

that's what
you get

poems

Sheila Maldonado

Here's a fun fact: Honduras in Spanish means "depths," which is relevant here, where the profound reveals itself on the poems' surfaces, vibrating with sonic and electric currents. Maldonado thrills with the contradictions in New York City life, where the people, in mourning over another victim of police brutality, can take over a plaza named to honor a colonizer; where the laundromat offers communion and the subway a site for Emersonian contemplation; where laying on your couch very well may be the ultimate act of resistance; where you could be a Central American Quaker in a Caribbean borough grooving to an Icelandic dance queen's DJing. Spunk, grit, the real deal, that's what you get here. —**Mónica de la Torre**

Using humor, language play, and innovative visual strategies, Sheila Maldonado takes on the full range of human experience, from familial love to pain and grief in the wake of racial injustice—"history a fugitive in the womb." *that's what you get* is a wild ride, a sensate ride, a ride of force and unflinching honesty. It's also a reinvention of Frank O'Hara's talking poems, but in Maldonado's poems there's something at stake, a steady beautiful rage brewing just below the surfaces. —**Dawn Lundy Martin**

Sheila Maldonado's poems are imbued with her signature humor, self-deprecation, and truth, always. Her newest collection is full of beautifully languaged, clear-headed, intertwined tales of gentrification, family, and work, as both a poet and struggling teacher, threaded with themes of longing and belonging, the loss of love, an ongoing "resist/submit" exhaustion and rage, and the injustices and madness of our social and political times. —**Lydia Cortés**



Sheila Maldonado is a Pisces from Coney Island. Her family is from Honduras. *that's what you get* is her second book of poems.



Poetry / US \$16.00
BrooklynArtsPress.com



that's what you get

Sheila Maldonado

Brooklyn Arts Press • New York

Also by Sheila Maldonado

one-bedroom solo

that's what you get

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ISBN-13: 978-1-936767-59-5

Cover and interior design by Shanna Compton. Edited by Joe Pan.

Author photo by Nikki Johnson.

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Published in the United States of America by:

Brooklyn Arts Press

154 N 9th St #1

Brooklyn, NY 11249

www.BrooklynArtsPress.com

info@BrooklynArtsPress.com

Distributed to the trade by Small Press Distribution / SPD

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:

Names: Maldonado, Sheila, author.

Title: *That's what you get* : (poems) / Sheila Maldonado.

Description: First edition. | Brooklyn, NY : Brooklyn Arts Press, [2021] |

Summary: "The second collection of poetry by Sheila Maldonado"--

Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020017507 | ISBN 9781936767595 (paperback)

Subjects: LCGFT: Poetry.

Classification: LCC PS3613.A435224 T47 2020 | DDC 811/.6--dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020017507>

First Edition

Para Mami,
Vilma Maldonado

I'm not good or real. I'm evil and imaginary.
—Karen Walker, *Will & Grace*

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poet in a shade of jade

I am so jealous of how poor you are
of how you are poor
your particular stilo pobre
The way you put no cash and
no money together is uncanny
This aesthetic
lack of change combined
with lack of dollars
is very difficult to duplicate
and I hate you for that

I was gonna go hear you read
from your new collection of
unpaid bills
just the other day
but you get readings
all the time
you have your pick
of not being paid
or being unpaid
You get to ride
the subway back and forth
on your own dime
and you buy your
performance alcohol

I'll make it one of these days
give you dirty looks
as you read and rake in
your air bucks

What I look forward to most
is not tolerating
how you hoard your poverty
tell no one your secret
you must have some malefactor
mentor
mentiroso
who further mystifies
the acquisition of wealth
and points you in the direction
of the dead end

epic laundry

a former nonprofit staffer
turned real estate agent tells me
laundry is too political
he sends it out now
he can afford to

I am still in the laundry struggle
the managing of the cloth
the managing of the time
it takes to manage the cloth
the hard labor of the destitute

heavy lifting and carting
into a top floor elevator
out the door to the street
home washer/dryers
the stuff of TV fantasy

at the laundromat I am confused
for the worker women
in my uniform of invisibility
braless in an old dark t-shirt
and high-water sweats

hair pulled back strays flying loose
my robust skin of servitude
the washerwoman by a river
scraping rags on a board
changing your dollar for quarters

I don't have any on me
I don't know what is wrong
with the machine
don't ask me what I charge
by the pound

I have my own epic laundry
like debt weeks of neglect
panty shortages and crises
all the holey t-shirts
that must be preserved

I am here for my zen penance
my workout in the back sweating
deep in the dryer heat
headphones on dancing
as I manipulate my rags

one owner admiring my zeal
showed me her tricks
pulled me and my fitted bedsheet
out onto the tiled floor
drawing me into her secret fold

I have since betrayed her
with a facility closer to my home
my burden too great to wheel
three extra blocks forsaking
communion for convenience

there I wash and fold with true
toilers nonowners fabric slaves
loveless and rightfully so
we share no confidences
only questions like complaints

my devotion to repetition
precision creases
organized by roy g biv
all underground all unnoticed
my order private

stop asking me to do yours

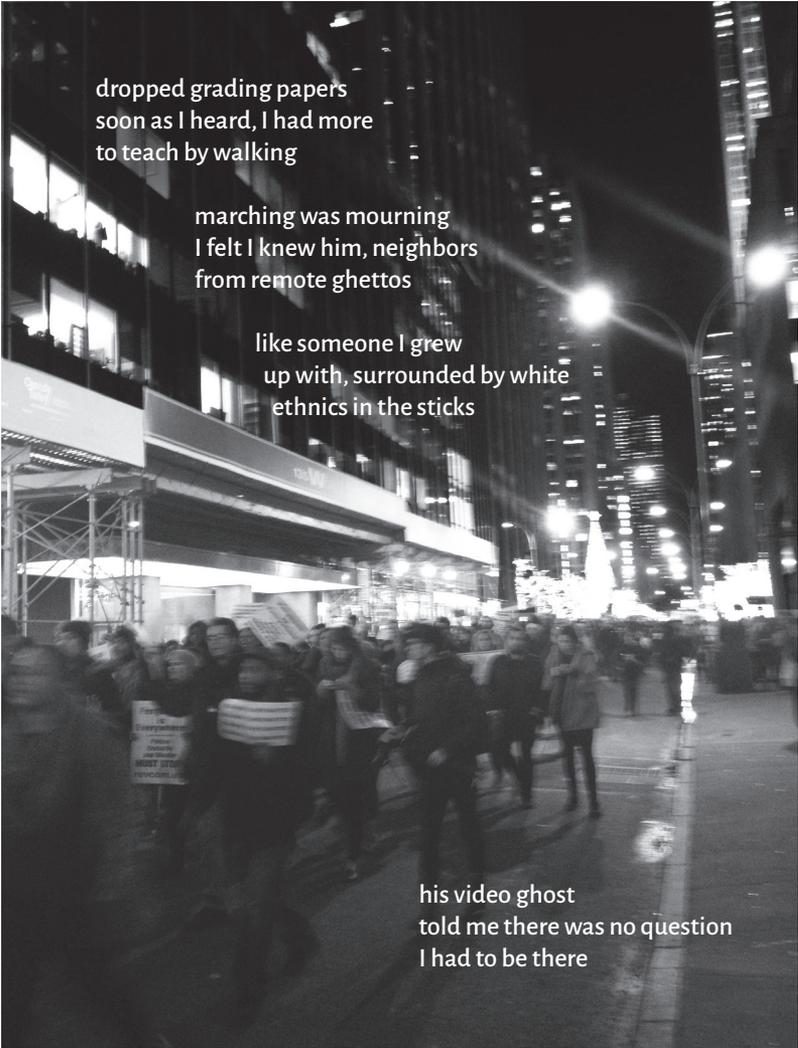
submit / resist

submit to the line of students as questions
resist their tall tales
submit to the stage of the classroom
resist the despair of unpreparedness
the blank stares blank papers
submit to the penal scholastic
resist the hourly rage
submit time sheet essay humility
resist the conspiratorial bank
remit subsist
submit to the clutch of the breast
resist the song of the uterus
submit to the will of the crotch
to the ass jet to the bike seat
resist memory failure humidity
submit to the one breeze
resist gerunds
submit to the peripathetic
resist the howl of the building don
submit to the raindrops on the air conditioner
resist the caffeine tremor
submit to the sweat lodge
resist the butter cookie
submit to the butter cookie
resist the baby squeal behind the neighbor door
submit to architecture and its facades
resist gatekeepers
submit to disorientation
to starting over and again

Garner verdict night (Dec 3 2014)

for Monica Hand

1. meeting the march at 50th and Broadway



dropped grading papers
soon as I heard, I had more
to teach by walking

marching was mourning
I felt I knew him, neighbors
from remote ghettos

like someone I grew
up with, surrounded by white
ethnics in the sticks

his video ghost
told me there was no question
I had to be there

2. sit-in at Columbus Circle

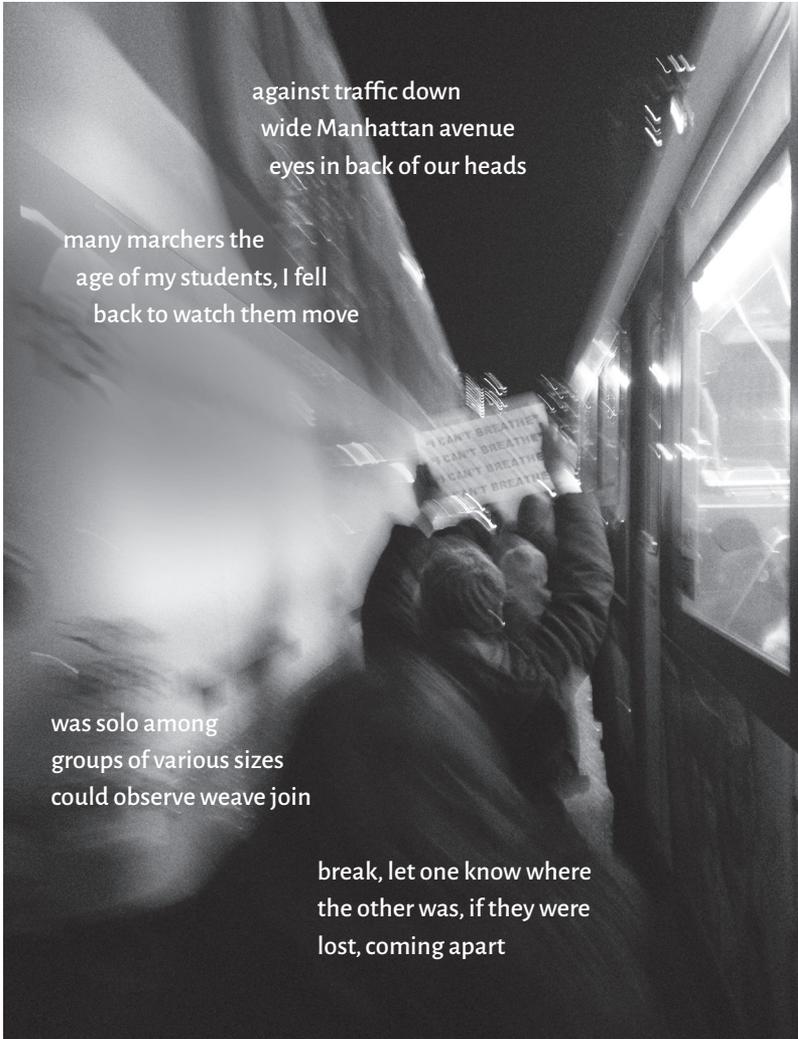
we sat down in a
crosswalk, Christmas lights of the
luxury mall winking

this couldn't be done
under Bloomberg, he corralled
blocked, barricaded

had people believing
they had to ask permission
to protest, to breathe

never felt more of this
city than when I took
my place on that road

3. between the buses down 9th



against traffic down
wide Manhattan avenue
eyes in back of our heads

many marchers the
age of my students, I fell
back to watch them move

was solo among
groups of various sizes
could observe weave join

break, let one know where
the other was, if they were
lost, coming apart

4. flag on West Side Highway

there had been honking
in solidarity on
the previous block

but here we waded
a river of cars the size of
what was gone

a police wall met
us, shields and helmets
outfit of control

before it our own
river of bodies waded pulsed
chanting his last words

