

December 2024

The Poetry Collection

Holiday Broadside

Featuring Aaron Shurin



ONCE . . .

Once I was a sailor in a fiction of the sea for a made-up self on a boat of text . . . I was happy as a comma when the waves broke, lifting me like a magic carpet into the changeable mist, then driving me down through the indigo gulf on a slant of ablutions, erasure. And what of the mist with its long gray hair and crystal kiss — a little template of the fallen sky, thickened for disappearing acts — what of its rolling folds, rich as a bisque, seething like a surname or a lexicon well? And what of the gulf and its plot-driven plunge, its quicksilver slippages — darting eels — and leading clues of bluey holes, descending . . . ? Once I was or could have been or may yet be a magnificent sailor, spelled out on a graph of azure rills, with hologram eyes that tell of spillover holds or vanishing dives or shedding selves . . . I bob in the chop, wail in the spray, plunder the swells . . . And what of the “was” with its cargo of facts; what of the “once” with its blown-open hatch . . . and flowering mast . . . and panoramic sails . . .

—Aaron Shurin

Aaron Shurin is the author of fourteen books of poetry and prose and his work has appeared in over forty national and international anthologies. A pioneer in both LGBTQ studies and innovative verse, Shurin was a member of the original Good Gay Poets collective in Boston, and later the first graduate of the Poetics Program at New College of California. He's the former director and currently Professor Emeritus for the MFA Writing Program at the University of San Francisco. "ONCE . . ." was originally published in *The Blue Absolute* (2020) and will be included in *Elixir: New and Selected Poems* forthcoming in June 2025 from Nightboat Books.

The Poetry Collection's Aaron Shurin Collection, 1955–2012 (PCMS-0086) contains correspondence, early manuscripts and unpublished poems, manuscripts for published work, books and chapbooks, periodical publications, documents relating to New College and Shurin's academic work, ephemera, other writers' manuscripts, notebooks, workbooks and journals, as well as a selection of early gay periodicals. To learn more, visit library.buffalo.edu/collections/aaron-shurin. Shurin's 1975 broadside "Ritual for Winter Soulstice" is included in the current exhibit *The Language of Magic: Queer Occult Poetics* now on view in the UB Libraries Special Collections reading room.



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