

## The Campfire

### **Transcript of Episode 4: Poetry—the Modern-Day Luxury, with Vievee Francis and Lori Anne Ferrell**

**Nick Owchar:** Fall means many things to many people: the start of school, the arrival of the holidays. At CGU, it also means that we welcome back the recipient of the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award for a very unique program: a weeklong poetry residency in which the recipient visits classrooms, gives open, public readings, and meets our community.

I'm Nick Owchar, and welcome to this episode of The Campfire, an ongoing conversation with the voices of our CGU community. We're thrilled to have with us Vievee Francis, winner of the 2017 Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award for her volume, *Forest Primeval*, and humanities professor Lori Anne Ferrell, the chair of our English department and the director of the Kingsley and Kate Tufts Poetry Awards. Lori Anne and Vievee, welcome to The Campfire.

**Lori Anne Ferrell:** Thank you, Nick.

**Vievee Francis:** Thank you, good to be here.

**Nick:** So glad to have you. So, how is the residency going thus far? You're a few days into it.

**Vievee:** Well, it's a lot of fun. So much so that my cheeks hurt because I keep laughing, and I have really high cheekbones, so it just makes my face ache, but it's great. The students have really been paying attention, wow. They've asked me questions that were unexpected and a delight, because I really like diving in. Everyone's just been really generous, really kind, and I feel celebrated, which is unusual. I don't know how to take it. All this joy makes me feel hubristic.

**Nick:** What kind of unexpected questions are you getting? I'm kind of curious.

**Vievee:** One young student yesterday ... there's a kind of sound play in one of the poems, and I wanted the sound of "la-la-la," but there was no A, just the L, the repeated L, and a kind of undercurrent, to give some levity to the end of the poem, and no one's ever asked me about that. They don't ask me about my soundscapes, which are very carefully wrought.

And I was so stunned, I just kept looking at her going, "Really?" and she thought she'd made an error, and I said, "No, that's spot-on, and no one's ever caught that before," and then another student asked me about another poem where that same thing was happening, but it was not intentional. It happened, but maybe, perhaps, intuitively. But, I told her I'm going to claim it from now on saying that I did mean it.

From sound, to really digging into the poems conceptually—what was I trying to convey, did I feel that I conveyed it—and giving me suggestions ... it was just incredible. One of the best student talks I've had in a long time.

**Lori Anne:** That is wonderful to hear, speaking as the chair of the department. That's terrific.

**Nick:** I wanted to start and ask you both about an op-ed that Lori Anne wrote back in April in the *Los Angeles Times*. It was picked up by newspapers all over the country, and one of the versions of Lori Anne's piece used the headline, "Quit Twitter and Read a Poem," which is a great headline.

**Vievee:** Yes, it is.

**Nick:** And so I just wanted to get your reactions to something that she wrote. So, Lori Anne, you wrote, "Try something revolutionary. Quit your Twitter feed and send a poem to someone, perhaps to someone with whom you disagree in our disagreeable times." I thought that was really a great prescription, so I wanted to ask you both ... I've been dying to ask you, Lori Anne, have you sent a poem to someone? And if you haven't, what poem would you send to someone who's, maybe, on the other side of the aisle who you're trying to reach?

**Lori Anne:** That's a great question. I haven't sent a poem to someone on the other side of the aisle. But, I think what I would do is one of the things that I ... The poem that I like to sort of recite to people at tough times, when I'm sort of being asked to address something either elegiac, or something sad, or some forms of goodbye, which is also, I think, very healing and very affirming, comes from Shakespeare, and it's the sonnet that begins, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? Thou art more lovely and more temperate. Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, and summer's lease hath all too short a date."

And I think it reminds us that we don't have time. The people that we love, if they're on the other side of that divide or any reason why we're disagreeing or saying goodbye for reasons that may be less than salutary, or thinking we need to say goodbye, I think we need to remember that summer's lease does have a short date, and with the leaves scuttering around now, I think that actually reminds me that we need to keep acting in love, in a way, and in a kind of trust and respect as much as we can.

And I also think you could do it ironically, with your eyebrow twitched a bit, when you say, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" because you might not be able to. They may be neither lovely nor temperate at that moment, but it's a reminder of what we can aspire to, because I'm often unlovely and often intemperate.

**Vieeve:** I don't believe that.

**Nick:** Yeah, I don't believe it either.

**Vieeve:** I have not seen that.

**Nick:** No, I don't either. Vieeve, is there a poem that you would send to someone to just remind them of our common human bond beyond all the noise of social media and all that?

**Vieeve:** I think the poem I send most often might actually fit the number of Twitter characters. It's "Nothing Gold Can Stay." I'm really quite a Frost nut, but I think it hits that same point—to grab hold of what we have in common and what we love with a kind of immediacy, because we don't know how long it's going to last.

I lost my mother since last seeing you all. I lost her on August 16, and that poem has been moving through my mind, but I have sent it, and until this moment, I don't think I realized why I was sending it. Maybe just to remind others what I like to keep in mind myself, and interestingly, last February, and I sent my whole department—I'm at Dartmouth—I sent my whole department love poems. You could sign up for them, and if you were in the English department, you got this love poem, and I did it, I think, through February 16, when my mother went into her kind of final loss, when we knew she was probably going to pass, and she hung on longer than we thought. So, I stopped sending the poems I was going to send once a day for the whole month because I was busy with my mother.

However, somehow, she feels tied to my tendency to send people poems and reminders, and maybe it makes me think of her phone calls, or her notes, this type of thing, and it turns out she wrote me secret letters that I never knew about until my father just gave them to me last week at her final memorial. That poem, "Nothing Gold Can Stay," has really been on my mind, and that's the one I've been sending recently.

**Lori Anne:** That's lovely.

**Nick:** Yeah, I'm so sorry too, you know.

**Vieeve:** Well, I think it's a pain that most of us will have to bear, so I'm bearing up.

**Lori Anne:** We're all golden; none of us stay.

**Vieeve:** That's true; very true.

**Nick:** Plus, it's a great poem in *The Outsiders*, I'm just going to say it, if you're into pop culture references.

**Vieeve:** Oh, I loved that book as a kid.

**Lori Anne:** Yes, me too.

**Vieeve:** Hinton? S.E. Hinton?

**Lori Anne:** I remember how the last line of the—it's almost like a poem in itself because the last line of the novel is the first line of the novel, right?

**Vieeve:** I didn't realize that.

**Lori Anne:** I remember reading it and going ...

**Vieeve:** My mind is a little blown.

**Lori Anne:** Oh, my gosh. It was something like it was a summer day when I came out of the movie theater, or it was an autumn day or winter, I don't remember what day it was, but I just remembered and I thought, "Wait a minute," flip, flip, flip.

**Vieeve:** How did I not realize or remember that? I'm not sure which it was.

**Nick:** See, isn't this great?

**Vieeve:** Well, it's part of why I love talking to readers. I love it.

**Lori Anne:** Speaking of readers, one of the things ... I've received a ton of poetry from people after this was published, and people I never knew, and it was amazing. I would get letters. For the first couple of weeks, I got letters all the time, and I had people send me their poetry, I had people tell me their poetry stories. Some of them were sad, some of them were very angry, and I got a whole sort of mass of poems that smelled like the man's cigars. When I opened it up, you could smell the old cigar, and he had been in the Navy, and he was now writing poetry. It was just kind of this extraordinary outpouring. A lot of people have poetry in them.

**Vieeve:** They do, far more than we know, and far more than will tell us.

**Nick:** Just to clarify, for listeners, what you're saying is after the op-ed piece ran in the *Times*, it ran all over the nation, people were reacting to that and sending you their poetry, right?

**Lori Anne:** Yes.

**Nick:** Was it emails, too, or did they send it old-fashioned snail mail?

**Lori Anne:** I got more snail mail than emails about it, but I got a lot of both. It reminds me, and I don't know what you think about this, Vieeve, but poetry does—I mean, there's spoken poetry, and spoken form is wonderful, but there does seem to be a need for a lot of poetry to be on the page and to work with the page.

Not only did I get snail mail, but I got interestingly decorated manuscripts and fancy—I had somebody that actually used, for the postage, so many old stamps of 1 cent or 2 cents that it made kind of a design around the—it was as if the structure of poetry, or the structure of the way they were thinking about the poems, made it important for them to also package them in a certain way. I don't know what you think about that, but I figured it would just be all emails.

**Nick:** We're living in a culture where there's a lot of snideness on social media, there's a lot of sniping going on, a lot of language is being used as a blunt instrument to beat each other over the heads with. Before talking about you as a poet, Vievee, I wanted to talk to both of you as professors teaching this. Do you feel that the environment that we're in now forces you to have to fight even harder to get the students away from the distractions of social media and all the other things to pay attention to your message?

**Lori Anne:** I teach other people's poetry, and I don't teach people how to write poetry, but what I do find that we need to work on, and probably always have, I have to ask people to practice attending to a seminar discussion, and to actually not have—they're not allowed to have laptops, or their phones, or anything that could distract them, and that's always hard in the beginning for people that need to check a lot.

I think there is that, and I think there's also a snap to judgment even on scholarly issues, but kind of a snap to judgment about a poem by Milton, or a snap to judgment about a Shakespeare play, and I don't think this is so much snideness on the part of students or of scholars, because I see it more, I think, in all sectors of the world of scholarship of this sort is the idea that there's a demand that we be able to be quick, and clever, and fast, and sort of dismiss or approve very quickly—thumbs up or thumbs down.

And that's not the way you reason through a reaction to a 16th-century play, or a 17th-century poem, but I think we're all tempted to do that, because I think just kind of this efficiency of response is supposed to be the new normal as opposed to the puzzlement. We're not comfortable with the puzzlement.

**Nick:** That's probably putting more pressure on you to make sure that these students are trained not to just hit “like” or “unlike.”

**Lori Anne:** It's pressure on me, but I think it's also pressure on me not to respond so quickly and feel like that's expected of me either. I'm not immune from this culture. I work with students on writing, but in a very different way, on expository writing.

**Vievee:** I think you just hit on the answer there though: “I'm not immune.” I think what you're doing and I'm doing is providing a model. If the student's inside of a world where everything is quick and everything is instantly liked or instantly disliked, then to come into the classroom for an hour and a half—I really love three-hour seminars—to come into the classroom, not that I'm forced to shift, but they're forced to slow down, and they get a model of reasoning and thinking

something through in a measured way, and I think that's what we offer them, those models, and I think they use them in their own ways, considering the technologies of the day.

I'm not on social media in any way: no Facebook, no LinkedIn, no Twitter, and it's not because I don't enjoy it. If my husband puts up something on Facebook even for a minute, five minutes later, "Oh, how many numbers are there? I want to know the numbers, I want to know the likes." So, I'm just like the students in this way, but knowing that, I also know how interiority works and how I need to build that for my writing, so I know when to let it go.

And for me, I've decided, because it would be too easy for me, I've let it go altogether. I want to spend that time in my own head, and I don't want to build, inside myself, a dependency on other people's liking or not liking. I want to build the capacity to like myself and for myself.

I would say this is a great opportunity to say this because I'm wrestling with this constantly, in the departments actually across the country where I go. So, I don't teach students to write poetry alone. I must teach the student the reading in order for them to write. So, I would say in my classrooms, it's about half and half—half of the time, we spend reading, and half of the time, we spend writing. So, there's an intersection between the scholar and creator's world there.

Now, I'm at a school where there are terms, and I can't assign a dozen books, and I'm learning to adjust my expectations. But, I speak slowly, I like to plod through my own thoughts. So, I think that my students are, in some ways, modeling that. You'll know them on campus because they're slowing down.

**Lori Anne:** I think that's perfect though. I do think that the slowing down is the thing which causes such great anxiety in so many of us these days. I wish I could speak more slowly, but I do think that ... One time, a friend of mine who went to UCLA, in the '60s, was telling me—I was talking about how hard it was to get through—we were reading *Hamlet*, and she said, "Oh, I remember. We were doing the *Faerie Queene* with this legendary professor, whose name right now, I've forgotten." She said, "We never got through the first stanza of the first book for the whole semester. We worked on that." And I remember thinking, "What luxury." That's revolutionary. I do try to tell my students that this kind of three-hour seminar, please come and join us for three hours, this is a luxury in a world. This is revolutionary. We are actually spending three hours together talking about Shakespeare or Milton. I mean, talking about these words, and a lot of people's lives do not get to accommodate that, and it is such a privilege.

**Vievee:** To have that luxury, you take that home with you. You pull that into the life with you. Milton's considerations become our considerations. If we think about Milton and Shakespeare, we're thinking so much. We're thinking about marriage, we're thinking about beauty, and really parsing it for ourselves. So, yeah, revolutionary, I never thought about taking time that way as revolutionary, but indeed, it is. I'm going to keep that, I'm going to be saying that. I'm going back to Dartmouth and I'm going to be saying this.

**Lori Anne:** This is not a rule that is actually rewarding plodding.

**Vieeve:** No, you're rewarded for speaking before one thinks, and I will always privilege thinking. I also privilege action. I don't really like thinking that goes nowhere. I love action. I don't know, I tend to tell my friends, it's the West African in me. I want a practical resolve. I left philosophy early on for the English department, because I felt like I was running around in circles. I needed application at the end of analysis.

**Lori Anne:** I love the idea that the English department has application at the end of analysis. I'm going to take that one.

**Vieeve:** I feel that, as an English major, I was able to use the things I learned in the English department. The things I read became foundational for me, for my thoughts, for my actions in the world, for who I am as a person. I loved those texts, every last one of them.

**Nick:** I sort of feel grateful for these podcasts too because this will at least give people who can't be in the classroom a chance to occupy this space on their drive, on their commute. So, enjoy this, listeners—you better.

**Lori Anne:** But, take your time on it. Don't drive too fast.

**Nick:** I wanted to ask about the reason why we're here, why we're lucky enough to be here is because of the Tufts residency. I don't know if there are that many prizes out there that have two parts where you have the actual award and then you have the residency section as well, and I was just wondering, Lori Anne, if you could tell our listeners, who might be unfamiliar with the background of the Tufts Awards, how they came to be, and how the residency grew into this.

**Lori Anne:** The residency is rather late on the history of Tufts. The history of the Tufts Awards really has to do with the love of a woman, Kate Tufts, for her husband, Kingsley, which is why it's named that. Kingsley Tufts was a shipyard executive, he had written poetry in school, he went back to study literature again, but he had never been allowed to pursue poetry. It was his avocation; not his vocation.

He had a habit, or a lovely practice, I should say, a tradition, of inviting people over to their home on, I want to say, New Year's Eve, or I think it was New Year's Eve.

**Vieeve:** That's my birthday.

**Lori Anne:** See? Perfect. I love these synchronicities, and he would read from poetry that he had written, and we actually have his poetry. He published some of it, and he was published in a number of, actually, quite good outlets earlier in the 20th century, and I think the way, if I got this story right, he was reading his poetry and actually died in one of these sessions, and his wife was wondering how to actually, in some sense, commemorate this.

They were not people that had been in what one might call—although, there may not be one of these—a high-toned literary world, flitting about various think tanks or Ivy League universities doing poetry. He was out here working in Long Beach writing poetry, and they had some very valuable property.

They were looking and she wanted to establish an award in his name and honor, and apparently, she called those important places and nobody picked up the phone, and then she called John Maguire, who was, at the time, president of Claremont Graduate School, as we used to be called, and John was known for picking up the phone, and so he did pick up the phone, and that ended up being an extremely lucrative gift to Claremont Graduate University.

She was very, very active in designing the way that this award is supposed to work. Within a year or two, we also established the Kate Tufts award in her name for a first book of poetry by a poet of genuine promise, and that's her lines, and lines from the actual award.

But, I do think one of the things that makes—there's many things that make the Kingsley Tufts award special. Mostly, it's the people that actually grace it, like Vievee, but it's for a poet in mid-career, and it's a large amount of money, and we used to be able to have all kinds of bragging rights about numbers, but as important that is, and you will never find me saying, "Who cares about the money?" because actually, Kate Tufts was on record for saying things like, "I just think poets should have a little time to be able to pay their bills and not worry about things." I mean, she saw it as important.

**Vievee:** She was utterly correct.

**Lori Anne:** That's right, so let's not get too romantic here. But, I will say the part that I love about it is the mid-career part. A lot of awards are capstones at the end like, "Thank you for your service. Wonderful poetry throughout the decades," or whatever. This is saying, "Buy your groceries, pay your bills, feel a little bit less pressure, and keep writing. We expect the next is coming. We are just pausing in the midst of your career. So, we are expecting, and we know, and we anticipate great things."

I love that sort of in-the-midst-of quality of the Tufts Award. I think that's what makes it stand out more than a number, and that, to me, is actually really powerful. Also, the story behind it, which is that people love and write poetry, and they find it, as part of their everyday life, whether they are poets in their career or not.

**Nick:** It almost seems like if Kingsley Tufts had been alive now and he read your op-ed, maybe he would have been one of those guys who had been sending you his poems.

**Lori Anne:** I think so. A lot of Kingsley's poems look like the poems that I got. There are several of them that are very playful, and there's one line that I remember and I love, probably because I also teach early modern religion, but it talks about knowing that a bird was there because it was predestined by a feather, so the feather has dropped, and that's a lovely line. So, some of his stuff is kind of, what I think of, as celebrative, and earnest, and sort of seizing the day about



feelings. Then, you'll come across something like that and you'll realize that you won't ever forget that line.

**Nick:** In terms of this year's winner, *Forest Primeval*, I just want to ask you, Vievee, reading about you, looking at interviews, there are a lot of people, they'll stick those category tags on. They'll say that, "Vievee Francis explores race, identity, gender," but you don't sit down and write a poem and say, "OK, I'm going to write about race today."

**Vievee:** No, but I don't say I'm not going to. I have an idea, something has triggered me, and I have an idea before I go into the poem, but by the time the poem's done, it might be about anything. It takes time, and my poems tend to be layered, and they can be read in several ways.

In this particular text, the fairy tales can be read through the lens of gender, but they can most certainly be read through the lens of race. They're highly coded, and so I find a different response from different audiences who are reading, I suppose, in the ways they need to read it. So, there's a lot of layering. What I'm trying to do is to avoid nothing, and I've said this before—I've written it—that race informs my work, just as gender informs my work, but neither gender nor race determine it.

**Nick:** I was wondering also about the writing process for a collection of poetry. I'm more familiar with the novelist side, where a novelist sits down, they have a clear sense that they're writing a novel, they're going to have this complete package when they're done. When you sit down and start writing, are you already envisioning *Forest Primeval*, or did the notion of this being an actual collection come in the course of the writing of the poems?

**Vievee:** I love that question because I'm working on a fourth book now, and my husband is Matthew Olzmann—he's a poet as well—and he's probably my best reader, and he's the person I talk to the most about process, and I was just saying to him either last night or the night before that I feel the poems are beginning to speak to each other, that the vision for the fourth book is coming into light, if you will, like an illuminated path. I can almost see it now.

I had an idea of what I wanted for *Forest Primeval*. I knew I was going to build a third book, but it took a while, maybe seven months of writing and almost daily, before I started realizing what I had, before I realized what was haunting me. So often I feel haunted, or compelled, or there's something underneath that wants to be voiced, and I'll write through several poems before I know what that is.

For *Forest Primeval*, I really wanted to think about the wilderness, American wilderness, in particular, and its impact upon me, and then it grew past myself and into its impact on women, and wildness, and the wilderness within. I am a fairly unconventional person, so I wanted to explore that more, and I wanted to do it bravely. I wanted to do it without a conventional voice whispering in my ear, "Be good." I had no interest in that. I wanted to be however that played itself out.

**Nick:** This year, we had some phenomenal finalists for the Kingsley Tufts award. Lori Anne, I wonder what were some of the qualities ... maybe it's something that Vievee's already just mentioned ... but what were some of the qualities of her work that really pushed her to the forefront among this very distinguished group of finalists?

**Lori Anne:** I have the privilege of silently sitting in the room during the judging. There's an interesting alchemy that goes on, I think, with the five judges who, themselves, are great poets, and the books and the discussion.

I think, in many ways, Vievee has already, in some sense, pointed to what—what I loved was just remembering back, and I don't remember all that discussion anymore. That was a long day. But, what I remember is much of what you were hoping to achieve was what was being remarked upon in the room, and I think that's kind of amazing, and then I think what, generally, is the part that in the crucible for that alchemy is the part you may have not intended quite so strongly, but is the part that actually speaks to them, the haunting.

I think the structure of this book came up a lot, just—both the fairy tale, and the wildness, and the notion of what sits behind stories that we tend to have turned into very conventional things. It's as if you stripped off the way that we've turned fairy tales into Disney princess stories, and then go back to the kind of wildness at the heart of what actually creates those. The Grimm Brothers and people who write fairy tales were not particularly kind. They actually spoke to the wildness in the heart of children, the wildness of that.

I think that is definitely part of it, but I was really struck by what you were looking for as you wrote because it was found in that room, and the excitement was palpable. It's always exciting to be there watching this happen and knowing, also, that this is a process that is not a slam dunk. There's all these great books in the room, and people have written great books discussing them. I feel like I'm in a master class in poetry evaluation and poetry appreciation, but beyond that, I think the silence of the cloister has to be maintained.

**Vievee:** Well, I feel I have to say—I'm going to try to say it without crying, but I'm not—oh my goodness, I feel like crying.

**Nick:** It's OK.

**Vievee:** There are two things that deeply awed me—I can't find my Kleenex. The first was the company that I was in, I couldn't believe it. I knew the work of all of them, and I knew three of them, and I felt such awe of their work, and then the judges themselves, especially when you all called me, part of it was just being in awe of the people who took the time. This wasn't a quick judgment. This was taking the time to go through the work and deeply receiving the work.

For me, it was judging of the best kind, and I was awed by that, and then awed by the work of the people who were judges. I fell into a state of awe that lasted for quite some time, and it was both empowering and humbling at the same time, and the others who were finalists, they were so kind. Some of those phone calls, I'm going to remember for the rest of my life.

**Nick:** I think, to bring this episode of *The Campfire* to a close, we would be deeply honored if you would read for us from *Forest Primeval* to give listeners a taste of what this book is about. You mentioned a poem, in particular. If, maybe, you could just explain what it is before you read it.

**Vieeve:** Thank you. This is my most requested poem. It's a harrowing poem to read. Its history, I was at Warren Wilson, the MFA residency, just visiting, listening to those lectures, which are just some of the best in the country. I would go to Warren Wilson just to sit and listen to those MFA lectures. I could go on and on about it.

I was listening to Jen Grotz do a lecture on poetics and boxing, and in the audience was Gaby Calvocoressi, and of course, she has that incredible book, *Apocalyptic Swing*. What a name for a book with boxing, and it's got this gorgeous cover. It almost looks like Joe Louis' fist, the one you see in Detroit, that huge sculpture.

After this, I ran up to Jen, I think, and Gaby was standing there, and I started talking about my love of boxing, which rises from violence in childhood, and of course, I'd had fistfights, and I used the term, of course, and they both looked at me, "Vieeve, what are you talking about?" So, I'm talking to them as if, of course, all three of us have been in fisticuffs, right? "Wow, tell me about your brawls," and they're looking at me as if I've lost my mind. They're like, "No, we haven't been brawlers," and that day, I began writing this poem, and as with many of my poems, I thought I was writing one thing, but then the thing that was really stirred and that was haunting me shows itself. So, "Taking It (for Gaby and Jen)":

I never remember the knuckles, though his hand was bare, though their hands were bare.  
I remember the impressions left on this skin, the wilting and welting.  
I don't remember the sound, not one smack. I remember the falls, myself falling to the floor, a sidewalk, or against the brick wall my head met after a push.  
There were many pushes: girls pushed. But, I punched, pulled one down by the hair and kneed her as my own head bled.  
Girls didn't punch until high school. I had always punched.  
"What kind of girl are you?" my father asked.  
"The kind who wants to live," I said, and I did want to until I didn't anymore.  
But, I wanted to leave and to be on my own terms, so I hit my father back.  
He owned me like any good country father.  
He waited for a husband to tame what he couldn't corral, to throw a rope like fingers around the neck.  
And when I missed a boy, finger holds, I remember those, and me making a fist wrongly, and punching, and I didn't mean to miss, but to hit the line below the belly, the belt line.  
Broke me in the snow my first year north. I'm still afraid to say his name.  
I wore shoes too thin for the weather. Who had ever seen such snow and had a Georgia lilt like molasses on a sore throat—sugared, raw—and he hated the sound of it.

He was black, and I was black, and I was so happy to be in Detroit, and he aimed for my  
heart-shaped mouth, my gap teeth, my too sweet tongue.  
I felt the juvenile weight of him above me like snow after dark falling—steady and hard.  
"I'm going to teach you talk regular," and I stopped speaking at all.  
I kept my swollen mouth shut, and a straight razor in my math book, and dreamt of a  
bat cracking against his chest.  
A woman like me with soft hands, not hands of the field, but hands meant to stroke and  
soothe needs a weapon.  
So, I studied the art of war, and watched boxing, and where else was all this rage to go?  
Is this too dramatic? Find another story. Find a lie, and love.  
Body after body fell beneath my own.  
Though my own was broken and I made love like a sea creature, fluid as if boneless,  
though my bones would rattle if not for the fact I cherish. Wouldn't you?  
And I grew to love the heavyweights, myself with one in the ring.  
Imagine him, punching me and punching me again saying, "I'm sorry, so sorry to have to  
love you this way."

**Nick:** Lori Anne Ferrell and Vievee Francis, on that beautiful note, thank you for joining us on  
The Campfire.

**Vievee:** Thank you.

**Lori Anne:** Thank you.