

Each Book a Different Me: Mapping the Progression of Self Over a Career

Event Description: One joy of being an avid reader is discovering a fresh voice, new to and in love with literary self-expression, but so too is there joy in following the growth of a voice over the course of an author's lifetime. Each book, a time capsule of sorts: the representation of an individual's understanding of the world, forever preserved on page. This event will feature writers in various stages of life, reflecting on all the people they've been over the years, charting out the many maps of the self.

Event Category: Artistic and Professional Development

Event Organizer: CavanKerry Press

Event Moderator: Andrea Ross

Once a park service ranger and wilderness guide, **Andrea Ross** now teaches writing at UC Davis. Her memoir, *Unnatural Selection: A Memoir of Adoption and Wilderness*, was published by CavanKerry Press in 2021. She has been awarded several California Arts Council residencies and a fellowship at the Mesa Refuge. Her work can be found in *Ploughshares*, *Huffington Post*, *Terrain*, the *Café Review*, and many other outlets. She lives in Davis, California with her husband and son. Find out more at andrearosswriter.com.

Event Participants:

Daniel B. Summerhill is Professor of Poetry/Social Action & Composition at CSU Monterey. His work has appeared in *Columbia Journal*, *Obsidian*, *Rust + Moth*, *The Hellebore* and others. He is the author of two collections, *Divine, Divine, Divine* (Nomadic Press) & *Mausoleum of Flowers* (CavanKerry Press). A Watering Hole fellow, Summerhill is the inaugural poet laureate of Monterey County.

***Roberto Carlos Garcia** has written three poetry collections, most recently [*Elegies*] published by Flower Song Press (Dec 2020), *black / Maybe: An Afro*

Lyric (Willow Books 2018), and *Melancolia* (Cervena Barva Press). Garcia holds an MFA in Poetry/Poetry in Translation.

*Unfortunately, Roberto Carlos Garcia had to withdraw from the conference. We are looking to have a replacement panelist here and will update this as soon as possible.

Dzvinia Orłowsky is an award-winning author of six poetry collections including *Bad Harvest*. Recipient of an NEA grant, she has translated Alexander Dovzhenko's novella *The Enchanted Desna* and co-translated *Eccentric Days of Hope & Sorrow: Selected Poems* by Nataalka Bilotserkivets. @DzviniaOrłowsky

Molly Peacock is a poet, biographer, essayist, and writer of tales whose multi-genre literary life has taken her from New York City to Toronto, from poetry to prose, from words to words-and-pictures, and from lyric self-examination to curiosity about the lives of others.

Run of Show:

Introduction (5 mins)

Moderator and CavanKerry Press author Andrea Ross will introduce herself and address the run-of-show.

Each author starting with Andrea Ross will speak for 5 minutes, retracing their steps from the beginning of their writing career to their first book, or from their first book until their 15th, elaborating on what they've learned about themselves in the process.

Dzvinia Orłowsky (5 mins)

1. **A Handful of Bees** (Carnegie Mellon University Press, 1994) What breaks the silence?
 - My father's death at age 64 from cancer.
 - My Catholic faith "magical thinking" that, post-war (WWII), my family was now safe from all harm.
 - Questioning identity as a first-generation daughter of Ukrainian immigrants/first use of hyphenated "Ukrainian-American".

- Questioning my identity as a woman; my failed first marriage: Who am I? What am I good at?
2. **Edge of House** (CMUP 1999) Motherhood!
 - My home and family are my country.
 - Life is constituted by a variety of boundaries.
 - Life is transgressing or respecting these boundaries.
 3. **Except for One Obscene Brushstroke** (CMUP 2003) Sex in the Suburbs!
 - The body as a pleasure-seeking country.
 - Use of candid, confessional, “flat” voice; Brooks Haxton’s “The Black Raincoat”
 - Pushing through taboo subject matter: the body desirous, both beautiful and vulgar
 4. **Convertible Night, Flurry of Stones** (CMUP 2008) *The blessing lies next to the wound.* ~African Proverb
 - The body as a potentially lethal country.
 - Journey through diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer.
 - Father’s death & Catholic faith revisited.
 5. **Silvertone** (CMUP 2013) My father’s guitar...
 - What I inherited/what we inherit: objects and cultural identities
 - Where does the sacred live? (Miriam O’Neal, Ragazine)
 - Title poem, “Silvertone” as book’s central narrative (that’s my daughter on the cover! ☺)
 6. **Bad Harvest** (CMUP, 2018) *Even after a bad harvest, there must be a sowing* ~Seneca the Younger
 - Holodomor (Stalin’s hunger famine): nightmares of Eastern Europe in the twentieth century
 - Cultural collective, familial, personal memory as narrative triggering points
 - A village of voices shape a single, authentic voice
 - “You never get finished with this subject, your mother and your father” ~Robert Lowell

Daniel B. Summerhill (5 mins)

Discovering Voice

1. Assimilation

a. Code Switching

- i. W.E.B. Du Bois on double consciousness: “a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of **always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others**, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder...from this must arise a painful self-consciousness, an almost morbid sense of personality, and a moral hesitancy which is fatal to self-confidence. The worlds within and without the Veil of Color are changing, and changing rapidly, but not at the same rate, not in the same way; and **this must produce a peculiar wrenching of the soul, a peculiar sense of doubt and bewilderment. Such a double life, with double thoughts, double duties, and double social classes, must give rise to double words and double ideals...**”

b. Read poem: “Mongoose Teaches a Lesson on Linguistics”

2. Nicole Terez-Dutton (Hybrid Beast of a Language)

a. Divine, Divine, Divine (Nomadic)

- i. Read introduction: My grandfather was a carpenter, which meant he could make magic with his bare hands. I once watched as he split a two-by-four in half to build the front and rear axles of my go cart. I was 7 and languaging. This lesson was on etymology. I knew english, like prison, didn’t add up, when I realized the term *saw dust* pays more credence to the destroyer than the destruction. I realized saws didn't have dust at all, just blades. And dust was only dust because it was at the bottom, the same way Ta-Nehisi Coates explains, “Black is just someone's name for being at the bottom.” I didn't see this as a metaphor for language in '98, but I did when I set out to write these poems many years later. The dust being my language. My language being my body...What is more divine than a

non-dying thing? My people die but never die. Our bodies may go but our tongues don't. Language is proof that we're alive. Proof that we're divine.

3. Baldwin taught me (Hughes +June Jordan)
 - a. Using all of my Englishes
4. Truth telling & excavation
 - a. Mausoleum of Flowers (CavanKerry)
 - i. Language is our only tool for survival/to know we're alive.

Andrea Ross (5 mins)

I have one book out, a memoir, so I will speak to how my many lives/livelihoods/careers informed my book. In my twenties, I was a residential outdoor educator, national park service ranger, wilderness guide, and search and rescue captain. I was also an adopted person wondering if I could be whole If I never learned about my origins. It focuses on how the natural world, particularly wilderness, can be an agent of healing and transformation. It marries these two ideas with the notion of the human need for belonging, and the potential for belonging to landscape—landscape as surrogate for lost family, landscape as corporeal, as the body of the beloved, as a living breathing entity.

Roberto Carlos Garcia (5 mins)

*Unfortunately, Roberto Carlos Garcia had to withdraw from the conference. We are looking to have a replacement panelist here and will update this as soon as possible.

Molly Peacock (5 mins)

Here's a guide to a half-century of my writing! I won't have time to talk at length for all this, but it outlines how books emerged from life and how life created poems, a memoir, two biographies, and essays about poetry, punctuated by service to poetry and efforts to bring this art to the wider public.

- **And Live Apart (Missouri University Press, 1981)** In which a working-class very young poet from Buffalo becomes a runner-up after

crying into a shag carpet on the floor while reading the percentages of first books being published. The seeds of Form form.

- **Raw Heaven (Random House, 1984)** In which a young poet wonders if only Anne Sexton can write about her orgasms, m moves to New York, where a payphone rings in the basement faculty room of a Quaker School, and a sonnet-loving editor is on the other end. The sonnet as a guide to a life of imperfection.
- **Take Heart (Random House, 1989)** In which a poet in her late thirties discovers that a daughter of a self-medicating veteran with PTSD can write about alcoholism—and abortion, too, since, at this point, she decides not to have children. The villanelle with its repeating lines demonstrates the repetitive patterns in a family.
- **Poetry Activism:** Maybe the poet could bring some lasting words to workers carrying lunchboxes on the subway. Poetry activism, 1990's-style? With a friend the poet creates Poetry in Motion on NYC's subways and buses.
- **Original Love (Norton, 1995)** In which the middle-aged poet re-discovers a lost first love--even as her mother, then sister, are dying--then decides to make a leap into another country and another life. Formal poetry becomes a philosophy of living.
- **Prose interlude: Paradise, Piece by Piece, (Riverhead 1998)** A memoir about the choice not to have children.
 - **Prose interlude: How to Read a Poem (Riverhead, 1999)** A book examining poems by Marilyn Nelson, Yusef Komunyakaa, Michael Ondaatje, May Swenson and “canonical” poets.
 - **Editing interlude: The Private I (Graywolf, 2001)**

- **Cornucopia (Norton, 2002)** In which a friendship with an editor leads to examining a poet’s true ambition while the purple curtain drops and the poet discovers that, like old-fashioned actresses, one must struggle not to disappear.
 - **Theatre interlude: The Shimmering Verge (Off Broadway, 2006)**
- **Second Blush (Norton 2008)** In which married love turns out to be a subject for poetry after all.
- **Poetry Activism: The Best Canadian Poetry**
 - **Prose interlude: The Paper Garden: Mrs. Delany Begins Her Life’s Work at 72 (Bloomsbury, 2011)** Poetry and autobiography becomes poetry and researched biography about creativity itself in a 72-year-old woman who invented an art form—collage—in 1772.
- **The Analyst: Poems (Norton, 2017)** In which the poet learns to guide the therapist who guided her. Form expands to all sorts of analogs, from Wikihow “How to Say Thank You in French” to litany as age and gratitude are explored.
 - **Prose interlude: Flower Diary: In Which Mary Hiester Reid Paints, Travels, Marries & Opens a Door.** The poet examines all the compromises in the valiant life of one of the first North American painters who managed both a marriage and a career. Using the ways in which a poem can be closely read, the poet explores how Mary Hiester Reid reveals her life in her paintings.
- **The Widow’s Crayola Box (in progress):** The advanced poet as caregiver—and survivor. The sonnet as a way to think.
 - **Poetry Activism: The Secret Poetry Room:** The poet raises funds for a tiny room within the library of a state university where first generation college students of diverse backgrounds can slip in to write.

- **Prose Interlude: A Friend Sails in on a Poem:** Friendship is an underestimated source for creativity. A short book of collected essays framed by an exploration of half a century of poetry exchange between two friends.

Panel Discussion (30 mins)

Moderator (Andrea Ross) questions:

1. What did reflecting upon the arc of your writing career illuminate that you hadn't consciously realized before?
2. In what ways have your jobs/careers over the course of your life (so far) affected the way you write or your writing in general?

The authors have prepared questions for one another based off of their discussions for the first half hour. They will then have a roundtable discussion commenting on similarities, differences, and points made about first books, writing multiple books, and redefining their voices from book to book.

Author questions:

1. Daniel Summerhill: Although the act of writing often happens in solitude, the process is often much more communal. How would you all describe your growth with relationships within the literary community? How has that changed?
2. Daniel Summerhill: Writing is often instructive and reveals things to us that we didn't know before. What have you learned from your writing since you began (overall/generally speaking)?
3. Dzvinia Orlovsky: If your body was a country, what qualities would define its citizenry?
4. Dzvinia Orlovsky: For every poem we write, we often imagine a receptive reader or listener. Has that imaginary reader/listener changed over the course of years and publications, and if so, how?
5. Molly Peacock: As an add-on to the previous questions, how have you juggled time as your publications have gotten more widely received and the public demands (and those of students and families) have gotten more intense?

6. Molly Peacock: Did looking at your life and your publications to prepare for this panel spark some future resolve for you?
7. (More questions to come)

60-85 mins

Authors will then turn the discussion towards the audience for Q&A