BODY FORMS

Queerness and the Essay

curated by
T CLUTCH FLEISCHMANN

featuring
KAZIM ALI
DOUGLAS A. MARTIN
JACKIE WANG
with an afterword by
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ESSAY PRESS LISTENING TOUR

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As the Essay Press website re-launches, we have commissioned some of our favorite conveners of public discussions to curate conversation-based chapbooks. Overhearing such dialogues among poets, prose writers, critics and artists, we hope to re-envision how Essay can emulate and expand upon recent developments in trans-disciplinary small-press culture.

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INTRODUCTION

—T Clutch Fleischmann

I developed an unfortunate habit in graduate school where I started to name anything that I liked (movies, sculptures, gestures in a dance, arrangements in a garden) as "essay." It's my tendency toward promiscuity, I think, knowing what I love and then finding qualities of that thing everywhere, so that I might love more things. I have a parallel desire in wanting to name things "queer."

But I say it's an unfortunate habit, because not everything I love is queer and not everything I love is an essay. To call a thing what it is not is to betray it, no matter how strong my desire to love. So I've admitted to myself, over time, that not everything can be a queer essay, that no matter how much I want to see Gertrude Stein as a trans man writing essays, in naming her as such I erase some of who she was. Promiscuity should celebrate rather than erase difference, and I have always felt metaphors to be dishonest, even when I use them.

In thinking about this, in noticing my piles of readings that fall somewhere along the lines of queerness and essays, I also began to realize how limited my understanding of these terms has become. Queerness has been useful to me in its ability to never land, to divorce itself from the ideas to which we attach it and to complicate itself further as it explores. Essays are similarly weird. The writers that try to define the essay-as-genre typically find themselves fraught with the effort. They are both verbs rather than nouns, "essay" and "queer." They are only what we make of them in the moment we claim them, and in the moment others encounter us, and in the moments after that, too.

And then, probably inevitably, I found that I had thought about these things a little too much, and so one day they seemed less interesting to me. *Maybe I am not queer*, I thought to myself (I identify more as trans these days, unless it is an occasion when I find it useful to describe myself as queer, in which case I will be queer, so I can go to that party), *and maybe these words are not coming together into an essay, just into a thing*. If queerness is exciting for resisting identity, and if the essay is exciting because of its hybridity, its way of slipping among genres, would the natural conclusion of these lines of thought be the extinction of both? Could I just not identify—a

gender, a sexuality, a genre, a body of a self or a text?

Which brings me to where I am now, and why I wanted to talk to these writers, as well as the other writers in this ongoing series, some of whose interviews have been published on the blog *Essay Daily*. I have two desires at once and both tug: to abandon all the terms, yet also to grab the books I love and hand them to a friend and say "queer" and say "essay" while I am doing so. But I am not certain, regarding these books that I love, if their writers would even call them queer, or essays, or a thing at all. "First off," I begin the interviews, "would you call your writing 'queer'?" And then, "Would you call your writing 'essays'?" And while I wait for the answer I am always a little excited and a little nervous, never certain if someone will say "Yes" or "No." If even asking these questions might offend the books or their authors, as I do not like when people ask me to define myself, either.

I am grateful to the writers gathered here for their thoughtful answers, as well as to the other writers with whom I have so far spoken in this series—Maggie Nelson and Ching-In Chen. All of these conversations, so beautifully in both discord and harmony with one another, continue to inform my thinking.

And that, the discord and the harmony, the promiscuity of reading and the return to the body that we celebrate and resist, is the goal of this project. Placing queerness and the essay together, two weird things that shift, and how they then shift more, again. I don't understand it myself, entirely, except to say that understanding has never seemed to be the point of essays, or of queerness. Rather, they are both about thinking their way somewhere new, and in turn becoming different through that thinking. The following interviews have helped me to do that, and I hope they will help you, too.

an interview with
DOUGLAS A. MARTIN

T Clutch Fleischmann: I first read your work in a graduate course on the essay, but I know that's not the genre lens through which most people approach it. I found an interview where you suggest you'd like readers to view your writing just as "literature," and another where you talk about formerly seeing yourself as a poet, while your publishing trajectory has obviously shifted genres. So could we open with that topic: as you set the terms for your own writing and reading, how does genre play into it all?

Douglas A. Martin: I like when things don't stay in their supposed places. And then how does that come into the work, formally or thematically, or both—that's something I try to work with.

What class was it? I know *Branwell* has made its way onto some syllabi. And the title story of *They Change the Subject*, as an example of a story in vignettes. I

do know that has been taught. That story to me is in part an essay, on thinking within the pose of hustling.

How attempts to define create points to push around, against…

TCF: The graduate course where we read *Branwell* was the Essay Prize course. I remember that those Aaron Kunin secret architecture journals were taught, too, and something by Bruce Hainley. It was a really robust list, I think.

DAM: I love a ton the book Letter Machine Editions did of Kunin's.

I tend to proceed into thinking (and by this I mean writing) by working against assumptions, prejudices even, of any given genres. I will sometimes be in a story and think how and in what ways, addressing what, can it also be an essay? On what? That gives a kind of focal point for me, and another relief. Or maybe the very plot of something is reaching for the poetry, which I am essaying toward. That is the movement I am attempting.

It has always struck me as odd or unfair, shortsighted or unimaginative, that when people will ask me what I write they will want it to be one thing or another. Like you can say poetry and perhaps not be pressed

further, or novels and then it goes to like, what kind, what about? "About language," I think I have even answered before.

TCF: Do you identify as a queer writer? You said once that you prefer the term "homosexual" for yourself because of its romantic implications.

DAM: Above all, what I want as a writer is to maintain a kind of versatility. And maybe I feel more at home in the solitary (that's what I know), more so than the experience of some utopian sociability.

Queer as a discourse was meant to be inclusive and bridging, while also troubling, but it can also become pretty and increasingly vacuous when devolved down to more about defining who is or isn't one—because of agreed upon usage of language. If someone wants to call me one, call it because they see it that way, I'm cool with that. Yeah. I don't feel like I own my interpretation.

I like a sentence that flips. "I don't care, we can just have vanilla Boy Scout sex forever." That's one of the sexiest things ever said to me. Still I can't get away from my biography. We didn't. When I say or think "homosexual," I just feel a charge of honesty, a recognition not pointing to some supposed model

of liberation, but how my life actually is lived and embodied day-to-day.

TCF: I like that you don't feel like you own your interpretation. That sits counter to a lot of the contemporary conversation around identity in queer communities, where it's considered paramount to allow people to own their interpretations. Do you think you can maintain the most versatility from the solitary (the homo) position? I mean this question both in terms of aesthetics and in terms of queerness, sexuality, whatever.

DAM: But even that word "homo" is not a great fit for me, because I feel a toughness there. I guess I like the "sexual" along with it, like a complement of how you get out of being one—just one, or just everything. I don't trust group mentalities, no matter the proposed allegiances.

It is hard for me. This could just be how I was brought up, with no people.

I see myself in like the desire of Genet—what happens in the mind, not necessarily the body (politic).

It's more about the past than the future, what memory is left in a moment, and that's maybe what I mean by

romantic: that I've been here all along, that I'm not inventing, procreating, joining up to enter into an exacting correlation of signs.

TCF: I want to talk about the literary traditions you see yourself as working in, and Kathy Acker seems a good place to start with that. What's happening with your (really thrilling) dissertation on Acker? How long has she figured into your thinking?

DAM: I was just talking about Kathy last night.

I never met her, but I like to use her first name I am finding more these days.

I talk about her a lot still.

I know that work like nobody else's. I will say that if not for Acker's work, when I found it, I would not have made it through the time of my first book.

I got deep back into the critical work this summer, while waiting and hoping for something to happen during the slow publishing months around this most recent novel I took forever to write, nearly seven years for not even two hundred pages. I had been sitting on the critical work because thinking

if I ever got in a tenure-track position, was I ever going to write a book like the dissertation again? But *Get it out there,* I am starting to think, *Have it be readable—forget the footnotes and all I tried to do within them to buck whatever system I was in.*

I think I'm trying to get it published, figuring out how to do that.

I am just a visiting writer everywhere, for years, so…

I have a few people reading the manuscript, but I don't want to get into whatever pissing war for territory or ownership of the legend of that corpus.

Chris Kraus read it. Then she wrote this big piece for *The Believer*. I think whatever I do with it now could start with that exchange. She said she wanted to read it, because she was writing about people writing about Acker. Then wrote back after reading it, and said she wasn't. I wrote some things back in 2007, and they are now part of the points hit in Kraus's very smart trouncing.

TCF: I'm wondering about writers like Acker, who other writers regularly write about, and how we can engage with our contemporaries or influences in a way that avoids the wrangling over territory that you mention. Emily Dickinson, for instance, gets all kinds

of engagements. It's interesting with Acker because of her own modes, the "intertextual desire and influence"—to steal the subtitle of your manuscript.

DAM: Yeah, it's like how could you ever say, "Someone took my idea!" You develop it in your own way. I worked on Acker along angles that I tried to make clear were selective and narcissistic to me: I wanted to see more of myself by seeing how she saw herself in gay men. I also wanted to understand more this voice that influenced me so much (even given our different tenors), that showed me how to be a poet in the novel, and how the novel could be an essay, even—it and poetry could be more than just one thing or just one conversation.

TCF: You read the Guibert journals that just recently came out, I believe (something on your Tumblr indicates as much). Do you keep a diary still?

DAM: My Tumblr is so pathetically anemic and unfollowed. I keep thinking *Just think of it as a diary in pictures.* If I have a diary these days, it lies somewhere between texts to my boyfriend/human companion (I have a dog and cat too we share, and a house, so he's also my life partner), other social media things, and then I just start these aesthetic abstractions, out of some occurrence or pondering of some day or another, things that might become

story grounding or a lyric line in some poem that might fly.

When you are in a journal, to write it, don't you already think of your life in a way as a story you are in?

Right now I'm writing poetry because I'm teaching poetry. So that's what I'm going to bed with and waking up around.

My journal practice has become very queer, you might say.

TCF: Are you writing poetry in your journal, then? Does work regularly find its way from the journal elsewhere?

DAM: I guess I'm writing poetry in my journal if my phone's Notes app is my diary. I think it is. A couple of years ago I realized I could take out my phone like everyone else had theirs and just secretly do whatever. I mean actually not get the kind of look I might if I were to take out a notebook, uncap a pen… like I was rude. A lot of times when I pretend to be texting now I'm writing.

Reading scholar Laure Adler on how Marguerite Duras did her diary later in her career, on loose

pages that variously got shuffled—this shifted a lot for me. I don't feel so trapped in time when I let whatever take the cast it might have one day, but don't attempt to follow it so far forward. In my marble composition books I would find myself actually trying to live towards arcs. But now I have circled around and we can say it's very queer of me, how I identify with these practices of these women, if we see Duras first and foremost as woman. She is just God to me.

TCF: If you were going to chart some sort of queer essay tradition, who would you put in there? I mean this more personally (like who has contributed to your own thinking) than generally.

DAM: Duras again (her book *Writing*, her book *Green Eyes*), Geoff Dyer, Wayne Koestenbaum's *Cleavage*, Leiris, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, Peter Handke (*The Jukebox & Other Essays on Storytelling),* the public journals of Ernaux (translated into English as *Exteriors* and *Things Seen*), Severo Sarduy. I find myself leaning towards Clayton Eshleman as well. In my some seven years of teaching classes at Wesleyan, with all our visitors, dinner with him was a clear standout and moment of real edification. Lucy Corin, too, has been a discovery.

Guibert was so monumental to me that I even read his journals first in the Gallimard publication (French

I mean), with me haunting the NYU library looking for anything, something, some new English translation to appear, so hoping for it. But then I just took on all those "foreign" pages, despite my faltering, halting command and grasp. I remembered what it was like to read *Wuthering Heights* at eight or whatever, and to know I was getting maybe about half of it, and I extended that to myself again with this other language, like theory—let the ghost come there where it would, let those filings telegraph or transmit to me however. Much of it just washed by, sure, but that's fine. It was still a meditation. It was still a time of companionship.

When Nathanaël was doing the translation for Nightboat, I was only too happy to read it again (in her hand) and offer queries or reservations, any things not sitting right with me. I think my big contribution was towards the underrepresented slang, and the blend he did of an archaic and mannered vocabulary along with just slick sex street words. I spent good months of last summer doing this, out of love. All of this is for free, I mean. And then I got to the launch party in the gallery, was asked to read, ended up changing in my recitation the words, her kept "glace" to my "Popsicle."

TCF: I'm surprised Guibert doesn't get read more, but then I went to the gay beach in New York and

a guy, a poet who I think is cute, was reading the journals, so maybe I'm wrong. In a conversation with Michael Klein you say that you "want to believe that poet equals queer" and also that you're "more a hunter-gatherer" in terms of how you write. Being a hunter-gatherer seems very essayistic to me, especially in the way you bring together other voices and artists in your work. Can essayist equal queer in this way, or with these moves?

DAM: Definitely, if there is supposedly one thing that goes in one thing always and only one way. I always try to screw (play, mess) around with that all. The more "people," "ideas," I can bring together in one language bed and get to recognize each other as mutual, the more I feel I am doing my kind of work.

TCF: Who are the other writers/artists that you find yourself working around these days? "To recognize each other as mutual."

DAM: About 90 percent of what I read these days is student writing. That's not an exaggeration. And not always a bad thing, when I can feel how there is someone alive in it, trying to pour everything into it, believing there is this and only this patient mining for which still nothing might come but an exchange of love. But for my own work, if I'm not going to be given the breaks the career academic gets, I also

have to get out somehow, and, as the old adage goes, somehow write myself out of the place.

an interview with
JACKIE WANG

T Clutch Fleischmann: So we were at a reading at the Poetry Project a couple of nights ago, and afterward you turned to me and said "You know, I really just think Eileen Myles shines in the essay form," which I totally agree with. I like her best as an essayist, but she's certainly considered more widely as a poet. When you said that, it reminded me of the fact that we met through poetry—we really became close when we organized a queer poetics gathering (Mad Cap) together. But I don't really think of myself as a poet, and a lot of your work is as closely aligned with the essayistic as with poetry. Anyway, what I'm wondering first is if you think of yourself as a writer of any particular genre, as someone that moves through genres.

Jackie Wang: Clutch, thank you for giving me this opportunity to think about form, and my relationship to it, which I don't do very much. Or maybe everything I do is about form and, in some

sense, is a meta-commentary or meditation on my relationship to form. I don't know. I usually rely on other people to see the "structure" in what I'm doing. To label it. To put it in relation to a school. To see the genre in it. I have always been promiscuous when it comes to genres and disciplines, because I rely on my intuition to guide me during the moment of writing. Whatever protocols I'm adhering to while writing are unbeknownst to me, though I don't doubt they are operating on me on an unconscious level. With academic writing it's a little clearer to me—especially as I try to transition into becoming a "historian." When I sit down to write a paper I have a much clearer sense of what I'm doing. With creative writing, the structure or genre either emerges in the process of writing, or is specific to the occasion for writing itself.

Did we meet through poetry? I believe we met first through "the essay," then re-encountered and developed a relationship around poetry. We met when you solicited me for an essay for the literary journal *Diagram*. I wrote you a poetic essay on the relationship between writing and silence, and poetry-as-incantation.

Maybe our relationship to poetry is similar. Before I wrote poetry and fiction I wrote essays. Later I was christened a poet by other poets, and I just kind

of rolled with it. Poets are very enthusiastic about identifying as poets (they've got an in-group, cliquey mentality about it), and maybe are also eager to fold others into the tribe. Why are poets so into parading their poet identity? I think it has something to do with the fact that most people don't give a shit about poetry, so we need to self-valorize. I used to have this ongoing joke about the "ontology of the poet." When poets were super self-aggrandizing about The Poet and her being and role in society, I thought it was silly. I still do, but now I embrace the grandiosity… strategically? Hmm. Do I believe that we poets are a special breed of visionary creatures endowed with linguistic and sensory superpowers? Are poets, as Shelley says, "the unacknowledged legislators of the world"? Maybe at one time I believed that such statements were elitist. I was mad when Genet insisted on labeling George Jackson a poet first and revolutionary second…because I have so much more respect for revolutionaries. Now I see that the occupations of the poet and the revolutionary are closer than I initially thought—they both require a visionary mode of being and working.

Actually, I made a YouTube vlog post right when I officially "came out" as a poet! Apparently the "transition" took place in fall 2011.

TCF: Similarly, do you think of yourself as a queer writer ever? Is that a term you would resist, or one that you find useful at times?

JW: I suppose I do identify as a queer writer, though thinking about your question, I notice that "queer" has been dropped from my bio more and more lately. Hmm I didn't think about it until just now so I don't know what to make of it. Maybe "queer" has lost its subversive edge for me? Maybe that is a direct result of capacious uses of the term "queer" in literary circles, where "queer" signals aesthetic affinities rather than an embodied experience, resistance to a heteronormative way of life, or expression of affinity with certain subcultures and models of relationality. Perversion is probably more important to me than "orientation." I'm certainly not a purist when it comes to identity, but I do want "queer" to retain its freakish and non-normative edge, and for people to back their aesthetic commitments by embodying that commitment in how they live their lives. Normal people who write weird shit disappoint me (haha).

At the same time "queer" has slipped out of my bio, other labels have made their way in. In literary contexts I find myself identifying more and more as a "prison abolitionist." Some people find it unusual for writers to be so upfront about their political commitments in their writing bios, but it's important

for me to foreground my commitment to abolition, especially in literary contexts! Loma (Christopher Soto) told me that they have started to identify as a prison abolitionist in their writing bio as well.

To answer your question: I do identify as a queer writer. It's easy for me, as a woman-identified person who doesn't have romantic relationships with cismen, and as someone interested in formal adulteration and hybridity.

TCF: When I talked to Douglas A. Martin he said he doesn't feel like he owns his interpretation. This really appealed to me, because I feel like a lot of people do want to own their interpretation, like it's really vital to a lot of people to have some ownership over that, especially in terms of queerness or gender or whatever, but he was kind of just chill about it, which seemed to sidestep a lot of narrowness—to make room for more openness and more questions. How do you relate to your interpretation?

JW: I can't own my interpretation, and that is a thrilling thing. I cannot control how my words circulate in the world and how they live in people. My words are like a baby I place in a skiff and send down the river. My words are out in the world to have adventures of their own, and I try not to be like an overbearing mama when it comes to controlling what

my words do. I might check in every now and then, because I am curious about where my words have been and what they have seen, but if I wanted to be all proprietary about interpretation I would have kept my words to myself, shoved them up my vagina instead of setting them free.

After I published some poems on *Fanzine* I had a funny talk with Dana Ward about his interpretation of one of my poems. In some of my writings I have used "Kant" as a pseudonym for a professor I was platonically obsessed with. In the poem Dana read I am at a party to celebrate the publication of a leftist journal titled *Deathnotes* and am surrounded by factious Marxists who are fighting about the nuances of value theory or something. Kant shows up to the party and saves me from the horrid scene. When I told Dana that "Kant" was a pseudonym for The Professor he was like "Aww, but it was so funny to imagine the philosopher sauntering into the party." I like to imagine Dana imagining me chatting with Kant the philosopher about sea turtles, against the backdrop of a petty feud between academic Marxists. So his reading of the poem was thrilling and in no way "wrong."

That said, I also do hope that people engage my work thoughtfully and at least try to develop a sense of what I'm about. I have, at times, felt maybe a

little "used" in terms of how people position me and my work. Like sometimes I find people aligning my work with projects that I feel no affinities with, and using my name to validate their projects or their literary camps. While I don't feel proprietary about how people interpret my work, I also don't want to be used as social capital by people who need a little brown queer sidekick to look legit.

TCF: You spent last night at my place and then today all we've been doing is reading *The Argonauts* and talking about it and reading *Citizen* and talking about it. Well, I've been sleeping all afternoon but you've been reading. You talked about how Maggie Nelson's life feels very informed by what she's reading, like the life and the reading feel one in the same. Is that an experience you have, too? Who are the writers you carry around with you?

JW: One of the reasons I was so set on becoming your friend when I met you was because I got a very good feeling about you based on your books. Maybe that's a somewhat juvenile way to relate to people (through literary "taste"), but you seemed to like many of the books I liked (I also knew I had a lot to learn about from you). We could probably write a history of our friendship using the books we've encountered through each other. I hope it's not terribly boring that I spend so much time reading

when I'm around you! It seems as though every time I see you I always borrow a little stack of things to read. Did I borrow Jenny Boully's *The Body* the first time I met you? You had two editions! After we parted I read more of her books. Before you moved out of IDA I remember how at the music festival Matthew and I commandeered your house while it was empty. I wanted to stay in your bed forever and read. When you and others came back to the house to "pre-game" I was still in your bed reading. Everyone was in the mood to party while I was in raptures reading *Franny and Zooey*, a book I have not read since high school. In that moment the book seemed genius to me, but maybe I was intoxicated. I was shocked by how little of it I remembered. Did I falsely remember a scene where Franny cried and rubbed a tear into the table? Eric, on the other hand, remembered a great deal. Perhaps his memory could even be called Proustian—ha! My episodic memory is not very good so most novels that I read quickly just kind of wash over me. Rereading them is basically like encountering them for the first time.

Though I did not want to pry myself from the Salinger book, everyone convinced me to go check out the party. People teased me about being a nerd and you told Israel they would be into Dennis Cooper. Matthew agreed. We joked about how our Mad Cap email password was about Cooper's love for emo

boys. While you were trying on cute clothes for the party (Eric was being playfully bossy and you were lovin' it), you gave me a rabbit-fur coat to try on and someone took a picture of me in it to show me how good it looked on me. I wore it to the party with zebra print flip flops. At one point during the party I found myself near the snack table (typical!) and accidentally leaned into a little puddle of melted butter. I felt sad about getting butter on the new fur coat you gave me. When I went back to your house to get my backpack an exciting orgy was taking place, so I watched from the sidelines with a couple other people. "Person" came and climbed over the pile of writhing bodies and retrieved my backpack. This story seems to no longer be about books.

But if books can bring us back to the body, that is a good thing.

Yes, reading is life, and life is reading. I don't claim to be a good reader. I'm slow and unsystematic and don't take as much time as I should to "fully" absorb a text after I read it (as in: I move on to the next book too quickly). But reading is such a huge part of my life. Books and libraries are the only things to have remained consistent for me throughout my adult life. Mommy may or may not love me (depending on the day); I may or may not have a home; life and all my relationships may be in flux, but so long as there is

a library nearby I can restore myself. When there is no ground, the written word becomes my ground. When I am without a home, or am doing the vagrant thing, the library is my sanctuary. It was nice getting to hole up with you in New York that week, to ignore my phone and read the wonderful books you had around, while you restored yourself through sleep. I totally needed that because I was going through library withdrawal and was starting to feel socially overwhelmed in New York.

Lately the main writers I've been carrying with me are Saidiya Hartman, Jennifer Tamayo, Bhanu Kapil and Fred Moten. Jennifer makes me want to be fierce and unapologetic and to really own all the fucked-up parts of myself. Saidiya makes me feel less bad about dwelling in the space of trauma and maintaining a political fidelity to wounds. Bhanu and Fred both give an exhilarating feeling that anything is possible, and a sense of what the body (flesh) can do under pressure. The "pressure" is always terrible, violent even, but the effects of the violences they explore are paradoxical.

TCF: Was the Serena Williams part your favorite part of *Citizen*? It was mine and I think it was yours, and I've heard quite a few people talk about it. And it's also maybe the most essayistic bit in a book that a

lot of people read as poetry. That seems queer to me, to come to essay within a poem.

JW: Like I told you, the Serena Williams section of *Citizen*, more than any other part of the book, gave me the feeling that I was going insane. Without coming out and stating her analysis, I think Rankine is trying to "give" readers an experience—to psychically induce in them the unsettling feeling that, as in the case of Serena Williams, the rules do not apply to you. As we discussed on the train, black Americans (and, to varying degrees, non-black people of color) inhabit this experience all the time. So maybe it is true that *Citizen* is written primarily for a white audience, though the people on my Twitter feed who have received the book most enthusiastically have mostly not been white.

Regardless of who the "intended" audience is, I think Rankine is trying to make a paradoxical experience legible: that of psychic erasure and of being brutally called into presence through address. Our innate addressability makes us vulnerable, but the violence of the address varies according to how others experience our bodies. This is a dimension of anti-black racism that is explored much less than the material, economic, political aspects of racism.

But back to your question. In the Serena Williams section Rankine is able to induce the feeling of going insane in a more total way, through sustained repetition (of sleights against Williams made by referees). In a way the genteel atmosphere that is cultivated around tennis makes it the perfect setting to explore racism. You really get a sense of how white people manipulate reality by selectively applying "the rules," and how maddening and disempowering it feels to have your reality systematically negated and to not be able to do anything about the arbitrary application of the rules because those who control the game and have institutional power are white.

Overall, what Rankine is illuminating in her book is the psychic dimension of racism, and she does this by creating a text that is essentially a litany of anti-black micro-aggressions. The book works by accrual, but the Williams section works a little differently, through suspense and the gradual unfolding of a story (a narrative?). The logic of the book unfurls and reaches its fullest realization during this section. The appearance of "the essay" amidst the poetic vignettes disrupts the tempo of the book. I think its appearance enhances both the poetic and essayistic parts of the book by playing with our formal expectations. It's kind of like this mostly silent film I made a while ago. The film is completely silent until the end, but because the viewer gets so

accustomed to silence, the appearance of audio is that much more jarring. Rankine is more subtle than that, but when she switches modes it does force the reader to pay attention. The manipulation of tempo in writing is all about guiding the reader's attention, and alternating between essay and poetry is one way of fucking with the tempo of a book. Of course in *Citizen* it's not just these two modes she's playing with—the book is working on so many registers: including film, performance, criticism, media studies and visual art.

TCF: And then related to that earlier question, do you connect yourself with any traditions? If you were going to make a (maybe queer) lineage that leads to the work you're doing now, who would be in it?

JW: Oh god I'm not much of a literary-school maker. Remember when we joked about doing a workshop called the New Queer Sincerity that was about writing, creepiness, projection, and queer sentimentality? Maybe that's kind of in the New Narrative lineage of Robert Glück and Bruce Boone or something. I dunno. I'm not a gay man. I was just solicited for the new Gurlesque anthology, and it never occurred to me that I might be read as a Gurlesque poet, especially since I feel like my relationship to felinity I mean femininity is quite a bit different than how it's been previously articulated in

the poetics of the Gurlesque. My lineage? I'm not sure. I feel a certain affinity with aliens and Asian lost girls. Feng Chen, Joohyun Kim, Vicky Lim, Oki Sogumi, Coda Wei and Christine Hou definitely feel like literary kindred spirits. And of course I am so on-board with Bhanu Kapil's de-compositional method, which is maybe related to Deleuze's description of Beckett's "exhausted" mode of writing. My School? The School of the Exhausted. Hmm…

TCF: What do you think an essay is?

JW: Here I will just say: dream wildly.

an interview with

KAZIM ALI

T Clutch Fleischmann: I'd like to start by asking about your relationship to queerness. Could you talk about the ways you define yourself as a queer writer, or define your writing as being queer? In an interview with Christopher Hennessy, you say "I'm queer on account of being gay, queer on account of being Muslim, doubly queer on account of refusing to relinquish either of those identities."

Kazim Ali: To me the "queer" is that that which resists government of body, spirit or ambition (ambition as union between those two? "ambition" being the capitalist word for "intention"?) in service of the needs of others. In a capitalist society we do actually work for the needs of others (for rich others, for the one percent). We are in that sense still "selfless," which doesn't mean the opposite of "selfish" in this case but rather (and literally) "self"-less (i.e., we give up our own body and our spirit to serve the needs of a privileged few). To me a "queer" body is a body

that works off the pale of this paradigm. Whether we actually embrace a revolutionary and radical spirit of serving all others and the planet and the animal beings besides really remains to be seen. I'm not naïve.

It does bring me back to the question of the advances we have made over the last 10 years in terms of the institution of marriage, the inclusion of LGBT service people, etc. Have we just gained admission to the inside of the tent, or are we aiming for a more radical restructuring of institutions and whom they actually serve? How might we "queer" marriage and military? Imagine that.

So to be "queer" means to be always in service of the alternative, to be in favor of self-actualization not elimination of the self—each body was given to us as a chance to know something about the most specific and the most universal experience. These are not binary equations but a multiplectal nexus of relations. We're never going to get there if all we think of life as is a chance to make wealth for the next person up the line.

TCF: You've also talked about your writing being queer in its engagement with genre (*Bright Felon*, for instance, you describe as being queer because its relationship to genre is fluid). Is it your writing's relationship to the book as a body that makes it queer? Is queerness a thing you ever want to resist?

KA: To "resist" is the "queer" experience for me. *Bright Felon* is a "book" unto itself: not poetry, not essays, not memoir, but a "text" that itself needs encountering. My book *Wind Instrument* is the same, with the distinction that Wind Instrument flies even between "fiction" and "nonfiction" in the same text, between first and third person, without differentiating. At least in *Bright Felon* I could tell you there is one single speaker and he's me. Even though the jacket copy says "part imagined past," there isn't anything imagined in it.

Not all of my books are genre-queer in this way but every prose book I ever wrote was. Poetry to me is language of the breath and body. It moves according to the line. When I get into prose suddenly I feel in dark and untended territory, and am able to move in new ways in which I was never taught. That is what a queer body does when it first discovers its own desire. As for young kids growing up now in accepting families, maybe without queer parents, in queer-friendly towns and schools: they may have boyfriends and girlfriends in junior high, go to their school dances with them, they are not holding any secret, shame doesn't burn their insides out—had I had that kind of childhood I wonder what I would be

like now, would poetry have ever found me? And if I did become a writer would I be the kind I am now, so drunk on sound, so lost in the world, so desperate for god…

TCF: Could you talk about your relationship to the essay as a genre? Your work roams across genre boundaries, taking on labels such as "nonfiction," "memoir," "poetry" and "notes" in the service of your thinking. So first, how do you define the essay as a genre, and how do you relate to that tradition?

KA: "Essay" as a genre, is, always has been, a reach toward the queer open genre. "Composition," the essay in service of education, which means in service of normalization, has always only held the remnants of "essay." But I learned "essay" through the work of Anaïs Nin, Carole Maso, Fanny Howe, William Carlos Williams, Leslie Scalapino and so on. "Notes" are poetry and explication (opposite impulses) each infiltrating the essay. The diary form (such as I used in a couple of my books) means your daily life is good enough and you don't need to understand something at the end of the day. This means not commodifying knowledge for the sake of the writing but trusting the experience of the body to itself reveal.

I have a new book I am working on called *Kazimnaut*, and it actually combines all of these modes—in the same book it is essay, memoir, diary, letters, notes, prose-poetry and so on.

TCF: Related to that, in your essay "Genre-Queer" you go further, saying that genre is "boring" and that it "creates a literature for the reader to not be a writer anymore." What does genre offer you today? Do you genre your books because you want to direct the reader in a certain way, or is doing so more of an obligation (by publishers, etc.)?

KA: "Genre" is a form of drag. You can make someone look at something differently by asking them to read it one way or another. In the beginning I really wanted readers to see *Bright Felon* as nonfiction, so we printed the phrase "lyric essays" on the cover, but many reviewers were confused and annoyed by the book. In the reprint we added the phrase "poetry" after the slash. In a way it matters but mostly it doesn't. What matters to some people is the question of how does the book change when you see it as one genre rather than the other. But what matters to me is the question have I been brave enough? Did I dare everything I could? Because I am not very brave.

Some of my books suffered and could not find publishers because they had no genre. My very first book *Quinn's Passage* comes to mind, as does little *Wind Instrument*, which 10 years after I wrote it has finally been published.

Some writers are obsessed with genre distinctions in a way that isn't interesting to me. I know poets who get all tied up when they decide to write fiction or prose. It is not my experience as a writer. Now, while certainly one mustn't essentialize too much a connection between "gender" and "genre," one great victory of the trans* visibility movement is showing that there are many ways to be a "man" or a "woman," and that there are many gender expressions in between. Speaking for myself only, as someone who considers himself genderqueer or gender-fluid, I do find myself wanting to conceptually resist the binarization and calcification of gender roles that I see going on in the mainstream media (as represented by Caitlyn Jenner for one example and Aydian Dowling for another). And I don't think it is an accident that so many trans* and genderqueer writers are doing bold and innovative work in terms of genre in poetry and prose as well.

TCF: Are you a poet at all anymore? I want to ask so many questions about that. I am so interested, always, when writers are a thing then are not, or when people are a thing then are not, and when I am a thing and then am not.

KA: Well that is part of "self" isn't it? "Identifying" what we think we are and what we think we're not. Then we get stuck on certain paths. I've been a yoga student for 16 years but once long ago I studied kung fu and dance as well. And I was really good at both of them. At some point I decided what I had time for and what I didn't, and I've had physical karma from those decisions. Both my body and my mind were shaped by the practices that I embraced, shaped by what came after. Every cell of the body and every shape of the mind comes from our cause and effect. "Karma" is closer to "kismet" than it is to "fate," because it moves multi-directionally.

As a poet I had time and space in my brain for poetry, which to me (as I said before) means breath. Poetry is an art of time (not that you need time to make it, because sometimes you don't, but that it works in the medium of time) like music.

TCF: It's exciting to me that you identify your prose as being genre-queer more than your poetry, since there seems to be more comfort in poetry communities with queering genre, broadly speaking. When I interviewed Ching-In Chen, for instance, they said their work "raises less eyebrows amongst poets

than prose writers"—the poets more likely to accept the work without challenging its genre. If queerness is about resisting, and if poetry is the language of the body, is part of this distinction for you a desire to inhabit rather than to resist the body?

KA: I'm not sure I agree with what Ching-In said. I don't find poets necessarily any friendlier to innovative/genre-queer work than anyone else. Some poets who read my book *Bright Felon* wanted me to cut out all the explication and discursive writing and shape the manuscript into "poems." Some books fall under the sign of "poetry" (Claudia Rankine's *Citizen*, Bhanu Kapil's *Ban En Banlieue*) solely because of their queer approach to form. "Poetry" becomes code for "queer" in terms of genre, and often it is just how a text "looks" that is at issue. That's why I said in my essay "Genre-Queer" that genre, like gender, is primarily a reading practice.

I (and just about everyone else) spend a lot of time avoiding bodies (my own and others'). We don't want to know about all of the body's animal needs, we don't want to know what we euphemistically call "intimate details." I always think about friends who are meat eaters who don't want to know about where the meat comes from, the processes that most commercial meat goes through to arrive on your

plate. First and foremost, of course, that it used to be part of someone else's body.

But yes, in a sense, Ching-In might be right, at least for certain kinds of poetry. It's already automatically "queered" off the "norm" of language, which is to make meaning. Poetry is always about music and anarchy and strange leaps of perception, at least the kind of poetry I appreciate. For me writing sentences in prose, and in established forms like the essay or the memoir, almost raises the stakes on the act of performing that queerness. The sentences of Carole Maso's book *Ava* are shocking precisely because we "know" a novel is "not supposed" to look or sound like that.

TCF: I'm always wanting to draw these links between genre-queer writing and the resistances I associate with queerness (similar to you, I think: resisting capitalism, war, prison, etc.). Do you think there is something inherently liberatory or revolutionary in genre-queer writing, in such modes of thinking? How closely can we draw those links? I challenge myself in this regard when I see writing that "reaches toward the queer open genre" but still upholds systems of oppression and violence.

KA: I want to believe the link exists. At the very least to believe that writing this way will open new ways of

perceiving and thinking. But like you, I think to myself, *Isn't it trouble that some of the greatest innovators and experimentalists in literature are among the most politically conservative or at least politically troubling?* I'm thinking of Eliot, Pound, Stein. There is such a thing as experiment taking you away from the social, meaning the human. That's the difference for me between Sol Lewitt and Agnes Martin. One I find chilly and impersonal and the other I find warm, witty, endlessly captivating. But if you "look" at his grids and her grids you might not see a difference on first glance.

Our present anxiety is to find the human amid the machine. And not just the conflict between human and machine (that was the science-fiction anxiety of the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s (*The Matrix*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Terminator*, etc.), but amid the spectacle mediated/created by the machine (this would be *The Hunger Games*, *Ender's Game*, *Ready Player One*, etc.). So we, like the ancient makers, look to new forms, new ways of perception, new ways of shaping and perceiving experience. The power of the endless stream of information is shocking and brutal. One path is to return into it, seek to manipulate, repurpose and package it (as some Conceptual writers do). Another path is to reinvent, find a new and original path (that's what Stein did in language, I feel, and Dostoevsky, Melville, Woolf,

Dickinson, or our contemporary trailblazers like Myung Mi Kim, Harryette Mullen, Hélène Cixous, Claudia Rankine, or you can include younger writers like Ching-In Chen, Soham Patel, Jenny Boully, CM Burroughs, Jai Arun Ravine—I can make a long long list). These are writers who invented themselves "in" the form of the work and in the language itself.

TCF: I'm curious about how two actions you mention align: the experience of queerness that leaves you "desperate for god" as a writer and the sense of the essay as "a reach toward the queer open genre." How does reaching toward the open genre move you closer (if that's accurate language) to god?

KA: Well "god" is always in lower case for me because it is a stand-in for a concept whose borders change and whose place in my life also changes. I don't feel like answering the question that I am often asked (which you didn't ask), which is "Are you a religious or spiritual person?" The typical answer is always "I don't consider myself religious but I am spiritual." But the fact of the matter is I "am" a Muslim. I was born that way. The words were whispered into my ear. They made a shape in my mind and it is denial to pretend otherwise. And my foundational belief (that an individual is one part of a comprehensive whole, whose success and failure depends on all of creation) is the foundational

belief of Islam. So there's that. And as for the "spirit" (which means breath as well): we do pay too much attention to what is an ideation, what is intangible, what is supposed to have been said by a Jesus or a Mohammad or a Buddha or a Krishna while there is an actual world.

If we're tricked into the same old narratives (and that's why poetry was invented in the first place, to be in service of the political order), then we are not moving anywhere in either body or spirit—we are simply reinscribing the previous generation's power structures. This isn't only boring; it's actually criminal. But within poetry and literature is the potential for the individual spirit to assert itself. That's why the old epics always betrayed themselves, collapsed under the weight of actual humanity. By the time you get to the end of the *Iliad* it is the "Trojans" you are rooting for, and Akhilaos only gets his humanity back when he relents to Priam and returns the body of Hektor for burial. The epic is the story of the human emotion (the anger of Akhilaos) not the story of the war.

TCF: The writers I've talked to in this series have such different takes on the self. You mention queerness as being in favor of self-actualization, while some writers have talked about using writing to subvert the self. Are there ever times when you think your writing subverts (intentionally or not) the self?

Would a subversion of self in your writing hinder its queerness? Its actualization? Its searching?

KA: Well there's the self and then there's the self. Who do you mean when you say "T"? Who am "I"? That's a deeper well than we normally draw from, and that is what I want to know about. Writing may subvert the public self, the planned one, the one that's been written for us by others, but it also will help us know more about our selves and the actual world. When I said my father whispered in my ears and made a shape in my mind, I was serious. There's no getting around that. But that's not the ground limit of what I can know in this life.

Rehearsing someone else's poetic forms and prose shapes and subjects is not going to get me there. It is only by these experiments in forms, this "queering" of both genre and body, that I have any chance at all of being able to say "I am" and to mean it.

TCF: I usually ask people to chart out some queer lineage affecting their work, but I want to phrase this question slightly differently for you. You've talked elsewhere about Carole Maso being an important writer (in kind of guiding you from poetry to prose), and in our emails you've questioned whether you are a poet anymore. Could you point to some other writers or texts that have lead you toward prose?

What did they show you, especially in terms of "trusting the experience of the body to itself reveal"?

KA: I "am" a poet still, of course, because it's the poetry in prose that I believe in. Nathalie Stephens/Nathanaël has been important to me in terms of making shapes in language. Fanny Howe's novels and essays showed me how to think, or gave me a certain permission to dare. Certainly all of Etel Adnan's prose work, and Mahmoud Darwish's, Gertrude Stein as well. Marguerite Duras has a certain rhythm of thinking-as-it-happens in prose. Anaïs Nin was the first writer I ever wanted to be. I've written a book about her, still unpublished, but I'll keep you posted. I read *House of Incest* my second year in college and became a fanboy for life. Other queer writers from the past who govern my stars: Rumi, Emily Dickinson, Lalla, Herman Melville.

TCF: I'm thinking about writers who invent themselves in the language, about your take on Agnes Martin as warm and witty, about "the potential for the individual spirit to assert itself" in poetry and literature. You are more optimistic, I think, than many writers might claim to be—which is interesting, as you acknowledge so much brutality, too. You don't hide from the horror of our world. Does writing help you maintain or find that optimism? Does the optimism serve the writing?

KA: The optimism may come from a certain naïveté or from my suburban middle-class upbringing or perhaps each feeds the other. When I teach yoga I am working with individual human bodies, one-on-one, same as when I practice yoga (though then the body in question is my own). There's nothing not to be optimistic about when you are watching someone breathing, when you have your hands on someone's body. And it's then also that you understand that violence (any kind, by anyone to anyone) is gravely gravely against our true inner natures. The urge to violence is not a human urge. It is borne of distraction and fear.

TCF: Do you feel, today, that any of your work says "I am" and means it? Does "Kazimnaut"?

KA: What a lovely question. It may or may not but that is indeed its aim. As for "Kazimnaut," it's the first of my books to be conceived of as a mix of poetry, prose, essay, letter, diary, fragment, all together in one place. Named after me. But Kazim not. Kazim knot. Kazim naught. Naught was I was called, knot what I called for, not what I named, naut I was named.

TCF: I'm curious about how your yoga practice aligns with your writing. For instance, do you think of words, language, while practicing yoga? Do the poses and movements play in your mind while you write?

Does your writing change if you write immediately after practicing or teaching yoga, or if you have not practiced in a while? I ask because of how important embodiment is to the thinking and the queerness of your writing, and I'd like to better understand how intentional and quotidian choices of the body play into the work.

KA: Yoga is a radical practice because it teaches us about our own body and breath. It also teaches us that our bodies are a gift (they belong to us and not to others), but that what we ought to do with them should be for the sake of common good and not for injuring or violating others. It is a hard lesson to learn as a human animal, because we are mortal and we feel pain and because we are mortal and feel pain we would do anything— (*anything*) to avoid pain ourselves and to avoid death, symbolic or physical. So we are in a bind. But my practice of yoga helps me to work through these issues, to wonder through them, to try to know more about the what and the why and the who of this life. And how.

Yoga aligns for me with writing in various different ways, but none the way you describe (you had asked if I "think of words, language, while practicing yoga"). I think it is precisely the opposite. It is nearly a wordless state utterly—the asana and pranayama and pratyahara practices. Even in meditation (called dharana and dhanya in the Yoga Sutras), I have only found phrases for poems once or maybe twice. Mostly I am measuring my body and breath and learning about myself.

But the poses were designed to open locks inside the body (called granthis). The locks occur along the various rivers or channels that run through the body, and when you can breathe through the lock the energy can flow. These gates you may know as "chakras" (it's not pronounced like "shock-ra" but like "chuck-ra"), and there are seven major ones that converge along the main energy river of the body, called Susumna Nadi, the spine. The various asanas can help you to focus and draw attention to different chakras and can help you to tap into the emotions associated with that chakra. For example if you practice heart-opening poses like camel or wheel, you can focus on the fourth chakra, the anahata or "heart" chakra, which may help you access areas of emotional vulnerability. And so on.

But for me I really learned about the architecture of a poem by learning about the architecture of a body in an asana. There are various forces moving in oppositional directions, often contradictory, and I found in this a way of thinking of poetic form and of language in the form. When you add to this that I was writing my first book of poetry along the

mighty Hudson River, which flows both ways, you can understand some of the deep psychic and physical energies that were traveling through the landscape as I wrote.

Something about that breath and stretch and breadth went into the poetic line. The river gave me the couplet. Now that I live out in the flat Midwest (south of the lake but not close enough to feel it), I've yet to find as deep a connection to the landscape, but the landscape of the body is always there, and the asana and breath is how we explore and come to know it.

Everything I said about yoga I believe too about poetry.

TO BE EVERYTHING:
A VIBRANT EXCESS

an afterword by Tisa Bryant

"I write writing," Steryl Flexum once said.[1] Flexum's declaration, along with Clarence Major's "Total life is what we want," James Baldwin's "Go the way your blood beats" and June Jordan's *Naming Our Destiny*, was one of many bees in the Dark Room Collective (b. Cambridge, MA, 1988) hivemind, the kind that can only exist in the private public of creation, between the person writing and how the writing occurs: to be absolutely with, in and for one's own pleasure; to be towards and away from the pleasure of others. "I write writing" might seem sexless, virginal, unfucked with, on task, but imagine a world laid out, tantalizing, sullied here, clean there, for you to enter and accept and change.

To write writing seems to create a bit of autonomy from genre. Noun and verb vibrating in a helix of identification and production. Consider "I queer queering." What does that do? To whom, for whom, does it do it?

In *The Curator* Turner says to Iris:
"I queer you."
And Iris says:
"What—who am I when you're not here?"[2]

Imagine that "you" is the interpreter, the editor, marketer, publisher, critic, reader. Then imagine asking Douglas A. Martin, Jackie Wang and Kazim Ali "What—who are you when I'm not here?" As distinct as the interviews they give here are, they might still respond in unison: "Everything."

And only in this could there be imagined agreement among them with any ease. And it's such a beautiful truth.

"If queerness is exciting for resisting identity, and if the essay is exciting because of its hybridity, its way of slipping among genres, would the natural conclusion of these lines of thought be the extinction of both?" T Clutch Fleischmann's thinking is loveable, future-forward. Let's swell that feeling. If what's radical and boundary-busting about queerness and the essay is excess (the race/gender/language/class/place bursting the seams of queer, the uncontainable-in-need-of-new-forms-ness of our content and context), then could a gathering of these the phenomenal forces of our (writing) lives be the thing to revel in as a mode of resistance? Rather

than hastening the extinction of these powers for the false promise of a better, simpler world? Aren't we queers (like we people of color, especially we black people, and especially we black women oh dear ancestors we black queers) always too much, and aren't we always being asked to tone "it" down, even though "it" is an intrinsic part of who we are, alla this stuff?[3] Against decency, respectability, normalcy, assimilation. Rather than emptying and absenting (who can afford it? not knot naught Kazim!), rather than the extinction of the visibly, audibly, radically capacious stealth named "queer," named "essay," named "just be trying to write writing," why not revel in its amplification, its proliferation, its being much? To be everything, in solitude and in exuberance with others, to find parts of yourself through writing, within the writings of others.

Show me your mirror and I will breathe on it, write upon it a name you have never seen. It will quickly disappear and you will forget it until the moment of fresh steam, when the trace will return, and it will be yours.

This proliferation of selves-as-text and -ideas is at once reflective and clean, sweaty, orgiastic, solitary but not self-involved, narcissistic. Intertextuality, when one's body, one's memory, is also text and open to others', can thwart narcissism. This is writing

that looks beyond the self for what perhaps can't be, may never be seen—your interpretation, written over, obscured, seen anew. As Douglas A. Martin ventures: theft, defense of the proprietary, can also fall apart. Who owns reflection? Who can own the Infinite Form? The Mirror-Writing Box?[4] Perhaps. It is a palimpsestuous medium, a mosaic of cells and selves, shifting, intermingled, performing, belonging to everyone.[5]

"Hybridity" is a fraught term, coming out of histories and sciences that worked against our existence. We reclaim and redress language, through postcolonial and experimental modes, but we cannot fully excise the use that Mendel's discoveries about genetics were put to, which should never have been applied to people.[6] And yet here we are, categorizing genes and genres as dominant and recessive, giving primacy to our racial, sensual and aesthetic prejudices, and calling it science, calling it natural, calling it art. A hot term, "hybrid," like a black or brown writing body that people want to get next to, to sex up, or (yes, Jackie Wang) to just use, like a tool.[7] But are we talking about genre here, or medium? Hybridity, or vibrancy? Let's talk about vibrancy in the medium of writing. Whatever happens within its frame is autonomous.[8] Simply vibrant and alive with all the syntaxes and structures ever known recombining to hold that life close and to push it forth.[9] Let us be

the medium in the medium. Let us write writing. Let us have vibrancy, and exuberance and excess. Let us be everything.

Promiscuity is not indiscriminate, not without taste, despite the damning connotations of the word, the criminal edge pressed to the flesh of pleasure seekers, lovers and girls, girls of any kind. To want every sensation somehow, directly or distilled, as first-hand experience with another human, or with fingers sliding along the spines of books, to get some butter in your fur. To try it on, maybe mess it up. How you be writing being everything you are? To make us feel it? Do you practice with your body?

What is the meat of your life? Where does it belong?

NOTES

[1] Steryl Flexum is a creation of Thomas Sayers Ellis, circa late-1980-something.

[2] *The Curator* is a novel by Tisa Bryant

[3] See Ntozake Shange's "somebody almost walked off wid alla my stuff" in *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf*.

[4] See Trinh T. Minh-ha's "Commitment from the Mirror-Writing Box," in *Woman Native Other*.

[5] Linda Hutcheon uses the term "palimpsestuous" in *A Theory of Adaptation*.

[6] From a conversation with Ricardo Bracho, who also said "Have you taught/read Adrienne Kennedy's *Deadly Triplets: A Theatre Mystery and Journal*? Hybridity doesn't even come close to the genre-fuck she puts down here." Answer: no/yes.

[7] Janice Lee, during a visit to my "Hybrid Writing" class at CalArts, focused on questioning "hybrid" writing—explored her suspicion of the term "hybrid," as one that seems most often applied to the works of people of color.

[8] Sidney Meyers says "Film is a Form in Continuity, within a more or less restricted frame. This frame is its entire world. Nothing exists outside of it. And whatever happens within it is autonomous."

[9] Against positioning queerness and this idea of hybridity as a beacon of singularity exclusive of all else, Naima Lowe says a vibrant creative, cultural and political life is "as magical as it is mundane."

AUTHOR BIOS

Kazim Ali's books include five volumes of poetry (*The Far Mosque*, *The Fortieth Day*, *Bright Felon*, *Sky Ward* and the forthcoming *All One's Blue: New and Selected Poems*), three novels (*Quinn's Passage*, *The Disappearance of Seth* and *Wind Instrument*) and three collections of essays (*Orange Alert: Essays on Poetry, Art and the Architecture of Silence*, *Fasting for Ramadan* and *Resident Alien: On Border-crossing and the Undocumented Divine*). He is editor with Nightboat Books. Ali is an associate professor of comparative literature and the director of the Creative Writing Program at Oberlin College.

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Jackie Wang is a queer poet, essayist, filmmaker, performer, alien and prison abolitionist based out of Cambridge, Massachusetts. Her work has been published in *LIES*, *Action Yes*, *Pank*, *Delirious Hem*, *DIAGRAM*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *October* and The Semiotext(e) Whitney Biennial Pamphlet Series. In her critical essays she writes about queer sexuality, race, gender, the politics of writing, mixed-race identity, prisons and police, the politics of safety and innocence, and revolutionary struggles.

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