Just Us

An American Conversation

Claudia Rankine

Claudia Rankine’s Citizen changed the conversation—Just Us urges all of us into it

As everyday white supremacy becomes increasingly vocalized with no clear answers at hand, how best might we approach one another? Claudia Rankine, without telling us what to do, urges us to begin the discussions that might open pathways through this divisive and stuck moment in American history.

Just Us is an invitation to discover what it takes to stay in the room together, even and especially in breaching the silence, guilt, and violence that follow direct addresses of whiteness. Rankine’s questions disrupt the false comfort of our culture’s liminal and private spaces—the airport, the theater, the dinner party, the voting booth—where neutrality and politeness live on the surface of differing commitments, beliefs, and prejudices as our public and private lives intersect.

This brilliant arrangement of essays, poems, and images includes the voices and rebuttals of others: white men in first class responding to, and with, their white male privilege; a friend’s explanation of her infuriating behavior at a play; and women confronting the political currency of dying their hair blond, all running alongside fact-checked notes and commentary that complements Rankine’s own text, complicating notions of authority and who gets the last word.

Sometimes wry, often vulnerable, and always prescient, Just Us is Rankine’s most intimate work, less interested in being right than in being true, being together.

PRAISE

“This brilliant and multilayered work is a call, an insistent, rightly impatient demand for a public conversation on whiteness. Just Us moves with tenacity, critical patience, and a rare honesty toward a potential affirmation. Anyone who turns away from this bold and vital invitation to get to work would be a damn fool.”—Judith Butler

Claudia Rankine is a poet, essayist, and playwright. Just Us completes her groundbreaking trilogy, following Don’t Let Me Be Lonely and Citizen. She is a MacArthur Fellow and teaches at Yale University.
Alexandria

A Novel

Paul Kingsnorth

A visionary and timely novel about a world out of balance by the prizewinning author of The Wake

When Swans return, Alexandria will fall.

One thousand years from now, a small religious community lives in what were once the fens of eastern England. They are perhaps the world’s last human survivors. Now they find themselves stalked by a force that draws ever closer, and that seems to have brought them to the brink of extinction. A force that offers them a promise and a threat: a place called Alexandria.

Set in a time on the far side of an apocalypse, and perhaps on the verge of another, Paul Kingsnorth’s radical new novel is a work of matchless, mythic imagination. It is driven by elemental themes: community versus the self, the mind versus the body, machine over man—and the tension between an unstable present and an unknown, unknowable future.

Alexandria is the rousing conclusion to an extraordinary fictional project that began with Kingsnorth’s prizewinning novel, The Wake, one that maps two thousand years of troubled human history.

PRAISE

Praise for Beast

“Cements Kingsnorth’s reputation as a furiously gifted writer.” —The Washington Post

“Taut, thrilling and mystifying. . . . Taken in tandem with The Wake, it forms a powerful meditation on violence, society and the nature of exile.” —Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

“Kingsnorth is becoming an existential David Mitchell.” —Vulture

Paul Kingsnorth is the author of Confessions of a Recovering Environmentalist, Beast, and The Wake. He cofounded the Dark Mountain Project, a global network of writers, artists, and thinkers in search of new stories for a world on the brink.
That Was Now, This Is Then
Poems
Vijay Seshadri

The brilliant new collection from Vijay Seshadri, author of the Pulitzer Prize–winning 3 Sections

No one blends ironic intelligence, emotional frankness, radical self-awareness, and complex humor the way Vijay Seshadri does. In this, his fourth collection, he affirms his place as one of America’s greatest living poets. That Was Now, This Is Then takes on the planar paradoxes of time and space, destabilizing highly tuned lyrics and elegies with dizzying turns in poems of unrequitable longing, of longing for longing, of longing to be found, of grief. In these poems, Seshadri’s speaker becomes the subject, the reader becomes the writer, and the multiplying refracted narratives yield an “anguish so pure it almost / feels like joy.”

PRAISE

Praise for 3 Sections

“A compelling collection of poems that examine human consciousness, from birth to dementia, in a voice that is by turns witty and grave, compassionate and remorseless.”—Pulitzer Prize citation

Vijay Seshadri is the author of 3 Sections, winner of the Pulitzer Prize; The Long Meadow, winner of the James Laughlin Award of the Academy of American Poets; and Wild Kingdom. He teaches at Sarah Lawrence College and lives in Brooklyn, New York.
Bring Me the Head of Quentin Tarantino

Stories

Julián Herbert

Virtuosic stories by one of “the more interesting and ambitious prose stylists of our time” (Los Angeles Times)

In this madcap, insatiably inventive, bravura story collection, Julián Herbert brings to vivid life people who struggle to retain a measure of sanity in an insane world. Here we become acquainted with a vengeful “personal memories coach” who tries to get even with his delinquent clients; a former journalist with a cocaine habit who travels through northern Mexico impersonating a famous author of Westerns; the ghost of Juan Rulfo; a man who discovers music in his teeth; and, in the deliriously pulpy title story, a drug lord who looks just like Quentin Tarantino, who kidnaps a mopey film critic to discuss Tarantino’s films while he sends his goons to find and kill the doppelgänger that has colonized his consciousness. Herbert’s astute observations about human nature in extremis feel like the reader’s own revelations.

The antic and often dire stories in Bring Me the Head of Quentin Tarantino depict the violence and corruption that plague Mexico today, but they are also deeply ruminative and layered explorations of the narrative impulse and the ethics of art making. Herbert asks: Where are the lines between fiction, memory, and reality? What is the relationship between power, corruption, and survival? How much violence can a person (and a country) take? The stories in this explosive collection showcase the fevered imagination of a significant contemporary writer.

PRAISE

Praise for Julián Herbert

“One of the most indispensable and widely read authors of contemporary Mexican literature.” —Los Angeles Review of Books

“[Herbert’s] books are mash-ups of memory, investigation and fictional ornamentation, marked with a fond disrespect for genre—much like life.” —The New York Times

Julián Herbert was born in Acapulco in 1971. He is a writer, musician, and teacher, and is the author of The House of the Pain of Others and Tomb Song.
Silence Is My Mother Tongue

A Novel

Sulaiman Addonia

A sensuous, textured novel of life in a refugee camp, long-listed for the Orwell Prize for Political Fiction

On a hill overlooking a refugee camp in Sudan, a young man strings up bedsheets that, in an act of imaginative resilience, will serve as a screen in his silent cinema. From the cinema he can see all the comings and goings in the camp, especially those of two new arrivals: a girl named Saba, and her mute brother, Hagos.

For these siblings, adapting to life in the camp is not easy. Saba mourns the future she lost when she was forced to abandon school, while Hagos, scorned for his inability to speak, must live vicariously through his sister. Both resist societal expectations by seeking to redefine love, sex, and gender roles in their lives, and when a businessman opens a shop and befriends Hagos, they cast off those pressures and make an unconventional choice.

With this cast of complex, beautifully drawn characters, Sulaiman Addonia details the textures and rhythms of everyday life in a refugee camp, and questions what it means to be an individual when one has lost all that makes a home or a future. Intimate and subversive, Silence Is My Mother Tongue dissects the ways society wages war on women and explores the stories we must tell to survive in a broken, inhospitable environment.

PRAISE

“Addonia’s prose layers imagery and insight to keep us glued right to the spectacular end. This is a splendid, compulsive reading experience.” —Maaza Mengiste

“The exchange of masculine and feminine roles within the context of a sexually conservative culture makes for a gripping and courageous narrative.” —The Guardian

Sulaiman Addonia spent his early life in a refugee camp and went on to earn an MA from the University of London. His novel The Consequences of Love was short-listed for the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize and has been translated into more than twenty languages.
Fugitive Atlas

Poems

Khaled Mattawa

Khaled Mattawa's poetry contains “the complexity of a transnational identity” (MacArthur Fellowship citation)

Fugitive Atlas is a sweeping, impassioned account of refugee crises, military occupations, and ecological degradation, an acute and probing journey through a world in upheaval. Khaled Mattawa’s chorus of speakers finds moments of profound solace in searching for those lost—in elegy and prayer—even when the power of poetry and faith seems incapable of providing salvation.

With extraordinary formal virtuosity and global scope, these poems turn not to lament for those regions charted as theaters of exploitation and environmental malpractice but to a poignant amplification of the lives, dreams, and families that exist within them. In this exquisite collection, Mattawa asks how we are expected to endure our times, how we inherit the journeys of our ancestors, and how we let loose those we love into an unpredictable world.

PRAISE

Praise for Khaled Mattawa

“Mattawa continues to write a global poetry . . . one of daring necessity.” —The Bloomsbury Review

“One of the most original, lyrical and intellectually challenging American poets of his generation . . . Dazzling and pertinent.” —Marilyn Hacker, Academy of American Poets Fellowship citation

Khaled Mattawa is the author of five collections of poetry. A MacArthur Fellow, he teaches at the University of Michigan.
My Name Will Grow Wide Like a Tree

Selected Poems

Yi Lei; Translated from the Chinese by Tracy K. Smith and Changtai Bi

One of China’s most significant contemporary poets, cotranslated by former US Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith

Yi Lei published her poem “A Single Woman’s Bedroom” in 1987, when cohabitation before marriage was a punishable crime in China. She was met with major critical acclaim—and with outrage—for her frank embrace of women’s erotic desire and her unabashed critique of oppressive law. Over the span of her revolutionary career, Yi Lei became one of the most influential figures in contemporary Chinese poetry.

Passionate, rigorous, and inimitable, the poems in My Name Will Grow Wide Like a Tree celebrate the joys of the body, ponder the miracle of compassion, and proclaim an abiding reverence for the natural world. Presented in the original Chinese alongside English translations by Changtai Bi and Pulitzer Prize–winning poet Tracy K. Smith, this collection introduces American readers to a boundless spirit—one “composing an explosion.”

PRAISE

“Yi Lei writes as movingly of grief as of love, of joy as of deep unrest. She celebrates and aligns herself with nature. . . . Her vision moves nimbly from the earthbound and everyday to the cosmic, the enduring.” —Tracy K. Smith, from her introduction

Yi Lei (1951–2018) received the Zhuang Zhongwen Literature Prize and published eight collections of poems, including A Single Woman’s Bedroom, The Love Poems of Yi Lei, and Women’s Age. Her work has been translated into five languages.
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