Lauren K. Watel

Dear V: Epistolary Responses to the Work of Victoria Chang

Dear V,

I have so many questions.

But first let me acknowledge that I'm taking a chance, writing a critical essay in letters. Not to mention addressing you directly. As you say in *With My Back to the World* (*WMBttW*), regarding your use of "Agnes" to refer to the artist Agnes Martin, I do so "not out of disrespect or presumption of intimacy and familiarity" (99). Rather, I'm following an impulse, as you did.

Most obviously, I'm riffing off *Dear Memory: Letters on Writing, Silence, and Grief*, an uncategorizable literary experiment in which you intermix, in inquisitive and inventive ways, the epistolary form, lyric, documentary essay, existential meditations, and visual art. Here the one-to-one address of a letter, from an "I" to a "you," creates a space, a shape for memory to inhabit. "I think I am more of a shaper," you tell the reader (143). As you wrote to your mother, your teachers, your grandfather, the Ford Motor Company, a beloved poetry friend, I write to you. And I, too, aim to shape something in the process.

Though not explicitly in letter form, your poetry also possesses epistolary qualities. The poems and illustrations in *With My Back to the World*, for example, constitute a correspondence of sorts between you and Agnes Martin, an imaginative engagement with both her writing and her

painting. Similarly, using W. S. Merwin titles in *The Trees Witness Everything* (*TTWE*) offered you "a way to inhabit another person's mind," the shared titles another mode of literary connection (118). Many of *OBIT*'s tankas are addressed to the speaker's children in the manner of letters; moreover, the obituary poems themselves, which could be likened to elegiac farewell letters, addressed to a person or an object.

The "epistolary" writing in your books, with its one-to-one correspondences, speaks on a human scale, and therefore creates a pressing intimacy. Which is why, I think, addressing Agnes Martin as "Agnes" was a natural inclination. It points to a companionship or camaraderie often inherent to exchanges between women, and women artists in particular, instead of the more impersonal use of a patronym, as male critics typically employ. "V" is my version of your "Agnes."

The epistolary, as form or inspiration or impulse, enables a voice that's decidedly personal. You send your words across time and space, each poem a yearnful outreaching from a speaker to an addressee, one who is not present and may not be known to you, may not even be alive. Most of these "letters" will never reach the person to whom they are addressed.

Perhaps in this way they are like "dead" letters. Meaning, undeliverable and unreturnable. Rather, they hover in a space somewhere between arrival and return. This liminal realm is where readers find them, between the covers of your books and on the page. Like curious postal workers, they rip open your dead letters and encounter your words, sent off to a particular "you." However, in tearing open these letters, in partaking of that intimacy, readers become another addressee, another "you," and the letters come to

life, every reader a resuscitator, every attentive reading an awakening, both of the work and of the relationship.

“One of the challenges of the epistolary form,” you say to the reader in *Dear Memory*, “is that the people you are writing to can’t write back” (143). But isn’t this also true of so many of your poems? Agnes Martin can’t write back. On Kawara can’t write back. W. S. Merwin can’t write back. “Blame,” “Yesterday,” “Privacy,” “Time”—none can write back. And yet, you keep reaching out, keep sending those letters.

Dear V,

Who are “you?”

Aside from a yearnful outreaching to a “you,” the epistolary form as you practice it also enacts a yearnful inreaching. In responding to the work of other writers and artists, you open up avenues to engage with yourself. In this regard, the imagined “you” of the addressee also represents an imagined “me.” As the self talks back to itself, a poem comes into being.

“What happens when you’re not supposed to be depressed?” you ask in “Grey Stone II, 1961.” “When depression becomes the form of your happiness? When your happiness is so sure of itself that it leaves only its form behind?” (*WMBttW*, 84). You’re asking yourself these questions, aren’t you? And yet, when I read them, you’re also asking me. I’ve felt depressed when, objectively, it seems I shouldn’t. Depression has been my happiness, a soothing habit. Happiness has fled, leaving me only its outline.

You’re often asking questions. “What happens when the shadow is attached to the wrong object but refuses to let

go?" (*OBIT*, 13). "Is it death or a small seed / growing inside us?" (*TTWE*, 100). "Everyone arrives one day and asks, *is this it?*" (*WMBttW*, 16). When I read the questions you're posing to yourself, *I* try to answer—in my thinking, in my incomprehension, in the emotional space your words open up inside me, a space where wordless answers reside. All my responses become part of a complicated dialogue; as your self talks back to you, my self talks back to me.

In "Starlight 1962" you say, "To ask questions is to be distracted by point of view" (*WMBttW*, 16). An authoritative assertion about questions, and I immediately find myself asking them. Why is asking questions a form of distraction? Why is point of view the distracting element? Distracting from what? Does asking questions involve a point of view absent from other utterances? Are you implying that one shouldn't ask questions to avoid being distracted, or that distraction is the nature of asking questions? In asking these questions, am I distracted by point of view? Is the distraction my point of view or someone else's?

Is your assertion about questions really an assertion? Or is it a question, disguised as an assertion? Maybe my questions aren't questions at all, but answers, disguised as questions. Whatever the case, I can't stop asking. This is because reading your work troubles my thinking, pushes my mind into uncomfortable shapes, makes me ask things I'd never ask otherwise, things I'd never even imagine.

Dear V,

Who is "Victoria Chang?"

"Victoria Chang" is a name. Your name, and the name of many others. "Victoria Chang" is also a shape that holds

memory. It's a letter as well, sent from your parents to you, from you to the world.

"Victoria Chang" brings together two cultures, which coexist uneasily, like estranged stepsisters forced to share a bed. "Victoria" for America, your family's adopted home. Also for Great Britain, with its royal resonances, its looming shadows of empire and colonial rule. "Chang" for China and Taiwan, your family's original homes, places of dramatic social and political upheaval, lands your parents left. Two names, two worlds, three histories, two languages, living side by side, in contradiction and tension. Just as you live.

You wrote this name on your first social security card in your fledgling cursive—*Victoria Chang*, *Vicky Chang*—leaving out your middle initial, *M*. "I, too, wasn't sure what to call myself so I wrote it twice," you say to your father in *Dear Memory*. "My *M* is for *Ming-Kai*, my Chinese name. Look how it's hidden" (132). There it is again, that liminal space where dead letters linger, the letter *M* now hovering, invisible, between your two names, undeliverable and unreturnable. And yet, when you sent the words *Ming-Kai* into your book, you brought your Chinese name out of hiding, made it visible. First, for you. Then for me, for anyone, to find.

A poem called "Seven Changs" appears in *Circle*, your first book, signaling a longstanding literary engagement with your name. Changs are proliferating in America; the speaker hobbles up a mountain. She addresses an Oracle, recalling an argument "over the arrival // of another Victoria Chang." This one, "a track star . . . faster than a seashore," is also the speaker's "ruin." Referring to herself as "a has-been girl or even worse, a not-yet girl," the speaker heralds the arrival of "[t]he next seven Victoria Changs, /

all victorious, // and each a little taller than the last. Their fevered footsteps persist" (51).

I find this poem, like many of your poems, deeply evocative and somewhat inscrutable. So I ask more questions. Why, for example, does the speaker have to "limp" up the mountain? Is the mountain America? Has being a first-generation American—an older, predecessor "Victoria Chang" injured her and weakened her ability to climb? Has her difficult assent broken ground for the seven Changs of the title, allowing them to be fleet-footed, to grow taller and taller? Can the "victorious" Victoria-Chang successors therefore inhabit the name more easily than the speaker does?

Often you seem puzzled by your name. Skeptical of it. As if "Victoria Chang" were not you, exactly, but your doppelganger.

Take the protagonist/speaker of *Barbie Chang*, a "Victoria" stand-in as aspirational toy, with a hyperconventionalized female body shaped to suit the male gaze. Adding "Chang" to "Barbie" disrupts the quintessential Americanness of the name, the doll, the very idea of a "Barbie." As a result, "Barbie Chang" stands perennially outside "The Circle," a clutch of cliquish American Barbie-moms. The awkward contrivance called "Barbie Chang," a mash-up of clashing cultures and selves, investigates and interrogates the inscrutable, exclusionary mores of the dominant ethnicity from the margins. Even as the "Chang" of "Barbie Chang" prevents the speaker from entering The Circle, it also gives her the differentiation and perspective to see through The Circle, thereby penetrating it in a different fashion.

In *OBIT* "Victoria Chang" dies four times. First, "unknowingly on June 24, 2009 on the I-405 freeway," when the speaker receives the news of her father's heart attack (7).

Next, “unwillingly on April 21, 2017 on a cool day in Seal Beach, California” (8), when the speaker leaves her father in a care home. Next, “on June 24, 2011, at the age of 41,” when the speaker’s father mistakes her for her dead mother, and she accepts that misrecognition (13). Finally, when the speaker’s mother dies, “Victoria Chang” dies again, near the end of *OBIT,* “on August 3, 2015, the one who never used to weep when other people’s parents died” (97).

I’m fascinated by this repeated self-elegizing, all the dead Victoria Changs signaling a multiplicity of selves inside the loose coherence known as “Victoria Chang,” a fractured assemblage constantly in flux, with some of those selves passing away. These self-addresses point to the dynamism and confusion of your felt identity, your name embracing many people in the world, dead, alive, yet-to-be-born, all the versions of Victoria Chang overlapping, blurred and diffuse, contradictory. Maybe even at war. In eulogizing the dead Victoria Changs, you memorialize them on the page, and you mourn them. Then you keep living, keep writing, keep moving toward other selves, other identities, such as a new Victoria Chang who, when other people’s parents die, can finally weep.

Dear V,

To whom am I addressing these letters?

There’s a “Victoria Chang” we might call the “real” Victoria Chang (though I can only imagine your pointed musings on this use of “real”). That version refers to the flesh-and-bones “Victoria Chang.” A public figure who writes poems and teaches at a university and hosts a reading series and posts on Instagram. Since I live within driving distance of that university, I could potentially attend a reading where I might encounter this “Victoria Chang.”

However, I’m not writing to her. I’m writing to another “Victoria Chang,” the one I imagine. A private figure. Whenever I encounter your work, that Victoria Chang—dare I say *my* Victoria Chang?—calls to me, whispers in my ear. And I respond. So I suppose we are having our own correspondence, Victoria Chang and I. Maybe this is how I can write back.

Dear V,

“We were born with a / large door on our backs. When will / we know if it opens” (5)?

This is the second poem in your sixth collection, *The Trees Witness Everything*. It’s called “Losing a Language.” Losing language is a major obsession of yours; for me, this quiet heartbeat throughout your work points to a fraught relationship between language, the poet’s medium, and you, the poet.

From birth you lived with two languages, Chinese and English. Or perhaps it’s more accurate to say that, as the American-born child of immigrants, you lived *between* two languages, like another “dead” letter, hovering in the middle, undelivered and unreturned. In *Dear Memory* you write, “I wonder what it would have been like to grow up in a family where everyone spoke the same language” (86). Unlike your parents, whose first language was Chinese, English was native to you. But it was also native to the people in your childhood who bullied you, native to the culture that alienated and marginalized you. One might say that in certain respects, both Chinese and English were lost to you long before you could learn them. How could you feel entirely comfortable with either?

In *The Boss*, your third full-length collection, loss of language becomes a grounding motif, one that engenders a shift in focus, an intensification of attention, and a newfound formal looseness toward language and its various failures. The book's first poem, "I Once Was a Child," announces a very different approach to language and the forms it takes, a radical departure from your previous work, characterized by lines with no endstops, no punctuation or capitals, incantatory repetition of words and phrases, obsessive word- and sound-play, and stanzas arrayed in a notable zig-zaggy shape.

Why in *The Boss* do you feel compelled to employ these formal elements, this novel, dynamic approach to language? The poem's central stanza suggests a possible answer. I'll quote it here:

> fired but me one year we all lost our words one year
> my father lost his words to a stroke
> a stroke of bad luck stuck his words
> used to be so worldly his words fired

First of all, without punctuation or capitals, a reader lacks conventional indicators of where individual sentences begin and end. As a result, the poem's syntax is far from clear. To make sense of it, a reader must mentally insert pauses and isolate units of meaning; in the process, the poem asks the reader actively to decipher the poem, its sense and its senses. The jagged stanzas rove restlessly across and down the page. In addition, the poem constitutes one long sentence that, without a terminal period, stops but doesn't exactly end.

It's fascinating to unravel how you reveal information in a single stanza. From the first line, I'm trying to discern distinct syntactical units. With "fired but me one year we lost all our words one year" I focus on either "one year

we all lost our words" or "we lost all our words one year." What an elegantly simple, sweeping proclamation, as if all of humanity suddenly could no longer speak. But when I enjamb the second "one year" with "my father lost his words to a stroke," "our words" in the first line becomes "his words" in the second line. The sweeping proclamation becomes a personal report, which supplies the reason that a specific man, your father, lost his words, and the "we" of humanity also includes the "we" of his family.

Just as "one year" repeats, beginning and ending the clause "we all lost our words," "a stroke" ends the second line and begins the third ("a stroke / a stroke of bad luck"), this repetition accompanied by a swerve of meaning, from "stroke" as a disabling medical condition to "stroke" as a metaphorical movement indicating a change in fortune. Moving on, I screech to a halt at the word "stuck," literally stuck between "a stroke of bad luck" and "his words," so that I'm reading "bad luck stuck" and "stuck his words," both statements accurate, regarding the irreversible damage of a stroke, as well as the difficulty of retrieving words after a stroke. The phrase "his words," repeated from the prior line, ends the third line, so now I'm enjambing "his words / used to be so worldly" and immediately encountering another repetition of "his words," so I'm reading both "so worldly his words" and "his words fired," the latter suggesting that his words were "dismissed" (as in no longer employed) and "subjected to high temperatures in order to harden" (as in pottery) and "discharged" (as from a weapon). And I see, all at the same time, that you've started and ended the stanza with "fired," so that the stanza is surrounded by dismissal, hardening, discharging.

(And say I continue past the stanza break and move onto the next stanza I'm now enjambing "his words fired // him let him go without notice" and the meaning of "his words fired"

at the end of the third stanza swerves again to suggest that his lost, previously worldly words fired *him*, in all senses of "fired." His words also "let him go," which one could read as "fired him" but also as "released him." And "without notice," meaning both "came upon him unexpectedly" and "caught him unawares," the repetitions and resonances of all these words and phrases compounding and accumulating in a torrent of overlapping meanings, and as I'm riding these linguistic and stanzaic waves, I'm finding the onrushing words, and therefore myself, laden with feeling, with grief and anger and disbelief.)

Dear V,

In feeling my way through a single stanza of your work, have *I* gotten lost in my words?

Perhaps. But isn't this the point? In getting lost, I'm discovering something. I'm figuring out why you might have used these particular formal experiments, at this particular time, in a book called *The Boss*. I'm also having my own experience of lostness as I wade through your words.

After his stroke, your father lost his words. Because those words, which "used to be so worldly," abandoned him, he lost his place in the world, lost his worldliness. He was "fired," as it were, from his position as the boss—the boss of himself, the boss of his family, the boss of language—discharged, burned, hardened. A stroke struck him, struck him down, struck him dumb, stuck him with a stroke of bad luck, with words that were stuck.

When your father lost his words, his position, his worldliness, your family lost its boss, lost its words, and you, in a sense, lost your boss, your words. How does

anyone, even a writer as probing and inventive as you, begin to articulate the loss that the loss of words represents for someone like your father? Not to mention the pain, the grief, the anger, frustration, bewilderment, dread, as you watch him deteriorate, lose his identity, his faculties, his abilities? Impossible, really. Words, as they say, fail. "Language fails us," you declare in *OBIT* (10).

And yet, even though you lost your words, you still had words. As a writer, words are your medium; they're also integral to your sense of purpose, your sense of yourself. "What am I outside of language?" you ask in "Gratitude, 2001" (*WMBttW,* 40). Even as words failed you, they also kept you going. "The language of poetry reminded me to stay alive," you write in *Dear Memory*. "It reminded me that, when it felt like I had nothing, I was nothing, I still had words. I could ride language as if on horseback, and it could take me anywhere, including more deeply into myself" (45).

So you're left with words, to try to convey a loss of words. How to do this? "I Once Was a Child" shows us. You remove punctuation, remove capital letters. Without these contextual markers, there is no conventional sentence sense. Words are set adrift; they float, unmoored, inside the poem. Decontextualized, their meanings also become slippery, leading to multiple possible meanings, multiple possible readings. Repetition, not only of words but of sounds, creates a sonic circling—just listen to the punishing percussion of the hard K sounds in "a stroke // a stroke of bad luck stuck" and the accompanying accented vowels of "stroke // stroke . . . bad luck stuck" (OH // OH . . . A UH UH), which sound like someone moaning in agony. All these one-syllable words, resounding one after the other, relentless, like punches in the gut. This aural volley eddying in and out of syntactical ambiguity, so that the poem itself,

through its proliferating linguistic experimentation, enacts, with words, the lostness and confusion and stuckness and repetitive circling of someone who has lost his words after a stroke.

This is also why you might have used an oddly serrated four-line stanza, with every line beginning and ending in a different place. Visually, the poem shimmers with instability, pulses with jagged movement, a further enactment of lostness and confusion. The stanza's spikiness compels one's gaze back and forth from one line to the next, the eye jumping from enjambment to enjambment with no rest, an anxious sort of reading experience that mimics, again, the panicky unpredictability of a person's life, post-stroke.

However, you chose to keep the same general form from stanza to stanza, coaxing the chaos and confusion of all these elements—the sonic repetition, the lack of punctuation and capitals, the ambiguous meanings—into relatively consistent shapes. Here the linguistic disorder of lost words meets the ordering impulse of the poet who, though lost herself, uses her words to try to make some sense of the loss, even if that sense is partly a stanzaic sense, purely visual, and partly semi-sense, or nonsense.

To title a poem "I Once Was a Child" evokes the once-upon-a-time of a fairy tale, a long-ago era when you were a child, and implies that after your father's stroke, you were no longer a child. So when your father lost his words, you also lost your childhood. Furthermore, when your father could no longer be the boss, you had to be the boss. And you, like so many of us with aging parents, were not quite equipped, not quite ready, for the role of the boss, nor for the loss.

Dear V,

How did trying to express, in words, a devastating loss of words carry through your subsequent work?

You titled the third poem of your next collection "Barbie Chang's Father Paid." Like all the poems in the book, this one retains *The Boss*'s lack of punctuation and capitals, word and phrase repetitions, swirling sonics, multiple possible meanings and ambiguities, and a jagged stanza shape. However, in *Barbie Chang* you use two-line stanzas, as if in the four years between publication of *The Boss* and *Barbie Chang*, your need to order the continuing chaos compelled you to simplify, to pare down the stanzas.

Your father's condition has deteriorated, necessitating a move to a facility. Here's how you depict that moment: "today Barbie Chang packs up his / clothes again to move him // to a facility to mute him no longer / able to travel to Italy or // the local deli he tells Barbie Chang she / is demented his dementia // is self centered it has no more center / his words have lost" (9). I could parse these seven lines in as much detail as the central stanza of "I Once Was a Child," but I'll confine myself to three observations.

First, the subtle, rather shattering meaning and soundplay starting with "facility," a word that simultaneously evokes both an eldercare home and an ability or aptitude. Having lost the latter, Barbie Chang's father must live in the former. Notice how "Italy" spins aurally out of "facility," Italy a faraway place where he can no longer travel, followed by "local deli"—readers ride the repeated *L*s, *T*s, short *I*s and final long *E*s, from "facility" to "Italy" to "local deli"—with its pun on Delhi, the local deli a destination also denied him. Second, notice the repetitions in "is demented his dementia // is self centered it has no more center." A declarative "is"

starts each line, followed by the pairings *demented/dementia* and *centered/center.* Here a past participle (a verb form acting as an adjective) becomes a noun, implying a change from movement to stasis; therefore, his inability to travel is enacted in modifications in the language itself. Finally, note this line: "his words have lost." Taken in isolation, the line seems to declare "his words" the loser in some epic battle. Which, of course, they were. However, when enjambing the line over the following stanza break with "what they are trying to signify," the reader understands that his words have become mere signifiers, orphaned from their meanings.

In *OBIT* language dies twice. Punctuation and capitals have returned to the poems, the sentences and syntax now discernable, to adhere to the conventions of your chosen form, the obituary. First, "Language—died, brilliant and beautiful on August 1, 2009 at 2:46 p.m.," roughly five weeks after your father's stroke. Significant that language "died brilliant and beautiful," since in four of the five poems preceding it, death comes "unpeacefully" ("My Father's Frontal Lobe"), "unpeacefully" ("My Mother"), "unknowingly" ("Victoria Chang"), and "unwillingly" ("Victoria Chang"). Letters feature in both obituaries for language. In the first, they "used to skim my father's brain before they let go. Now his words are blind. Are pleated. Are the dispatcher, the dispatches, and the receiver" (10). Here letters no longer activate your father's ability to create words. Therefore, like the words without signifieds in "Barbie Chang's Father Paid," these words, unseeing and folded over on themselves, no longer can make meaning.

"Language—died again on August 3, 2015 at 7:09 a.m.," the same day your mother died. As she was dying, you hired a nurse, who wrote accounts of your mother's difficult nights. In the poem you liken this "night person" to "a ghost who left letters on my lips." Again, letters float in, isolated from the words they form, and alight on your lips:

> I got on all fours, tried to pick up
> the letters like a child at an egg hunt
> without a basket. But for every letter
> I picked up, another fell down, as if
> protesting the oversimplification of
> my mother's dying. (12)

This image could almost serve as a personal ars poetica, the poet akin to a child, trying to grasp at letters without the proper container to put them in, the letters falling as the poet keeps gathering them, the falling letters "protesting" the insufficiency of words to capture a mother's suffering.

The poetry in *The Trees Witness Everything* is pared down even further into very concise poems, with short lines and short sentences, or longer poems with short stanzas, short lines. You use various traditional Japanese forms that employ syllabics, so that each line contains its own enumeration, which the reader "hears" without necessarily being aware of it. Lost words continue to haunt this work. Here's "Losing a Language," a Katauta with a 5/7/7 syllabic arrangement: "I saved Mother's words, / buried them in the ground. How / do I only kill the weeds?" (35). Here the speaker saves—"save" meaning both "rescue" and "store"—her mother's words by burying them, as if they were corpses. But this act of interment is also a form of planting, the dead words like seeds. The speaker wonders how she might tend to that plot to allow for their growth, how she can "only kill the weeds" ("the weeds" referring to words that are not valued or necessary) so that her mother's words can survive, can break through the soil and flourish. I'm reading another ars poetica: a poet rescues precious words that are beloved, storing them in a plot of earth, and tries to omit only the valueless words that hinder the growth of the words she wants to cultivate.

Your latest collection, *With My Back to the World*, consists entirely of poems in dialogue with the work of visual artists Agnes Martin and On Kawara. As a result, language is shaped into poetic content inspired by this work and into poetic forms—prose poems, variously gridded poems, canvas-like poems, diaristic entries, and so-called illustrations, among others—that reference visual art in their unusual graphic qualities. Your skepticism and frustration toward language remains. "Some of us spend our lives trying / to pin language to the sky but language is the one that gets to stay," you declare in "Untitled, #5, 1998" (91). Poets believe they can control language, believe they have the godlike power to make meaning by affixing words to the firmament. But language always slips out of their grasp, escapes their efforts to pin it up, to pin it down, and ultimately outlives every poet, every poem.

Dear V,

"When the stars hit the / windows now, they turn into / flies. Who knew they would come down?" ("To Age," *TTWE*, 43).

Is it a stretch to call yours not only an epistolary but also an interrogative poetics? I don't think so. "Interrogate," from the Latin *interrogare*, which combines *inter* (between) and *rogare* (to ask). Your poems, obituaries, letters, illustrations constitute ever evolving forms of interrogation, the asking that happens between words and meanings, between writers and readers, between the engagement with the art of another and the creation of one's own art.

It's said that Socrates called himself an ignorant inquirer, asking his interlocutors questions for which there were no adequate answers. Is this not what your poems do? Are you

not a philosopher of sorts, your work posing a series of questions for which there are no adequate answers, your project an ongoing inquiry into the fundamental nature of knowledge, of language, of reality and existence, speculative rather than empirical?

Someone asks a question. Someone writes a letter. Someone says a prayer. Someone writes a poem. They send these words into the world, and they wait for answers, even if answers come only in the form of more questions. And the stars come down. And they hit the window. And they turn into flies. And no one knew. And the large door on our backs opens. And we know because words have opened it. The questions. The letters. The prayers. The poems.

Works Cited

Chang, Victoria. *circle*. *Crab Orchard Review* & Southern Illinois University Press, 2005.

---*The Boss*. McSweeney's, 2013.

---*Barbie Chang*. Copper Canyon Press, 2017.

---*OBIT*. Copper Canyon Press, 2020.

---*Dear Memory: Letters on Writing, Silence, and Grief*. Milkweed Editions, 2021.

---*The Trees Witness Everything*. Copper Canyon Press, 2022.

---*With My Back to the World*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2024.