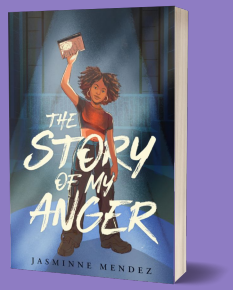
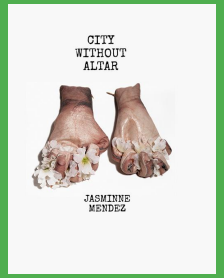
The Hybrid “Genre”: What It Is & How To Do It

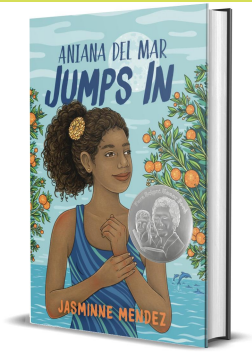
Workshop by:
Jasminne Mendez

JASMINNE MENDEZ

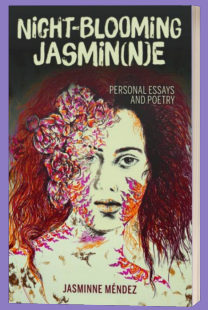




DOMINICAN -AMERICAN



AUTHOR, POET, TRANSLATOR

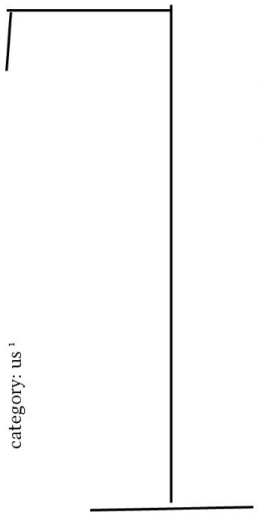


Opening Poem

Ars Poetica

Nabila Lovelace

guess a letter based
off your moon



ask your neighbor
for a hint

category: us [1]

[1] we all played w/ gallows. we gathered & pointed &
guessed until the murder was our own
exchangeable glance, our money
& the face on top. we watched. we asked for vowels
& consonants—at best
what did we save? at worst what our words
failed to total / hung a man.

Intro: Setting Intentions

1. In the chat answer the following with ONE or TWO words MAX:

"During this workshop I would like to learn more about…."

forms, craft elements, hybrid books, how to write hybrid forms, "rules" of the genre, hands on prompts I can practice with etc.

3 min

Intro: QUICK WRITE

1. Write about something that's happened to you recently.
2. Find or draw ONE image from nature that captures the emotional weight/significant of that event.
3. Make a list of objects/ideas/tools/emotions related to that event and write them all around the image.

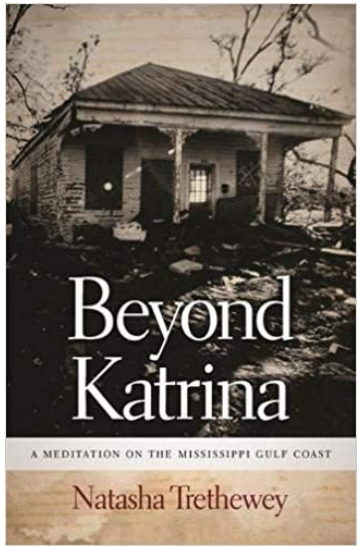
10 min

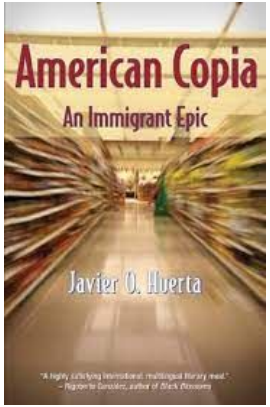
Hybridity: Defined

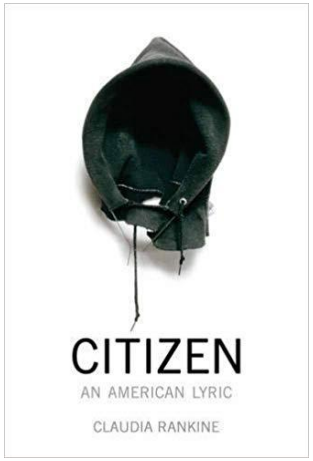
A work of literature (essay, book, poem etc,) that combines 2 or more genres or artistic forms to tell a story, or create an emotional or narrative arc.

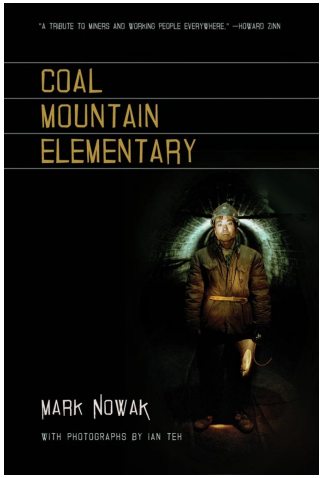
Essays with poems, poems and comics, pictures or illustrations in an essay, a book that weaves photographs, letters, poems and essays, a ten-minute play between essays etc.,

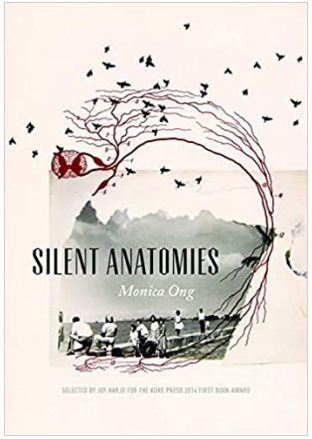
BOOK EXAMPLES:

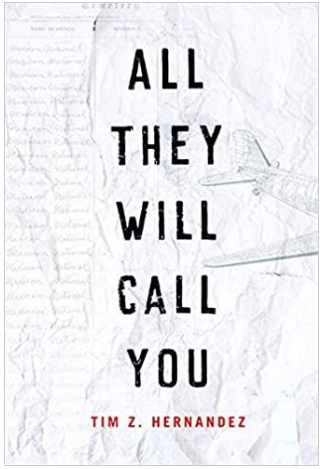


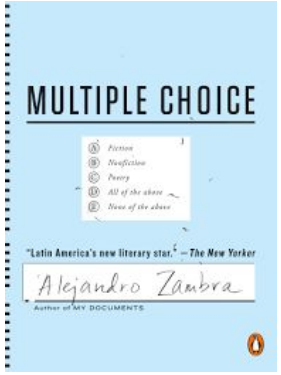


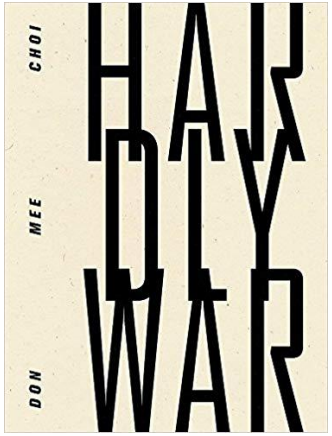












Hybridity: Forms & Genres

Literary Genres

Poetry

Fiction

Essay

Written Forms

Recipe

Letter

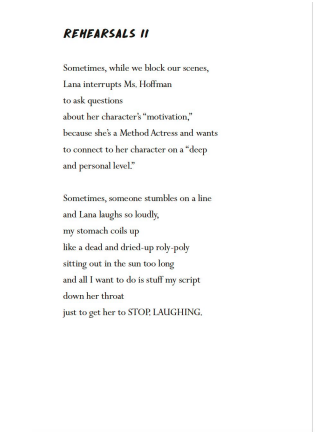
Instruction Manual

Other Visual Formats

Map

Photograph

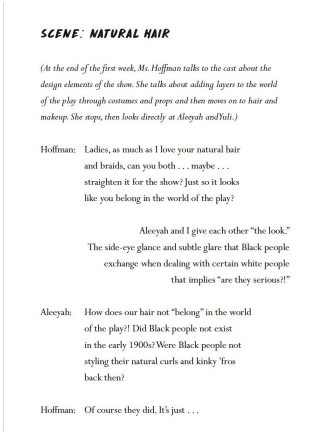
Illustration



REHEARSALS II

Sometimes, while we block our scenes,
Lana interrupts Ms. Hoffman
to ask questions
about her character's "motivation,"
because she's a Method Actress and wants
to connect to her character on a "deep
and personal level."

Sometimes, someone stumbles on a line
and Lana laughs so loudly,
my stomach coils up
like a dead and dried-up roly-poly
sitting out in the sun too long
and all I want to do is stuff my script
down her throat
just to get her to STOP. LAUGHING.



SCENE: NATURAL HAIR

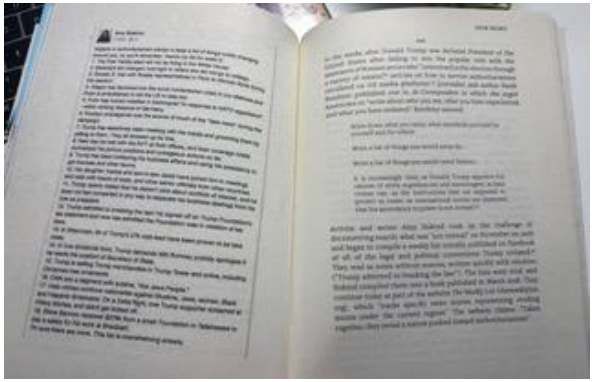
(At the end of the first week, Ms. Hoffman talks to the cast about the design elements of the show. She talks about adding layers to the world of the play through costumes and props and then moves on to hair and makeup. She stops, then looks directly at Aleeyah and Yuli.)

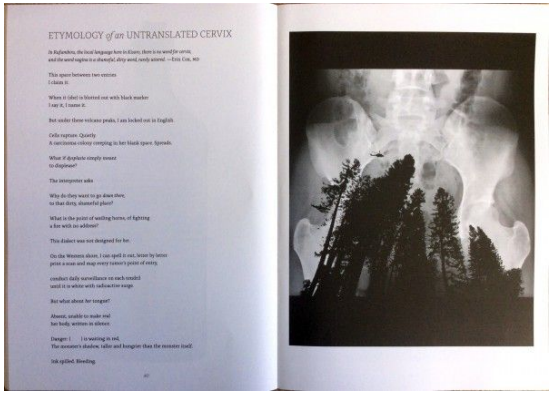
Hoffman: Ladies, as much as I love your natural hair
and braids, can you both . . . maybe . . .
straighten it for the show? Just so it looks
like you belong in the world of the play?

Aleeyah and I give each other "the look."
The side-eye glance and subtle glare that Black people
exchange when dealing with certain white people
that implies "are they serious?!"

Aleeyah: How does our hair not "belong" in the world
of the play?! Did Black people not exist
in the early 1900s? Were Black people not
styling their natural curls and kinky 'fros
back then?

Hoffman: Of course they did. It's just . . .





ETYMOLOGY *of an* UNTRANSLATED CERVIX

REHEARSALS II

Poetry/Verse

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Playscript/Scene

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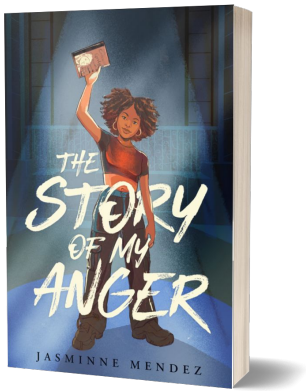
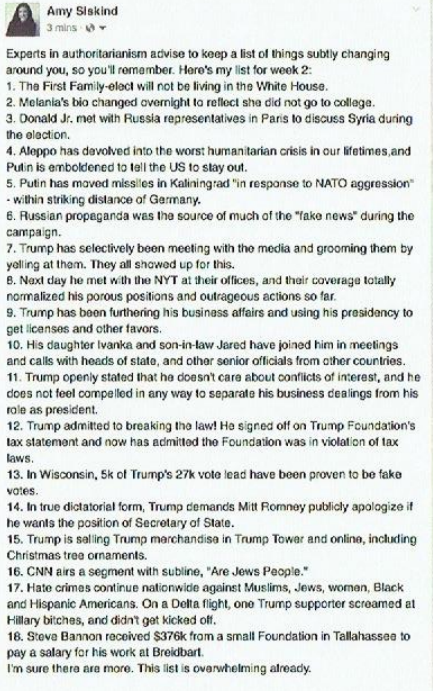




Amy Siskind
3 mins ·

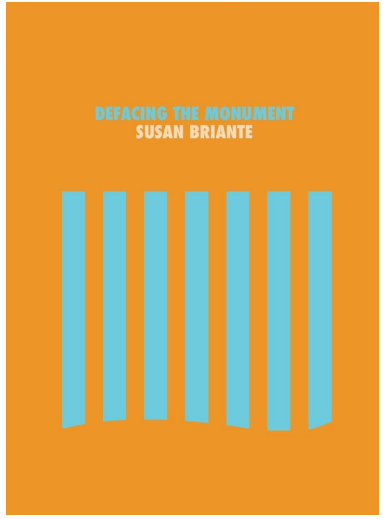
Experts in authoritarianism advise to keep a list of things subtly changing around you, so you'll remember. Here's my list for week 2:
1. The First Family-elect will not be living in the White House.
2. Melania's bio changed overnight to reflect she did not go to college.
3. Donald Jr. met with Russia representatives in Paris to discuss Syria during the election.
4. Aleppo has devolved into the worst humanitarian crisis in our lifetimes,and Putin is emboldened to tell the US to stay out.
5. Putin has moved missiles in Kaliningrad "in response to NATO aggression" - within striking distance of Germany.
6. Russian propaganda was the source of much of the "fake news" during the campaign.
7. Trump has selectively been meeting with the media and grooming them by yelling at them. They all showed up for this.
8. Next day he met with the NYT at their offices, and their coverage totally normalized his porous positions and outrageous actions so far.
9. Trump has been furthering his business affairs and using his presidency to get licenses and other favors.
10. His daughter Ivanka and son-in-law Jared have joined him in meetings and calls with heads of state, and other senior officials from other countries.
11. Trump openly stated that he doesn't care about conflicts of interest, and he does not feel compelled in any way to separate his business dealings from his role as president.
12. Trump admitted to breaking the law! He signed off on Trump Foundation's tax statement and now has admitted the Foundation was in violation of tax laws.
13. In Wisconsin, 5k of Trump's 27k vote lead have been proven to be fake votes.
14. In true dictatorial form, Trump demands Mitt Romney publicly apologize if he wants the position of Secretary of State.
15. Trump is selling Trump merchandise in Trump Tower and online, including Christmas tree ornaments.
16. CNN airs a segment with subline, "Are Jews People."
17. Hate crimes continue nationwide against Muslims, Jews, women, Black and Hispanic Americans. On a Delta flight, one Trump supporter screamed at Hillary bitches, and didn't get kicked off.
18. Steve Bannon received $376k from a small Foundation in Tallahassee to pay a salary for his work at Breidbart.
I'm sure there are more. This list is overwhelming already.

IIII

In the weeks after Donald Trump was declared President of the United States after failing to win the popular vote with the assistance of Russian actors who "intervened in the election through a variety of means,"[42] articles on how to survive authoritarianism circulated on US media platforms.[43] Journalist and author Sarah Kendzior published one in *de Correspondent* in which she urged Americans to "write about who you are, what you have experienced, and what you have endured." Kendzior warned:

> Write down what you value, what standards you hold for yourself and for others.
>
> Write a list of things you would never do...
>
> Write a list of things you would never believe...
>
> It is increasingly clear, as Donald Trump appoints his cabinet of white supremacists and warmongers, as hate crimes rise, as the institutions that are supposed to protect us cower, as international norms are shattered, that his ascendency to power is not normal.[44]

Activist and writer Amy Siskind took up the challenge of documenting exactly what was "not normal" on November 20, 2016 and began to compile a weekly list initially published on Facebook of all of the legal and political conventions Trump violated.[45] They read as notes without sources, written quickly with emotion ("Trump admitted to breaking the law!"). The lists went viral, and Siskind compiled them into a book published in March 2018. They continue today as part of the website *The Weekly List* (theweeklylist.org), which "tracks specific news stories representing eroding norms under the current regime." The website claims: "Taken together, they reveal a nation pushed toward authoritarianism."



ETYMOLOGY *of an* UNTRANSLATED CERVIX

In Rufumbira, the local language here in Kisoro, there is no word for cervix,
and the word vagina is a shameful, dirty word, rarely uttered. —Erin Cox, MD

This space between two entries
I claim it.

When it (she) is blotted out with black marker
I say it, I name it.

But under these volcano peaks, I am locked out in English.

Cells rupture. Quietly.
A carcinoma colony creeping in her blank space. Spreads.

What if dysplasia simply meant
to displease?

The interpreter asks

Why do they want to go down there,
to that dirty, shameful place?

What is the point of wailing horns, of fighting
a fire with no address?

This dialect was not designed for her.

On the Western shore, I can spell it out, letter by letter
print a scan and map every tumor's point of entry,

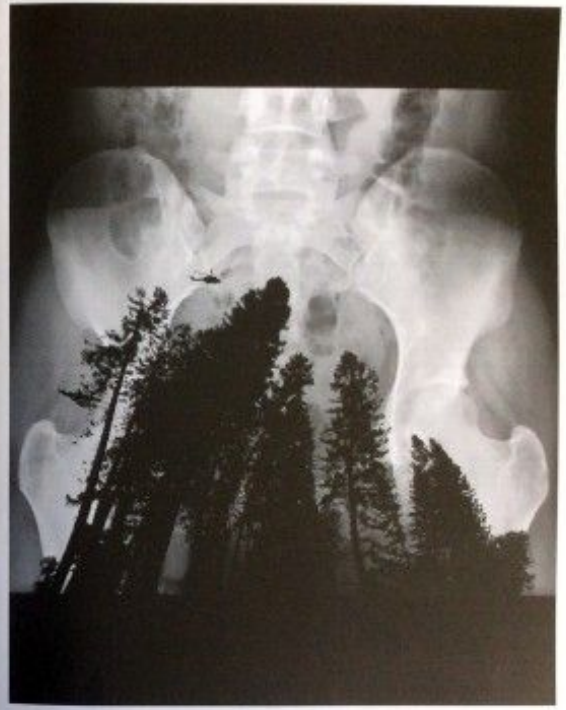
conduct daily surveillance on each ovule
until it is white with radioactive surge.

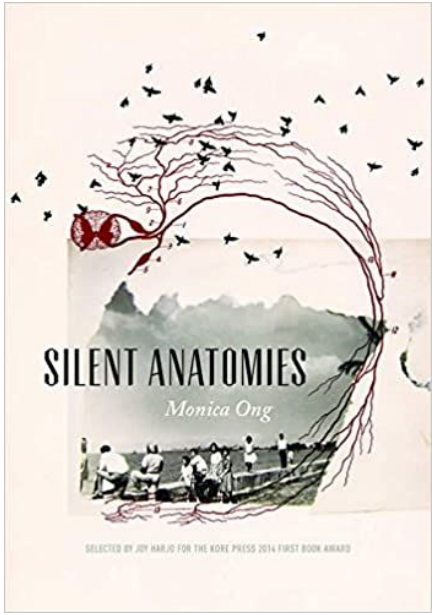
But what about *her* tongue?

Absent, unable to make real
her body, written in silence.

Danger: I | is waiting in red,
The monster's shadow, taller and hungrier than the monster itself.

Ink spilled. Bleeding.





Hybridity: Why?

- Intersectional identity calls for intersectional form
- Retell, recover, refashion an untold or silenced story
- Build tension or connections between emotional truth and factual truth
- Juxtapose two narratives
- Braid 2+ narratives/experiences & show connections
- One genre cannot “hold” the weight of the story you are trying to tell
- Visuals tell more of the story than words can
- Poems hold more emotional weight than prose can

Hybridity: Pros & Cons - LET'S DISCUSS!

PROS	CONS

Hybridity: How?

- **Braided** - 2-4 "threads" weaved throughout *(poem, essay, illustration, poem, essay illustration etc,)* you come back to each section more than once.

- **Juxtaposed** - Could be "side by side" or one section after the other, each genre/form can say the same thing/carry the same ideas but are in different forms or can say different things to offer new/different perspective

- **Integrated** - the forms/genres are weaved together without line breaks or page breaks and work together to tell the story/create the arc. *(a poem lives within the space of an illustration or above/beneath it, a short play has a character reciting a poem, a photograph is in line with an essay etc.)*

- **Collage** - a variety of forms and/or genres are layered throughout a piece with a thread/theme/idea that ties them all together. You may or may not come back to each one of the sections. They each are their own "piece" but they work together to form a whole.

EXAMPLES:

- Silent Anatomies - By Monica Ong
- Beyond Katrina - Natasha Tretheway
- Citizen: An American Lyric - Claudia Rankine (Video Essay)
- Defacing the Monument - Susan Briante
- Recent Examples - How Not Drown... & Borderland Apocrypha
- City Without Altar - Jasminne Mendez
- Multiple Choice - Alejandro Zambra

Hybridity: Questions to Ask Yourself (Before & After)

- How will a hybrid form HELP tell the story I want to tell?
- What genres or forms will BEST tell the story?
    - Does form inform content/theme/tone?
    - Does form mimic content/theme/tone?
- Will each form/genre get equal time on the page? Will one form/genre carry the piece?
- How will each form/genre move the narrative forward? (Enhance the piece? Create tension? Expose something?)

MAKE A LIST:

Make a list of memories, moments, myths, fairy tales, historical events, social issues, places, people, identities that make you who you are, that influence you, that matter to you, that you care about.

If you feel comfortable, share one or two items from your list in the chat.

5 min

Writing Assignment Options:

1) Choose 1-3 items from the list you created. *(Try to vary the types of items you choose and consider how are they related to each other? How can you make connections?)*
    a) *My Brother*
    b) *The theatre*
    c) *Death of Sandra Bland*
    d) *Alice in Wonderland*
2) Ask yourself - what story(ies) do I want to tell?
    a) *The story of loss and grief related to my relationship with my brother, the theatre and my understanding of Blackness,*
3) Ask yourself - how do I want to tell it?
    a) *Straight prose, theatre scenes, pictures of us, poems, news clippings, a video, lyrics?*
4) Choose 2+ forms/genres to juxtapose, braid, integrate, or collage in order to draft an essay.
    a) *Collage*

CRAFT ESSAYS:

Picturing the Hybrid Form

On Genre, On Form, On Limitations and False Borders: Offering Creative Writing New Boundaries

Using Hybrid Genres in Your Writing

Closing: Reflection

1. In the chat answer the following with ONE word or a VERY short sentence or phrase:

"I am leaving this workshop with…."

new ideas, excitement, possibilities, confusion, an eagerness to try new things, stress, hope, joy…

5 min