This lecture takes as its subject two very recent installations in the history of lyric poetry: the post-“post-racial” imaginary that has anchored identity-driven poetry in the U.S. since Barack Obama’s first presidential election in 2008, and the “post-human” imaginary that has anchored poetic responses to climatological and financial crisis in the U.S. during the same period. These two apparently unrelated strands in recent poetic discourse arguably represent two versions of an identical logic. In the first poetry maintains the fantasy of the self in the absence of any recognizable expression, while the second offers the fantasy of self-expression in the absence of a self. In short, we find ourselves with a poetics that mirrors the fantasy of unregulated markets – in which what it means to express something is to mean nothing at all, and where meaning nothing at all presents the appearance of a politics.

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