

Finalists for the Wesleyan Poetry Series: Rae Armantrout

The Wesleyan Poetry Series is one of the most prestigious poetry awards in the United States. Each year, the series publishes a new book of poetry by an emerging or established poet. This year, the finalists for the series are Rae Armantrout, Natalie Diaz, and Terrance Hayes.



Finalists (Wesleyan Poetry Series) by Rae Armantrout

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
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Rae Armantrout

Rae Armantrout is a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet known for her innovative and challenging work. Her poems are often short and fragmentary, and they explore the nature of language, perception, and identity. Armantrout has published over 20 books of poetry, including *Necropolis* (1989), *Versed* (2009), and *Partly: New and Selected Poems* (2016).

In her poem "The Invention of Glass," Armantrout explores the relationship between language and the material world. The poem begins with a description of the invention of glass:



***“In the beginning was the word,
and the word was with God,
and the word was glass.”***

Armantrout then goes on to explore the ways in which glass can be used to represent and distort reality. She writes:



***“Glass is a transparent material,
but it can also be opaque.
It can be used to create windows,
or it can be used to create mirrors.”***

Armantrout's poem suggests that language is also a transparent and opaque material. It can be used to communicate our thoughts and feelings, but it can also be used to distort and deceive. Armantrout's work challenges us to think about the ways in which language shapes our perception of the world.

Natalie Diaz

Natalie Diaz is a Mojave American poet known for her lyrical and evocative work. Her poems explore the themes of identity, loss, and resilience. Diaz has published two books of poetry, *When My Brother Was an Aztec* (2012) and *Postcolonial Love Poem* (2020).

In her poem "American Arithmetic," Diaz explores the legacy of colonialism and violence in the United States. The poem begins with a description of a classroom in which the students are learning about the history of slavery:



“In a classroom in America,

the teacher writes

slavery on the board.

The students

stare at the word,

at the letters

that make up

the word.”

Diaz then goes on to explore the ways in which the legacy of slavery continues to shape American society. She writes:





“American arithmetic,

the sum of our parts

is never equal

to the whole.”

Diaz's poem challenges us to confront the legacy of racism and violence in the United States. Her work reminds us that the struggle for justice and equality is ongoing.

Terrance Hayes

Terrance Hayes is a National Book Award-winning poet known for his experimental and innovative work. His poems explore the themes of race, identity, and the American South. Hayes has published five books of poetry, including *Wind in a Box* (2006), *Lighthead* (2010), and *American Sonnets for My Father* (2018).

In his poem "Wind in a Box," Hayes explores the relationship between memory and imagination. The poem begins with a description of a box that contains the wind:



“I have a box

in which I keep

the wind.

I caught it

one day

when it was

still.”

Hayes then goes on to explore the ways in which the wind can be used to represent and distort the past. He writes:

““

“I can open

the box

and let it out

any time

I want.

It will blow

through my hair

and make

me remember.”

Hayes' poem suggests that memory is not a fixed and unchanging thing. It is something that is constantly being shaped and reshaped by our imagination. Hayes' work challenges us to think about the ways in which our memories shape our perception of the past.

The three finalists for the Wesleyan Poetry Series are all outstanding poets who are making significant contributions to contemporary American poetry. Their work is innovative, challenging, and thought-provoking. The winner of the series will be announced in April 2023.



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