



# THE POETRY PROJECT

August/September 2019

Issue #258

# The Poetry Project

## August/September 2019 Issue #258

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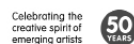
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**Cover image:** "autumn flood" courtesy of Xandria Phillips

# Readings Calendar

All events begin at 8pm unless otherwise noted.  
**Admission \$8/Students & Seniors \$7/Members \$5 or free. No one turned away for inability to pay. The Poetry Project is wheelchair accessible with assistance and advance notice.**  
**For more detailed information about St. Mark's and accessibility, visit [poetryproject.org](http://poetryproject.org) or call 212.674.0910.**

## **WED 9/4 6:30 pm in the Sanctuary**

NYC Writers for Migrant Justice. Featuring Alexis Aceves Garcia, Daniel Alarcon, Desiree Bailey, Wo Chan, Ariel Francisco, Rigoberto Gonzalez, Jan-Henry Gray, Ellen Hagan, Terrance Hayes, Marwa Helal, Zakia Henderson-Brown, Darrel Alejandro Holnes, Rindon Johnson, Vivian Lee, Joseph Legaspi, Melissa Lozada-Oliva, Yesenia Montilla, José Olivarez, RA Villanueva, Javier Zamora, and others TBA.

## **WED 9/11**

Ali Liebegott & Ariana Reines

## **WED 9/18 7:30 pm in the Sanctuary**

BREAK OUT: a movement to (re)integrate incarcerated writers. Featuring the work of Peter M. Dunne, Edward Ji, Sean Patrick Dunne, Vaugh Walker, Christiana Justice, David Pickett, John Benjamin, Jevon Jackson, Heather Jarvis and Douglas Weed, with quotes by Sean J. White, Spoon Jackson, B. Batchelor and Charles Norman. Read and staged by Cortney Lamar Charleston, Cecilia Gentili, Rachel Eliza Griffiths, Margo Jefferson, Shaun Leonardo, T Kira Madden, and actors from Rehabilitation Through the Arts' alumni theater group. Presented in partnership with PEN America.

## **FRI 9/20**

Janice Lowe and NAMAROON & Jeffrey Pethybridge

## **MON 9/23**

Lydia Cortés, Sara Larsen, & Trace DePass

## **WED 9/25**

Kate Colby & Liz Howard

## **MON 9/30**

Book Launch for the Semiotext(e) republication of David Rattray's *How I Became One of the Invisible*

## **WED 10/2**

Andrei Codrescu & Victor Hernández Cruz

## **FRI 10/4**

Demian DinéYazhi' & Suzanne Kite with Marilu Donovan

## **MON 10/7**

Baraka & Place. A multimedia evening with poetry, archival audio, music, and visual art tracing the development of Amiri Baraka's poetics, social praxis, and relationship to avant garde communities through his time in several specific places. Hosted by William J. Harris

## **WED 10/9**

Caroline Bergvall & Jerome Rothenberg

## **THURS 10/10**

The Writing of Carolee Schneemann. Featuring Pierre Joris, David Levi Strauss, Nicole Peyrafitte, George Quasha, Jerome Rothenberg, Anne Waldman, and others TBA.

## **WED 10/16**

Gordon Henry & George Emilio Sanchez

## **MON 10/21**

Sun Yung Shin 신 선영

## **WED 10/23**

Brenda Hillman & Marjorie Welish



# Letter from the Executive Director

Greetings Poetry Projectors. We're excited for this coming season at The Poetry Project, this year organized under the banner, imperative, faith, and method of the word TRANSMIT.

At a time when we find ourselves steeped more deeply in algorithmic solitude, our often alienating and sometimes fractious content-streams of justifiable outrage, we want to call to mind the conviction of fellow senders, receivers, and conductors, those heading likewise across the void, beyond meridian. We don't (can't, shouldn't) pretend that such vectors of communication are imaginings of equivalence or even empathy – what we're getting at instead is that electric vantage point where witness meets humility, past ego, past the desire for our own identification or recognition, where we find our nerves have opened to the previously inconceivable.

We ask: where are we writing from and toward? What are the possibilities and limitations of poetry to envision and articulate? How can language render us differently attentive to one another?

We start the Fall with two headlining collaborations reaching across particular distances: **NYC Writers for Migrant Justice**, a marathon-style event to raise bail bonds and other support service funds for Immigrant Families Together; and **Break Out: A Prison Writing Awards Celebration & Anthology Book Launch**, in collaboration with PEN America, as part of The Brooklyn Book Festival,

and a larger effort to reintegrate work by incarcerated writers into literary community.

Collaboratively curated by The Poetry Project's staff, this season also features poets, writers, and artists sending dispatches across a number of other frequencies – samizdat, music, critical correspondence, and inquiry. And we've organized several group events tuned into the archives of some specific language-workers and community-makers – with book launches for **David Rattray** and **Ed Smith**, a multimedia event on **Baraka and Place**, and memorials celebrating the work of **Steve Cannon**, **Kevin Killian**, and **Carolee Schneemann**.

Last, I want to share some news of change. We are about to welcome two new staff members here (stay tuned!), and Laura Henriksen has moved into the new role of Director of Learning & Community Engagement. We also extend our gratitude to the people who have helped with editing and curation here over the last two years. Much thanks to Marwa Helal and John Rufo for their editorships of our Newsletter and reviews, to Adjua Gargi Nzinga Greaves for her work on the Monday Night Reading Series, and to Mirene Arsanios and Rachel Valinsky for their work on the Friday Night Series. You have all brought a level of care and critical-mindedness that has made an indelible mark here. Thank you, and thank you friends for reading. We hope to see you soon.

kd

## Workshops and Reading Groups

### **Friends & Lovers Feminist Reading Group** **Tuesdays, 7-9pm | 5 sessions | Begins September 10**

*This reading group will meet at the Neighborhood Preservation Center (232 E 11th St, New York, NY 10003). \$75 to register.*

It is not uncommon for poets to be categorized into "schools," "generations," or "movements," each organized around a particular "genius" or two surrounded by rings of increasingly peripheral, "minor" poets, one "movement" responding to the last in art's own linear and easy-to-anthologize narrative of progress and discovery. Against the pristine manageability of "schools," we will see what we can learn when we think instead in terms of little groups of friends and lovers, poets and artists who fed each other and stole from each other and loved and fought and mourned and remembered and had fun together. We will think of poems as part of ongoing conversations, we will consider how poems are made possible because poets survived, and how that survival was made possible through the material conditions of existing in relation to others. The people you talk to every day, the people you talk to even when they aren't there, the people you pay or attempt to pay rent with – they are there already in the poem, always, necessary and alive. In this reading group we will celebrate that relationality, knowing we are a part of it too, the constellation of our lives making us who we are. We will be a little gossipy, elevating the anecdotal, the backstory. We won't make all that big a difference between art-making and life-making. We will read some Romantics, poets of Kitchen Table Press, we will consider how incarceration fits into this framework of relationality, we will think about translation and letters and imaginary interlocutors, and we won't forget that this relationality extends beyond just friends and lovers to include humans and non-humans, the animate and inanimate, the living and the dead. These meetings will be facilitated by **Adjua Gargi Nzinga Greaves**, **Laura Henriksen**, and **Meagan Washington**.

### **Meditation in an Emergency — Workshop with Betsy Fagin** **Thursdays, 7-9pm | 5 sessions | Begins September 19**

*This workshop will take place in the Parish Hall of St Mark's Church (131 E 10th St, New York, NY 10003). \$150 to register.*

In this practical class, we will be exploring the present moment—lived, bodily experience—within and through the vehicle of writing. Utilizing a variety of generative writing exercises, meditation practices and discussion, this 5-week class invites participants to anchor in the body, the breath, sound and sensation and to translate this embodiment into their writing practices. The focus of this class is cultivating mindful awareness and generating new material. Previous meditation experience is not required.

# Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

It is my honor to file this final issue of my tenure as editor of this fine institution's newsletter. I'm so grateful for all of the voices I've been able to share through this vehicle. And all while the wheels of capitalism have been grinding with their constant pressure to produce and make and speak and voice and respond and publish, I have taken my sweet time in getting this last issue out. Call it resistance. Call it a need for rest. This work is a marathon and it is a life, it's always here when we are ready to pick it back up. I'm happy for that and hope you give yourselves permission to rest this fall. I hope, too, you find some light in these pages or something you wanted to say but didn't know you could or how to. That is our work as poets, writers and educators.

I'm ever grateful to my incredible Reviews Editor, John Rufo, who helps us to see again and [a]new with each set of reviews they offer us. Check those out starting on p. 22.

Grateful for the incredible team here at The Poetry Project, the space they make for us everyday through their hard work. Thank you, Kyle, Nicole and Laura for all you do.

I'm excited to share more GRIEVANCES but by another

name on p. 16 from the brilliant Roberto Montes -- thank you for allowing me to share your work.

The poet and visual artist Xandria Phillips's work adorns our cover. Check their new book *HULL*, out now from Nightboat Books. Grateful for new poems from Ron Padgett and Zaina Alsous.

And some of our favorite poets pay tribute to poets who have passed on p. 11-15.

Eline Marx shares a powerful piece about Raúl Zurita on p. 19

And finally, a most ethereal interview between Brendan Lorber and Lauren Ireland. Check that out starting on p. 29.

I'm looking forward to new iterations of this newsletter and am continually encouraged by the ways this institution willingly reinvents itself. It knows its survival and capacity to thrive depends on it. Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of this. Peace, always, from my favorite place: the archive.

mh.

EDITORS EMERITI: Ron Padgett 1972–1973 / Bill MacKay 1973–1975 / Ted Greenwald 1975–1977 / Frances LeFevre 1977–1978 / Vicki Hudspeth 1978–1980 / Greg Masters 1980–1983 / Lorna Smedman 1983–1984 / Tim Dlugos 1984–1985 / James Ruggia 1985–1986 / Jessica Hagedorn 1986–1987 / Tony Towle 1987–1990 / Jerome Sala 1990–1991 / Lynn Crawford 1991–1992 / Jordan Davis 1992–1994 / Gillian McCain 1994–1995 / Mitch Highfill 1995–1996 / Lisa Jarnot 1996–1998 / Brenda Coultas & Eleni Sikelianos 1998–1999 / Katherine Lederer 1999–2000 / Ange Mlinko 2000–2002 / Nada Gordon & Gary Sullivan 2002–2003 / Marcella Durand 2003–2005 / Brendan Lorber 2005–2007 / John Coletti 2007–2009 / Corina Copp 2009–2011 / Paul Foster Johnson 2011–2013 / Ted Dodson 2013–2015 / Betsy Fagin 2015–2017

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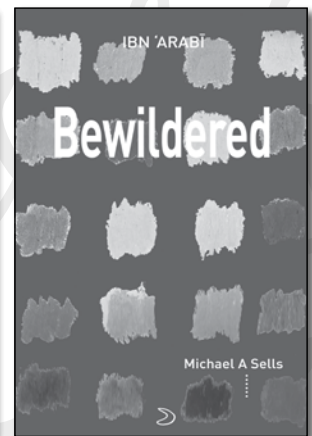
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# POETRY: Ron Padgett

## Poem

You're here—  
and if you relax  
for a moment  
your back  
and other parts  
will arrive  
and you can be  
together,  
with yourself,  
a little happiness.

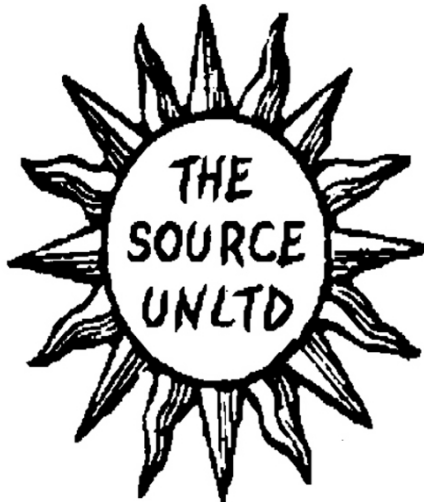
## Sweeping Away

What I want to do  
is to forget everything  
I ever knew about poetry  
and sweep the pine needles  
off the cabin roof  
and watch them fly away  
into this October afternoon

The pen is mightier than the sword  
but today the broom  
is mightier than the pen

---

**Ron Padgett** grew up in Tulsa and has lived mostly in New York City since 1960. Among his many honors are a Guggenheim Fellowship, the American Academy of Arts and Letters poetry award, the Shelley Memorial Award, and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. Padgett's *How Long* was a Pulitzer Prize finalist in poetry, and his *Collected Poems* won the William Carlos Williams Award from the Poetry Society of America and the *Los Angeles Times Book Prize* for the best poetry book of 2013. In addition to being a poet, he is also the translator of *Guillaume Apollinaire*, *Pierre Reverdy*, and *Blaise Cendrars*. His own work has been translated into eighteen languages. His new book is *Big Cabin* (July 2019), written over three seasons in a Vermont cabin, these poems act as a reflecting pool, casting back mortality, consciousness, and time in new, crystal-clear light.



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## Third

Between the academy and the cemetery, exists another classroom—tendrils of language in study, a pedagogy prose poetry of ghosts. There is Sun and there is Earth, but what of the land swelling inside Sun—petaled umbras, unseen heat to feast. We are never only hungry. After three years of Non-Alignment, Fidel says *Our revolution does not rely on men. It relies on ideas and ideas cannot be assassinated*. Besides life and death, there is the third option: to idea. My mother says *it's not too late for you to fall in love, don't assume it will never happen*. She forgets another possibility: all this time I have already been in love. Mundanely, a red bird chirping e c t o p i a, my heart listens outside the body in order to be shattered daily, to become more porous, in constant preparation to hold everything. Ho Chi Minh said *the nation has its roots in the people*. The people are not quite dirt not quite map made sovereign, the people are something that happens—a third event: we be peopleing, to rooster to cum and social music. Not taken, not given, but shared—the third gesture. After the interrogation room, after blinds of cursive yes or no, lawful purulence and the yellow wound, there always was a third option: I'm in love with you right now.

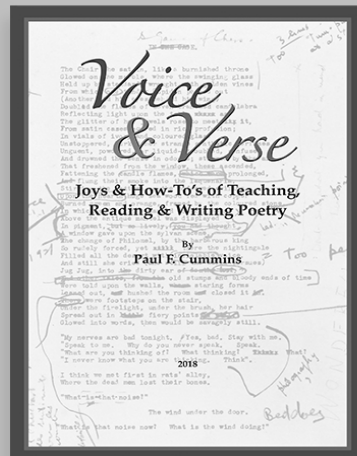
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**zaina alsous** is a daughter of the Palestinian diaspora and a movement worker in South Florida. Her first full-length poetry collection *A Theory of Birds* will be published in October by University of Arkansas Press.

# *Voice & Verse*

## Joys & How-To's of Teaching, Reading & Writing Poetry

by Paul F. Cummins



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*The Collected Poems of Paul F. Cummins*, an assortment of his own finest and most beautiful poems, will also be available in early 2019.

# In Memoriam: Kathleen Fraser

In 2004, I asked Kathleen Fraser to teach a poetry workshop at Poets House. She arrived in New York with scissors to encourage her students to cut up and collage their poems. She had recently completed “hi dde violeth i dde violet,” which began as a poem written over the Easter holiday in Italy to amuse her friend, the poet Norma Cole, who had just suffered a stroke in San Francisco. Kathleen found the poem static and uninspired, so filed it away, until invited to participate in a gallery show, then blew it up and cut it up, creating something new. The finished poem is rooted in sound and shape, the typographic expression of Kathleen’s voice and then the manipulation by her hands. It was the most inventive of scores; I saw her read the poem a handful of times and she always read it as if making a discovery.

Discovery might have been Kathleen’s middle name, which is in fact Joy, and her work in language in all its capacities caused her great joy. She was not a fast writer, but she wrote consistently from her late teens until a couple of years before her death. She arrived in New York in the late 1950s and learned to write an accomplished lyric poem; she sold three of these poems to *The New Yorker*. Harper & Row published two of her books in the 1970s, but she then left New York and its patriarchal publishers behind. Her heart was with small presses. She published books with Kayak, Penumbra, Tuumba, The Figures, Kelsey Street, Lapis, Chax, Apogee, and finally Nightboat, where I worked with her on her last book, *movable TTYPE*. The book is comprised of her collage work—many created in collaboration with visual artists and published as artist’s books—and her forays into short-form narrative writing. She was an avid fiction reader and film watcher late in life, and you can see the impression of those genres on those last poems. I love the way the wild, fragmentary collage work is sandwiched between her more narrative prose pieces, both the result of rigorous editing and rearranging, another set of her core values.

After the publication of *movable TTYPE*, her once robust missives began to dwindle, then ceased to arrive, first stuck in drafts, then left unrecorded as fragments in her mind. On her last visit to New York, we went too see an exhibition of paintings by Fay Lansner and poet Barbara Guest. She had no trouble reading the looping letters and words of her late friend’s poetry, immediately drawn to the visual play and inventiveness of “MAKING LARGE MARKING,” as she herself described it in her poem “ii ss.” Her making/marking will forever be a favorite of mine. How I miss getting to see her in action.

—Stephen Motika

# In Memoriam: Sean Killian

I first met Sean in 1979 in Berkeley. He was intense. He had jet-black hair (no signature white ponytail yet), and he already walked like a New Yorker, fast and purposefully. He talked a blue streak. He was the most opinionated person I had ever met: Sean had strong feelings about art and music, and especially about poetry, which he studied assiduously (he was a student of Robert Duncan). If he got you on the phone—especially after midnight—he could go on for hours. He was a disciplined and prolific writer: stacks of poems (Sean composed on a typewriter for his entire life) lined the walls of his living room. He was a perfectionist who revised his work incessantly; he bound his poems in notebooks and reworked them for years. This is probably why he published little—one chapbook and several pieces here and there.

—Michael Golston

NYC was Sean's spiritual home. He was the best of companions—garrulous and articulate—and he loved live music: jazz and the Dead, Dylan and Bach. His CD collection and his library were always growing exponentially. Sean was famous for hosting after-reading gatherings and informal salons at his East village apartment, and he often hosted gatherings at his house in Catskill. He'd attend parties with a backpack holding two bottles of wine, and if the party merited it, he'd pull out the second bottle. He remained a 70s kind of dude with an @AOL address and a vintage blue and white Macintosh. Sean's favorite poet was John Ashbery—a Hanuman Books edition of Ashbery poems graced his entry table, and he was a lifelong reader in philosophy and especially in Buddhism. He once sent a collection of poems to Jacques Derrida, who responded in an enthusiastic letter. He was a true connoisseur of the arts and life and a tried and true friend.

—Brenda Coultas

# In Memoriam: Lizzy McDaniel

## Remembering Lizzy McDaniel

Lizzy McDaniel, exceptionally gifted poet, scholar, and French translator, passed away on June 19, 2018 at the age of 35, after a battle with antibody-negative autoimmune encephalitis, a rare form of the disease. Lizzy was an extraordinary human being whose grace, wit, and original poetic practice changed all those who came into contact with her.

Lizzy was born at the Bethesda Naval Hospital, Maryland and grew up in South Carolina. She lived for many years in New York City, where she received her Bachelor's degree and MFA in creative writing from The New School. In addition to being a brilliant poet, Lizzy was a singer of opera. Her knowledge of philosophy, art, and music was endlessly rich. With great sensitivity and care, she gathered history's secrets, often weaving them into her poems. Her unique poetic voice moves with agility between the fiery and the delicate, boldness and nuance. In her poems, interiority opens onto the world, and so transforms.

Lizzy's chapbooks include *Partial View* (Green Zone Editions, 2009) and *Angel Applicant* (2014). Her poems appeared in the literary magazines *MAGGY*, *Gerry Mulligan*, and *Sal Mimeo*, as well as in the anthology *Like Musical Instruments: 83 Contemporary American Poets*, edited by Larry Fagin and featuring photography by John Sarsgard (Broadstone Books, 2014). For a period of time, Lizzy lived in Paris where she worked on a project under the title *Between the Two Tongues*, which she pursued through Columbia University. The project, focused on Mallarmé, deployed an innovative approach to poetic translation, in which she turned untranslatability into a fertile ground for creating "fresh couplings of sound and sense" in multiple expressions. This open-ended creative practice, inspired by a Mallarméan poetics of potentiality and seeking to participate in the writing of collaborative text, *voix mixte*, built on the notes toward the poet's unfinished *Hérodiane*. Parts of this project are collected in *Angel Applicant*.

In the last years of her life, Lizzy battled an illness on which much medical research remains to be done. She passed away at her family's home in Sunset Beach, North Carolina. Lizzy is survived by her sister Kate McDaniel, her mother Jean Fowler, and her stepfather Tom Fowler. Many dear friends survive her as well. We honor her and remember her with love.

—Sylvia Gorelick

-

## THE PLEIADES

This moon is useless  
I must have another  
planets chime in their pockets  
I've missed them for how many weeks?  
gas waits to be flame  
the ocean may sit on my lap  
with plenty left over  
if I discover a new species  
it will not be grateful  
like a human thing  
gasping on the lawn  
but I've hatched a plot  
to outsmart the squid  
to read by its bioluminescence  
Dostoevsky, Giordano Bruno  
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# In Memoriam: Meena Alexander

Meena Alexander was one of a kind. Her accomplishment in poetry was barely seen in the US the way it was seen globally and maybe that is because Meena's poetics and aesthetics are better understood in the context of Indian and Sudanese African poetry, the two landscapes of her childhood and where she learned English as a language. Of course she has written extensively about the violent nature of her introduction to English in poetry and essays both. It seems this may have led her to her doctoral studies which were on revolutionary writers in the canon of English literature, Mary Wollstonecraft, the mother of Mary Shelley and wife of social thinker William Godwin, whose own novels and essays presage modern feminism by a hundred years or more, as well as Dorothy Wordsworth, sister of William Wordsworth, who is now recognized as being as great a writer and stylist in the language as he, though her work was solely in the notebooks and diaries and daybooks she kept during her life--a period in which those quotidian forms were the only literary forms available perhaps to women not of royal or noble status.

At any rate, Alexander's rejection of the Wordsworthian ideal is explored first in her short and brilliant novel *Nampally Road*, and more extensively in her second and more complex novel *Manhattan Music*. Meena Alexander was a beauty herself, interested in glamor, interested in captivating an audience, nearly girlish in the way she sometimes interacted with the people around her-- you could see it in her body language, the way she fluttered her hands like birds, or tossed her hair, or ducked her chin coquettishly, the way when she sat she would pull up her feet and tuck her ankles beneath her. Her work shimmered with beauty but always--always--the tension of violence quivered just beneath. A boy would have a streak of blood on his shirt, a metaphor would seem oddly askew, a little disconcerting. Alexander experienced violence-- personal, familial, social, political-- in her movements across the country of India and across the world and back. From India to Africa to England to India again to the midwest, she crossed many borders before she found her home (she mightn't describe any place as "home") on the northern part of Manhattan.

My partner, Marco Seiryu Wilkinson, was once a horticulturalist at the Cloisters. Soon after Meena and I became acquainted she discovered this and from that moment on, she would appear in the gardens and Marco--charmed by her charms as countless others were--would take her on tours, showing her the flowers and trees and plants he cared for. On one trip, I was along with them and some bees were buzzing around the bee-balm as Marco explained the plant's properties. Meena said, "Oh I must be careful not to be stung, I'm terrible allergic." With concern I asked, "tell us where your epi-pen is in case we have to use it." She laughed her tinkling laugh and said, with either shame or humor or both, "Oh I never have one with me so if I'm stung it will be bad!"

There's a moment in Meena's searing memoir *Fault Lines* (you MUST read it) where she paused on a street corner in Manhattan. The light has changed but she can't bring herself to cross. She's suddenly paralyzed. She doesn't know who she is, where she is, what she is. It's the most painful condition of the migrant, the nomad. Most of the people who I talk to about that scene fall into one of two groups. Either they have no idea where she has suddenly stopped stock-still on one of the busiest street corners in the world, or they quietly acknowledge that they too often feel the same way. Meena's lyrics and essays and novels tackle that terrifying condition of the human heart in the most universal of terms. I feel that in the coming years and decades of climate-changed induced migration crisis, this work will become more and more and more relevant and more people are forced to move by changing environmental conditions--weather, shore lines, etc--of their own homelands.

Meena always paired beauty with crisis. One was not more important than the other. In a painful essay from *Fault Lines* (she also published a poem on the same theme that appeared in her book *Raw Silk*) she describes the days following September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City. Not wanting to wear her sari in public though she had an event at Hunter College that night, she placed the sari in her satchel and took the subway in Western clothes, slacks and a blouse. When she arrived at Hunter she went the Women's Room and spread the sari out and dressed herself. What's interesting to me is that in the essay she describes carefully folding the sari and placing into a plastic bag and sliding it between her books so it wouldn't get creased, while in the poem she describes the sari as being place into her satchel "crushed into a ball." One account may be truthful to what she actually did but the other is truthful to how felt to be doing it.

Meena was a truth teller, a singer of choruses, the most beautiful bird in the garden. Her voice was like a high clarinet, her bearing was regal, her affect generous and kind. I once saw her at the Hyderabad Literary Festival holding court at a reception, speaking French to two professors from France, English to me and another poet there, Hindi with the festival organizer and Malayalam with some visiting writers from Kerala. She lived in many languages at once, in many countries at once, and in many conditions at once. She was cosmopolitan, beautiful and brilliant. I will miss her.

—Kazim Ali

# To Our Readers: We Have Been Listening

"To our readers: we have been listening."	published a poet	It is possible that the Editors felt there was no basis	(The eroding factor among
Constitutes the entirety of POETRY	Who might actively be promulgating a fascist politics	To the claims	The community of such speculation
Magazine's editorial statement in response to concerns	We would have no choice	(Though it is unclear why they would not then	Being only one of the deleterious effects
That a poet they published in their November 2018 issue	But to forgive you	Simply state so)	Of silence)
Toby Martinez de las Rivas	The discussion	It is possible that the Editors were not concerned	Let us circle back then to something
May be a fascist	Clipped and careful	By the content of the claims	We can speak to
Using his work and status	To be kept to Twitter	But by their clamor	The charge of propagating
To push and glamorize fascist politics	Was soon buried	(A fear that their Institutional power	Fascist politics is a serious one
.	And moved beyond the	Would be weakened —	Especially in a time where far-right extremism and violence is on the rise
The concision of their response	The serious question of whether	<i>If we make a statement on this</i>	(Though it should be noted that Martinez de las Rivas's career appears
Against the backdrop	Toby Martinez de las Rivas espouses fascist politics	<i>We will have to answer for every call</i>	To have suffered little
Of Toby Martinez de las Rivas's 1,894-word statement	Is beyond the scope of this grievance	<i>To accountability in perpetuity)</i>	From the accusation
Published by POETRY Magazine themselves	It cannot be addressed until we unpack	It is possible that the Editors feel that	<i>The Paris Review</i> published him in their Winter issue the following month
Shortly after	How the situation was allowed to be framed	Poetry is not transformative enough	To little outrage I have discovered
Continues	The undeniable danger caused by POETRY's	To warrant any sort of response	Even among those who shared the issue with Martinez de las Rivas)
To this day	Editorial response	(A fascist poem is merely a poem	The seriousness of the charge is completely undermined by the unseriousness of POETRY Magazine's response
To flood me with such a ferocity of shame	To concerns within the community	After all—	The seriousness of what a poem can do
It is as if I	It is possible that the Editors felt they were	More decorative throw pillow	What poetry is
Myself	Unequipped to speak to such claims	Than political possibility)	Is completely undermined by the unseriousness of POETRY Magazine's
Were responsible	(Though it would be unclear why they would not	The reason the editorial board chose to refrain from comment	
If you were unaware	Seek those who might then be more equipped	Is something we can only speculate on	
There were concerns	Or else offer to moderate a discussion)		
POETRY Magazine			

# To Our Readers: We Have Been Listening

response	But because the ripple effect is greater	Poets do not have the resources to spare	Normalize fascist rhetorical strategies
As a planet			And embolden white supremacists and fascists
Not by choice but sheer enormity	And subtler And because the repercussions are few	Of all the ways the business of poetry warps	Who are also
Curves the fabric of space around it	The precarity of poets in the United States	Our priorities	Listening
By refusing to address the concerns in good faith	Means that it is easier to let things go	That we would allow it to so recklessly	Watching
They recontextualized the situation as a matter	Than to potentially alienate yourself	And uncritically engage with the actual real	For what our community will bear
Of mere disagreement	From an institution that could offer you the opportunity	Threat of fascist politics	
Between two parties		Feels among the lowest	
The possibility of poetry	To devote yourself to poetry	Feels	
As mere craft	Without having to work long and enervating hours at another job	Even after so much time	
And when they chose to publish Martinez de las Rivas's statement	The fear that builds	Present	
They legitimized	In the wake	It is the duty of our community	
Without daring to declare it plainly	Is paralyzing	To reset the conversation	
The assertion that concerns about fascist politics	The shame of wondering still	And untether it from the binds left	
Is explained by textual misinterpretation	If it is worth forgoing a possibility toward	In the wake of the Editors' silence	
For the journal of the most prestigious poetry institution	The few vestiges of stability available	In fact POETRY	
In the United States to	Stifling	Magazine could choose to facilitate that unbinding	
Validate that dismissal by refusing to contextualize it	Still	They could choose to issue an official explanation	
Was a real danger	Of all the speculation we might hold regarding the Editors' decision	For why they chose not to respond	
And a torrential shame	To refrain from response	To the original concerns	
Not because I believe that prestige lends institutions	One seems likeliest	By refraining from comment	
Moral authority or political sense	They knew we would after time drop the matter entirely	By stonewalling community	
		They	
		Regardless of their intentions	

—  
**Roberto Montes** is the author of *I DON'T KNOW DO YOU*, named one of the Best Books of 2014 by NPR and a finalist for the 2014 Thom Gunn Award for Gay Poetry from The Publishing Triangle. His poetry has appeared in *The Lambda Literary Spotlight*, *Guernica*, *PEN America Poetry Series*, and elsewhere. A chapbook, *GRIEVANCES*, is now available from the Atlas Review TAR chapbook series.

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# On Raúl Zurita by Eline Marx

*"Forgetting is impossible. But what you do with that inability to forget is a different story"*

— Raúl Zurita

I learned about Laura Isabel Feldman's existence at the same time as I learned more about my grandfather's disappearance. Laura was a political dissident murdered by the Videla regime in 1978. She was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1959. In highschool, she campaigned with the Federacion Juvenil Comunista and joined la Unión de Estudiantes Secundarios, the revolutionary student branch of Peronism in 1973. In 1976, she started contributing to the marxist review *Informacion*. The newspaper never circulated; it was supposed to be launched the month Jorge Rafael Videla staged a coup. In 1977, massive persecutions against political opponents began, but she decided to stay in Argentina and continue her activism.

In 1991 my father met Laura's father, Simon Feldman, on a film set in Paris. At that time, my parents were looking for traces of my maternal grandfather, Samuel Lipszyc, who was known to have been a worker's organizer and marxist in Argentina. My mother had only met her father as an infant and grew up thinking he had been tortured and assassinated by the Videla regime. Through Simon Feldman, she discovered her father had a brother in Argentina and another in Brazil. The last time they had heard from Samuel Lipszyc was in fact in 1983 while the dictatorship was ending and he was thought to have been in Mexico. Mystery continues to shroud his disappearance.

Simon Feldman searched for his daughter all his life and had the confirmation only a few years before his passing that she had been abducted, sequestered and executed at the secret detention center El Vesubio. I still can't wrap my mind around the idea of the State assassinating a teenager, and yet simultaneously know that this is what a State represents. I may never learn of the destiny of my grandfather; but knowing how hard Laura fought for the political conditions both of them sought after fills me with admiration for her utopianism, her determination, her fragile youth, her political anger. Men in uniforms tried to wipe away her existence, but she is very present to me. I sometimes dream that ghosts of murdered revolutionaries will materialize to lead us in an insurrection against the international right wing.

Chilean poet Raúl Zurita knows existence does not stop with the death of a human body: in Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay under the "Operation Condor" coordinated by the CIA, dissidents were thrown from planes in the ocean and in the desert; they are now part of our surroundings, they inhabit the elements, our common memory. Poets are here to bring times and spaces closer, open passages we thought were closed. Raúl Zurita awakens entire worlds State terrorism intended to destroy. His words are incantations to bring his comrades back to life. His capacity for tenderness is large, uncorrupted and firm: "I am not his father, but Galip Kurdi is my son" writes the poet about the Syrian child who drowned in the Mediterranean sea on September 2015 while trying to escape the war.

Raúl Zurita was born in Santiago, Chile in 1950. In 1973, the Commander-in-Chief of the Chilean army Augusto Pinochet overthrew the democratically elected socialist president Salvador Allende. The day of the coup, Raúl Zurita was arrested, imprisoned and tortured for twenty-one days with hundreds of others in a secret detention center held in a naval training ship because he carried a notebook with poems. Writing became then a matter of personal survival and collective salvation. Raúl Zurita has dedicated his life's work to honor the disappeared worldwide: "He who is being beaten or tortured or killed is united with everyone who has been or is being beaten, tortured and killed: it's the military coup in Chile, but at the same time it's Auschwitz, it's the bomb over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it's the Sabra and Shatila massacre. Each disappeared, tortured, massacred human being represents the absolute failure of all humanity". There is a continuity in this immeasurable violence. Violence in the exclusive project of the nation state and the discursive fiction of democracy. Violence in the totalitarianism of capitalism, or "hyper-dictatorship" as Zurita names it, which attempts to annihilate anything resisting commodification and rests on its bloody colonial and imperial legacy which too many pretend to forget. (In Chile, the U.S. support was crucial in the execution of the coup. The Pinochet regime was put in place to eliminate communism and trade unions and enforce economic liberalization and privatization. These policies created a rise in the GDP —concentrated in the hands of the oligarchy— and severe inequalities. The Argentinian junta also had the support of the U.S., and while Henry Kissinger was urging the regime to rapidly silence its opponents, the government was implementing free-trade and deregulation policies that led to the Argentinian crisis of 1998-2002. Neoliberal policies developed in prestigious universities and carried out by international institutions continue to devastate the lives of people worldwide for the interest of the capitalist elite in the name of "development", "growth" and "security".) Violence in the propaganda that wants us to believe this reality is inevitable.

Raúl Zurita fights back against the manipulation of language which aims to distort our perception and prevent the imagining of alternate worlds. His words bear witness to brutality, and against this void, there is the fundamental force of our love. "We live in the age of the agony of languages and the absolute triumph of the language of advertising. [...] Poetry is the most fragile art because it depends on those words that die. But at the same time, it's the most powerful because it is the only one that can give account to that ferocious loss and raise up new meanings. [...] Poetry will not die." (Raúl Zurita)

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**Eline Marx** is a writer and translator living in New York and Paris. She holds a master's degree in political science and critical theory. Her work has been included in *No*, *Dear* magazine, *A Gathering of The Tribes*, and other publications.

# Getting to Know Lorenzo by Ron Padgett

"Have you read Kerouac? Camus?" Lewis Meyer asked me. Tulsa, 1958.

Lewis was the proprietor of Tulsa's only good bookstore and I was a high school boy who kept turning up to buy things. Before long I was working in the store, where Lewis told me about the hippest publishers—New Directions, City Lights, and Grove Press. I soon found myself reading their authors: Rimbaud, Lorca, Patchen, William Carlos Williams, Pound, Ginsberg, Corso, Ferlinghetti, Beckett, and Kerouac, among others, as well as Grove's new literary magazine, *Evergreen Review*. I read every word of it, right down to the small ads in the back pages, one of which was for a literary magazine that bore the unusual name of *Yugen*. I subscribed to it right away.

For several years I had been writing traditionally rhymed verse, but under the influence of Whitman, Ginsberg, and Cummings I veered sharply toward modernism. Soon I got the idea of starting a literary magazine in my high school, but when the class counselor said that it would require a faculty advisor I balked. At home, looking at *Yugen* (edited by LeRoi Jones), I realized that it wasn't a big fancy production, and so I invited several other highschoolers—notably Dick Gallup and Joe Brainard—to join me in producing what turned out to be *The White Dove Review*, in whose five issues we eventually published Kerouac, Jones, Ginsberg, Creeley, and other beacons of contemporary poetry. We sent multiple copies to contributors and to the bookstores they told us about, such as New York's Eighth Street Bookshop and Books 'n' Things, Cleveland's Asphodel, and San Francisco's City Lights Bookshop. Word got around, which led to unsolicited submissions.

The envelope said "Lorenzo Roberto Thomas" and came from an address in Jamaica, Queens, NY. I was intrigued even before I opened it. However, the poems didn't live up to my expectations, so I wrote Mr. Thomas a letter rejecting them and offering advice on how he could improve them.

A week later I got a reply that began, "Who the hell do you think you are?" It went on to take me to task for my presumptuousness and arrogance. No one had ever said this to me. Like a bully challenged to a fight by a smaller but fiercer person, I was stunned, but the letter made me reconsider the cavalier way I had patronized Mr. Thomas. I wrote back, apologizing and ascribing my behavior partly to the callowness of youth. He responded with courtesy and tact. It turned out that he too was a high school student! Although he didn't submit any more poems, I felt that we had made an amicable connection, albeit a brief one.

A few years later, in New York attending college, I had

become part of the underground poetry scene that floated around what was then called the Lower East Side. One of its focal points was a basement coffee house on Second Avenue called *Le Métro*, where weekly poetry readings were taking place. *Le Métro*, with its bare brick walls, funky lighting, stacks of antique furniture, and somewhat rough-and-ready atmosphere was the coolest poetry venue in town. For me it was also intimidating, as the dominant tone was set by male poets who seemed big-city savvy and tough. Among the crowd were Paul Blackburn, George Montgomery, Ted Berrigan, Aram Saroyan, Art Berger, Jackson MacLow, Al Fowler, Lennox Raphael, Harry Fainlight, Carol Bergé, Ed Sanders, Allen Ginsberg, and Dan Saxon, who circulated rexograph stencils for the poets to write their poems on so he could publish them in his magazine *Poets at Le Métro*. For me to read my work before this audience (usually between twenty-five and fifty people) took courage, but at the same time *Le Métro* had a social and artistic fluidity that was encouraging. Every week you could meet someone interesting or at least unusual.

"Ron, let me introduce you to Lorenzo Thomas."

The name rang a bell, but this guy couldn't be Lorenzo Thomas. This guy was black. Then I heard another bell. I had assumed that Lorenzo Thomas was white! Duh. I extended my hand and reiterated my apology of a few years ago. He shook my hand and, giving me a nice smile, told me not to worry about it. I had found a colleague, potentially a friend.

Lorenzo's quick, sophisticated sense of humor and his impressive knowledge of poetry and jazz were what made his early poems so strong and enjoyable ("The Yellow Peril," for example). We had a lot in common. We were roughly the same age, we had gotten seriously into contemporary poetry in high school, we shared an agile sense of humor, and we were energized by certain artistic influences. I wasn't always sure about my authenticity, and though at the time he was spelling his name Lorenzo Toumes (his family's original name in Panama) I was pretty sure he was the real deal.

At readings over the next several years the bond between us grew stronger. We always retreated to our respective colleges and private lives but we were definitely part of the same literary scene. We were literary buddies. And so it was that when David Shapiro and I decided, in 1967, to assemble an anthology that focused on poets we admired and knew, we wanted to include Lorenzo. After college, living far from New York, I had been out of touch with him, so what I didn't know was that in those few years he had changed. The Civil Rights Movement, the Black Arts Movement, and his participation in the Umbra group had led him to a much deeper political engagement. He hadn't changed his name the way LeRoi Jones had when

# Getting to Know Lorenzo by Ron Padgett

he became Amiri Imamu Baraka, but he had had a similar awakening. (Lorenzo later told me that he had thought his being Panamanian made him special, but when he walked down the street he saw that he was just another American black man.) By 1967 a number of black poets were distancing themselves from white poets. Lorenzo didn't answer my letters inviting him to be in the anthology. I was so naïve and oblivious that it took me a while to understand his silence and to figure out that he especially didn't want to be seen as the token black in our book. It just hadn't occurred to me. Duh again! One upshot was that our anthology lost a good poet; another was that I had lost a friend.

The next I heard he had joined the Navy (in 1968) and been sent to Vietnam—in the middle of the war. Lorenzo always had a mysterious, private side, but his enlistment made absolutely no sense to me. First, not one poet I knew joined the military at that time; on the contrary, a number of them had even fled to Canada. Given Lorenzo's political awareness, why had he volunteered to fight a white man's war against a Third World country? No one could provide an answer. After four years of service he came back—with a drug problem.

Not long thereafter he was scheduled to read at the St. Mark's Poetry Project. I wavered, then decided to go. Waiting for him in the church's sanctuary was a sizeable crowd, and then, wearing a three-piece suit and with two attractive young women in tow, he swept in, openly radiating an energy I had never seen in him. He mounted the podium and, like a hellfire-and-brimstone preacher, erupted in a torrent of elusive surrealistic imagery fueled by rage. He was like an Aimé Césaire on steroids and cocaine. It was impressive, but kind of scary. When he finished he strode straight out of the church and went off into the evening with his entourage. The beauty of his voice and the power of his performance notwithstanding, my heart sank, for I saw with regret that trying to revive our friendship was utterly hopeless.

Around 1973 Ted Greenwald, probably his best white poet friend (going back to their college days in Queens), told me that Lorenzo had moved to Texas, partly to escape the ravages of New York's drug culture. Indeed Lorenzo had gotten sober and was working as a poet in the schools in Texas, Arkansas, and Oklahoma, as well as serving as writer in residence at Texas Southern University. Now in touch with Lorenzo again, Ted spoke with him often and at length on the phone. Eventually Lorenzo co-organized a popular annual blues festival in Houston and hosted a weekly radio show. In 1984 he joined the faculty at the University of Houston-Downtown. When he invited Ted and me to read in Houston, we jumped at the chance. The three of us had a great time together there, like in the old Métro days, but this experience was thoroughly relaxed and joyous.

After that, whenever Lorenzo returned to New York to visit his family, sometimes my wife and I would have him come to dinner at our apartment, where we had long, cascading conversations. Lorenzo was not only a poet but also a serious intellectual, with an incisive intelligence and a sly wit. His strong sense of social justice had never left him, but now it came through not in jeremiads but in an angular irony that was piercing and sometimes just plain funny and sometimes both. His spirit had not been diminished by life, even by the cancer that had required the removal of part of his jaw. He continued to arrive at our apartment, dressed in a perfectly rumpled suit and tie and a tan raincoat, toting a worn leather satchel filled with books and papers. Years after he died I found myself alone in a clearing in the woods in northern Vermont, and suddenly I thought of him and burst into tears.

# Reviews

## LETTER FROM REVIEWS EDITOR JOHN RUFO:

In this issue, Lix Z writes Andrea Abi-Karam's *EXTRATRANSMISSION*, a book working genderqueer cyborg responses on and over various state violences from various states, as "assert[ing] a remembrance and a rupture." The "re-" prefix can re(-)mind us that repetition is not the same thing as "the same" or simply the production of mirrors. We're not about déjà vu all over again, because every time an "again" haunts, it changes, shifts, produces a key we may already know but maybe not quite like that. Through collaborative projections, some ghosts might come around and around, depart and re-double. That the "rupture" near "remembrance" constitutes a break with the repeating thing, its doubling makes and breaks a difference. We repeat, reverberate, resist, make resilient, and "record," a word which means "bring to remembrance." We read, again and again. Lix Z teaches us how we might do this with Abi-Karam's exhaustive and engaging work.

These forms of bringing to remembrance are brought to bear in this issue as well with Aria Aber writing on Jenny Xie's *Eye Level*, whose work "look[s] into how to honor the questions with a precision that stems from a deep-seated, profound love for the world." Probing into experiences of exile and borders, Aber gives us the time and space to see the variety of levels Xie's poetry might operate within and through. Our eyes are retrained: so to speak, so to see. Aber underlines Xie's lines that "combat the psychological anguish of displacement" while also "mixing sensory information to create synesthesia." Aber additionally reminds us that Xie's work exists in a collective genealogy of contemporary poets of color. This careful framing does, at the very least, some work to draw together writing instead of acting as if each person works alone.

Working with and hearing a variety of persons and documents, Jonah Mixon-Webster's poetry, in its ghostly materiality, is read by Adam Malinowski as a space for "radical critique" of antiBlack violence. Outlining the "ongoing emergency" of Flint's water crises, especially how they relate to Black persons, Malinowski finds Mixon-Webster "interrogat[ing] identification," showing forth the fissures and foundations of local and state militarization's internal collapse and its realities and resonances. In a succinct response, Malinowski finds "police violence, environmental degradation, and rampant state border securitization" coming together in a recording that reissues and propels a typographic set of responses and renewals by Mixon-Webster.

Ultimately, what is at stake for Malinowski is Mixon-Webster's Stereo(TYPE) "imagin[ing] a space outside the white supremacist power structure."

What is already happening outside? "Reflections on being and dying are not abstractions, but known and felt on variously physical and spiritual planes," Alisha Mascarenhas writes into Etel Adnan's *Surge*. Here we witness another form of address that takes into account racialized environmental disaster and consequence. Mascarenhas notes how Adnan devotes deep, humble study to "clear shouts to the wind." These "natural" movements of "body-mind" demand so much from us listeners and recorders, rehearsing another poetics as Mascarenhas says of Adnan "with relentless sensitivity."

These writings all fall under what get called "reviews." We sit with something like "seeing again," especially those we haven't seen in a long time. Staying with what strays and rests without arresting.

If you would like to send writing for a future issue, please query: [reviews.ppnl@poetryproject.org](mailto:reviews.ppnl@poetryproject.org)  
John Rufo

John Rufo's materials have been published with The Capilano Review, The Offing, the Journal Petra, Tagvverk, Dreginald, and elsewhere. Contact: [johnspringrufo.tumblr.com](http://johnspringrufo.tumblr.com)

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**Andrea Abi-Karam's *EXTRATRANSMISSION* (Kelsey Street Press, 2019)**

Review by Lix Z

"how to become a new glitch, a new disruption?"

Andrea Abi-Karam's vengeance poetics in their debut book of poetry, *EXTRATRANSMISSION*, breaks glass of lyric and form. Moving at the volume and velocity of sound [767 mph, at least] in an unrelenting, ALL CAPS trauma narrative, Andrea vivisections the intricacies of genderqueer cyborg identity under systems of oppression. The form shattering swells of resistance against state violence, nationalism, the medical industrial complex, the tech industry, cops, and bros erupt in a tensional torrent of I's: subjects hyper-excised from injury as the injury is hyper-excised from subjects.

One of the characters in *EXTRATRANSMISSION* is a combat veteran who survived a blast in the Iraq War. The veteran sustains the signature injury from the War on Terror, a traumatic brain injury (TBI), erasing her



# Reviews

memory of family members or events. Andrea's poems searingly narrate how she uses a PDA as an external brain attached to her inner arm: "THIS IS THE END OF A PERSON AND THE BEGINNING OF A MALF(X)ING CYBORG" The veteran describes how she receives a port a point of fusion that produces complications that she never thought would happen. She screams for subjectivity in the midst of combat inflicted violence, state inflicted violence, tech inflicted violence, medical industrial inflicted violence resisting the expectations and coercions of the system of oppression. Her voice arises out of the tension with the power struggle. "Machines that force their way through." The I emerges with the question "how to become a new glitch, a new disruption" a ghostly crystallization in the shell of the signature injury.

THE STATE GAVE U THE PDA BUT IT ALSO GAVE U  
THE INJURY  
WHICH CAME FIRST  
THE INJURY OR THE TECH  
THE INJURY  
IT'S ALWAYS THE INJURY

In October, Andrea and I collaborated to create an interface hybrid of poetry and film, using *EXTRATRANSMISSION* as the source text. On a rooftop in Brooklyn, we unspun a roll of mylar creating a chrome conveyer belt, a metallic runway reflecting an inverted sky. Andrea used a medical stapler to pierce their forearm and stretch the cables of the external brain, wires flowing out of their wrist in rain. Andrea's performance in the film magnified and refracted the polyvocality in *EXTRATRANSMISSION*. The art direction and acting in our collaboration aimed to entangle the multiple I's and tighten the tension and attention to the violences of the US military complex in the Middle East. Mirroring the traumatic reverberations of the signature injury, the pacing of the editing in our film created a new reality, a reality on loop, a loop that gradually gains new elements in a slippery search for memory and oblivion.

In the past six months, Andrea and I versioned this film project into a series of performances. Drawing on the visual language we created in the film, the stage became the arena for us to perform a rupture---a temporary autonomous zone---destroying all levels of hierarchy. In a performance at a gay rave in Oakland, I stapled a mesh cable directly into Andrea's left forearm on an operating table made from two oversized plush dice covered in the mylar. The source text of *EXTRATRANSMISSION* grew louder, the visual language sharper with the compressed stack of staples, the distorted reverberations of the music

composed by Dorsey Bass, and the sleek surface of the mylar runway. The stapling erupted into a dynamic tension, as Andrea pulled on the mesh cable, performing what they call the "violences of un/forced adaptation of the cyborg body." Two friends held iPhones for the operating room light, and I used the medical stapler to attach the mesh cable to Andrea's collarbone, shoulder, ribs, right thigh and calf. Activated by each staple, Andrea's sternum kept rising on the sharp metal edge of the fuzzy dice. After the procedure, we projected our film from October on a concrete wall as Andrea's body absorbed the staples and became static.

For Andrea's reading at the Poetry Project February 4, 2019, we collaboratively versioned this performance further. Andrea first read from *EXTRATRANSMISSION*. Seeing them read from it underscored how performative the text *EXTRATRANSMISSION* is with its pacing perpetually in fifth gear yet still so precise and strangely intimate. They began the reading by brutally dissecting tech bros, noise bros, refuse-to-tip bros. Every unapologetic kill bro poem left shreds of cop and bro corpses quivering in the papers they threw on the floor, AmEx metal black card incisions glistening. Their reading of *EXTRATRANSMISSION* continued with explosive intensity as Andrea continued with a narrative of how the War on Terror inflicted the signature injury on the subject in combat after surviving the blast. The multitudes of genderqueer cyborg subjects cascade into the final scene of *EXTRATRANSMISSION*: an intimate interaction with a fawn superzooming into the scales of violence inflicted by capitalism, the tech industry, and gentrification. Andrea describes the fawn dislocated: "Its hooves are bleeding from slapping the concrete day after day." The descriptions magnify the visceral effects of violence that eerily feel more innermost, more familiar in their accumulation.

"The fawn's hooves are cracked & dry from clicking across the pavement in order to find something still."

The repetition of hooves propel the fawn forward into exhaustion, erosion, infection until the fawn disappears in both corporal and narrative forms. The book and Andrea's reading ended with a zoom out, one of the I's of *EXTRATRANSMISSION* on the edge of a chasm "on the sidewalk looking up @ the whole nation looking down."

After reading the final line of *EXTRATRANSMISSION*, a recording began booming through the space and



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Andrea stepped away from the mic. Vocally tethered to the recording, they spoke in sync with it: “On the surface of the signature injury / on the surface.” They shed their clear replicant jacket and their body seemed to glitch as they moved on the runway down the center of the Poetry Project to an OR table (aka the usual merch table) in between the two sides of the audience. The recording continued on high volume, and I pierced them with the first staple upon the word “impact”. As I stapled, I thought of the fawn. I thought of the visceral accumulation and the practice of stapling forming in our collaboration, the sharpening of senses through stapling and sound, the erotics of excision. I think most people think of the fawn to be this tender, vulnerable subject, but I see the fawn in *EXTRATRANSMISSION* to be the image of accumulation, the multitude of potential (and dislocated) selves, a collapse of endings and beginnings stretched over the webs of power that ends *EXTRATRANSMISSION* in nonresolution: “A ghost that would live on and on.”

Rendering an incisive critique on the violences embedded within the US military complex in the Middle East, *EXTRATRANSMISSION* asserts rapt resistance against the systems of oppression on every scale: from the rave to the riot, the OR to the orgy. The book insistently pulls out the wires that invisibly run through the circuitry of memory and experience, while sharply honoring the memories at every layer that tensionally compose one’s own polyvocality. I was in awe of the letter Andrea wrote in the Acknowledgements section, in which they fiercely recognize the forces and affinities in Oakland that coalesced to drive this dazzling book. I thought of how this book was in process under the weight of the immense loss of loved friends in Ghostship in 2016 in Oakland, and how collaboration was forever changed in Oakland with our loss, and how collaboration became wildly vital for our communities. Andrea’s poetry harnesses the liveness of memory, the interdimensions of selves glowing, gleaming, gripping tightly on the enduring pulses of collective experience and resilience. *EXTRATRANSMISSION* asserts a remembrance and a rupture.

**Lix Z** is a queer nonbinary performance artist, art director, and writer. They also play synth in Telepathic Children.

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**Jenny Xie’s *Eye Level* (Graywolf Press, 2017)**  
Review by Aria Aber

Within the last decade or two, poets of color like Suji Kwok Kim, Natalie Diaz, Ishion Hutchinson, Athena

Farrokhzad, Warsan Shire, and Cathy Park Hong have shown that the private is always public for the disenfranchised citizen. Writing from a liminal space, these authors study the seams between cultures, post-colonization, cultural integration, linguistic assimilation and inherited wars. The homelessness that the loss of one’s default language and culture can incur is, after all, independent from an actual political exile and can happen, as with indigenous cultures, within the safe confines of your own country. Or, as Jenny Xie’s poetry debut *Eye Level* demonstrates, within the confines of any borders—even those of your own physicality.

The meticulously precise book *Eye Level* discusses the ironies of exile as frictions between the private and public, the interior and exterior, identity and geography. Her lyric poems relentlessly question the body’s hunger to belong to a logical, chronological, and place-centered narrative. This narrative is, per the speaker, retrieved through our most reliable adult sense: sight. But, as sight is inherently unreliable and can only study the exterior, the speaker is always trapped in a paradox, in a tug-of-war between two worlds. Xie’s poems travel Cambodia, Southern Europe, China and the US, while, like vagabonds, the people in the poems feel uprooted and excluded from their surroundings.

Xie’s collection, which was selected by Juan Filipe Herrera for the prestigious Walt Whitman award, begins with the aptly titled poem “Rootless,” which exposes a traveler’s concerns about solitude. Echoing a sentiment that even Emily Dickinson argued, the cerebrally acute speaker tells herself “No matter. The mind resides both inside and out. / It can think itself and think itself into existence.” This argument—namely, that belonging and the self’s fluid identities are related only to the psyche rather than the unfamiliar landscape the body inhabits—is one that will resurface again and again in the book. The final couplet of the first poem announces the speaker’s own rootlessness, crystalizing the ironies of exile:

At present, on this sleeper train, there’s nowhere to arrive.

Me? I’m just here in my traveler’s clothes, trying on each passing town for size.

The vagabond mind is both homeless and can take root anywhere. To come up with a rather simple example for the conditions of exile, we can look at the Tillandsia: the air plant thrives anywhere that offers sun and water, unbounded by earth. Similarly, the minds of exiled children flourish, even if alienated, in many places; exile becomes an advantage. “Rootless” offers a premise for Xie’s collection, inviting us to question home and

belonging in each following poem.

*Eye Level* is divided into four parts, the first of which is comprised of poems discussing countries abroad. The Phnom Penh Diptychs are long poems, sectioned into vignettes and snapshots of life in the Cambodian capital during the wet and dry season. Xie excels in compressing emotional, sensory and intellectual information into couplets and monostichs which allow her to pay attention to minute details: "There's new money lapping at these streets / Thirsts planted beneath the shells of high-rises" or "An hour before midnight, the corners of the city begin to peel. / Alley of sex workers, tinny folk songs pushed through speakers." While these snapshots successfully convey the image of a newly rising city, the danger of exoticizing the class struggle of another's country is, somewhat cleverly, circumvented (see the use of "sex workers" instead of "prostitutes" and the lack of moral judgement regarding pollution). Xie also declares her speaker as Other in the surroundings, showing cognizance of her own privilege. Not only does she contextualize this part of the book with a quote from Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*, but she also mentions her tourist-speaker's hungry "gaze," fueled by an "outsider's extravagant need / While [she] listened for the dialects" and "hunted down the night markets' chewed lips."

These diptychs are a true testament to Xie's gift for creating original images that "ring red with everything" for a long time after reading them—with the precision of an alchemist, she mixes sensory information to create synesthesia: "The zippered notes of bike engines enter / through an opening in my sleep." Or later, noticing that "even the rain sweats, unkempt like the rest of us." Such brilliant moments of linguistic and visual invention make up for, and perhaps explain the few instances that feel more expected (water growing out of water). As a reader, I am surprised but trust the writer enough to believe those moments. This is not to say that those simpler lines let down, but that they—usually placed at the end of a long, fastidiously rendered sequence—are "earned" and alleviate the sometimes densely taut language.

One classic way to combat the psychological anguish of displacement is to recreate the lost country through food. In *Eye Level*, food and national cuisine, or the lack thereof, offer a verbal palette that lets us revisit home while also offering mental sustenance. Xie animates the material world through active longing, avoiding pathetic fallacy by translating abstractions into digestible matter: "I pull apart the evening with a fork. White clot behind the eyes."

Throughout the entire book, the strange, foreign topographies are turned into food ("Ice, entire cakes of it," "kernels of rainwater"), or they turn the speaker into food: "the mouth of the outer world / sipping gingerly / on the broth of us."

For the aspirant middle class, food becomes a status symbol by which to define one's wealth. In the second part, which deals with a family's immigration story, Xie uses this symbolism to illustrate poverty, announcing with musical genius the "over-warmed bones of January" or "two mice" making "paradise out of a button of peanut butter." The poem "Lunar New Year, 1988," draws the picture of a family that attempts to mask its economic status in family photographs:

The husband and the brother in law remove every item from the refrigerator  
And arrange it all on the old card table for a Kodak photo.

...

One bottle of artificial mango drink for show.

How soon a photograph can erase all labor.  
It says: we are sated, but the watercress and the pork are unending.

While this book glimmers with beautiful and sensual writing, Xie restrains her language with skill and sheer elegance. The economy of emotional descriptors as well as the clinical attention to sensory detail successfully convey the pathos of a wanting family dynamic. The speaker, trapped between countries, lacks not only a sense of definite belonging but also a sense of emotional certainty which the at times painful details ("A wife bleaches out the urine smell from the bathroom tile / while suffering the clean cuts of an insult") attest to.

"Metamorphosis" highlights the changes that accompany immigration. Xie writes a mother figure who gave up an old country's "pad of a stethoscope for a dining hall spatula" of the new country. This intelligent use of synecdoche renders a familiar trope to an innovative and heart-breaking image. The speaker's distance towards the subject disposes of sentimentality. I thought of my own immigrant doctor parents, who were humbled with "working-class jobs." The alienated subject anchors herself with a meal, albeit unbeknownst to us whether this is for her job or herself: "Every night she made a dish with ground pork, / paired with a dish that was fibrous."

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At first glance, the temporal opening of “every night” bears witness to an economically forced routine. At second glance, however, we see this habit transformed from routine to ritual, as cultural traditions often center around a meal. The title, then, becomes multidimensional: the woman is morphed from doctor to cook, while the cooking morphs from an act of work to ritual. Again, Xie elevates the bleak sadness of exile with a sense of ironic but spiritual devotion.

As the title suggests, the fulcrum of the book is Xie’s radical looking, following the premise that noticing equals preservation and sense-making. However, her sense of sight surpasses the eye and encompasses all senses, while restlessly searching for an eye that can turn inward and scrutinize the “I.” The most difficult and ambitious part is at the heart of the third section, wherein Xie discusses interiority. Her study of sight in “Visual Orders” is guided by essayistic impulses, questioning both the biological and psychological attributes of sight. This poem demands to be read in relation to the preceding and following texts, as it answers to and reverberates Xie’s concerns and obsessions. Most of the 14 fragments deal with the phenomenology of seeing and being seen:

What atrophies without the tending of a gaze? The visible object is constituted by sight. But where to spend one’s sight, a soft currency?

Xie’s eye falls everywhere, attempting to create a selfhood that understands the other. Ironically, she deploys the word “profligate” twice in this section, referring to the speaker’s self. But the language, although taking risky leaps, is never profligate. Xie describes with searing tenderness her journey inward: “Describe how the interior looks. / Cloak the eyes. / Close them, and seeing continues.” While some fragments read like exercises of lyric imagination, others vibrate with sonic and intellectual genius: “That we are touchable makes us seen” or, as is the truth with anyone who’s ever perceived themselves as Other, “Self-consciousness anticipates an excess of seeing. Its incessancy.”

Xie doesn’t only travel in subject matter, but also in form. She borrows the ancient Japanese form “Xishuitsu.” Tracing her own ancestry in her notes, her lyric and imagistic precision bears witness to her appreciation of Chinese poetry. Poets Li Shangyin and Zhang Yanghao wrote allusive poems that pondered on the mind’s fallacies, as well as social unrest. Like her poetic influences, Xie creates a pleasure for both the ear and mind. In “Letters to Du Fu,” her lyric fragments form observations that are

both smart and humorous:

They say too much brooding      elongates the mind  
Everywhere one lands      the train arrives at the  
depot early or late

Du Fu, too, moved often and dedicated his life to writing poetry about historical and personal losses.

Xie’s poems need to be read carefully; they defy the short attention span required for image-heavy and pseudo-aphoristic “trendy poetry,” if we want to ascribe to that term. *Eye Level* is not a difficult book because it necessitates an academic education but because it wants to be read with the same patience and attention that must have gone into writing it. If read in chronological order—and the poems certainly benefit from being read that way—the joys of arriving at poems like “Melancholia” or “Exit, Eve” are indescribably rewarding both on an aesthetic and intellectual level. Frankly, I am astonished by the emotional impact such sparse and taut language can have. For the scholar, this is a book of allusions, connections, and rich intra-connected voices, which allow for endless study. For the poet, this is a book of endless wonder, an instructive guide to learn from, a model to look at for restraint and truth-searching, a book to keep close in times of artistic solitude. For the general reader, this is also a book of wonder, guiding us—regardless of our ethnicities and immigration history—closer to the problems that gnaw at each and every one of us. Xie doesn’t pretend to have the answers, but she knows how to honor the questions with a precision that stems from a deep-seated, profound love for the world: “She had trained herself to look for answers at eye level, / but they were lower, they were changing all the time.”

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**Aria Aber's** debut *Hard Damage* won the Prairie Schooner Book Prize in Poetry and is forthcoming from University of Nebraska Press in September 2019.

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**Jonah Mixon-Webster's *Stereo(TYPE)* (Ahsahta Press, 2018)**

Review by Adam Malinowski

Jonah Mixon-Webster's first book, *Stereo(TYPE)*—selected by Tyrone Williams as the winner of the 2017 Sawtooth Poetry Prize, and published by Ahsahta Press in February of this year—sets out to “Write a poem that will keep you out the grave.”

Writing through an appropriation of state documents,

medical records, field recordings, and dream sequences, *Stereo(TYPE)* positions itself forcefully as an inversion and critique of "the great intellectual tradition of the white man." This is a poetry of consequence, which seeks to invert white supremacist and colonial structures—the very same conditions that produced the disaster in Flint and the ongoing emergency of being black in America. Mixon-Webster interrogates identification in these pages, and invites the reader to enter a space of radical solidarity—or perhaps complicity, depending on your subject position—with those whose lives are at stake within the racial power structure that produces these disasters.

*Stereo(TYPE)* subverts the official registers of dominant discourse and places blackness at their center—not as casualty but as a kind of powerful heroism that inverts the values and language of white supremacy. In *Black Hauntology* No. 5, Mixon-Webster writes, "A body thronged / hard and buried / in the open light." For Jacques Derrida, according to Colin Davis, hauntology refers to "the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present, nor absent, neither dead nor alive." Through these poems we recognize blackness as erasure, the hauntology of dominant historical narratives, the black figure being that which is never represented—"buried in the open light"—yet precisely whose labor and life have laid the brickwork for the dominant narratives of the West—"Inexorable meaning / through erasure," he writes. In fact, Mixon-Webster draws our attention repeatedly to the "zombification" of black people: "We is walkin' dead around here." However, it is precisely blackness which exceeds dominant forms of cultural representation, and these poems find themselves in this space—writing around and pointing toward the thing that cannot be said—"is the ordinariness of color / is dirty money // is the blackish rat he spit up // is the phantom object // is the dead wail of a red siren."

In the poem "Frequently Asked Questions," Mixon-Webster draws our attention to the Flint water crisis as a state-sponsored assault on black lives. This is Mixon-Webster's hometown, and through these poems, "Flint" becomes a metonymy for a whole host of racialized disasters: police violence, environmental degradation, and rampant state border securitization. In other words, Flint becomes a figure for the racialized violence that takes place there. Similarly, "lead" becomes the material figure for white supremacy: "The contagion carries itself into the host." Mixon-Webster writes. And in the epigraph to the last section of the book, he quotes Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, a Flint pediatrician: "if you were going to put something in a population to keep them down for generations to come—it would be lead."

Although *Stereo(TYPE)* was written under precisely the conditions which produced the disaster in Flint, the poems here forcefully imagine a space outside the white supremacist power structure by way of their radical critique. These poems ultimately allow us to touch, if only momentarily, a space where "...two black birds collapse into the hem of this horizon."

—**Adam Malinowski** is a poet living in Detroit, Michigan and currently completing a Master's in Creative Writing at Eastern Michigan University. His work can be found at *Poets Reading the News*, *Philosophical Idiot*, and in *Mirage* #5/*Period(ical)* #6.

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**Etel Adnan's *Surge* (Nightboat Books, 2018)**  
Review by Alisha Mascarenhas

As a wave does. Of the sea, of emotion, of thinking. Meaning crests, blinks, and submits to the vast and chaotic flow of thought. Nothing stays. The workings of the mind keep happening. Etel Adnan's long poem, *Surge*, published through Nightboat Books this summer, attunes to such a motion; humbling itself to the forces beyond a singular subjectivity. It is a philosophical succession of aphoristic thoughts, turning its reader in on herself and back out again; visiting questions of being, of perception, with the rigour of a thinker who has lived a deeply curious life. All certainty is laid to rest as every impulse to fix meaning in place is flipped on its side, inspected, considered, and swallowed again to the waters. One is brought into a mind space that invites a compassionate and deliberate attention to thinking as a natural occurrence; a movement beyond the grasp of the individual. Thinking is treated as an often futile, and nonetheless inevitable, process in which we are all involved and entrapped.

In *Surge*, Adnan is addressing some of the most basic human inquiries into being. Her text brings into consideration reflections that are timeless in their relevance as well as their possibilities for answers. That is to say, it is made evident that no clear answers exist in the absolute, and there is a pleasure to be found in releasing the illusion of knowing. Adnan offers a rest from the anxieties of trying to figure things out; acknowledging the persistence of analytic thought, giving it a little pet, and dismissing its hold. "We pretend to measure the invisible and the unknown," she writes, "It can all be just some entertainment. Better to claim ignorance, with pride, "we need the pride of not-knowing, the breathing space." If these declarations can still be called aphorisms, they undo



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themselves in their saying; announcing from the outset that "[m]eaning is ephemeral."

The subjective "I" in *Surge* appears as an observer of all that passes: the weather, accidents, a madness which "can run as a sweat over the brain." As someone who has lived and written—with a relentless sensitivity and passionate attention—now into her ninety-third year, it is evident that the poet's intimacy with mortality is felt with specificity and experience. Reflections on being and dying are not abstractions, but known and felt on variously physical and spiritual planes.

Time keeps moving, we move with it, and at a given moment, we cease. Nevertheless, we continue with the notion that "Death exists only for the others," turning insistently towards any available, immaterial void, "Oh the computer that replaces the cinema of the lost years!", some fantasy or another. Adnan's ruminations on the tricks of the mind that it calls reality are never given with disdain, always with an understanding for how pathetic human beings are, yet how resilient. A brightness perseveres, and indications of desire as given proof of being alive, "The fish's ability to shift environments," writes Adnan, "makes me want to inhabit the tummy of any whale that swims by the coast, to get out of my skin and lie under his." She repeatedly refers to the elements and forces of the natural world as sites of wisdom; indications for how a person should be: "The tide comes at its own pace; this is why it never commits a crime."

As a philosophical poet and painter who often turns to the sun (*The Arab Apocalypse*, 1989), the sea, (*Sea and Fog*, 2012) and the indomitable strength of mountains (*Journey to Mount Tamalpais*, 1986) as points of reference towards the creation of her art, this comes as no surprise. Adnan's oeuvre has consistently addressed the natural world with awe, humility and a deep inquisitiveness that discernibly shapes and informs her poetics. At this stage in her life's work, it is evident that this relationship with the forces of the natural world, the cosmos, and the mess that humans make in thinking ourselves separate, has been profoundly considered. Adnan's wisdom is earned, is breathed, and is made humble because of it.

It is this depth of wisdom that brings the aphoristic quality of Adnan's work such particular strength. Her declarations—clear shouts to the wind—land not with the arrogance of the unlearned, but with the comprehension of one who knows she cannot know. Adnan is thus taking up a form historically instrumentalized by a dominant tradition of western, male philosophers who have an unattractive tendency to take their perspectives as conclusive fact. Beyond

the gender identities of individual thinkers, this is about the implications of patriarchal belief systems in literary conventions of thought. Adnan's poetics brings the feminine power of the undetermined, casting language around what cannot, ultimately, be made certain. With skill, she uses words to obscure fixed notions of what it is to be a person, to experience pain, to think about it, and refracts thought matter back to the light of the moon. "That kind of motion," she writes, "alters the world."

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**Alisha Mascarenhas** is a poet and emergent translator who has spent most of her life between Vancouver and Montréal. She is presently a Leslie Scalapino Fellow completing an MFA in Writing at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, where she is working on her first play.



# Conversation: Lorber and Ireland

## IN PARADISE WITH MY FEELINGS BEING A CONVERSATION BETWEEN BRENDAN LORBER AND LAUREN IRELAND

**Brendan Lorber (BL):** Hello from Moose Bar where people want to know why I'm sitting alone reading a book called *Feelings*. But I'm not alone, I'm floating with you here in the cloud where we now live most of our divice-ive days and nights. And we are interviewing each other because, thanks to a cruel combination of lifestyle choices and sleep away capitalism, we never get to IRL it up without some ulteriority. Even this sentence, that's pretending to be part of Totally Normal conversation, is actually an introduction to this formal exchange in which I question your *Feelings*, which is more of a perfect book than any of us deserve. And you can ask me if this really is paradise after all.

**Lauren Ireland (LI):** Hello from the sky somewhere over Montana's crumpled brow. Remember when we lived in the same city, and we could sit together in your kitchen with a bag of just-the-right-level-of-stale Middles and some whiskey and read other people's poems? I do. And this plane is a bullshit substitute. However, I have a PDF of *Paradise* to guide me over the scary red parts of the planet. And every flight attendant on this plane is a huge fan of whatever snippet of your work they glimpse as they rocket by.

**BL:** I explained to the people in the bar that *Feelings* is an over the top title that kneecaps the naïve idea a legit book of poems could feeling-driven. But at the same time, it's maybe a nod to the fact that what else is there to write from? Like we live in the pretense that life keeps going forever when, spoiler, it won't. So the title is a kind of doubling, saying the book is not about the one thing it has to be about. Or tripling, if you consider that feelings might not be the things we have, but rather what we do with our hands in a dark place when we are trying to figure out what is going on. They didn't seem to buy it, and I'm really good at misunderstanding things — but is this an okay way to start talking about your book to strangers?

**LI:** I think it's extremely accurate—you just left off the part about how I'm still wearing a chip on my shoulder w/r/t feelings and poems. I learned about confessional poetry at the same time I learned that mostly women wrote it, and no one liked it. But if writing about my life and my feelings isn't how to make a poem, what am I supposed to do?

My therapist says that some people do their feelings so I decided to be one of those people.

Maybe you were talking to people at just the right pitch of drunkenness when they can't feel their feelings. Two more drinks and they will be feeling alllllll

the feelings. Then you should give them my book. Your title is a question I know I'm not supposed to answer. It would be a good alternate title to Fodor's Hell (a volume not as up-to-date as I'd like), as it certainly previews the endless circular route of Adult Life. And in your book, there's a lot of moving through the curtain between earth and the bardo and whatever else. Why's it so haunted?

It's okay that we're all ghosts but do we have to be ghosts of something? I want so badly to not be of myself but I'm so bad at everyone else. Why are we in the car? And why are we still driving? Can't we take our hands off the wheel?

**BL:** It's haunted less by ghosts than a nagging sense that we are really in for it this time. And also a few ghosts. The kind that demand answers. Using your question to rephrase the question in the title of my book is a clever way of trying to make me reveal how the magic tricks work or to perjure myself. Nice try! Sure we could get out of the car. We could "follow our bliss" or "do what we love" or any of the other mantras that dog our minds. A little voice telling us we're living in the precarity the wrong way. The darkness doesn't surround us. It is us, and every other pantone chip in the book. Like an auto-tuned Robert Creeley slow-jam played at doubletime or an old joke that the unanswerability of the title is punishment for having laughed at a bad joke in fifth grade. Here's the joke: I want to die peacefully in my sleep like my grandfather, not screaming like the passengers in the car he was driving at the time.

Ooh. The bartender just gave me a buyback. It will take some time to recover from this interview. Strange that getting free poison is considered a boon. When you call something strange in your poems, are you directing our attention to things which can't be boiled down because they're designed to boil over?

**LI:** Nope. Maybe.

**BL:** Yeah. Me neither. (looks away uncomfortably) But what are we to do with a mystery which, by definition, can't be solved? Unresolvable states like trauma or love that unstick us in time and space and remain present years and miles away from the event. Like here we are, savaged detectives, three-toed-sleuths, charged with unraveling life from within it. This is two questions really — what do you mean by strange, and what's with poems all tagged with locations and dates that move with a weird associative fluidity?

**LI:** Maybe what I mean by strange didn't exist until I read your question. I guess it is a clumsy attempt

# Conversation: Lorber and Ireland

to describe all the non-flesh feelings and the way they linger and change over time. How you can experience trauma one time but wake up to it forever. How a relationship can end and the love can end but somehow you're still in it with alarming immediacy when a memory overtakes you.

Which also answers your second question, sort of. I was poking fun a little at poetry and at keeping a journal, for sure. And thinking about confessional or whatever poetry. But it's also an attempt to capture the way feelings collapse time.

You brought up weird associative fluidity, but you take it so much further than I do. You change the meaning of words as I read them; it's like stepping into a rip current.

Like in *The Butterfly Defect*:

Only words are magic That is only words like only  
that move light across a table Once I loved you  
only so much but now I love only you so much  
And lots more. It makes your poems move on the  
page. What's this instability about?

**BL:** Stability is an illusion. In my case, all ability is an illusion. But I wanted to reveal, in the structure of the poems, the way this instant is established by the one before and then changed by the one after. Each phrase appears to exist on its own, with a little space on each side. But it is informed by memory of the lead up, by the anticipation of the next one, which in turn doubles back and redirects the phrase. It's a good way to fight nostalgia which is a kind of grass-is-greener death-in-life. More specifically, it's an honest way to appreciate both kinds of relationships that continue after they're done - being together without the love, and being in love after you've broken up.

That may seem pessimistic, but actually, it's not — because the architecture of the phrases does not permit done-ness. Ideas aren't static, they are driving, and if they pretend otherwise, they must be hiding something that is. It has to be broken open. That's, like, our job. But like splitting an atom or an egg, it's terrifying if the idea is a big one (love, death), but provides access to the unseeable mysteries of the universe. From the moment you zygote it up from one cell to two, your sense of time is shaped by memories (past) and desires (future). Maybe there is an objective ontological foundation. Maybe we can sort of glimpse it in the distance as a kind of unreachable coastline, but the solidity under our experience is basically just all those tiny icebergs that polar bears live on. Tiny. Unstable. Melting. And there's a hungry polar bear next to us.

Hey did I mention that I miss you? I mention this because you miss people in your book, and paradoxically harbor amplified loneliness when

actually together. Is that because things don't happen to people, but to the space between them? Even when it snows in your poems, the storm is mostly the space leading up to or between snow. Like how Gertrude Stein could only understand Oakland from France, or nobody who lives in New York City ever sees any of their friends who live here until they move away and then come back for a visit. Does intimacy require distance? You should visit.

**LI:** Is there a word for pre-nostalgia? For experiencing nostalgia while living the moment I'll be nostalgic for? If so, that word goes right here. It's nearly impossible for me (for anyone? I really want to know) to be in the moment or whatever without mourning every second as it passes. Unless I'm having a horrible moment, like this turbulence over one of those rectangular states—the one with the wiggly stuff at bottom right and a bite taken out of the upper left side.

Also, I'm reminded of a *Calvin & Hobbes* panel that made me sad even before I knew what it meant. It's the one in which Calvin asks his dad about the halcyon days of youth: what the hell are they, and is he having them now? And his father replies that they are only awarded retroactively.

**BL:** I can't talk about *Calvin and Hobbes* because Bill Watterson's genius was precisely what made my youth halcyon. I also can't talk about it for much more recent joyful reasons later made sad. Sometimes you have to add layers to the onion, just to get through the day. Every happy day is a little wounded by time's arrow, the down side of "this too shall pass." Weirdly some of my most vivid childhood memories are of nostalgia for some vague earlier time in childhood. Unremembered Eden, before a long-suppressed banishment. The word nostalgia is from the greek nostos (return home) and algos (pain). The german is similar: Heimweh, Leading to the joke "What's a Heimweh?" "It doesn't weigh anything because you can never reach it, yet are forced to carry it forever, its unbearable heaviness." It sounds funnier in german.

The closing bit of your opening poem is a sequence of equivalences circling to a giving of yourself. "Beauty is insane insanity is divine / divinity is violence violence is beauty I am yours." Is that a kind of arg poetica for the book, the turtle under the crystal at the center?

**LI:** You know, I realize you mean *ars poetica* and I was going to correct it and decided not to because it is actually an **ARRRGH POETICA**. Turtles all the way down. I'm back to the idea of poetry as a thing—a thing that only works when it's about drilling down.

Meanwhile,

# Conversation: Lorber and Ireland

The shore in the woods  
I have a core — less solid than music or an  
argument  
filtered through thin walls A set of beliefs that  
lives  
by the shore I visit a couple times a year where

contributors' work in addition to the final versions in order to reveal the creative process. He lives atop the tallest hill in Brooklyn, New York, in a little castle across the street from a five-hundred-acre necropolis.

--  
Over two decades in the making, **Brendan Lorber's** first full-length book just came out. It's called *If this is paradise why are we still driving?* and is published by the Subpress Collective. He's also written several chapbooks, most recently *Unfixed Elegy and Other Poems* (Butterlamb (Hi Nicole!)) He's had work in the *American Poetry Review*, *Fence*, *McSweeney's*, and elsewhere. Since 1995 he has published and edited *Lungfull! Magazine*, an annual anthology of contemporary literature that prints the rough drafts of

**Lauren Ireland's** most recent book is *Feelings*. She's a graduate of the MFA program for Poets and Writers at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and an editor at Ghostwriters of Delphi. She is also the author of *The Arrow* (Coconut Books, 2014), *Dear Lil Wayne* (Magic Helicopter Press, 2014), and two chapbooks, *Sorry It's So Small* (Factory Hollow Press, 2011) and *Olga & Fritz* (Mondo Bummer Press, 2011). She lives in Seattle and online at [laurenireland.net](http://laurenireland.net) and [ghostwritersofdelphi.com](http://ghostwritersofdelphi.com).

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