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the87press**Author bio:**

Emily Lee Luan is the author of *□ / Return*, a winner of the Nightboat Poetry Prize and forthcoming with the87press in the UK, and *I Watch the Boughs* (2021), selected by Gabrielle Calvocoressi for a Poetry Society of America Chapbook Fellowship. A 2025 National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellow and the recipient of a Pushcart Prize, her work has appeared in *The Best American Poetry 2021*, *American Poetry Review*, *Lithub*, and elsewhere. She teaches at Adelphi University and lives in Brooklyn, New York.

□ / Return

Emily Lee Luan

A contemporary take on the traditional Chinese reversible poem meditating on memory, migration, and Taiwanese diasporic experience.

- Rooted in the classical tradition of the Chinese reversible poem, this debut poetry collection explores longing, displacement and inherited history
- 2025 National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellow, 2023 NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellow in Poetry, and the recipient of a 2022 Pushcart Prize.
- Has received fellowships and scholarships from the Asian American Writers' Workshop, Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, Jentel, Kenyon Writers Workshops, Millay, Monson Arts, Lighthouse Works, Storyknife, and Willapa Bay AiR.
- For Fans Of: Don Mee Choi, Theresa Hak Kyun Cha, Mei-mei Berssenbrugge

About the book

Rooted in the classical tradition of the Chinese “reversible” poem, *□ / Return* is engaged in the act of looking back—toward an imagined homeland and a childhood of suburban longing, through migratory passages, departures, and etymologies, and into the various holes and voids that appear in the telling and retelling of history. The poems ask: What is feeling? What is melancholy? Can language translate either?

Reviews

Luan's meditative debut explores the Taiwanese diasporic experience through poems rich with vivid imagery, imagination, and candor that draw from the classical tradition of the Chinese “reversible” poem. —*Publishers Weekly*

In *□ / Return*, Emily Lee Luan's stunning reflections on sorrow haunt the sensorium. This sorrow—or “an anger rooted in sadness”—is untranslatable, rooted in the violence of colonization, displacement, and deracination. And yet Luan's poems, which alloy Chinese and English into feats of formal ingenuity and beauty, translate the unspeakable. Read it once, then read it again slowly to perceive the spectrum of emotions Luan unseams with dexterity. *□ / Return* heralds a potent new voice in poetry. —Cathy Park Hong

A book of both startling intimacy and formal excitement, neither compromising the other, *□ / Return* is an assured and moving debut that navigates the murk (and heft) of the past, dissatisfied with easy nostalgia. —Wendy Xu, *BOMB Magazine*