

# Mixtapes

## PLATFORMS AND SITES



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### PHOEBE'S LINER NOTES

Papyrus scrolls or Facetime calls— what we used to communicate has changed, but the role of poetry has connected us for millennia. In fact, this is one of the vital functions of poetry— to reach ears over time and space. This mixtape includes poems that take the form of letters, known as 'epistolary' poems. This poetic form has roots in classical poets such as Ovid and Horace, and in the 17th and 18th century, poems of address would contain debates and professions of friendship and love. The form continues to be reimagined by Canadian and American poets, with simple notes such as William Carlos Williams' "This Is Just to Say". While technology has evolved, the motivation to express a message to a specific other remains unchanged. These poems place the reader into the position of someone listening in to a private exchange. There is a unique tension in how a poem which begins as an intimate need becomes a public document and expression.

We begin with Ezra Pound's translation of Li Po's "The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter", a letter that arranges a reunion between a husband and his young wife, while also drawing a portrait of a young woman who finds the language to tell her own story. Hart Crane is another modernist poet, whose grandmother's letter gives rise to the "stumble" of memory. We move to Canadian contemporary poets, where Russell Thornton's epistle is an act of letting go, Evelyn Lau's address is both an elegy to another author in a season when creativity is stunted, and Joy Kogawa asks how letters might slip

Continue on back >>>



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through walls of violence and oppression. Cecily Belle Bains' "Dear Diaspora Child" creates its own recipients, as any reader who has never "set foot on the soil of your people" is reassured by the cascading repetition of her poem.

As letters are replaced with emails, texts, social media, phone and video calls, sites and blogs, this collection mixes in poems that allude to these platforms. They address the fear of disconnection and the strangeness of learning about someone through the filter of screens. Paradoxically, these forms of media are barriers as well as facilitators of connection. Learning of a death of an online friend, Raoul Fernandes is doubly removed, first physically from the long distance loss and again as the blue screen cannot facilitate the speaker's grief. In "SpaceTime," Yusef Saadi's jumble of platforms and plethora of shared data and images can't fill a lifetime. Sennah Yee's "Internet Safety" contains other dangers, where an online avatar is a means of assuming an identity outside of her racialized one. Updates on Livejournal, a popular blogging community in the early 2000s, becomes a carrier for Kayla Czaga's nostalgia for the adjacent experiences of high school.

For US poet Raymond Antrobus, reading about the killing of a deaf man on his phone brings the acts of police brutality closer, not further from his present. Ariana Reines describes her flickering thoughts while tweeting, "wavering/Pieces of consciousness eloquently/ Describing to me giving up on the thought/ Of ever reaching you." These poems may not ever reach their intended recipients, but they reach us across time and space with their wishes for authentic connections. These poems are a reminder that even in times of social isolation, someone's always listening.



### THE POEMS

**THE RIVER-MERCHANT'S  
WIFE: A LETTER, AFTER LI PO**  
by Ezra Pound

**MY GRANDMOTHER'S  
LOVE LETTERS**  
by Hart Crane

**LETTERS**  
by Russell Thornton

**DEAR UPDIKE**  
by Evelyn Lau

**WHERE THERE'S A WALL**  
by Joy Kogawa

**DEAR DIASPORA CHILD**  
by Cicely Belle Blain

**TWO GUNS IN THE SKY FOR  
DANIEL HARRIS**  
by Raymond Antrobus

**INTERNET SAFETY**  
by Sennah Yee

**AN ONLINE FRIEND DIES  
SOMEWHERE OUTSIDE  
THE INTERNET**  
by Raoul Fernandes

**SPACETIME**  
by Yusef Saadi

**INNER LIFE**  
by Ariana Reines

**LIVEJOURNAL.COM/  
LONELYRADIO**  
by Kayla Czaga