

The Dancer From The Dance

Thursday, 3/5/20. **Scheduled Time:** 01:45:PM–03:00:PM

Scheduled Room: Room 210A, Henry B. González Convention Center, Meeting Room Level

Event Description: How can we, and do we want to, separate the writer from the writing?— an investigation of how or whether we can separate the work, which we may like and even admire, from the author, who may have been racist, xenophobic, homophobic, anti-semitic, for instance Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Paul Claudel, etc.— and more recent examples of writers whose lives and political or social views may be problematic or even reprehensible, but whose work we may still want to read, admire, teach, and study.

Type of Event: Pedagogy

Event Organizer: Mộng-Lan (monglan17@gmail.com)

Mộng-Lan, poet, writer, educator, author of 7 books (Dusk Aflame) & 3 chapbooks, has won a Stegner Fellowship at Stanford Univ, Fulbright, Pushcart Prize, Juniper Prize, etc. Former professor at the Univ of Maryland in Tokyo, she has served as faculty & visiting writer-artist on numerous campuses. www.monglan.com

Moderator: Ralph Adamo (adamoralph@yahoo.com)

Ralph Adamo is a Professor of English at Xavier University where he edits Xavier Review and Xavier Review Press. He is the author of seven collections of poetry, the editor of several others, including the selected poems of Everette Maddox. He is past editor of New Orleans Review.

Participants

Participant: Mộng-Lan (monglan17@gmail.com) See bio above, Event Organizer.

Participant: Bill Lavender (bill.lavender@gmail.com)

Bill Lavender is the author of 12 books of poetry, most recently MY ID, from BlazeVOX, and the 3 Letters, a trilogy of novellas, from Spuyten Duyvil. He operates Lavender Ink / Dialogos from his home in New Orleans. He is cofounder and co director of the New Orleans Poetry Festival.

Participant: Jessica Smith (jessica.s.smith@gmail.com)

Jessica Smith's books of poetry include *Life-List* (Chax) and *How to Know the Flowers* (Veliz). She teaches at The University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Participant: Michelle Taransky (taransky@writing.upenn.edu)

Michelle Taransky is the author of two books of poetry: *Sorry Was In The Woods* and *Barn Burned, Then*, both from Omnidawn. Taransky is a Critical Writing Fellow teaching writing at University of Pennsylvania and working as Reviews Editor for Jacket2.

Moderator Questions (To be used as a guide, loosely, as needed)

1. How can we, and do we want to, separate the writer from the writing?
2. The morality in this new age of consciousness, the #MeToo movement, anti-semitism, have new implications and have increasingly affected the status of major players in most fields. Does this affect writing and literature as well? Should it?
3. Is it true that for most of history before the recent political movements, people have made value judgements on art and writing without notions of morality? (Charles Dickens, horrible person and husband, wrote books which people admired. Picasso, honored as a genius, known close to him to be truly a terrible person and a misogynist, “driving to despair everyone who got near him.”) (“Grandpa Picasso: Terribly Famous, Not Terribly Nice,” NY Times, 2001.)
4. What do we think of or how will we respond as teachers, among other things, to the canonical works of people who offend us and maybe ‘morality?’
5. Is it possible to study only the writings and art of “good people”?
6. Although all the questions above also includes living writers, this one specifically is for them. How do we respond to these living writers who have transgressed to be a morally corrupt writer? So, we have a list (or a mental one) of those reprehensible wrong-doers, do we boycott them? Should we discontinue to read them and study them? Should we banish them from our bookshelves and minds? Or if their works are of artistic merit, should we continue to read / study / teach them with a grain of salt, teach their works through this new lens of knowledge, knowing that perhaps their works contain moral poison?

Responses from Participants

Q & A