A Body of Work

One comes, eventually, to the realization
that one will leave behind only
a body of work that will grow increasingly
unintelligible to each new generation. A trace
will remain spread across the vast
internet in much the way certain particles
inhabit the emptiness of deep space—negligibly,
though perhaps measurably. I, for instance,
am childless and, therefore, most likely
will die alone, my nest feathered
with yellowing poems. One comes, eventually,
to the knowledge that one's children
are increasingly unintelligible, being yellowing
poems spread across the emptiness of deep space—
negligible, though they once seemed, in their way,
to breathe. For instance, I am alive, right here,
in the middle of my poem, having had, perhaps,
too much to drink. One comes, eventually,
to the certainty that one's body of work
is nothing like another man's progeny, being
made of language which can only veer
toward emptiness as years become empty space.
For instance, hello? I am calling out to you,
folded here between the pages
of generations. You don't know me, but once
I was particulate and alive. Now what am I?

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Kevin Prufer's next book, *The Fears*, will soon be published by Copper Canyon Press. Among his many previous collections, *How He Loved Them* (Four Way Books) was longlisted for the 2019 Pulitzer Prize and received the Julie Suk Award and *Churches* (Four Way Books) was named one of the ten best poetry books of 2014 by *The New York Times Book Review.* He lives in Houston, Texas, where he directs the Unsung Masters Series (a book series devoted to bringing great but forgotten authors to new generations of readers) and is a professor in the University of Houston's Creative Writing Program.