



Fall 2020 Poetry Workshop – Urban Love Poem

- Sister Sarah Joan:* I read your college essay. You clearly love Sacramento.  
*Lady Bird:* I do?  
*Sister Sarah Joan:* You write about Sacramento so affectionately and with such care.  
*Lady Bird:* Well, I was just describing it.  
*Sister Sarah Joan:* Well, it comes across as love.  
*Lady Bird:* Sure, I guess I pay attention.  
*Sister Sarah Joan:* Don't you think maybe they're the same thing—love and attention?

from *Lady Bird* (2017), dir. Greta Gerwig

While mankind feels love as a blaze, wild and loose, the Bible says, “love is patient, love is kind. It does not boast, it is not proud.” Certainly, love is a spectrum, including numerous definitions and variations; in light of this poetry workshop about love for our city, I would like to define love as a slow fire, bright and consistent, because what is love if not attention duly paid to someone whom we gravitate to or a place without which we would not be ourselves?

We will look at apparently simple poems about cities around the world (San Francisco, New York & Shanghai) and understand some ways of conveying and sustaining one's love for a place. We will focus on concrete nouns, close observation, and some moves which help ease a poem into the figurative. We will also look at how the poets move away from their initial subjects (the cities) and point at something more substantial, something the cities illuminate.

Texts to be discussed:

1. “Urban Love Poem” by Marilyn Chin  
<https://www.poetryinamerica.org/episode/urban-love-poem/>
2. “First Warm Morning, Amsterdam Avenue” by Marcus Jackson  
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/09/02/first-warm-morning-amsterdam-avenue>
3. “Shanghai” by Megan Fernandes  
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/07/06/shanghai>

Craft to be discussed:

1. Concrete nouns vs abstractions
2. Appositives as revision
3. Anthropomorphism
4. Descriptions & Meditations