

Connect with characters from our common past at this poetry reading event.

Agata Popęda Apr 27, 2023 0

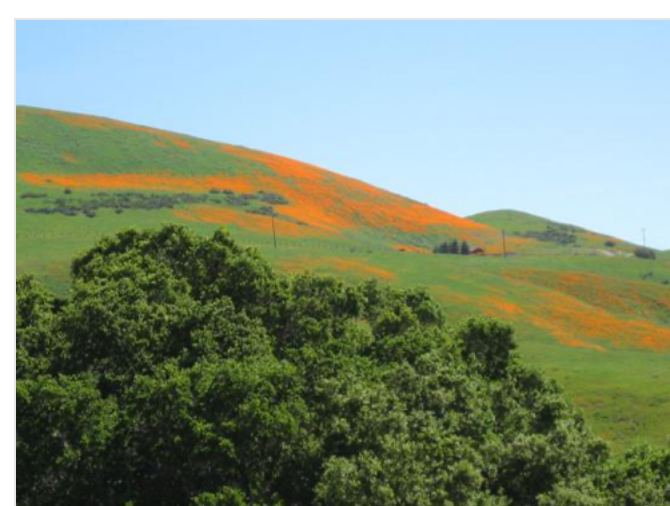


Pilar Graham during a poetry reading at Old Capitol Books in Monterey.
Photo by Stephanie Spoto

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NEWSLETTER

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Apr 28, 2023



Agata Popęda here, looking for tools for ancestral healing. This morning I had the most amazing conversation with poet and professor Pilar Graham who—next to Monterey County Poet Laureate Daniel B. Summerhill—will present her poetry at the “Prayers for Everyday Ancestors” event that is [taking place at 5:30 tonight](#) at Pacific Grove Public Library. In addition to poetry, healer Katie Coo will do sound healing with crystals.

The concept of “everyday ancestors” comes from a collaboration of Graham and Summerhill, colleagues at CSU Monterey Bay, where Graham is a lecturer in the School of Humanities & Communication and where Summerhill serves as an assistant professor of poetry, social action and composition. Reflection on the role of ancestors in their poetry seemed a dominant common theme. The most recent volume by Summerhill is [Mausoleum of Flowers \(2022\)](#); Graham’s debut collection, [Currents](#), was also published last year, in December.

During the interview, Graham shared that she lost both her parents between the time her volume was accepted for publication and the time it actually came out. “It made the experience bittersweet,” she says about her success. But the idea of “everyday ancestors” is broader than personal. Everyday ancestors include our common past and the community of the living, where humanity is perceived as one big, spiritual family. “We are all connected,” says Graham, who defines herself as someone who “tends to hang in the cosmos, but is metaphorically grounded in the physical landscape.” She has been writing poetry since she was able to hold a pencil in her hand, and completed her first poem in the sixth grade.

The event is a tribute to the community of the dead and the living, Graham explains. Poetry has always been one of the most effective tools of ancestral healing. It is rooted in an oral tradition, and originally was meant to be recited aloud. Poetry is all about “going to places people are afraid to speak about,” Graham says, and ancestral healing and grieving requires exactly that kind of courage. The courage of the poet.

Graham, Summerhill and Coo (a CSUMB graduate) invite you to join them tonight. If you can’t—or can’t wait—check out a poem by Graham from her new collection [Currents](#). The poem below is titled “Skinned”:

See you at the library.

P.S. Can’t make it to the poetry event, but looking for something else to do this weekend? [Don’t forget to check out the Weekly’s online calendar.](#)



Agata Popęda



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