



CARMEN GIMÉNEZ SMITH

CRUEL
FUTURES

CITY LIGHTS SPOTLIGHT NO. 17

CITY LIGHTS
BOOKS

CARMEN GIMÉNEZ SMITH

CRUEL
FUTURES

CITY LIGHTS
SAN FRANCISCO



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CITY LIGHTS SPOTLIGHT

The City Lights Spotlight Series was founded in 2009,
and is edited by Garrett Caples.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Giménez Smith, Carmen, 1971- author.

Title: Cruel futures / Carmen Giménez Smith.

Description: San Francisco : City Lights Books, [2018] | Series: City Lights
Spotlight ; no. 17

Identifiers: LCCN 2017055971 | ISBN 9780872867581 (softcover)

Classification: LCC PS3607.L45215 A6 2018 | DDC 811/.6—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017055971>

Cover art: “Untitled” (2018), photograph by Tân Khánh Cao

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All City Lights Books are distributed to the trade by
Consortium Book Sales and Distribution: www.cbsd.com

For small press poetry titles by this author and others,
visit Small Press Distribution: www.spdbooks.com

City Lights Books are published at the City Lights Bookstore,
261 Columbus Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94133
www.citylights.com

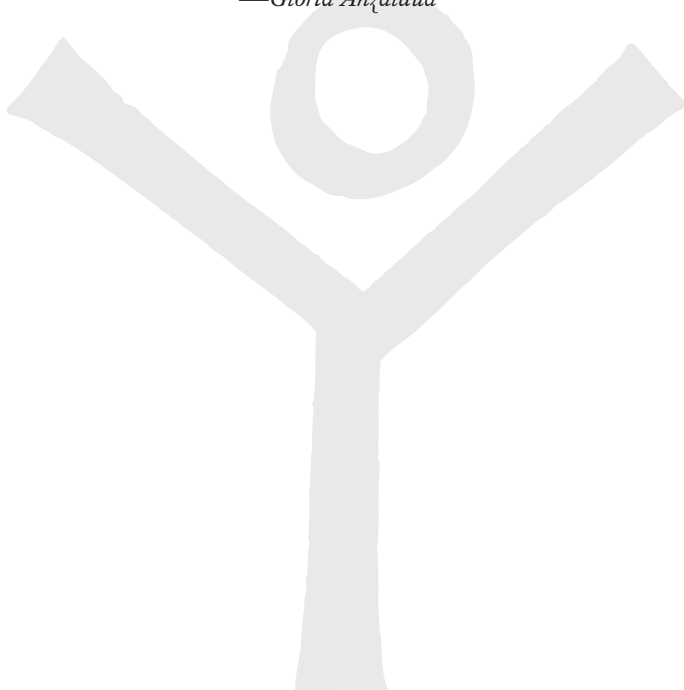
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*There is no one who
will feed the yearning
Face it. You will have
to do, do it yourself.*

—Gloria Anzaldúa



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CITY LIGHTS LOVE ACTUALLY BOOKS

When mumblecore
gets eaten by television,
I will understand it better,
then I'll write about it
to create an object that
belongs to no committee,
so it doesn't exist, like
unicorns and democracy.
Then again it won't be
in the art cycle, so you
should write about
my writing about it,
then we'll be the infinity
symbol together projected
against the littered sky.

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CITY LIGHTS BOOKS

AS BODY

From a succession of queens,
I was five two and on and on
with the gov. I became t-minus
nihilism, someone's most recent.
I was ten, and then a promise
I discarded for beans. I am fire,
trade fire for maternity,
maternity for majesty—
how sure and freeing to let go
of shackles to trade in for shackles.
I open the door, get opened
by riot. I raise the flag,
got bombarded by episode five.

My body unhinges at the psyche
and suffers a narcissistic
punch-drunkenness,
an exhaustive catalog of sin
inside fits of anxiety and guilt,
occasionally out of range,

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braver than the colony pounding
pavement into perpetuity.

A fan of mayhem, I sometimes
celebrate good times by trash
talking the fountain of youth,
straight up jeering it. The night
peters out along with my
resolve to self-improve.

I grew up on the edge
of your electrified fence
like a weed. My brother and I
were a suburban gang and then
trouble magnets, a creed to resist
and abandon, to vex the neighbors,
to disseminate father's grift.
Should have been born pale
scion or with less oddity, less
diagnosis, as I have only twelve
coins worth of goodwill
to spread over my whole life.

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I live on the corner of identity
and shadow, one true-false away
from infiltration, grew up
a sinkhole of envy and grunting
want, grew up profligate,
something of a gambler.

Knew when to hold them, when
to wink or stab. Part one:
the gaining on you. Part two:
the ship cast off like the gull's
filthy feather. Oh my god,
this body-boat had been
the perk I promised myself
one day! I was once one and two
and three. I was four and five.
I was all the numbers
until forty-six. I was a first,
an only. I was last.

I want another baby but only
the broad strokes of that anvil
on my head. I'd like the Italian
actor but he is an effort above

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my pay grade. I'd love to get at
the so-called insider but he's afraid
of my cha-cha-cha. To barter
is outside my purview. I'd like
to begin loading this heteroglossia
with more brutality, but I keep finding
a new pith: make it even realer.
The self wants to be unburdened
of her bulges. If only I wrote
about robots, and if only
my schooling had been more useful,
but I don't give a shit about robots.
Instead I'm still caught up
with the lyric, that working class
bauble anyone can foment.

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CITY LIGHTS DISPATCH FROM MIDLIFE BOOKS

Gender is the civic center
of my adrenal gland.

I am bound by certainty
to keep it in a shell.

Past fertility, insomnia
is the new membrane
around my nights. My
mortal terror is the now
with what's left of me.

What are you, demand
the witches from the throne
of their own infallible
femininity. I'm a monster
of my own making who quit
one guile for this new one,
wanton with indifference.

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