



# The Cineaste: Poems

*A. Van Jordan*

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“Finds evocative new ways to connect us to a shared storytelling heritage.”—*Entertainment Weekly*

A. Van Jordan, an acclaimed American poet and the author of three previous volumes, “demonstrates poetry’s power to be at once intimate and wide-ranging” (Robert Pinsky, *Washington Post Book World*). In this penetrating new work he takes us with him to the movies, where history reverberates and characters are larger than life. *The Cineaste* is an entrancing montage of poems, wherein film serves as the setting for contemplative trances, memoir, and pure fantasy. At its center is a sonnet sequence that imagines the struggle of pioneer filmmaker Oscar Micheaux against D. W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation*, which Micheaux saw not only as racist but also as the start of a powerful new art form. “Sharpen the focus in your lens, and you / Sharpen your view of the world; you can see / How people inhabit space in their lives, / How the skin of Negroes and whites both play / With light.” Scenes and characters from films such as *Metropolis*, *Stranger than Paradise*, *Last Year at Marienbad*, *The Red Shoes*, and *The Great Train Robbery* also come to luminous life in this vibrant new collection. *The Cineaste* is an extended riff on Jordan’s life as a moviegoer and a brilliant exploration of film, poetry, race, and the elusiveness of reverie.

from “*Last Year at Marienbad*”

*A place, though visible, is like a ghost*

*of memories. Even memories one forgets*

*linger in the space in which they occurred.*

*Here within the expanse of vaulted ceilings,*

*doorways leading to more doors, hallways*

*leading to more halls, the faintest recollections*

*absorb over time; no act will wholly evanesce.*

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