Kore Press, 2010) as well as several chapbooks. She was a founding editor of the feminist press Switchback Books and is coeditor of the multimedia poetry anthology *Electric Gurlisque* (Saturnalia Books, 2017). She attended the University of Southern California (BA), Columbia College Chicago (MFA), and Rutgers University (PhD), and in the spring of 2017 will be the Arts & Sciences Distinguished Visiting Writer at Bowling Green State University. She lives in Brooklyn, where she cohosts the podcast *The Real Housewives of Bohemia*. beccaklaver.com

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