

S166. Heretic Poets Rewriting Sacred Texts

Room 214C, Henry B. González Convention Center, Meeting Room Level

Saturday, March 7, 2020

10:35 am to 11:50 am

*A panel of poets engaged with their own faith traditions will discuss the **challenges** and **excitement** of retelling inherited sacred texts, especially for those of us in queer, femme, or nonbinary bodies, and indigenous or previously colonized communities. We'll **share approaches** for re-hearing and rewriting traditional sacred stories, and **offer strategies** for others to do the same.*

- Who's in the room
- Disclaimers
- Rewritings
- Heretical Questions
- Strategies
- Conversation

Who's in the room:

Introduction of panelists: Elizabeth Harlan-Ferlo (moderator), Melissa Bennet, Rajiv Mohabir, and Alicia Jo Rabins (via video/phone)

Visual poll responding to prompts from moderator

Disclaimers:

- Poets don't speak for a whole tradition just themselves
- We are not here to debate the value/damage of religion
- "Religion" does not mean Christianity

Rewritings:

Each panelist shares an image or text of a story, or challenge from a text they have grappled with and the poem that resulted and answers the following:

Why did you choose this story/text?

What major challenges did you foresee?

What surprised you about the poem that arrived?

Heretical Questions:

Panelists will answer questions generated by the other panelists

Strategies:

1. Lacunae: finding gaps in the story and filling them in (as per the role of midrash in the Jewish tradition.)
2. Unheard Voices: Writing from the perspective of characters whose whose voices have been sidelined or deemed unimportant
3. Imaginative Liberation: imagining the ideas/rituals/aspects of the story without the intrusion of colonialism, racism, sexism, etc.

Conversation:

Panelists answer questions that participants have submitted on notecards.