

## PREFACE

Every year, I experience a minor crisis over the title of this series, *Corresponding Voices*. It sounds too polite, too neat. But then I remember that our founder, the late Pedro Cuperman, intended it as something of an illusion, one that suggests harmony between disparate voices, but in fact puts a productive pressure on that idea. In truth, we do not curate this series by way of some perceived agreement or harmony, and in fact, disharmony would serve our notion of correspondence just as well. Contention. Friction. Voices at variance. Pedro's conception here, as he stated it, was to create, in these annual volumes, "a continuous, meaningful text, with relatively loosely defined borders, where translation and dialogue with other poets occupies a central role." When I recall Pedro's sense of the multivocal and multivalent, of boundary crossing as marks of transgression, the title snaps back into place. *Corresponding Voices* offers an untidy, more expansive notion of correspondence, one that is ever-opening and reconfiguring, a resistance to the closed-circuit knowing (or posturing) of the now-outdated lyric.

If there is any agreement between the poems in this new issue, it could be an appetite for what René Char calls "a certain anxiety which, when tasted among the swirling sum of things existent or forefelt, causes, as the taste dies, joy." The poems here transgress and transform, split meaning and breath, invite discord and even cacophony in service of a rarer joy that comes from resisting the false sense of some essential, static "identity" or "truth." Because in truth, errancy also corresponds. Our own daily failure of comprehending our world corresponds. Our collective destruction of the planet corresponds. Poetry, in its very attention to language, makes music of the disastrous, puts "not knowing" into a place of primacy, invites synaptic leaps of energy, via the poetic line, as transactions that will shock or shake loose our deadlocked thinking or implacable feeling.

In her long series that opens this volume, Rachel Eliza Griffiths seems to speak to this problem: "To see it all would mean my absence..." We serve as obstructions to ourselves, to our view of the world. And yet, via the poems, we resist a bit, we reassemble, we decide for a moment to entertain a reconfiguration that will save us from what Puro sees, in one poem, as our inevitable end, as we "die floating in opposite directions..." *Corresponding Voices* offers a humble stay to such despair: let's not float away from each other just yet, but rather come together via the artifice of art; not in the pretty or orderly way, not as a palliative, but via the rifts and riot of the "swirling sum of things" that these poets offer — let's correspond.

—Jules Gibbs, Series Editor



Photograph by Rachel Eliza Griffiths