

## Episode One Transcript

[intro music]

Ayezah: Hello, and welcome to the first episode of our Intersecting Lines podcast. I'm Ayezah.

Adele: And this is Adele.

Ayezah: And we are working with various writers in the Seattle area to explore their connection to Seattle, the city itself, and its vibrant local writing community. In times where connections have been lost and sometimes forgotten, we hope to use this space to reconnect, understand, and celebrate the experience the works of local writers. Today, we're grateful to be working with Arianne True. Arianne True (Choctaw, Chickasaw) is a queer poet and folk artist from Seattle. She teaches and mentors youth poets around Puget Sound and moonlights as a copyeditor. Arianne has received fellowships from Jack Straw and the Hugo House and is a proud alum of Hedgebrook and of the MFA program at the Institute of American Indian Arts. She is currently the Seattle Repertory Theater's first Native Artist-in-Residence. Today, we are on-site at the Hugo House.

Adele: This is Adele, with Intersecting Lines.

Ayezah: This is Ayezah, also with Intersecting Lines.

Arianne: And this is Arianne, AKA Ari, today's special guest.

[environmental noises]

Adele: I was wondering, reading a lot of your work, does your writing stem from any particular sense of place? And is that place something that is unique to you, or is it something a lot of people can kind of bond over and form a community around?

Arianne: I think a lot of my writing is extremely place-based, and I think a lot of that is because of how I grew up writing, like I grew up on the metro buses, running around Seattle on my own. Like, that was a lot of the time I was writing, was like, when I was on buses, when I was out between things, going to things, filling time. And so much of it was very observational, for a long time. And so it does feel very, very grounded in place. I have been told by other folks, sometimes that they do connect with the sense of place that's in there, and they're like "oh yeah, that's exactly that," especially the poem I'll be sharing later, some people were like "this is so my feeling about Seattle right now, too." And that means a lot to me, like, so much of what I want to be able to do with writing is have that moment of connection. So when it does happen, I get very happy.

Adele: That's a fascinating insight, and I think one of the things about place which is such an interesting concept is that it's not only the place, but the ways it can be accessed.

Arianne: Hm.

Adele: Is there any particular way in which you access the place that you write about? And that you think your readers access it from?

Arianne: I mean, I'm prone to interpreting everything literally, so my literal answer to this question is, like, as slowly as possible and on foot. I've noticed that when I'm driving places, I don't write, not just because it's literally dangerous, but I don't notice enough to have poems start. But when I'm on the bus, when I'm on foot especially, I can notice enough detail to start writing. There was a second half to your question, but I don't remember what it was.

Adele: Well, the other part of that question was, I was wondering how your readers maybe relate to your poems. How do your readers enter your poetry?

Arianne: In my dreams, they enter, like, body first. That is my hope. Like, what I'm trying to do so much of the time, I remember this recently, what I'm trying to do so much of the time is take an experience from my body and put it into someone else's body, and poetry is the way it works for me to do that. So my hope is that when they're entering, that it happens through their body before anything else.

Ayezah: I feel like, first of all, that's profound, because, like, I feel like as a poet, I don't, I guess I'm maybe not that far along in thinking about what my body is.

Arianne: That's totally fine!

Ayezah: But, like, it's like how, first off, you write a poem, and that's the first and foremost thing, it's the words you put on paper. But then, like, actually thinking about how you enter the poem, and if you want that to be the same. You enter a poem body first, and how you want that same process, and, I guess, those, like, bodies of feelings to also be the same way your readers enter a poem. It's a fairly raw and fascinating idea, and...ruminating, like I am now. On this idea of place and, like, accessing places, I wanted to ask if you could elaborate a bit about your relationship to Seattle or just, like, the greater Northwest area?

Arianne: So, I grew up in Seattle proper. I grew up in a bunch of different places, but mostly in North Seattle. And I lived here my whole life, and, like, almost never left, to even go outside of town, until I went to the East Coast for college. And then in college, I, like, traveled all over the East Coast, spent a year actually traveling the entire globe. And by the end of college, the thing that felt the most true to me was, like, by my last semester especially I would come down, I, like, lived in a co-op, and I would take my bike down the hill and right when I would turn into the co-op, I would see across the valley that my school was in and see the lights up on the hill, and it

was so beautiful it just always reminded me of seeing the lights on, like, Queen Anne or Westlake, and I was just like “I just have to go home.” So I moved home as soon as college was done, and I was really happy to do that, and I’ve been here since. And yeah, this is just my home, this is where I live. My partner is from Vermont, and she moved back there last fall, and, like, we’re just doing a bi-coastal relationship, because our places are so important to us, they matter so much that neither of us can give them up. So now we kind of live both places. Because of how much that place means and how much it feeds both of our souls and how much it feeds my writing and my writing community. I can’t imagine living anywhere else long-term.

Adele: That’s really beautiful, and it also makes me think about how much of place doesn’t exist in the place itself but exists in your connection to the place.

Arianne: Totally.

Adele: And when there’s this sense of belonging, it doesn’t actually come from the thing you’re belonging to, but the relationship you have to that thing. It’s sort of a self-generating emotion. If you can even call it an emotion.

Arianne: Yeah, and I think that there are ways that that feedback loop, like, keeps happening. The more you sink into that, like, people talk about that it’s harder to leave a place the longer you stay in it, and I think that’s part of why, it’s because of this, like, you put more in and the place puts more in, and you just keep meeting each other there. And it is, like, a very alive relationship if you pay attention to it.

Ayezah: What I found really interesting was what you said about when you were on the East Coast and saw the valley and the lights. Is that, like, you’re longing for a place and the feeling that a place leaves you, or, like, leaves within you, it’s not just tied to when you’re in the place, but you find it in places that you don’t have that connection, that memory-driven connection within? Which I thought really resonated and was profound, too.

Arianne: Yeah. And I loved upstate New York, I had a really great time there, but it just never was the same, I didn’t have that long there. I’m excited to go back and see sometimes, but it’s not this, like, yeah, it’s not this longing, it’s not this pull from your heart first.

Adele: That kind of leads into another question we have here. Which is, would you say your poetry is more internal or external? If you do differentiate between the two.

Arianne: What do you mean by “internal” and “external?”

Adele: Well, do you think your poetry comes from within you as modified by the world around you, or comes from the world around you as modified by you?

Arianne: That's a fascinating question. I have never been asked that question before. I think it's probably seventy-thirty of, like, "is the world filtered through me" is the seventy. I feel like most of the poems I write are that, and especially the poems that do feel very place-based. It's just weird, because the project I'm working on right now and probably the next project I'm doing are much more, like, my experience and then how I'm communicating that, and are less necessarily place-based, and those are just so much of my attention, but the poems I just write on the regular that aren't part of these two very contained and specific projects are definitely more, like, filtering the world through me and putting it back out. That's part of what I like about it, it's the way you can show someone this thing if they weren't there.

Adele: Well, that's wonderful, because it really is, you know, all the light, all the things we see, all of our vision is made up of reflections, of light reflecting off of surfaces, so...

Arianne: Reflecting off of the inside of our own eyes.

Adele: It's sort of less about being the light source, and more about being that object that reflects light in all these different ways.

Arianne: I think that's a really lovely way to think about it.

Ayezah: I've been, well, the terms are off, but it's an art movement, I mean, expressionism and impressionism always or usually refers to painting, and, like, impressionism leaving or creating the impression, finding and expressing a momentary scene as it is, as the world, exactly as the question was, like, what the world is bringing to you, and how you're putting it on paper. And then expressionism, that you're interpreting the world, so your emotion, whatever range of emotions you have when you're looking at a scene, and I think that, like, it honestly works the same with poetry. I think that there's impressionist and expressionist approaches to it, which I hadn't really thought of until recently when I was looking at paintings, and I was like, "I can see it."

Arianne: Yeah, I haven't thought of, like, in grad school, some of my professors in poetry grad school, they talked a lot about using, like, specifically painting and stuff as metaphors for different ways that we write, and it was such a, like, it sent me on a whole new track of thinking. I even remember, we're sitting across from the Hugo House right now, and a lot of the Hugo House summer camps that I did, Scribes, back when I was a teen, we would go to art museums, we went to the Frye all of the time and would write in response to this visual art, and, like, they're so juicy there.

Adele: It's also so interesting because what I, forgive me if I'm misinterpreting you, but it almost seems like you're seeing poetry as a form of translation, translation from some sort of greater, maybe not greater, but more whole sense of being that is sort of translated into these little...I'm going to rephrase.

Arianne: This is a great question, though, go on.

Adele: A whole sense of being that is translated into smaller, digestible, comprehensible forms. Like poetry, or like painting. And maybe it's just, you know, different objects that reflect that same light in different ways. So, it's very much interconnected I think.

Arianne: Yeah, and I think translation is a really good way to put it. I do think, I haven't used that word before this way, but I do think that a lot of the time how I'm thinking about what I'm writing, and especially when I'm trying to get that experience into someone else's body. Whether it's the more place-based poems, or whether it's the more experimental projects I'm working on right now, more focused, like, it is this act of translation. And especially because I'm aware of how very...I know I see things very differently than most people around me, and so it is, like, this kind of, I can show you something you're not seeing, I can translate my experience because you won't notice this happening if I don't.

Adele: Could you tell us a little bit more about those experimental projects you're working on?

Arianne: I sure can!

Ayezah: I was going to ask the same exact thing!

Arianne: Yeah, I probably wouldn't have talked about these. So, the thing is, I just finished my first manuscript a few months ago, right at, like, eight o'clock on December thirty-first, because I was like, "you have to finish it before the end of the year!"

[laughter]

Arianne: So, that. It's called *Exhibits*, and it is a museum in poems, and it's trying to, as faithfully as possible, recreate the museum experience. Like, the first half of the book is poems that are in a gallery, and they're framed, and they have little title cards, some of them have artist's notes, there's curator's notes, there's some announcements that come over the intercom. There's a mention of the gift shop. And then the second half, is, like, the idea is that there is this exhibition that's being put on in the museum-slash-book which is called *Side Effects of Survival*. And then the second half of the book after that gallery is supplemental materials from the artist's notebooks, drafts and other things like that that inform the exhibit. And then there's an overture at the end. Because why not! Yeah, and that one explores how the bad things that happen to us when we're kids...I think there's this kind of underlying assumption in society that, like, once you're not a kid anymore, you're fine, and, like, that's not how it works, those effects ripple for decades unless they're healed. And so the book is kind of looking at that through a museum.

Adele: That's a fascinating way to put it, too, because a museum is to artwork in many ways what a book is to poetry.

Arianne: Sure! Yeah.

Adele: So you really are establishing that connection and fortifying it.

Ayezah: Yeah, I was just going to comment when you were talking earlier about translation, I think that what you're talking about, like, actually it molds very interesting with translation, it's that it, like, first off, taking these experiences and the concept of the museum, and translating poetry into that, and, first off, translating those experiences into art and then, or, poetry, or just art...which I use those interchangeably at this point!

Arianne: You can just call it art!

[laughter]

Ayezah: And then translating them into this medium, I think there's, I kind of was thinking, like, again I think there's another form of translation, which is, like, when that art that you've created and this project actually reaches people, there's another translation that happens then. When you were talking earlier about the body, like, you want that reader, that viewer, to, like, dive in body first, that's another translation. And I just love that you use that terminology, because now I'm gonna be using it. It's so helpful.

Arianne: It's so helpful. I'm gonna be using it! Thanks, Adele.

[birdsong]

Adele: I'm kind of curious, because earlier you brought up the body entering first into a poem, and you also use the phrase "body of work," do you think, at least in your own personal lexicon, that those two words are connected, in any way, those two uses of that word?

Arianne: I mean, my first thought is probably? But I don't know how? But probably?

Adele: That's a good way to sum up poetry in general.

Arianne: Vague uncertainty!

[laughter]

Adele: Vague uncertainty, but it makes you want to hear more.

Arianne: Yup.

Ayezah: I have another question on if you seek advice or critique while in the process of writing a poem, and how does that experience of others shape your work? Like, is your experience, your

process, is it a solitary thing, and there's just little feeds of people's critiques and just sort of commentary and even experiences as writers feeding into it slowly, or is it that your process is more collaborative?

Arienne: Yeah, I feel like there's a way which it is kind of a bit poem-to-poem or project-to-project, but there's a way in which I feel like it's always collaborative, but not necessarily synchronously. Like, a lot of my writing feels very collaborative with the media I'm taking in, which can be books of poetry, they can be books of prose, but they can also be albums, or video games, or TV shows, or films, or comics. All of those are things that have influenced and shaped what I'm doing, and changed the course of it. So it feels always collaborative, but the other people don't always know they're collaborating, because they've already put their work into the world! But I do think there are times I've also been, like, I've been writing pretty consistently and dedicatedly for about fifteen years now, so I have a lot of skill and sense around, and because I also used to be a slam poet, so I'm used to feeling an audience and understanding how they're responding, and so I have some level of skill around being able to tell some of those things while I'm writing of, like, "here's what's gonna land," like, you never know until you read it, and then get that feedback from your audience, but I have a better sense of that than I used to, just from practice. And there are times when I have needed other people, like, finishing *Exhibits*, I had my friend Brian, who was one of the Fellows with me at the Hugo House last year. Brian came over and had read my manuscript, we did a manuscript trade, and we talked about it for hours, and they were able to provide so much helpful understanding of the way they had responded to stuff, and shoot ideas back and forth. That was absolutely necessary to me finishing the book the way I did.

Adele: Well, and if you're viewing poetry as your own view on a universal truth, then another person's view on your poem is sort of like getting a different perspective on something that isn't really yours, but is on something that you're tapping into.

Arienne: Yeah, and I think what I'm often most looking for when I'm asking other people for feedback on a piece is how things are landing with them, what experience they're having, because that tells me what I need to adjust to give them the experience that I want them to have.

Adele: That's fascinating.

Ayezah: I had one little question while you were talking, and this is maybe on more of like a process level for writing poetry and I guess the collaborative thing, and, like, poetry is always very personal, and often it can be very introspective as well. And I was wondering a little on the critique end, and how do you go about mentally, personally, when you're in revising stages or when you're just getting feedback, even on your manuscript or poetry or anything that's personal and that you built from the ground up within yourself? Like, how does that process of critique work within your mind? How do you separate, like, "this is me, this is very personal, and I need this" versus if somebody, there's often, you get comments and criticisms on those things, how does that back-and-forth, like, how do you decide where you stand on that?

Arianne: Like, what I do with people's advice and thoughts?

Ayezah: Yes!

Arianne: That's a very good question. And not what I think people usually think about for critique. So, I think it really helps when I have a sense of what I want for a piece. Both in terms of...[clears throat] Sorry, my roommate doesn't talk a lot! So, it's been a quieter day.

[laughter]

Arianne: When I have a better sense of what I want from a piece, it's easier to tell what comments are relevant or not, because if the comments aren't addressing what I'm trying to do, even if that's not what's happening yet, then they're just not really relevant. Sometimes they can be helpful as an extra layer of perspective. But mostly, knowing what I need from the piece helps me filter comments more. But that is a good question, because usually people want to talk about, like, "how do you emotionally withstand people talking about your work?" And I'm like, "that's, like, a therapy question." But that's a very interesting point about "how do you sort through and decide what to do with it."

Adele: Earlier you were talking about how this relationship to the Northwest brought you back from the East Coast, and I'm wondering if you write poetry at all as sort of a means of connecting to the past or as a means of making sense of your present?

Arianne: I think it's actually probably a little bit more flipped, it's more a way of making sense of the past and connecting to the present. I think those are two things I do a lot. Like, the two experiments, I didn't talk about the other experiment, the two experimental projects I'm working on are a lot more about making sense of the past and also helping people see how that works, because if you don't know, you just don't know, and that's not their fault, but they need to know. I need them to know, a lot of people need them to know. But the pieces that a lot more place-based and all of the other poems I write that aren't part of one of those two projects, those are very much, like, very connecting with the present, like, really sinking into a moment. And sometimes when I'm writing those, either if it's while it's happening, or if it's later that day, or a couple days later or something, I'm trying as much as possible to just feel more. When I'm stuck in the poem, like, "okay, just feel more of what's around you, just sink in deeper to what's happening now." So I think yeah, connecting to the present, making sense of the past. Both.

Ayezah: Would you say that the goal of your poetry is to communicate existing information or to generate a new perspective in your readers? Or is it both of that, does it depend poem-to-poem, project-to-project?

Arianne: I think there is a level at which it depends, but I think for me and because I see things very differently, and part of that is because I'm autistic, so I just fundamentally am receiving



different sensory information than other people are. So, like, to me, communicating information often is what causes someone's perspective to shift, because I'm able to tell them things they actually haven't noticed. Because that's just not a way their brain works.

Adele: And it's another example of that alternate viewpoint that is so valuable in poetry. Well, we've spent a long time talking about poetry, and maybe you'd be willing to share some?

Arianne: Sure. I brought this poem, as you know it is on the long side, but it felt like a hundred percent responding to the brief of what you're doing with this podcast.

Ayezah: I read it over multiple times, and I was like, "this is the heart of it!"

[laughter]

Arianne: I know, I think Adele asked me shortly after this poem either was published or was finished and scheduled for publication, and I was like, "it's gotta be that one."

Adele: Okay, well, let's hear it!

Arianne: Okay. I was told recently by someone that when you're reading a poem in parts, you should tell them how many parts it has so that people don't feel anxious about it, so if you want to know how many parts this has, if that is a soothing for you, this poem comes in nine parts.

Seattle Sonata (legato, every note legato)

I - razbliuto

It's hard to be in love with  
someone who can change so much.

My city left me behind chasing  
a seat at the table when  
our table was already set,  
overflowing with possibility  
and art and people who can't afford  
to live here anymore. I live an hour  
away now and don't know how to feel when  
I see her. Something like longing. Something  
like disappointment. Something I worry is  
like a word I learned once at her side,  
the Russian word that names the feeling  
you have for someone you once loved  
but no longer do. I worry that's true.

## II – in Russian

There's no such word in Russian. You can say,  
"I once loved you but no longer," but there's  
no shorthand for it. No sum up. Despite being  
in the books of so many experts, so many linguists —  
no such feeling in its source language. Best guess:  
a typo in a 60s tv show. Replicated somehow to now.  
A not-Russian word that only exists in English.

## III – object permanence

I feel home, though, in some of the same places.  
Pioneer Square and the Seattle Center, bookends  
of a past continually overwritten and a future imagined once,  
two half-truths preserved in architecture. These buildings at least  
feel real to me, like they'll still be there when I turn around.  
It's hard to feel steady when you're surrounded by disappearances,  
a constantly changing view. How much was ever really there?  
I trust the old bricks and concrete most in this city.  
[Still not more than the trees that grow up the ravines.]

## IV – no what

it's hard to tell     someone you left  
everything they would've needed to change  
for you to keep wanting them.  
you shouldn't try. living things change,  
it is just hard to love living things  
(harder not to) the city is a living thing,  
you know. like I am a living thing to  
the microscopic creatures that populate  
my body who make it somewhere  
I can live too. no me without them.  
no city without who? hard to say  
for a city bleeding out. what are you losing?  
when will you notice? and what  
will you do then?

V – somehow it's not happening here but

Sometimes I have to speak so plainly that my voice gets lost in the words.  
It's to be understood when you're swimming against misconceptions.  
It still only works when someone will listen. Is willing to hear.

VI – why here

My writing exists because this is home. Me born to another city  
is another artist, who knows her medium? Something about this  
place keeps breathing me words. Maybe it's the dense undergrowth,  
so many places for a whisper to catch and hide, to wait for you.  
So easy to move slow here, easy to spend an hour on the bus  
or twenty minutes walking. Cars dull my senses, speed me up  
to where I can't catch the details anymore. I write more when  
I am slow in the world, and this home made that so easy  
for so long. It's harder to get here now, but when I can  
the whispers are still waiting, falling with the pine needles  
or pushing up with irises, caught in the air of a bumblebee's  
fuzz as they sleep in a rosebud. Other places have flowers,  
but these ones know my name.

VII – whole-body ear

I wear thinner shoes now  
and can feel the streetcar  
fifty feet away, every move  
and stop spreads sensation  
across the soles of my feet.  
This place always teaching  
me new ways to listen.

VIII – what about the other colors

Thick pigeons flock and split  
like a grey kaleidoscope no one is turning  
in the one hour we have of snow.  
So many land together three stories up,  
a whole crenellation of plump birds.

The rest must've gone west somewhere,  
maybe past the clock tower,  
I can't see them now.

IX – cadence

I think what I want is for hometown to mean something.  
Something tangible, more than longing or nostalgia,  
to mean something with a body. Some kind of right  
to live in your home. Some new knowing (not new  
to me) that these streets were parents for some of us.  
Some of us were raised by buildings and bus routes  
and empty auditorium stages, by old old trees,  
by blackberries and sticky rhododendron blooms and  
the salmon that come home every year to become  
the stream again. Some of us were raised by  
pavement and school fields and drainage ditches.  
By strangers and being a stranger show after show.  
By the water that runs over all of them. (us.) None  
of these are just images. This is not a poem, it's  
a map. This is not a poem, it's a lineage. I am  
telling you my family. I am telling you my home.  
I am telling you one of the saddest things I know,  
that none of that is allowed to matter more than  
money in the city that's been built here. Maybe  
what I miss is like parents before you find out they  
are only human too. I am not surprised by the  
changes here anymore. But I am surprised  
by the things no one notices. I live in shock that  
we have no right to our home.

So, that's the poem.

Adele: Thank you so much.

Ayezah: That was beautiful.

Arianne: I love that poem!

Adele: If I may address on turn of phrase somewhat early in the poem that stuck out to me.  
“Half-truths preserved in architecture.” Where did that come from? That was such a beautiful  
turn of phrase. I'm so curious about it.

Arianne: Yeah, I think, so most of this poem was written in a day, and I was thinking about, like, there are... I was writing this at the Rep as part of the residency I have there now, I was doing a work day and I had this poem due at the end of the day, and I was thinking at the Seattle Center, I'd passed through Pioneer Square, like, there are those places that do feel so solid to me. And so those kind of became these visual bookends, but I was thinking about how neither of them is quite right. I've spent a lot of time in both, and I used to work as an Underground tour guide, so I know the history there, and I know how much of it is bogus and not really what happened, how much of that has been changed and is still changed to fit a narrative people want rather than what actually happened. And how the Seattle Center is, like, the World's Fair, and that people were imagining it as, like, "this is what the future's gonna look like." And so holding those two together, I was like, "neither of those is quite right, these are both half-truths, and you can see it in the buildings." So that's kind of where that came from.

Adele: That is wonderful. Could you tell me the meaning of the word *Razbliuto*?

Arianne: Yeah, well, as I said, it doesn't exist! I found out, writing this poem. The first section was the only thing I wrote before the day I wrote the rest of this. And I was like, "oh, I don't have the book with me where I learned about this word, I'm gonna look it up online."

Adele: So this is the fake Russian word.

Arianne: This is the fake Russian word. And the definition I grew up knowing is from this linguist's book, it's the feeling you have for someone you once loved but no longer do. And how beautiful would it be if you had a word for that, because that's a feeling, but it doesn't exist! It's not a Russian word, you can go on these forums where people are talking, like, Russians are talking about, like, "supposedly there's this word in our language, has anyone heard of it?" And they're all like, "no, that's not a thing." And I only found that out writing the poem.

Adele: I feel like that could be people talking about English and words like *indubitably*. Like, no one says that, they're wonderful words, but no one says that.

Arianne: That is a wonderful word. But no, yeah, there are people who have done pretty deep digs on this and tried to trace the etymology of this word And it doesn't exist in Russian.

Adele: That's fascinating.

Ayezah: What I love about other languages apart from English is that it's like a word far greater than a word, and I feel like we often miss that in the English language.

Adele: This gets back into translation, too.

Arianne: It all gets back to translation!

Ayezah: Full circle!

Arianne: Adele, I feel like you're giving me a new framework to talk about my work, which is helpful.

Adele: So, for all of our new listeners, which are all of you, because this is our first episode and stuff, I'm probably going to be talking about translation in every episode, so you can look forward to me going on the same tangent. To just so naturally bring this poem up in the form it came to you, and there's nothing that tries to alter that into any sort of comprehensible reason, it just has its own reason and its own rhythm, kind of like its own body, really, that's just what its body is.

Arianne: Yeah, and I think I think of my poems as their own beings a little bit. And this is part of going back to your question earlier, from Ayezah, around taking in other people's comments and feedbacks, there's what I know from my poems, but most of all there's what my poems know about themselves, and what they're asking for. That's just how I relate to them, and how I've come to relate to them. But I trust them to know a lot about what they need, and my job is to kind of help them get there.

Ayezah: I actually wanted to comment on how you were talking at the early start about how you wanted your readers to dive into a poem body first, and I think that there was something so powerful about having it read out loud, too, which I couldn't, I didn't fully experience at first. I was, like, while reading over it, and like, first off how beautiful and how much I felt the city and felt every, I could feel so many emotions, and so many feelings, and so much nostalgia, and different fragments of the city and change and the things that don't change and the things which have changed, especially over the last two years, and even far before that, too, but especially my real era of cluelessness has more recent, because yeah. But during your reading I felt myself, like, body first in this experience, and you nailed it!

Arianne: Yes! That's [unintelligible]! I don't expect it to happen every time with every person, but when it does happen, I'm like, "you only need one person to have the thing you want." My writing, Roberto, Robbie, Roberto Ascalon, was my writing mentor, hardcore in high school and then still into college and now is a friend, and he read it recently, and what he said about it was it felt like being on a metro bus, watching a series of vignettes going by through the window, and I was like, "that is totally a thing I want from this, that is a body experience I want someone to have from me." So it's so exciting that you had a body experience, that's all I want.

Adele: Right here you have "Something tangible, more than longing or nostalgia, to mean something with a body." And I think it's such a fascinating concept to have this notion of hometown given a body. People talk about giving things a voice, but people don't often talk about giving things a body.

Arienne: That's true, yeahyeah. Yeah, I think that for me that was just this really, at the time I processed it some, but it was a deeply crushing realization of, like, you don't actually have a right to the place you grew up. We feel like we do, you should, I think there's a narrative of that, but functionally, because of how economics and governance work right now, you don't. You have no right to live in your hometown. And that's horrible. That's so upsetting.

Adele: It really is. And I guess that's also sort of like vignettes passing by on a metro bus, even if you have some sort of deeper connection to them, it's not that you have to keep going, it's that everything else keeps moving in the opposite direction than you.

Arienne: Yeah, you're on the bus, and it just goes.

[cars passing]

Ayezah: I actually have a question that maybe is a bit broader out of the scope of just the poem, and I guess one of the major intents behind our podcast is finding connection and reconnecting after two plus years in isolation in every aspect of life, specifically also the writing life. And you talk about how important the metro bus, the walking around, just passing by car doesn't have that same connection, and there was something you mentioned in the poem which resonated, you talked about your shoes, and they're thinner, and just walking around, and I was instantly brought back to what you said earlier. How do you feel that your writing life, your writing self, changed in different ways throughout the pandemic, and do you feel like that change is just there? Has that become integrated with as things begin to open up, and, I mean, there's changes that are irreversible, too, I feel that this pandemic has brought. Just, what does that kind of look like, and what has it looked like, and what do you think it's going to look like?

Arienne: I think I have two answers or two big thoughts to that question. One is that it's just been such a great reinforcement of how much writing community matters to me, which is part of why Seattle and this region matters to me so much, like, I've always had such really beautiful, wonderful, exactly-what-you-would-hope-for writing community here that has beautiful frameworks and is so loving and is so excited about things, and we've just had to find different ways to connect during this time, and that's kind of reinforced how important those connections are. One of the ways that's come out really concretely is, like, you know a lot of the readings have been online for a long time now, and after one of the first readings that I was reading at, usually after a reading there's this time where people mill around and hang out, even if you have to leave the venue right away you stand outside and people are chatting and you're seeing the person you only see at readings and you're always excited to catch up with. Or people are like, "that poem was so dope," or, like, whatever. And with the online readings, you just close the browser, and you are suddenly crushingly alone in your house. And that broke my soul, and so we started doing afterparties for readings, because I was like, "I need that come-down," and everyone else was like, "we do too." And that was really this beautiful affirmation of, like, no matter what the venue or the format, we really need, so much of those events aren't just about the events, they're about the community and the coming together moments after.

Adele: The events have bodies.

Arianne: Yeah! And they have an arc, and they need this hug at the end of everyone kind of just embracing a little bit, emotionally even if not physically. My other thought answering that question is that the pandemic was actually not as big of a life-changer for me as I think it was for a lot of people, because about six months before the pandemic started here, I got really seriously ill, and I have a lot of pretty severe chronic illness that was a lot worse then, so like, by the time COVID hit Seattle, I had already spent most of the last six months confined to my couch. I could barely get up to move around my own house, much less leave it. So I was already kind of negotiating a lot of that isolation. Like, I could have people come visit me, but I lived in the far north of Seattle at the time, so a lot of people wouldn't make the trek out all the time, they have jobs or whatever, so I was already navigating a lot of that isolation. And so it didn't feel as stark to me when the pandemic happened, because not as much changed in my daily life. That change had already happened, and I was already sort of working through it in poem. But I do think it's nice that as things are starting to come out again, I think that people are better aware of access needs, which is really exciting, especially as someone with a lot of chronic illness, there is more attention to that at events and as people are planning out community meetings and things like that. So that's something I've seen changing that I'm excited about.

Adele: I do hope, coming out of this, that people can just show each other a little bit more tenderness than was the case beforehand, and I think the same probably goes for poetry and other kind of communal acts like that. I think people are going to be much, or I hope that people are going to be much more sensitive to how they fit into that greater picture.

Arianne: Yeah, I think I already see that happening, and I'm really excited about it.

Ayezah: I hope that people will get to hold onto community more, and I guess also how to make community accessible in various ways. Like, access in that physical sense, but also as a space for marginalized people. At least from my experience, I've always felt like, at least till recent years, actually until the writing program that me and Adele met through, that as a student of color it's always been very daunting, like, sharing my work already as it is, but also in a place where maybe there's not even the intention to make a space feel hostile, but...

Arianne: Mostly people genuinely don't know.

Ayezah: Yeah, exactly, they just don't know, which is also difficult, because, like, how do I navigate that when I really want to share my work, really want to share my process, really want to hear other people's work and process too, but how can I help myself become comfortable in that, and how can I express to people what might be needed in that community to make it more welcoming? I think many conversations I've heard and I've tried to become part of on how to make community accessible on all fronts, whether it's physical or also on an emotional and mental level.



Adele: And I suppose this gets all the way back to the beginning of our conversation, when we were talking about entering the poem with the body first, and how we access poetry.

Arianne: Yeah. Ayezah, a lot of what you're saying is why I had ruled out going to an MFA program, because I was like, "I'm Native, and I don't want to deal with any of that!" And I had planned, I was just not gonna do an MFA, I'll just keep writing with my writing community, I love my writing community, I feel so supported, loved, seen by my writing community. And then I found out there was a new program that was only a couple of years old at the time at the Institute of American Indian Arts, they had a Native-focused MFA where the program is, like, two thirds Native and one third students who actually can hang. And it was transformative and incredible, one of the best things I've ever done. But I never expected to have a space like that, and I had ruled out the entire idea just because of exactly what you were talking about.

Ayezah: Yeah.

Arianne: I think the Seattle writing community is better than most, and especially, like, I grew up with a lot of, like, I was in Youth Speaks, which is just such a wonderful community. But yeah. It's a big thing.

Ayezah: Yeah, I think where I go to school right now, my high school, is very predominantly white, and definitely predominantly affluent, which is very different from how I've grown up. And I'm going to college soon, and I wanted to study English, but then I look at faculty...

Arianne: Study comparative literature! Comparative literature's way better!

Ayezah: Honestly, I might take you up on that, because I look at the faculty and I look at student body, and I think that literally when we were writing at *Between the Lines* this summer we were surrounded with people from all these different states and so many different backgrounds, and also there were two writers who were from Bangladesh, and they were in Bangladesh, and it was the most incredible experience. It kind of gave me hope that there are places, I just have to find the right place where I can fit in and find that comfort.

Arianne: And there's more of that emerging all the time. Like, really all the time. The fellowship I have at the Rep, the Native Artist-in-Residence? This is the first year they're doing it. And I just got a retreat fellowship for an emerging Native poets thing, this is also the first year they're doing it, so literally every year there are more of these things. I think there's a boom right now.

Adele: Before we end for today, and it's been lovely having you thank you for coming...

Arianne: It's really my pleasure. This has been really fun.

Adele: Make sure, if you get the chance, Arianne has an exhibit at Seattle Rep through April tenth. So make sure to check that out if you get the chance.

Arianne: Yeah, that's up April fifth through April tenth in the Poncho Forum. Tickets are free but you do need to book them. It'll be open in the evenings and on the weekends it'll be open all day if you want to walk around inside *Exhibits*, it's that book I was talking about earlier. I'm adapting the whole book into an installation, a multimedia immersive installation, so you can walk around in it, literally body first.

Ayezah: That's incredible.

Adele: Make sure to check that out! And thanks for being here. It's been wonderful talking with you.

Arianne: Thanks for having me!

Ayezah: Thank you again. This is definitely, like, I'll probably cut this out, but thank you, like, really thank you for this first experience. It's been a ride, and a lot, and we've learned so much. I hope we'll be able to carry a lot of what we've learned here onwards. And I'm really glad you were our first guest.

Arianne: Thanks! Me too.

[outro music]