

Dear Poets,

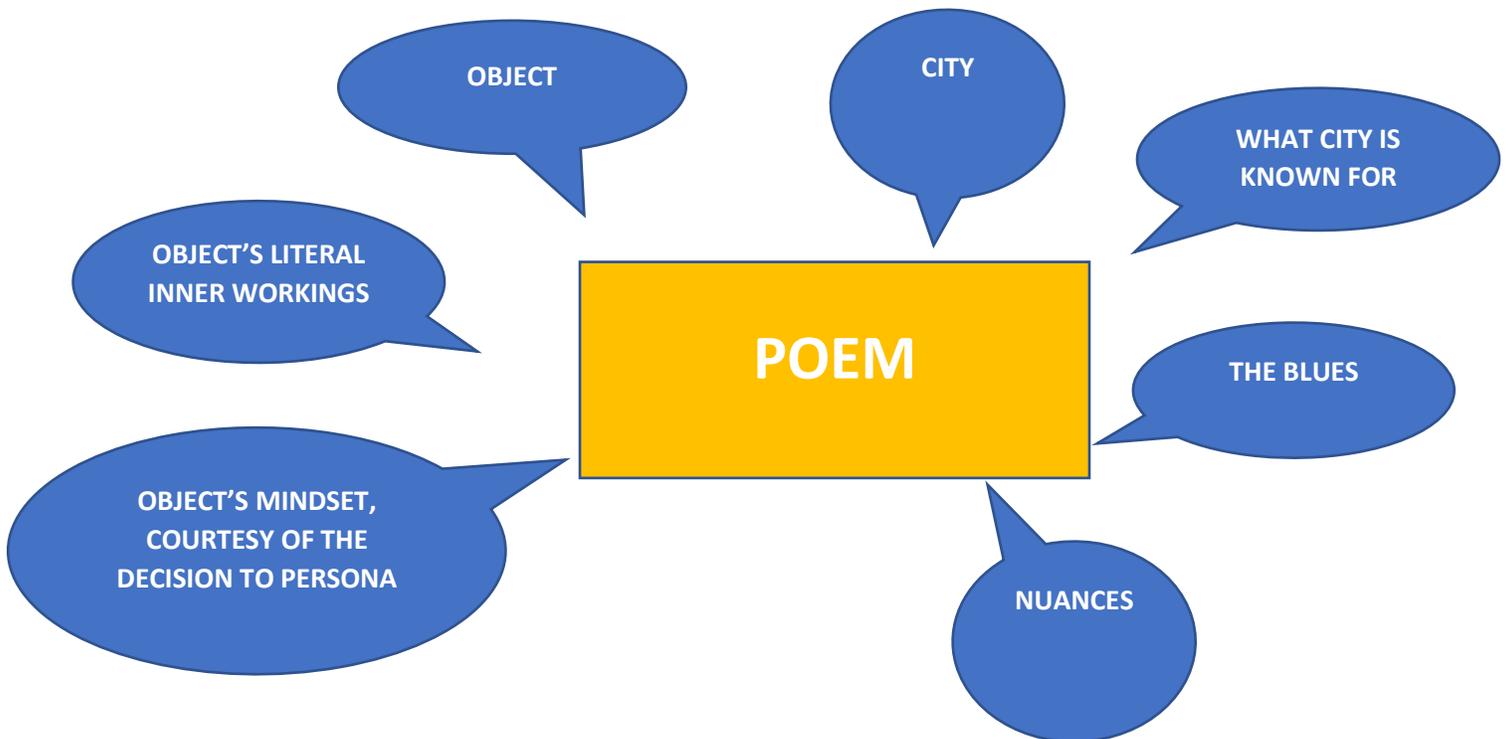
Today's teaching takeaway examines Maria Nazos's "Cash Register Sings The Blues" from her chapbook *Still Life* (Dancing Girl Press, 2016). The poem and its synesthetic rendering are included as a separate document. Carbon credit card reader, we haven't forgotten you.

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How It's Put Together

Two places I want to visit: Roswell and Las Vegas, interdimensionality a BellagiUFO. In Nazos's persona poem, I'm granted the latter.

Think of "Cash Register Sings The Blues" as a seven-bubble dialogue:



Object

Cash registers are the link between abaci and spreadsheets. Their systems of organization, reward repositories. They're "everywhere you look, ubiquitous and ignored."

Object's literal inner workings

Persona poems spin on their ethos; research toward authenticity is opportunity's cornucopia. Did you know an old-fashioned cash register's anatomy consists of a key bar and a camshaft, among other components¹? Nazos details her speaker's beginning-by-alloy, "As a young sheet / of steel and plastic," in addition to its physicality and location: "But I'm a squat box crouched behind the counter." Both traits contribute to the likelihood we take it for granted ("noticed only if someone robs me").

Object's mindset, courtesy of the decision to persona

A cash register can pine. Fantasize. Bemoan. Nazos's money till has confessed, *wanted*, and *dreamt*. Panache? Literal inner workings combined with mindset: "I'm touched all day, // but never caressed." and "Feed me, feed me with the only love we know."

City

Las Vegas. What watermark wouldn't be happy in southern Nevada?

What city is known for

History, hotspots, lingo, lodging. Nazos unbottles Vegas and out the contents cascade—

a dancer's pole
a headdress glossy as gossamer
lights
gold tokens
neon martinis
black leather sectional couches
slot machines

The blues

Per *poets.org*, "A blues poem typically takes on themes such as struggle, despair, and sex. It often (but not necessarily) follows a form, in which a statement is made in the first line, a variation is given in the second line, and an ironic alternative is declared in the third line."ⁱⁱ

Note our cash register, crestfallen:

Statement of Despair

This *isn't* my dream-job. As a young sheet
of steel and plastic, I dreamt of being melted

Ironic Alternative / Job Variation

down into a dancer's pole in Vegas. I wanted
a woman in a headdress glossy as gossamer

Sex

to wrap her lithe limbs around me.

Unrequitedness is jackpot. The *your – you* is ground zero for *I's* regrets in lines 16 and 17. ("I'm the container of your dreams that tossed away my own. // I've kept my clean, sleek lines but you never say a thing.")

Nuances

My favorite takeaway from this piece is what it teaches me about alliteration. "Lithe limbs" and "powdery perfume." Cool. "Glossy as gossamer" alliterates G, S, sonically doubles the short O, *and* similizes. *Gossamer* is a fabric contrast to "acid- / washed jeans." Cooler.

Want to see how it's parka-level done?

"while people treat currency / carelessly as spit in the wind."

Currency / carelessly is alliteration (C, R, S, doubled long E) backed by the syllabic mirroring of 3 + 3. It prefaces a simile whose short-I vowel sounds create another echo trinity.

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From beverages to bankrolled quarters, Nazos's chorus flourishes, couplets the poem's seating chart.

Prompt

Using the seven-bubble method, write a persona poem as told by runes, tea leaves, or a crystal ball. Consider a possible switch from blues to *décima* form.ⁱⁱⁱ The city on whose associations you will draw is Hollywood or your hometown. Give us an alliteration so cool a windchill precedes it.

Happy Poeming,

Jon

ⁱ <http://www.madehow.com/Volume-7/Cash-Register.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://poets.org/glossary/blues-poem>

ⁱⁱⁱ *Décima* – Poetry Forms (poetscollective.org)