

TEACHING GUIDE

I Love It Though

by Alli Warren

Nightboat Books

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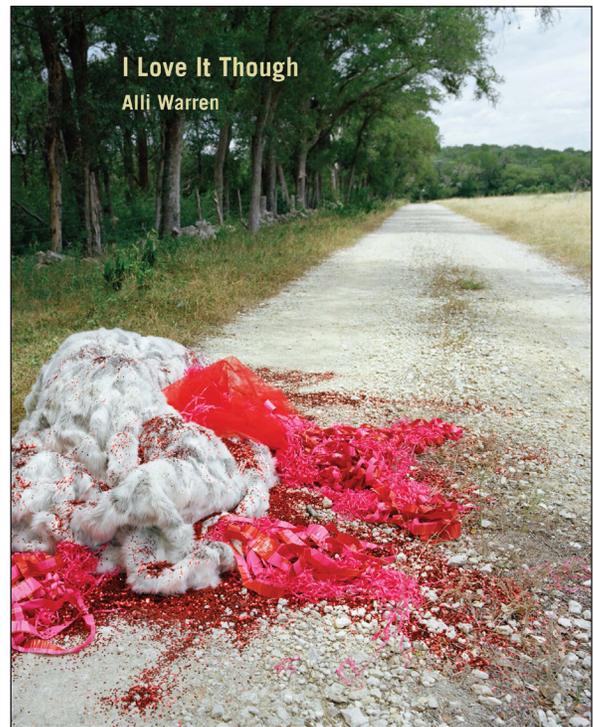
In *I Love It Though*, growing authority and growing bewilderment appear to be out on a date, perhaps married, “the bottom / of the surface of the sound” never not in effect. Propelled by closely parsed internal commotion, the book is a great follow-up to *Here Come the Warm Jets*, itself a great follow-up to the earlier books that rightly put Alli Warren on the map as a poet to watch, be reckoned with, read and reread. — **Nathaniel Mackey**

Where were you when the very bird Alli Warren winged in upon opened its beak & began to speak? I was in Queens. My jaw dropped. Actually it was Alli ventriloquizing the bird, right there on my windowsill, with the pigeons in the airshaft. As I greedily thumb through the pages, honey seeps through the cracks, ‘one gape follows the next.’ — **Julian Talamantez Brolaski**

Invite Alli Warren to:

- Skype into classes in which *I Love It Though* is being taught
- Read from *I Love It Though*
- Give a craft talk

To invite Alli Warren to your campus, email alliwarren@gmail.com



Recommended Classes:

- Poetry
- Creative Writing / English
- Feminist Literature
- Gender Studies / Women’s Studies
- Queer Studies



ALLI WARREN’S most recently published works include *I Love It Though*, *Don’t Go Home With Your Heart On* and The Poetry Center Book Award winner *Here Come the Warm Jets*. Her writing has been published in many journals and magazines, including *Poetry*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Jacket*, and *Rethinking Marxism*. She previously co-curated The (New) Reading Series at 21 Grand, edited *Dreamboat* magazine, and co-edited The Poetic Labor Project. She lives in The Bay Area.

Praise for *I Love It Though*:

Alli Warren knows there are limits to the possibilities of any given day. She writes from the experiences of attuned observations, surveying the landscape with a hesitant but not unwilling participant's attention to interplays of detail. She tracks ridge and crevice, inclination and fold; they belong to the topography of social landscapes and the bodies in them and also to the structures of her articulated thoughts. Days take place, abounding with forms. And thus it is that, with respect to affirmation, these poems begin with reservations. But they do not end there. If skeptical affirmation is one of this book's moods, love is another. It is shaped out of the quicknesses of Warren's attention, guiding her embrace of the specific given good and her grief over all that's malevolent. This is a powerful and beautiful book, and the poems that comprise it should be read over and over again. — **Lyn Hejinian**

With “one foot in the office the other lolling/ about the field,” Warren (*Here Come the Warm Jets*) probes at what “lies between/ want and need.” Amid the comforting concreteness of fact and the energetic forces of dream and instinct, Warren sings “of something that cannot speak/ its name though its signature is everywhere.” Her poems are lean and energetic—most do not exceed a page—but they can be slippery and bewildering in their tight-packed complexity. In “A Better Way to Zone,” for instance, she instructs the tide to “bring some/ little green thing to dust/ behind my eyes// Touch the hotspot/ and drag the tongue/ over the fat belly/ of a flapping fish.” Warren directs her aptitude for rhyme and aural texture to conveying the shape and expression of human desire (“we have nothing/ between gasps/ of great need”), as well as the political structures that have evolved through these hungers: given the tendency of borders to “burst open under their/ propensity for feasting,” Warren encourages readers to “embrace your finitude/ as the end of accumulation.” — **Publishers Weekly**

The taste this poem, and Alli's collection as a whole, leaves in my mouth is one of quiet—indeed, sometimes nearly-silent-to-the-point-of-compliance—resistance. It's a paradox I'll let you grapple with, though if you're a socially and politically conscious human being who experiences daily doses of both subjection and privilege, I think it's a paradox you know well. This book is not afraid to linger at that disconcerting threshold, and to say its lingering out loud as it does so. The community invoked in the collective “we” of its poems is kept “from just sustenance”; the speaker “laddle[s] in the brothy endurance of subsistence and resistance” and is occasionally “given one hour off leash”—which is, we might presume, the very hour these poems get written. Yet we are periodically given that the speaker has access to alternative ways of being: to “be an accomplice to the flood / or insist on property as my right to white life”; to be “fat / on duck and the ground / up bones of wealth / which feeds me”; to “suc[k] heartily on the teats / and profi[t] off the gaunt / carnal mess.” It's as though the underlying inquiry *I Love It Though* softly proposes is: What does resistance look like for one who also possesses the (relatively) privileged option of non-resistance.

— **Lauren Shufan** for *Entropy*

Warren effortlessly blends the analytic mind and the swarming sensorium of the body into a fleshy web of connectivity: “as an ear's for / tonguing the open out / an ear's for breathing / engine of thought.” These poems invite the reader into an uncanny immersion within the quotidian—akin to tasting the sharpness of sky color or watching song penetrate office walls. Taken together, their power rests not in the visionary aim of Rimbaud's “derangement of the senses,” but in the willful blurring of the material limits of language—a rich verbal synesthesia that suggests a collective politics of bodies: muscle, blood and bone. “If I give skin syntax,” Warren writes, “or touch a swallow as it lifts / that a finger might slip.” There is an immediacy here that rides atop this collection's deftness and depth, its slippery gallows humor (“There is no spring break for debt”) and pathos at deadening routine. This immediacy suggests an urgent present moment that requires holistic attending. Warren's lean discursive lines wander restlessly, fully awake, curving each poem away from any foregone conclusion: “Tide, bring some / little green thing to dust / behind my eyes.” — **Jamie Townsend** for *The Boston Review*

I Love It Though Discussion Questions, Creative Writing Exercises & Teaching Tips

Read an interview with Alli Warren:

- *Los Angeles Review of Books* (Warren in conversation with Lauren Levin) : <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/on-longing-listening-and-levity-lauren-levin-interviews-alli-warren/>
- *The Conversant* (Warren in conversation with Caleb Beckwith) : <http://theconversant.org/?p=10917>

General discussion questions:

- How does desire function in this book? Feel free to understand “desire” as variously as possible.
- What are some of your favorite sounds in the book? How does the musicality affect meaning?
- How do you read the “though” in the title? As a conjunction? A qualifier?
- How do you understand the pronouns “I” and “we” working throughout the book? In different poems? Do their meanings change or are they steady signifiers?
- What is the book’s relationship to the Law and politics?
- What kind of world does the book imagine, give details. How does it differ / not differ from our current world?

Writing Prompts:

- (Adapted from Steve Dickison’s writing exercise “Close Copy”) Choose a poem from *I Love It Though* and replace the verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. Keep just the “skeleton” of the poem and replace everything else with your own language.
- (Adapted from Donato Mancini’s writing exercise “Speech Ear”) As you go about your day, collect language found in various social sites (a subway station, bar, post office, university lecture, butcher, concert, religious service, etc.). Be attentive to what you hear. Engage as best you can in deep listening to the idiomatic language of these spaces. Take notes, collecting at least one page of eavesdropped speech. Compose a poem using language from the various sites.
- What do the two longer list poems (“To the Fledglings” and “Protect Me from What I Want”) have in common? How are they different? How might they represent central themes from the book as a whole? Compose your own translation/version of either of these long poems.
- Make a list of every question which appears in the book. (Think about what a question does in a poem. How does it make you feel, as a reader?). Compose a poem as a response to one, some, or all of the questions from your list.