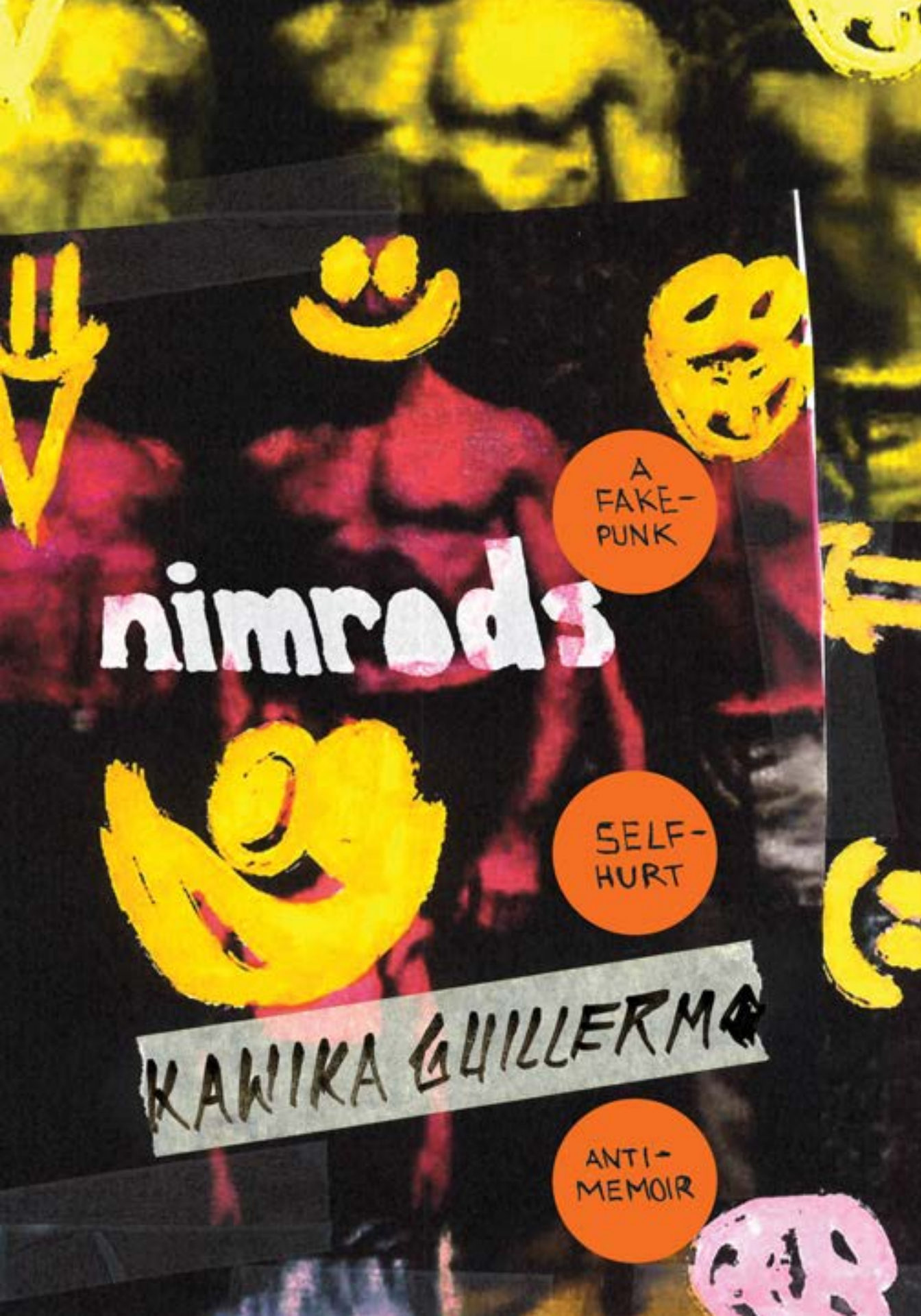




nimrods

A
FAKE-
PUNK

SELF-
HURT

KAWIKA GUILLERMA

ANTI-
MEMOIR



Kawika guillermo

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nimrods



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in loving memory of
Y-Dang Traeong
1980 - 2022

you were my spirit
my ocean
my brick of a fist

Once more
let us stroll
another shore

pray
to the seas
please

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NIMRODS

IN VOCATION 1

STROPHE: ODE TO

PATRIARCHY

NICE GUYS READ

THIS LAST 5

GET IN THE CAR 15

OMG I'M TURNING WHITE

LIKE MY DAD 25

REPUGNANT 35

SCAT 45

DOING TIME 55

DEAD ENDS 65

I HOPE YOU 85

ANTISTROPHE:

HOLY HAI BUN

SUICIDE'S LAST CALL 89

THE LAST RIDE 100

BINGE 114

ALL OUR YELLOW FEVERS 126

A PSALM OF MY MOTHER,

WHO, AFTER FIVE YEARS

DIVORCED, RETURNS TO

PORTLAND 141

TO HELL AND BACK TO

HELL AGAIN 148

LONG GONE DADDY 161

EPODE: THREE /

CORD \ DIGRESSION

SISSY / SISTER \ CIS 181

RE / CON \ SILE 193

ME / MORE \ IRE 205

ENVOI 219

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IN VOCATION

can't write for shit these days (fatherhood & covid et al.)

this book began under the smothering covers of journal sheets

this book began when my brother and I asked each other if we missed our father and we both said the same word

this book began in 2016 when my father voted for the future president

this book began in 2017 when my son was born & I promised he would never meet his grandfather

this book began in early 2019 when I believed my father's death was a blink away & he'd never be around to read it

this book began huddled in quarantine; my father in a factory

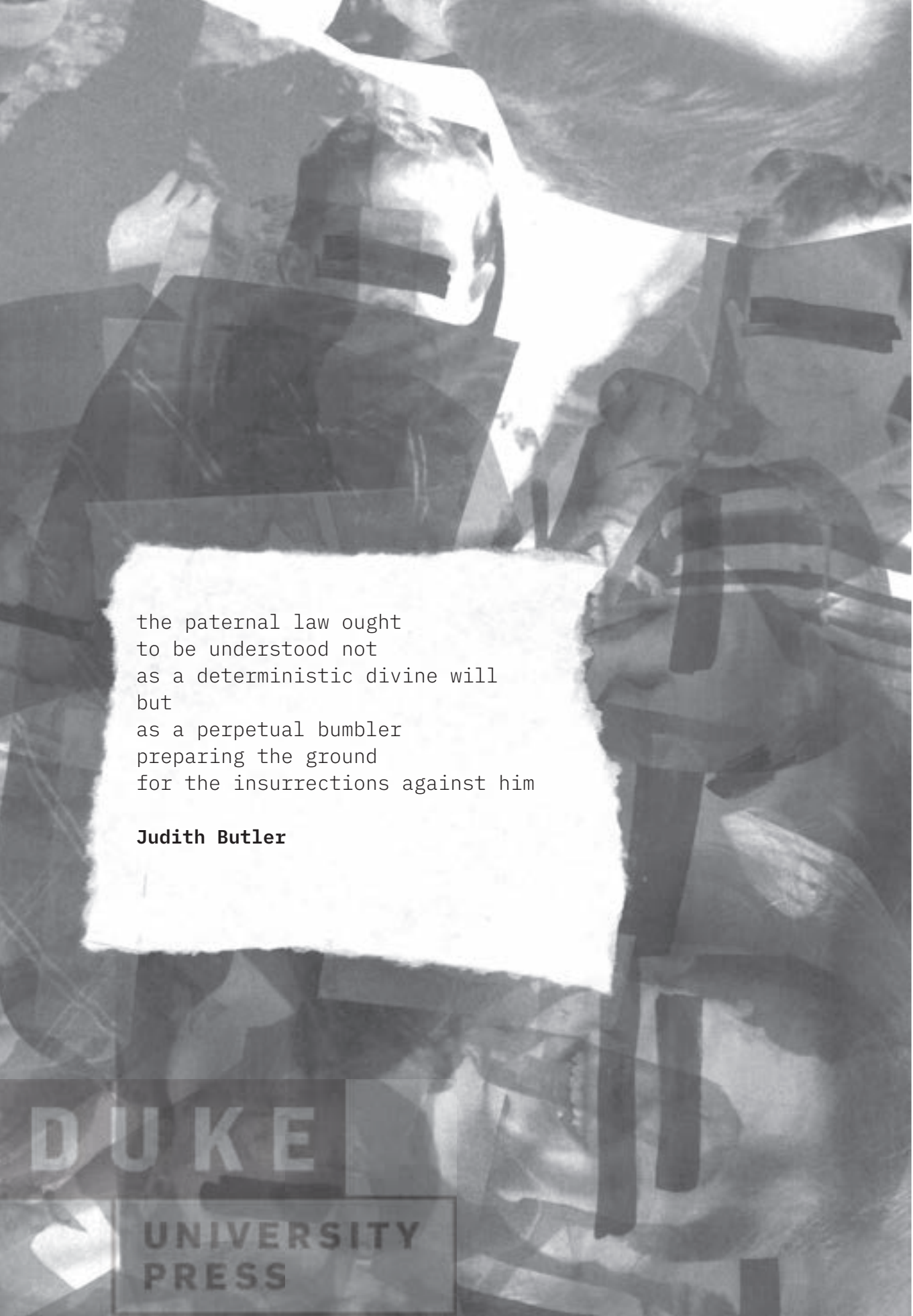
this book began in the preoccupations of the professorial confession

this book began before I was born

this book began & began & will begin again

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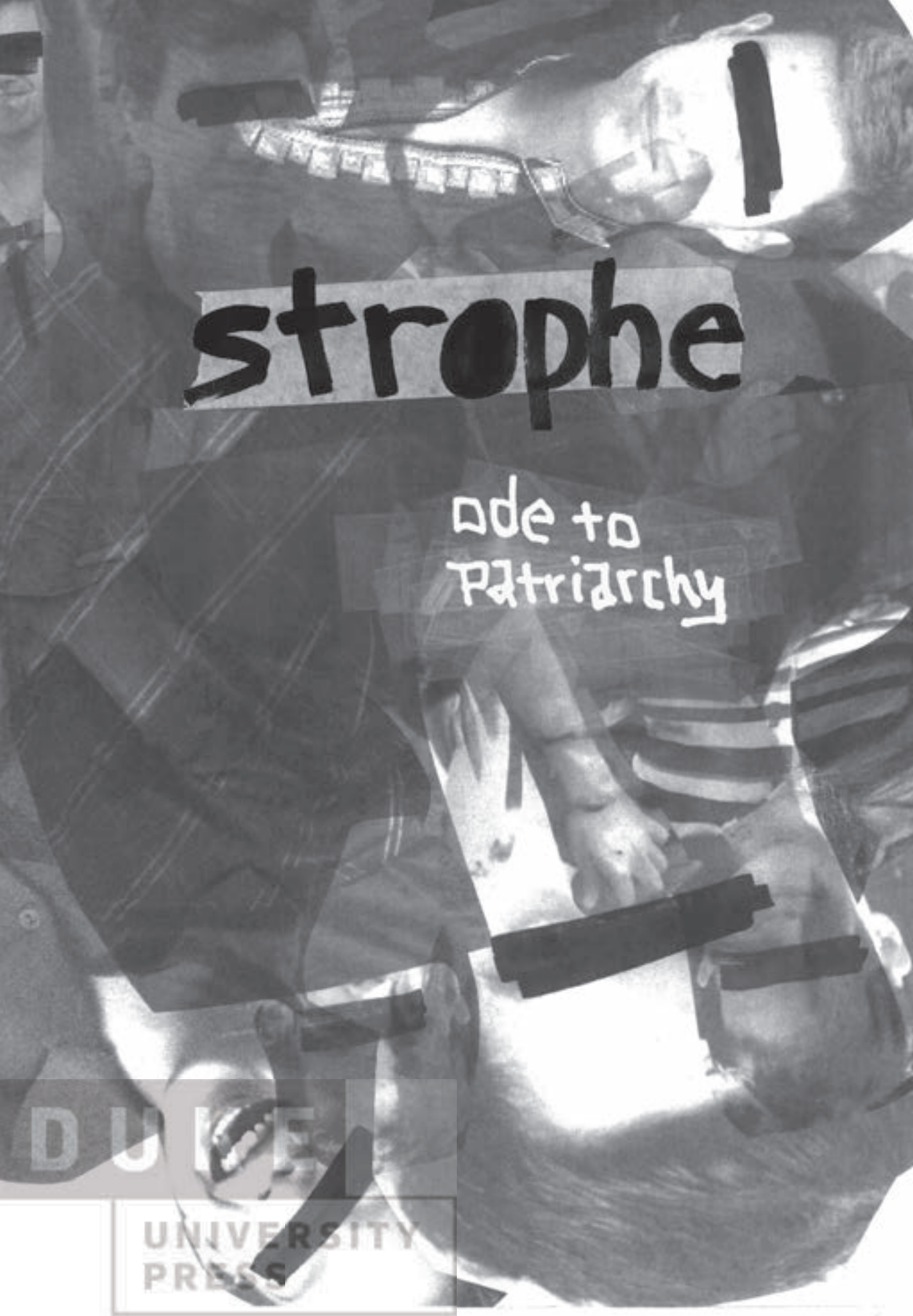


the paternal law ought
to be understood not
as a deterministic divine will
but
as a perpetual bumbler
preparing the ground
for the insurrections against him

Judith Butler

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strophe

ode to
Patriarchy

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LINE 1

NICE GUYS READ THIS LAST

I wake to my son
bleating
more goat
than child

atoms materialize in my
breath and ribs
the calf's ear
piercing whine

I catch my
self thinking
I can't do
this anymore

when will it end?
it being
fatherhood. My son
bleats

I wake

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when I learned I was going to be a father I was in hanoi quaffing bia hoi
while perched atop a red plastic stool

my

first thought was that an early reckless death was now forever off the table

I

began to hope for a girl

be

cause my child is a boy he is more likely to take after his father and take
and take but never take an affirmative step to deal with his own shit like
being the mixed-race straight-presenting white-passing all-perpetrating
son of an eye-rolling

wmaf

someone else's baggage will be forever heavier than

my

son who will come from a long line of men who die drunk and grasping at
reflections of the throbbing high

moon

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6

x
x
x
x
x
x
x
x
x
x

I lift my son. I consider saying

I LOVE YOU then

how meaningless is

I LOVE YOU he

would say

I LOVE YOU in

cessantly while tossing toys

I LOVE YOU how

I came to fear the phrase

I LOVE YOU its

intensity its expectations its constant being

I LOVE YOU keeps

you holds you would do anything any thing to save you

I LOVE YOU and

I want to shove that pacifier up your nose

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Not even a real minority. Not really even marginalized. Marks of sin,
trespass. Sooner or later.

but does he even count
as a diversity hire

and does his inner child
still cluster

How does it feel to be a problem~~a~~**atic**?

~~ur~~
/ |
hapa, traitor, bi, — blacklisted

~~the success of my~~
~~success story~~

~~tolerate my~~
~~ambiguous body~~

~~analyze my~~
~~caucasian roots~~

~~bear witness to my~~
~~background~~

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∞

x
x
x
x
x
x
x
x

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In case you didn't know, I am a professor in an Institute for Social Justice.
I make money teaching kids to hate their parents.

During my first class, I ask students to write their family histories and
explore the ways that power and resource-grabbing has permitted them
to attend this university.

I do not join them. I walk the room, check my phone, try to memorize
their names, mull over the library gardens, eye the clocktower monument to
the pioneers, and glance at an oak bench upon which a committee has paid
someone to carve the statements of refugees.

"The most surprising thing about coming to Canada was
to see a person walking ahead of me and holding open a
door until I could put my hand on it. Where I come from
people were taught to kill..."

—W—, Rwanda

"...when I moved to Vancouver, I thought that home
was a safe place, a place of prosperity. But now I
understand that home is home because of identity..."

—M—, South Sudan

"...whenever I start to complain about university work,
I think of my father and how he had to leave in the
middle of his degree because someone decided to start a
war..."

—T—, Croatia

"...while so many others came from such difficult
circumstances, I had nothing to run from, nothing to
escape."

—Chris, Canada

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the academy has taught me to isolate the past into weapons of my own making

arc

hive text stories of my family's migration from ilocos norte to hawaii
their offspring's fornications with indigenous japanese korean
cambodian black and haole people

re

silence in the face of war poverty and white supremacy carve the
past into weapons I keep in a box to pull from whenever I need a
past of seeds caught in trade winds but there is another past not
of seeds coming to root but of ships coming to settle the past of
my white grandfather who preached from a pulpit that divorce
and homosexuality were certain routes to hell the past of my uncle
who retreated from his father's insanity and died in los angeles of
hiv-related illness

no

one in the family talked about him and if asked they would get
choked up or pretend to sometimes the past is not an archive
it's the white uncle a

ski

ng you at your own grandmother's funeral how you learned to
speak english

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10

xxxxxxx

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*an o de of
debts o wed
to myself*

if a brown man falls
in a forest of white ever
greens does anyone
feel appalled?

*to whom do I owe
the power behind my voice
what strength I have become?*

hide your heart until it
grumbles like a thunder
that pounds your body
into the storm

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armor lurks below death's door

we work the floor

wake work: the work of dwelling in the wake of

*plotting, mapping, and collecting the archives of the everyday
of Black immanent and imminent death*

ode work: the work of giving honor and respect in a way that also
dismantles that honor

I do not know how to speak of the dead without the song of odes

I cannot speak of elders without counting the owed

I cannot reach the paths without anodes

without working to

strip out

every piece

of rusted ore

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12

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my son will live in the owed ac

counting for un
counted broken treaties &
counted plantation sakadas from ilocos who
counted the sugar that fed the
counted migrants of the dust-bowl plains rescued by the un
counted airplanes that
counted 7.6 million tons of explosives dropped not
counting the un
counted genocide & its unac
counted aftermath where un
counted reliance on all the isms that will guide him to
count whether or not he is a man whether he
counts in the way others
count

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someone said each kid
eliminates one book

what did I sacrifice for you?
what did you write for me?

what can storms build
out of the trees they fall?

how much slack can
we give to what writhes
at the line's end?

can new grammar
overcome the violence
of abstraction?

there is a lot
to mourn to warm to
warn

and work
to be done

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14

x
x
x
x
x
x
x
x
x
x

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ENVOI

page

- 2 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*.
- 8 W. E. B. Du Bois, “How does it feel to be a problem?”
- 8 Ellen D. Wu, “the success of a success story.”
- 9 Gray text is taken from a bench owned by UBC (outside Buchanan Tower).
- 11 Audre Lorde, *Zami*, “to whom do I owe . . . I have become?” (3).
- 12 Christina Sharpe, in italics.
- 13 Mahalo to my family in Hawai’i and all the Guillemos abroad.
- 14 Saidiya Hartman, “violence of abstraction,” in conversation with Patricia J. Saunders.
- 19 Thank you, Chanel Guillermo, who gave me the third text in gray. The rest are common sayings from friends after meeting my father.
- 20 Thank you to my teachers in Las Vegas—Marc Smereck, Anne Stevens, Vincent Perez, and Felicia Campbell—for changing my life by changing my worldview.
- 23 Thank you to my mentors and colleagues in Asia/America, too numerous to mention.
- 31 Thank you to Micheal James Drake for helping guide me through these hardships of youth.
- 36 James Joyce, “dark-plumaged dove.”
- 36 Tony Kushner, “mangled guts pretending.”
- 36 Against Me!, “rough surf on the coast,” from the song “Transgender Dysphoria Blues.”
- 36 David Henry Hwang, “big western arms.”
- 36 Susan Sontag, “the coarsest, commonest pleasures.”
- 39 Gracias to Allen Baros and other friends in Seattle who saw me through this period.

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