

**MAKING
NATIONAL POETRY MONTH
GREAT AGAIN!**



EILEEN R. TABIOS

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**An April 2017 Biography of
No. 45, As Witnessed in
the Convex Mirror**

Eileen R. Tabios

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and
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Polychrome woodblock print; ink and color on paper.
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Author's Note

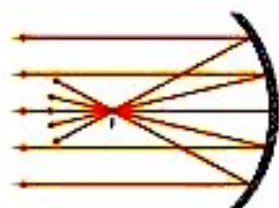
April is National Poetry Month in the United States. Many poets choose to celebrate or commemorate the month by writing a poem a day.

I chose to do so for the first time in April 2017. Given the events that unfolded during this time period, it was inevitable that some poems came to form a biography of the 45th President of the United States.

I also wrote April 2017's poems as a tribute to John Ashbery by referencing his poem "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror." In part, this means that for all of the poems, the first or first and (parts of the) second lines are taken from John Ashbery's poem.

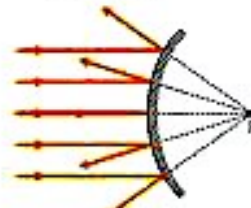
Curved Mirrors

Concave



"converging" mirror

Convex



"diverging" mirror

April 7

**Witnessed in the Convex Mirror:
Trumping Syria**

Tomorrow is easy, but today is uncharted which means the days need not be desolate though the President just bombed another country whose name makes it distant, thus theoretical. *It's all perspective*, you sigh, tired knowing the thought is not original. But this is what happens when your President bombs another country—the Poem, exhausted, resorts to clichés and lacks the requisite imagery.

April 20

Witnessed in the Convex Mirror: Atonal

How many people came and stayed a certain time
uttered light or dark speech that became part of you—
how often were you so apart from this inevitable world?
There, the street sign beckons: PLEASURE, ONE MILE
AHEAD. Beneath the sign, air shimmers from the baking
deer poop littering the ground. Not summer, but already
hot, for this is the outcome of human history: overheated
ado over, not exactly nothing but, not much. I only
can return to what I've reluctantly learned: the wrinkles

on

not just my flesh but on all bodies have *all* become hard-
earned. "Aging gracefully" is the new relict, the grail
for archaeologists sifting through sharp rocks, bitter ash
behind pressed lips, gritty dust, self-mocking desire
snakes in camouflage—all for the hope of sparkling gold
and gems despite the lack of lingering chords of music
even the most severe or faint of atonal notes . . .

April 10

Witnessed in the Convex Mirror: *Marhaba Shayrat*

The words are only speculations
(from the Latin *speculum*, mirror)
But beware: we need you, harbormaster
as not mere fog lurking between unread
pages. Not to mention, the fish are drowning
from a word whose articulation surfaces
its scent: *diesel*. A fish gasps despite its
gills fashioned from a rainbow's drop
-pings, the latter an act that unfolds from
its velvet bed when pity leaves abstraction
for *Morality*: a lesson manifested by
the boy who stuck his finger in a hole
For certain objects exist in the service
of anguish: for the possibility of
breakage, of break

-ing, like: Hello, You
who I did not love despite your bouquets
Hello, _____ [insert a country('s name)]:
Have my Tomahawk cruise missiles
reached your family, so far away, so far

April 12

Witnessed in the Convex Mirror: FATTED

Like a dozing whale on the sea bottom
in relation to the heavily-mortgaged tycoon
with tiny appendages napping on his yacht
on top of, not with or within, water
you lurk behind your Papa's shoulders
or behind the doors to an office for which
you were not elected. Evening brings your
whine: "Papa, I want this and I want it *now!*"
What a throwback you are with your
coiffed blonde and thickened hair. You
want, ergo, the sky erupts with tears of
subsonic missiles and now the landscape
is as grey as the whale your brothers
once speared from a curiosity over blubber
because all of you were raised by a toupee
lover who cannot spell "White Privilege."
It is spelled with letters, not witches, despite
the alternative fact of your smile made
in China, where the dozen thin children
sharing the same penny you tossed
point at the poster with your photo-shopped
face but hold their spit because within it
there may still exist rare protein which they
need—a *desperation* you and your bloated
Papa are not blessed to understand.

April 17

Witnessed in the Convex Mirror: Military Philosophy

On a pedestal of vacuum, a ping-pong ball
secure on its jet of water: make your path
a circle and, Grasshopper, you shall never
be lost. Rain ceased, but so much water
still flows on the streets, releasing con-
crete from their steel bindings. To be
suspended in confusion is to be protected
For one may colonize the confused, but
never recruit their loyalty. Confusion,
loyalty—both are constructs that cancel
each other. Learn from me, General Grass
-hopper: you want them fully comprehending
when you invade. You don't want them
thinking you and your soldiers are mere ghosts

April 27

Witnessed in the Convex Mirror: False Meteors

In due course: more keeps getting included without adding to the same: a wrinkled woman berated me at the check-out line for taking up too much time. I clutched a pink coupon worth \$2.99—it was worth my mind's eye but not hers. "It's only \$2.99!" But it's that diminished care, I wanted to say, that's causing islands of plastic to sprout in the Pacific, Atlantic, Arctic and spaces in-between. Dede Surinaya* surfed a coast of Java and the wall his would-be ecstatic fingers touched arose from sunlit turquoise water, yes, but also fragmented Pepsi bottles Garuda peanut bags, and old red "On" buttons for releasing nuclear bombs. Instead, I told the stranger—a respected elder to no one—"You are as ugly as your heart." Her diminish-ments and mine bounced off each other's and the equation of human progress that sent a man to the moon. Our words floated up from the store's animal-rank air and now revolve around our shared planet, creating their own isolated islands in space that, too often, crash down to earth, pretending vainly to be flashy meteors

* from "How The Oceans Became Choked With Plastic" by Dominique Mosbergen, *The Huffington Post*, April 27, 2017

About the Poet

“What’s interesting about writing off from John Ashbery’s poem is that I don’t recognize the voice that surfaces. But of course it is *my* voice since I’m the author. I welcome this result: I don’t mind not recognizing myself when I write poetry.”

—offered during the readings at Berkeley and New Orleans

For More Information: <https://eileenrtabios.com>



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