For immediate release February 28, 2014

Poet’s second collection works through loss of a friend, beginning at the end

PITTSBURGH—Teresa Leo said her new poetry collection Bloom in Reverse “is a book where grief, melancholy, heartbreak, and disillusionment intersect with urban romanticism, hope, possibility, and love.” It has just been released by the University of Pittsburgh Press.

Bloom in Reverse chronicles the aftermath of a friend’s suicide and the end of a turbulent relationship. Leo works through devastation and loss while searching for solace—from local bars to online dating and beyond, to find ultimately a true connection and sustaining love. “Things move backwards, from death to life,” she explained, “like a reverse time-lapse video of a dead flower morphing from a brittle, scorched entity to floral glory to nascent bud.”

“Clarity of feeling and insight still fight the battle for ‘hipness’ in American poetry, but Teresa Leo makes a large cut into the cold caverns of conceptualism by chronicling a friend’s suicide in a way that feels breathless and moving,” praised Major Jackson. “Such amplitude and precision masterfully locate love and grief, making Bloom in Reverse a new frontier for being in the world and surviving.”

Leo, who resides in Landsdowne, Pennsylvania, near Philadelphia, noted she hopes Bloom in Reverse helps to raise awareness about the “often taboo and under-discussed topic” of women and suicide.

Leo is the author of the poetry collection The Halo Rule, which won the Elixir Press Editors’ Prize. She received a Pew fellowship, a Leeway Foundation grant, two Pennsylvania Council on the Arts fellowships, and the Richard Peterson Poetry Prize. Leo serves on the board of Musehouse, a center for the literary arts in Philadelphia, and works at the University of Pennsylvania.

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Bloom in Reverse, poems by Teresa Leo, is published by the University of Pittsburgh Press.
104 pp. • 5.75 x 9 • ISBN 9780822962977 • Paper $15.95