



Lark Books & Writing Studio



d.a. levy-palooza 3: celebrating three renegade presses

We get the good word from Lark Books & Writing Studio, Nostrovian! Press, and Nous-zot Press in advance of the May Day event.

ART

Hugo Bastidas

FILM

Books! Screenings!

The Adolfas Diaries at Anthology and Kathryn Ramey at Connectivity

LIBRARIES

CHLOE: With 'An Enthusiastic Roar for Everything Literary,' a Library Grows in Southeast D.C.

MUSIC

What the Purple One Taught Me in 1984

POETRY

Julie E. Bloemeke, Ryan Nowlin, Abraham Smith

SMALL PRESS

Arm-in-Arm with Sibling Rivalry Press
Opening Paths with Four Way Books

Spiriting the Radical with Lark Books

Boog City’s small press editor Joe Pan is excited to bring our readers a series of interviews between small press publishers and their authors. This month we have authors Ginger Ko (Comorbid) and Raquel Salas-Rivera (oropel/tinsel) in conversation with Elizabeth Treadwell, poet and publisher of Lark Books & Writing Studio.

Elizabeth Treadwell: Since Lark is just getting started, the importance of each book to our process of self (press) definition feels even more luminous and resonant than it otherwise might. I am so, so happy and honored to have each of your books as one of our first five—Ginger Ko’s *Comorbid* and Raquel Salas-Rivera’s *oropel/tinsel*. I love them both so much!

Can you each say a little about your book and how it fits into your writing and publishing life so far? How it relates to your other books and unpublished works and doings (knowings)?

Can you also each say a little about some of the books that have been important to you at different stages in your lives? (Including childhood.) (At Lark we include childhood—as you know my daughters are my coworkers in Lark!) (For me this inclusion is a radical act, a stand against unexamined hierarchies of experience, and false nostalgias, too.) (Lark is a healing press.) (I will let you talk.)

Ginger Ko: *Comorbid* is definitely something very new for me, a style and consideration that I’m just starting to apply to all facets of my life. And I feel incredibly lucky that *Comorbid* is in the care of Lark Books! I’ve gone through some trauma with the first publisher of my book, *Motherlover*, before the book was re-released by Bloof Books, so when I placed *Comorbid* with Lark, it was this feeling of almost bliss, the relief was so great and right. A big part of *Comorbid* is considering the ideas of safe spaces, the fragrantcy of self-advocacy, and reclamation of abjection, and I knew I could completely trust Lark as a home for that work.

The books that really began it all for me, as a booknerd girl who felt incurably hapless, were Robin McKinley’s fantasy children’s books, especially *The Blue Sword* and *The Hero and The Crown*. Brave and ethical young women protagonists were a revelation for me, and sadly a model I began to lose as I entered into the “English Literature” study of my undergraduate major. I didn’t have any poetry in my soul’s shelf until my M.F.A. and discovered Kim Hyesoon, Hiromi Iti, Dorothea Lasky, Danielle Pafunda, and Claudia Rankine. These women write about really difficult things, but I think that kind of unflinching testament provides the space to heal.

Raquel Salas-Rivera: The first book I wrote was a book in English called *Three Elements at Sixteen*. I wrote it from the age of 12 to 17, and it related to the dislocation of my childhood years and the relocation that followed my “return” to Puerto Rico. Additionally, it was my way of thinking through my relationship to the colonizer’s language, which was my own language, and how this language formed part of my experiences to such an extent that even if I read in Spanish, fought in Spanish, and lived in a Spanish-speaking country, I couldn’t bring myself to write in Spanish.

The first book I published, *Caneca de anhelos turbios*, began as a book in English. My mother was helping me translate some of the poems and, while correcting the translations, I began to write in Spanish. This was a major shift for me. I had been reading Vallejo, Lorca, and everyone who was beast and suddenly I could write in this language that had seemed so experientially inaccessible. *Caneca* took shape over a period of five or six years. It was largely informed by my participation in both the 2005 and the 2010 student strikes at the University of Puerto Rico and Aníbal Acevedo Vila’s budget cuts.

I came back to the U.S. for graduate school near the beginning of my Saturn Return. I had been living in Puerto Rico for 11 years and had no interest in staying in the U.S. *tierra intermitente* was the book I wrote during these first few years in Philly. Mostly, I wrote it as a way of saying to extraño Puerto Rico, but there is a lot in there that centers around being a cuirican in sexile.

There is usually a highway to cross between the writing experience(s) and the stressful publication process, but this was not the case with *oropel/tinsel*. Lark Books has given me such freedom in terms of the writing and editing that I really feel at home in my cuir-language(s).

oropel/tinsel is the most and least confessional of my books. I feel that a reader that knows me might think I’m about to give away my login password, but that most readers will think I’m speaking in code, which (of course) I am. It was written after a major political breakup and before I turned thirty. Basically, it’s my Saturn Return book; my book of fuck yous and love y’alls. For the longest time, I thought ‘oropel’ translated as ‘fool’s gold’ rather than ‘tinsel,’ so I think my definition includes ‘fool’s gold’ as a possible (mis)translation. Coming from the queerest of places and formations, I wrote these poems as my way of pledging my commitment to a radicalism that resists a politics of representation, a radicalism that chooses supplementary over the purity of origin.

ET: Thank you both so much for these responses, which are so open and buoying. I’m also curious as to whether there are any “obscured” women poets of antiquity/priority that you have learned of and want to share?

Lark Books & Writing Studio

RSR: I can’t speak much to women poets of antiquity, but I can speak to specifically Puerto Rican women poets of obscurity. I’ve been working for a while with poets that rewrite erasure through what I call “pointing at nothingness” and a few names stand out. The first is Anjelamaría Dávila Malavé, a poet who wrote during the latter half of the 20th century. Calling her obscure is not quite accurate, since she

has a strong following among Puerto Rican poets, but it is difficult to acquire her books and not that many people know her outside of Puerto Rico. I’ve been working on a translation of *Animal fiero y tierno* for a few years now. The book’s skin is composed of permeable boundaries or “frontiers with the air” that demarcate but do not exclude. Multiple voices echo within its intermittent frame, where the reader must choose whether or not to participate by lingering in the lacunas of shadowy, mossy, wet places, dark niches where the crying begins even before the crier can be named. There, the answer—who is not a principal voice but an open subject that is searching for her “lineage”—learns to make alliances, responding to hostile voices through haphscotched multiplicity. To be of the book is to assume the precarity of an identity that is always being formed through the shared anonymity of collective loss.

Then there is Marigloria Palma. She is my obsession and my greatest fear. I’m elated that people like Carina del Valle Schorske are taking an interest in and translating her work. I found *La noche y otras flores eléctricas* among my grandfather’s books and spent a while reading, crying, and rereading her. Throughout her life she wrote poetry books, children’s books, plays and novels, most of which I’ve had difficulty locating. The fact that she could be so transformative and seldom discussed makes me want to burn things. For the longest time I would ask different Puerto Rican poets why she wasn’t as well-known as her contemporaries and would get a disparate set of answers, until I finally stopped asking and started assuming that being Boricua and a woman was reason enough. Palma taught me about grandiloquent irrelevance, about being the bad word, the lyrical discards, without falling into abjection. She taught me about celebrating the pigeons, the manyies, the big littles. She is my patron saint.

GK: An “obscure” poet that I’m really interested in, and still learning about, is a major Chinese feminist poet who was introduced to me by my mother: Zhai Yongming. My mother is Chinese, and still learns about the world through her first language, so she’s really active in Chinese-language message boards based in China. On Weibo, my mother read lines that others shared from Zhai Yongming’s poetry as a way to spark discussion and commiseration, and in turn, she mentioned them to me when we spoke on the phone. My mother’s critical engagement with Zhai’s poetry was really touching and impressive to me, and we were able to discuss the poignancy of representative language in ways that we were never able to before. Zhai is of my mother’s generation, whose younger life was deeply affected by the political turmoil of the Cultural Revolution, and much of her most powerful poetry was published during the 1980s. Her poetry engages with the public face of political oppression, and the private face of patriarchal family structures, and of course her language also draws from the strong cultural tradition of wordplay and punning—whether joking, insulting, or expressing soul grief, the Chinese language always looks for homonyms, picturesque metaphor, and history within the layers of language. I’m really, really eager for an English translation of her work to be brought to the Western world.

ET: Thank you. It is so good to be introduced to these writers. To wrap up, maybe we should include an excerpt from each of your books? Do you want to exchange manuscripts and choose excerpts for each other?

GK: I’m shivering reading through *oropel*, thinking of taking slices from it is very hard for me, I hope I can do this work justice!!

From “en la metrópolis soñada” / “in the dream metropolis”

como llegué después de la barbarie
le temo al fuego, como mi madre me dio fuego primero
temo la cocina, como nunca pude superar mi humanidad avanzada
temo cuidarme
la piel como charcos de aceite viejo como vela derretida con llama abierta
temo bañarme brinco grietas
sabes que no puedes contar conmigo querida
apenas puedo doblar la ropa

como llegué después del tiempo completo
adquiero trabajos adquiero
tu medicamento

si me llevas al mar será ocean city
si te llevo al mar será buyé

since i came after barbarism
i fear fire, since my mother first gave me fire
i fear the kitchen, since i could never overcome my advanced humanity
i fear self-care
the skin like pools of old oil like the melted candle with open flame
i fear bathing i skip cracks
you know you can’t count on me querida
i can barely fold clothes

since i came after full-time
i acquire little jobs i acquire
your medication

if you take me to the sea it’ll be ocean city
if i take you to the sea it’ll be buyé

RSR: I want to tattoo *Comorbid* on my soul. These are my selections:

From “Representation”

I tell you, desire is not a flame.
It is the scraping of a heavy stone lid.
It is not a burst, a flagrant. It is
imagining the course of the sun by
the rim’s little leaks.) My life
was not your image. (My life
is not your telling!)

From “Residency”

(If I live or die, just an assembled woman.
(I have tried so hard to grow from a girl into a man.
(I’m fury-righteous of my body but in the everyday still wish to be a simple mother.
(With a body like an ox or wolf. (Instead, a naked housecat.)
(The light-switch of seeing all the way through to the fourth carbon copy.
(The off switch is dead.

(The off switch is dead.

This part is actually my favorite, but including it would cut it out of one of the verses. Still, I’m leaving it here because I love it so. From “Subjectivity”:

(I want something made
just for me, for me
and my history.)

HOLLA

Ginger Ko is the author of *Motherlover* and *Inherit*, both from Bloof Books, and *Comorbid*, from Lark. She lives in Athens, Ga., where she is a Ph.D. student at the University of Georgia’s Creative Writing Program.

Raquel Salas-Rivera has published poetry and essays in anthologies and journals such as *Los rostros de la Hidra*, *Tongvas*, *En la Orilla*, *Claridad*, *Quaint*, *#gorgonpoetics*, and *La Revista del ICP*. In 2010 she won first place in two literary contests: El Decimosexto certamen literario de la Universidad Politécnica de Puerto Rico and El Certamen de Poesía del Festival Cultural Queer de Mayagüez. Her first book, *Caneca de anhelos turbios*, was published by Editora Educación Emergente. *oropel/tinsel* is new from Lark.

Elizabeth Treadwell’s *Penny Marvel & the book of the city of selfys* is forthcoming from Dusie in 2017 and also exists in another iteration as a tumblr at <http://www.pennymarvel.tumblr.com>. A selection from her earlier books appears in *Out of Everywhere 2: Linguistically Innovative Poetry by Women in North America & the UK* (Reality Street).

For me this inclusion [of childhood] is a radical act, a stand against unexamined hierarchies of experience, and false nostalgias.
—Elizabeth Treadwell



Lark Street publisher Elizabeth Treadwell, and authors Ginger Ko and Raquel Salas-Rivera.



To Health and Art with Nostrovial! Press

Boog City’s small press editor Joe Pan is excited to bring our readers a series of interviews between small press publishers and their authors. This month we have author Sarah Certa in conversation with Nostrovial Press (Christopher Morgan and Jeremiah Walton).

Sarah Certa: So one of my favorite things about NIP, and the thing that drew me to submitting work your way, is that you seem to make your own rules, from having a 48-hour flash submission period to donation-based chapbooks for sale, yet at the same time you are organized and structured, just in a way that is different from a lot of other presses. You bring a lot of fresh energy to the publishing scene and this seems to be an integral part of NIP’s philosophy. Tell me where your inspiration for this comes from. What are the root energies that give shape to NIP? How did all of this begin?

NIP: Much of NIP’s momentum came from traveling. The press has been managed on and off the road by Jeremiah since 2013. Libraries and cafes provided Wi-Fi, and we’d bop around from open mic to open mic, busking on street corners, kicking it with different communities around the country to get our name out there.

Running NIP’s projects on the road also lead to some ramshackle tendencies. The road doesn’t give a shit if you have a deadline, and the immediate moment’s crisis would often take priority. Things didn’t begin having a solid structure until early 2015 with Christopher’s idea of launching a chapbook contest. Up until that point we’d had a few ideas about the upcoming NYC Poetry Festival, and were even considering self-publishing some titles of our own. But that didn’t feel right. We wanted to enable other writers in the community, knowing firsthand how hard it could be to find a place to really champion your work.... but it was already February and we only had a few months until July! and we still had so many questions.

But we talked and talked and finally decided, even though neither of us had hosted a contest before, that we should just fucking go for it and work our damndest to make it happen! We immediately began looking at all the other presses in the indie scene that were big influences (s/o to Big Lucks and tNY Press, especially), researching each step as we went along. We revamped the website and began laying out a stronger foundation to better operate from. Through it all, we kept asking ourselves how we would want to be treated if we were the writers. We knew we wanted the chapbook contest to be free, and to give as many people a chance as we could. We also wanted to really make our writers feel like they were part of a family, that their work would be reviewed and shared and promoted well after the initial publication excitement subsided.

We meshed the beat-up tendencies of the road and the sound structure necessary for successfully releasing publications by interweaving our backgrounds.

SC: Well you’ve definitely succeeded in making your authors feel like family! And you’ve done such an amazing job in continuing to promote our work, from making the chaps available as e-books a few months after publication to the online reading that you hosted last fall. You put a lot of energy into getting people excited about your authors and it’s been really wonderful to be included in that. And I love that NIP is a traveling press. All that movement! I imagine NIP has an audience in cities all across the country, both on the Internet and off. Is this true? And who do you think of when you think of your audience? Whose hearts are you pulled toward/whose hearts do you pull?

NIP: The social circles we run around in form a convoluted Venn diagram. We’ve kicked it at desert punk house shows, Cleveland wine-fueled poet gatherings, the cleaner cut edge of New York City, Santa Cruz libraries, Rainbow Gatherings, impromptu squat circle pits, Lit Crawl San Francisco, open mics/slams from New Hampshire to Oakland, and the boardwalk of Venice Beach to New Orleans street corners.

We distribute wherever we are, setting up the traveling bookstore when we can, and promote thru conversation, kicking it with other artists/poets/writers/creatives, encouraging each other over wine corks and clichéd cigarettes, sharing our passions. We have a lot of strange ciphers, and freestyle circles kick off wherever we go. Foregoing the barriers of ‘mass communications’ with direct interaction is invaluable.

I remember when NIP first kicked off, I (Jeremiah) was 16 and sneaking nano-poem collections into books at Barnes & Noble. In Austin, Texas, on our last tour, thru hilariously drunk coincidence, we bumped into someone who donated to NIP’s Indiegogo campaign to launch the traveling bookstore.

If you gathered all of our readers, homies, writers, everyone who’s participated in/with NIP, we all probably wouldn’t get along. But what’s important is each person finding their own way to interact with what we’re doing, and that we live up to our goal of pushing passionate living > making a living.

SC: I love that so much and am so excited to participate with NIP in person this spring. And passionate living > making a living (x) Infinity! Yet so many writers and artists, myself included, struggle so much with balancing our passions with our incomes. I theorize often about collective ways to change this and wonder if you have anything to add. What are the various ways you’ve managed to live your passions within a capitalist society?



Nostrovial Press’s Christopher Morgan and Jeremiah Walton, and author Sarah Certa.

NIP: Saving up prior to hitting the road with Books & Shovels is the ideal situation to sustain ourselves, but that safety net isn’t always viable. There are deadlines and promises set that need fulfillment. Meeting those can be one hell of a process.

Everything is donation-based when we set up the bookstore. We’ve traded for songs, books, food, showers, rides, cigarettes, wine—anything really. We appreciate monetary donations, but it’s primarily a barter system.

And when we fail to accumulate necessities thru shows and open mics, and cops keep us from setting up on street corners, it comes down to scrounging.

New Hampshire benevolence found us showers in the muggy summer. Saints of the desert traded meals for books. Santa Cruz dumpsters have filled our bellies. Work exchanges in Flagstaff landed us some gas money. Flying signs in Kansas City on Thanksgiving landed us a cold turkey feast for days. I’d crack jokes for smokes while we performed street poems, hip-hop, Sublime sing-alongs.

In Denver, I threw a kid spanging 50 cents. He saw us busking later, and threw us ½ a pizza someone had kicked him down.

On our second 2015 tour, in Santa Cruz, we lost our ride, and Christopher scooped up a friend and I from a parking lot where we were stuck with piles of books, everything fueling Books & Shovels. From there, we bopped around the Bay homeless and waiting on Beast Crawl to perform. We slept around Berkeley sidewalks for a bit, till luck couchsurfed us in San Francisco with a cat we met in City Lights. Adventures in-between led him to Tucson where

we’re now roommates. This cat ended up giving us lodging thru to the show, and thanks to a loan from another homie, we were able to Greyhound with most of the books and our gear out East to the NYC Poetry Festival.

We’ve switched it up from couchsurfing, urban camping, rubber tramping—we roll with the situations as they arise. The pay-it-forward attitude has saved our asses, and we work to keep that cycle rolling when we have the resources to.

Luckily, with the calendar’s flip into 2016, things are smoothing out economically, and NIP is almost getting to a point where it can fund its projects without having to rely on presales. Support from the community has really blown us away (especially for the chapbooks), so we’re almost breaking even overall.

Experience is a currency worthwhile. From getting illegally searched and arrested in Arkansas, to setting up the bookstore on Frenchman Street in New Orleans with Cajun feasts, we’ve been battered and raised. The destinations, monetary opportunities (if they existed), the shows and gains, these don’t elicit a sense of fulfillment.

It comes down to the process, having the opportunity to inspire ourselves and others.

SC: You said “process” and I am jumping up and down! Because not only is “process > product” a fundamental truth about art (for me, anyway), but it’s also something I’ve been thinking about a lot on an even greater scale, how a capitalist system emphasizes product over process yet as human beings we are inherently processes, cyclical and infinite. I feel like NIP is a manifestation of a return to this aspect of ourselves, to our passions and talents and truths, and this makes me more excited than I can articulate. I am especially into quantum physics lately, in attuning myself to the subatomic particles that make up a *thing*, and I can tell that NIP is literally woven from love. You’ve put your hearts into NIP and I can feel the radiation! I feel blessed to be a part of the NIP family. In closing, where do you envision the press growing towards next? Will there be more chapbooks? Art books? Live online dance parties?

NIP: Aww Sarah, we at NIP have been blessed to feature you and your work, too!!! and yes, yes, yes, there’s no final destination for any of this jazz. It’s always the inevitable: “What’s next?”

Right now we’re focusing on *Fuck Art, Let’s Dance*, NIP’s zine, to offer an accessible amp for voices in and outside the literary community.

As we bop around hitting open mics, street freestyle ciphers, kicking it with New Orleans street typists, anywhere we end up bumping into voices seeking outlets, we solicit submissions. While some doors may open with welcoming arms, the literary community has clichés, cliques, and divides that do not always make it easy to find larger outlets to express yourself. We want to bridge that gap with *Fuck Art, Let’s Dance*.

Our annual chapbook contest is still alive and kicking, and we’re grateful for all the momentum it’s already gathered! We closed out 2015 with an awesome online poetry reading, and we’re looking to coordinate more digital parties thru 2016. Incorporating dancing would be rad. Next we’re looking at hitting the road with the traveling bookstore come January 2017. Some obligations in Tucson, AZ, manifested, and we’re now split between the desert and the Bay.

No idea where we’re headed. We’re just dancing.

Sarah Certa is a poet and author of the full-length collection *Nothing To Do with Me* (University of Hell Press). She is also the author of the e-chap *JULIET (I)* (H_NGM_N Books) and the chapbook *JULIET (III)*, which was one the winners of Nostrovial’s 2015 Chapbook Contest. Both chapbooks and more are available for free download on her website, <http://www.sarahxerta.com>. She lives in Minnesota.

Christopher Morgan is the author of *Shadow Songs* (Sad Spell Press) and the co-manager and chapbook editor of Nostrovial Press. He grew up in Detroit and the Bible Belt of Georgia, before settling in the San Francisco Bay Area, where he received his M.A. in creative writing and American Literature. The reviews coordinator for *Alien Mouth*, he also edits for tNY Press and *Arroyo Literary Review*. His work has been published at Gargoyles, A cappella Zoo, Voicemail Poems, Bartleby Snopes, DOGZPLOT, and *Fruita Pulp*, among others. He loves fables, hiking in the redwoods, and happy hour margaritas.

Jeremiah Walton is a 21-year-old poet from New Hampshire who has been bopping around the country the past two years. He featured at the NYC Poetry Festival, Snoetry, Beast Crawl, and San Francisco Lit Crawl. Walton is founder of traveling pop-up bookstore Books & Shovels and small press Nostrovial. He stays up late talking to the moon. He externalizes to survive and functions best in consistent crisis.

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Boog City presents

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celebrating three renegade presses

Sun. May 1, 2016, 12:00 p.m., \$5 suggested

Lark Books & Writing Studio

<http://www.larkbooksandwritingstudio.com/press.html>
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Nostrovial!



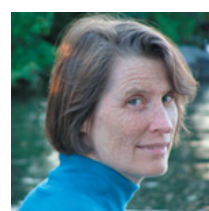
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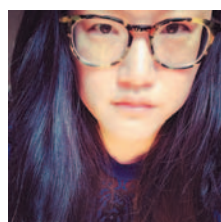
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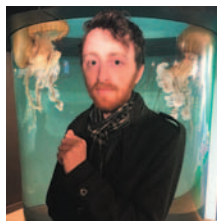
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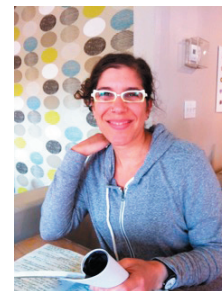
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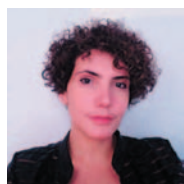
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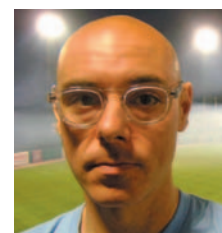
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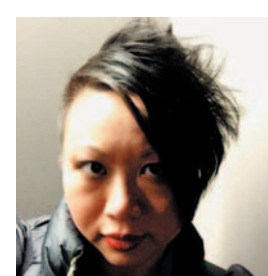
Renée Sarojini Saklikar



Jeremiah Walton



Patrick Williams (music)



Annie Won

2, 3 to Grand Army Plaza, C to Clinton-Washington aves, Q to 7th Ave.
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Discovering the We/Us Others with Nous-zot Press

Boog City’s small press editor Joe Pan is excited to bring our readers a series of interviews between small press publishers and their authors. This month we have author annie won, author of the chapbook *so i can sleep*, in conversation with Marthe Reed, poet and publisher of Nous-zot Press.

Marthe Reed: annie, you and I met in Providence, Rhode Island, a couple of years ago, at a reading organized by the marvelous Kate Schapira. I recall being excited to hear your work, to discover a poet I had not yet encountered. The poems themselves are challenging, non-narrative often, and disjunctive. And yet I found myself intriguingly captivated by the directness of the address in the work, the present quality of the voice, how the reader is pulled into the private space of this encounter: the poems intimate and yet curiously dispassionate, analytical.

: simply transcribing : what you have to say :
: this is less reliable :
: have you woken up yet :
: can you hear me :

Nous-zot Press Publisher Marthe Reed.

When I saw the manuscript pages, I was struck by your attention to the page—suggestive of *Un Coup de Dés* in its expansiveness—and the incorporated images, often technical drawings. Would you talk a bit about these impulses in the writing?

annie won: how wonderful it was for kate to gather all of us together! it was wonderful to work with you to bring the chap to print! and thank you for the kind allusion! even though i was not previously familiar with mallarmé’s work, i do find similar bloodlines in his relationships between content, form, and white space. as my old piano teacher once taught me, music is not just about the notes. it is also about respecting the silence that surrounds it. listening to the silence is also a type of music. white space exacts pause. this is where the visual meets text. the work was initially conceived in powerpoint (yes, a bear to translate to an actual printing proof!), partially because i enjoy the freedom of considering the page as canvas. and sure, all my scientific presentations are done in powerpoint. this is also true.

what is not said also contains its own power. so *i can sleep* was an early venture into translating movement onto the page, as a representation of hybridity, of several registers, not without also representing my dual life as a text/visual artist and scientist. as a former pianist, my mind speaks the language of lyric movement, which finds its way onto the page in that vein. and what better context than the incremental staging of sleep—the considerations of various states of consciousness, how thoughts float in and fly out—within the container of a day/night, sleep/wake cycle. so in this sense, the literal science easily translates into allegory. and even in words that feel more analytical or dispassionate—as someone who desires to move into medicine career-wise, i also find the everyday lay folks’ relationship of scientific/medical terms to be curious. the perception sometimes includes fear—science as a sort of witchcraft. the pills are dangerous. we cannot let them control us. and somehow, again, we talk about control.

what i seek to bring to poetry from my chemistry training is the nature of experiment; two new parts may not create the whole one anticipated. that alone is exciting. similar to crafting a manuscript, to writing, we don’t always know how things will turn out. as a yoga mentor reminds me, you are not the doer. it is a wonderful mystery of being human.

the published rendition came after pulling and tweaking a long poem, and braiding in source material like EEG (brain wave) sketches, scientific and architectural dicta, basic kinematic physics. somehow a whole emerges. a curious story book. the consideration of directionality was not without cardinal direction, and so, the compass is central. “Bring a compass to bed / Point it at your head.” we try to make sense of things, and somehow, they still exist. either way, they exist. and in the existence of objects, we contemplate our nature of being.

MR: In collaborating on the design of the chapbook, you wanted to draw your own cover image, borrowing the idea of a Rube Goldberg machine, which is both playful and intimate in ways similar to the voice in the work. What brought you to these choices and what did you want to bring to the cover in conversation with the writing?

aw: there is much in the way of dialogue of sleep, heard between friends, broadcast through media, rendered scientific by the way of electrodes on the head at a sleep lab, with no lack of pills, devices, and attempted remedies—it appears that for many, no one solution works for long. there is something about our American society that worships the go-and-go. without the need to stop and reconsider, or reflect, or allow for, space becomes a foreign entity, a less-than, what we should “feel guilty” wishing for—and yet, it is the very thing we need. the rube goldberg indications (okay, mostly a multitude of arrows) expressed by the cover graphic are present to indicate a sort of directionality, our psyche needing to control and have a beginning, middle, and end to our actions. as if we could control our sleep, give it four walls, lock it in a box, hide the animal when we don’t need it. then things would make sense. then we would get it. then we could forget about it and stop thinking about it. there is something fascinating about the notion of a rube goldberg machine—best known as a series of painstakingly executed, specifically excessive moves for an otherwise simple task—whether drawn or put into action for the eye to see — we humans enjoy the crash bang boom gadgetry of progressive moments, each very miniature, often completely irrelevant to the matter at hand. and somehow, in the end, the action happens. we sleep. sometimes we do. as if to emphasize the miracle that our bodies do know how to do some things without our help. breathing. shutting down and starting back up. no matter what we feed it, push and pull, head in the other direction. there is something fascinating about the motions, and that is what i wish to capture.

marthe, i was wondering if you could tell me about how nous-z t started. its name is rather curious. so much is contained in a name. you mention on your website that the name has creole derivations—perhaps also hybridized from “nous autres,” also known as “vous autres,” “eux autres,” the Latin “nos alitres,” and the like.

MR: I lived in Lafayette, La., at the time of the press’ founding, and wished to draw some resonance of that place into the work of publishing. Nous-zot has numerous spellings: nouzòt, nou-zòt nous-zots, nous-mem(e), derived from the French “nous” and “autres.” In Canadian French, where lie the origins of French language in southwest Louisiana, “nous autres” is the subject pronoun “we”; however, in south Louisiana, the pronoun is general purpose and used for “our” and “us,” as well. I was taken by this compression and by the literal translation into English “we/us others,” which emphasizes the outsider status of French speaking people in Louisiana, and more particularly French speaking people of color, as well as the sense of the margin against which the people in south Louisiana live—at the edges of ever-encroaching wet. The press takes intersectional feminism as its raison d’être: I choose to publish only woman-identified writers, a response to the power of patriarchy/hierarchy to alienate all others. Nous-zot is one means of refusal or, better, reimagining the possibilities.

aw: what is nous-zot’s relation to the vitality of hybridity, its embrace? how does nous-zot’s vision compare and contrast to your full-length press, black radish books? as i understand it, the relations of scale and scope between chaps and full-lengths are large. chaps are near and dear to many poets, and yet, to my non-poet friends, to explain what a chap is, i often allude to a music album’s LP or EP. not quite a trailer. more like a short. sometimes to be continued.

MR: There is a lot to unpack there! My own impulses as a writer have grown increasingly hybrid, and my editorial inclinations follow on from the excitement I feel when I encounter a “text” that reconfigures textuality, what is possible to be said and how.

Black Radish Books is not my venture, but a collective one, for which I am managing editor, as well as co-publisher with Nicole Mauro, the founder. Though I serve as the “face” of the press, its work is undertaken across the collective and in collaboration. The making of the BRB books is radically different than for these chaps. For Nous-zot, I handle all aspects of the work: selection, design and layout, physical making (printing, sewing, trimming), promotion, mailing, you name it. For Black Radish

the work is distributed, shared among eleven of us, and the books are printed by a commercial printer and marketed through SPD, rather than my study! Your description of the chapbook is spot-on. The chap is a short collection, usually around 20-30 pages, though there is so much variation from a few pages to 40 or more. Full-length books usually start at 60-65 pages. The chapbook is a more intimate project, both in terms of scale, and in terms of production. These are handmade objects: I build a mock-up of the chap, play with various possible designs and layouts, work intimately with the authors to bring their aspirations for the book into its making: what we create together is a collaboration, one of the signal pleasures of the process. Nous-zot chapbooks are hands-on objects: I print them at home (except in the case of color printing), hand-fold and sew the bindings, and trim them in my big machine in the basement.

To me making the chaps is akin to other kinds of traditional craft, or making, in that sense. It also affords me a different mode of creative expression, and, importantly, a sense of community. I have always lived in smaller places, outside big urban centers. I grew up on a small farm in central California and, except for college days in San Diego, have lived at a remove from cities: Providence, Bloomington, Wanneroo in Western Australia, Lafayette, and now Syracuse. Community is thus fundamentally important to me personally, but also to my sense of my work as a writer, building and sustaining and extending community—how writing lives in physical form, and importantly, whose writing?

aw: considering the trajectory of nous-zot, can you speak to its line, what story it has been telling, where it would like to go?

MR: The story of Nous-zot in some ways speaks to my own journey, both physical and intellectually. The first projects were very local, three poets from Lafayette. When I moved to Syracuse, I published a poet from Ithaca, Lori Anderson Moseman, and one from Syracuse, Jesse Nissim, as well as two poets from New Orleans, Megan Burns and Carolyn Hembree, and Metta Sáma, who I first knew when she taught at LSU, all nodding back to Louisiana. From there I have drawn on writers I have encountered through public readings, books, and other writers who suggest poets to me. One other important mode of encountering writers I want to publish has been through Susana Gardner’s Dusie Kollektiv. I met both j/j hastain and Maria Damon through Dusie and those were both fun books to design and build. It took a lot of thinking, talking with Maria, and trying different ideas to make her gorgeous little book come together. I am very pleased with XXX, my first color project.

Current projects are a chapbook by British Columbian poet Renée Saklikar, whom I met in Ottawa, and another for Eleni Sikelianos, whose work I have long admired for its attention to the intersections of the human and other-than-human. This summer I hope to be making a chapbook for Trace Peterson, whose work also, in the broad sense of the term, is rooted in the work of building and sustaining community. And she is a kick-ass poet, I love what she is up to! I am also planning a second chapbook for Jacqueline Frost, whose chapbook *The Soft Appeal, Sentiment in the Age of Cybernetic Disclosure*, a richly hybrid and experimental work, was one of the original three chapbooks published at the launch of Nous-zot.

Where next? Following my heart, my ear, reaching outward. Nous-zot is a labor of love, so subject to the constraints of time and money, but there are so many amazing writers out there extending and reimagining the possible, I have a hard time constraining myself to what is possible for me to accomplish! Thank you, annie, for this conversation, and thank you Joe Pan for affording an occasion for this conversation.

Marthe Reed is the author of five books: *Nights Reading* (Lavender Ink); *Pleth*, a collaboration with j/j hastain (Unlikely Books); *(em)bodied bliss* (Moria Books), *Gaze* (Black Radish Books), and *Tender Box, A Wunderkammer* (Lavender Ink). She has published chapbooks as part of the Dusie Kollektiv, as well as with above/ground press and Shirt Pocket Press. Her collaborative chapbook *thrown*, text by j/j hastain with Reed’s collages, won the 2013 Smoking Glue Gun contest and will appear this spring. She is co-publisher and managing editor for Black Radish Books and publisher of Nous-zot Press chapbooks.

Annie Won is a poet, yoga teacher, and medicinal chemist who resides in Medford, Mass. She is a Kundiman Fellow, a Juniper Writing Institute scholarship recipient, and a Best of the Net nominee. She is the author of three chapbooks: *Once When a Building Block* with Brenda Iijima (Horse Less Press), *so i can sleep* (Nous-zot Press), and *did the wind blow it* (Dusie Kollektiv). Her work has appeared in or is soon to appear in venues such as *The Locked Horn Anthology*, *New Delta Review*, *Entropy*, *Delirious Hem*, *TheThePoetry*, *TENDE RLION*, and others. Her critical reviews can be seen at American Microreviews & Interviews.

Arm-in-Arm with Sibling Rivalry Press

Boog City’s small press editor Joe Pan is excited to bring our readers a series of interviews between small press publishers and their authors. This issue we have author D. Gilson in conversation with Seth Pennington, who with his husband Bryan Borland runs Sibling Rivalry Press.

D. Gilson: At a time when any number of digital platforms—blogs, Tumblr, Facebook, self-publishing, Twitter—can dispense information, sometimes even artfully, why is small press publishing important?

Seth Pennington: Crater of Diamonds State Park in Murfreesboro, Ark., is 37-and-a-half acres of dirt you can dig in; if you happen to find a diamond, it’s yours to keep. When I was a toddler my family took me there with a group of Cub Scouts. It had rained heavily. I have no real memory of this other than my mother telling me how she had to pull the gunk out of my mouth, all that mud, because I had fallen face first into a furrow and nearly drowned.

These platforms where anyone can post anything—that’s the rain-logged field we’re in. You can dig, I hope you will, but soon you’ll be up to your neck in water too. There’s probably not a better example of quantity killing quality. A small press does that work. We find and invest in artists, help make their work shine, and then it’s yours for the taking.

Gilson: I want you to take me to this park (in the rain even, a little mud never hurt us, and makes the wrastlin’ a money-making endeavor). But in all seriousness, that’s a perfect metaphor for publishing today: at a time when almost anyone can self-publish, the job of presses is to find and prepare the diamonds. One of the ways y’all find the diamonds is in the annual Sibling Rivalry Press (SRP) open call for manuscript submissions. Can you tell me a little bit about that process and how it works? What do you love about it, what do you hate about it, and what surprises you?

Pennington: From March 1 through June 1, we say send us what you want. We are largely focused on poetry—no apologies here, it’s simply where our hearts sit, being poets ourselves—but we want to look at everything. We publish works that disturb and enrapture, as Adrienne Rich would say. So whether you are a seasoned poet with a gruff voice, a photographer with a following that devours their soft, matte images of the body, or if your name is D. Gilson and you write a collection of essays—lyrics, really—that will make the academy weep and the rest of us, we outsiders, hole up with your book and not let go, send it our way, that’s what we want.

We use Submittable, (<http://siblingrivalrypress.com/submissions>) like most others. What I love about our process is there’s no cost to submit. Well, yes, there is. To submit you have to purchase one of our titles (which start at a quarter). At SRP, we are family. That family is what sustains us as a business and as individual artists. This working relationship means you need to know each other and what better way to get to know who you are going to be working with than knowing their art?

And what surprises me: we are five years old this year. We have an amazing roster of talent, of awards, and now everything we publish—past, present, and future—will be included in the Library of Congress’ Rare Book and Special Collections vault. But what surprises me is that big names like Denise Duhamel and Maureen Seaton entrust us with their collected works, and that both wonderful emerging authors like yourself and our career authors love and support each other and SRP by purchasing and lauding our entire catalog.



Gilson: You flatter! But okay, since you went there, let’s talk about my book for a second. I’d be interested to see you give a Twitter-length summary of my essay collection. So, GO!

Pennington: Poems typically hold horses; the essay does not. D. runs them like bulls and sets them on fire instead. His sword is his risk, is steel, sincere, yes, austere.

Gilson: I like your description! And thinking about the writer as a bull runner (though without the bad animal rights politics bull running gives us).

Pennington: Where comes this transition from poet to essayist? Your poems were already deeply personal, so where comes this provocation?

Gilson: That’s a great question, one that consumes a lot of my thinking these days. Poetry was my first literary love, and I’m glad for that because it teaches a focus on language learning; i.e., every word is important; every little syllable (caesura, line break, image) is crucial and can live or kill the poem. But genre is ultimately a vessel. It’s Tupperware. So when I was first beginning to take writing seriously I was micro-focused on the self and on very specific situations, and the poem took the size of whatever container made sense. But when I began a Ph.D. in literary and cultural studies, my curiosity shifted—I wanted to think about how the specific, the micro, the “personal,” functioned within larger cultural ideas and worlds. Plus, I got tired of myself to be honest. And to continue the Tupperware metaphor, getting a Ph.D. has been like an everyday Thanksgiving for me as far as reading and being challenged to think and being exposed to a breadth of ideas. The essay was the container I needed to contain those ideas, though since my essays don’t leave poetry behind altogether, I hope the genre lines are being constantly blurred.

One thing I’ve been so drawn to is the evolution of SRP’s cover art. You do an amazing job in this area. Tell us your process for thinking through this artistic practice—cover design and perhaps book design more generally—and how it might differ from, or overlap with, your own writing process.

Pennington: I look at books and movies I love for inspiration, magazines from when I was kid, like *National Geographic* and *Southern Living*. For example, I’ve made books after early covers of *The Great Gatsby*, another after Wes Anderson’s *Moonrise Kingdom* (and thanks again for that long-distance conversation, D., after I finally watched the film and sat in a Wendy’s parking lot eating French fries and us going on and on about it).

Everything I do is felt. There is no technical background—not that I’m against what scientifically or mathematically makes a cover or a photograph great; instead, I think it’s the difference in playing music by ear and reading sheet music. There is emotion with improvisation that cannot be replicated.

You’re like that too, when you become enamored with something, someone. Frank O’Hara, the first poet you read. It’s how we understand ourselves. You grew up in the Ozarks. O’Hara had New York City. You now live in D.C. O’Hara’s influence is detectable, even in your sense of rhythm. Tell me more about relating to this guy from the big city as a youngster, and how he is or isn’t your oracle.



But whether I’m writing scholarship or essays or poems, I just can’t shake Frank O’Hara’s mode: so damn charming and yet punch-packing. —D. Gilson

Gilson: *Moonrise Kingdom*! Talk about an aesthetic. I’m so glad we share that (and us talking about movies was helping me at a time of deep, deep loneliness, after I moved from Pittsburgh to D.C.). And I like how you mention this balance of not being

“trained” formally, but obviously show a curiosity (both in youth and now) that pushes you to think long and hard about design not as secondary to the book, but as a complementary, essential part of the book, especially concerned with how readers receive the text.

Oh, Frank O’Hara. Yeah, he’s definitely in my work everywhere. I mean, the poetic style (I do this, I do that) is something I draw on, as is the drive toward obsession more generally. But I’m more and more intrigued by him in other ways. Like, how is it that this man who didn’t get taken that seriously as a poet in his lifetime is now one of the preeminent poets of the 20th century? The first chapter of my dissertation looks to his literary relationship with black poets (Langston Hughes and Amiri Baraka, specifically) and his sexual desire for black men, and I argue that in hindsight O’Hara models cross-racial public life in a way that we ought to be thinking about today.

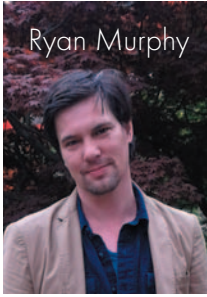
But whether I’m writing scholarship or essays or poems, I just can’t shake his mode: so damn charming and yet punch-packing. And I’ve tried to bring his love for the city into my writing, but in a complicated manner, because I don’t love New York, and given the chance, I’d much rather live in a small city or, even better, a liberal mountain college town. So maybe he’s not my oracle, but rather a guy with whom I have an open relationship in which we sleep with lots of other people.

It’s been a pleasure writing with you, Seth. You always amaze me with your insight and thoughtfulness, which shows with every SRP title you work on.

D. Gilson is the author of *I Will Say This Exactly One Time: Essays* (Sibling Rivalry Press); *Crush* (Punctum Books), with Will Stockton; *Brit Lit* (Sibling Rivalry Press); and *Catch & Release*, winner of the Robin Becker Prize. He is a Ph.D. candidate in American literature and cultural studies at George Washington University, and his work has appeared in *The Indiana Review*, *The Rumpus*, *Threepenny Review*, and as a notable essay in *Best American Essays*.

Seth Pennington is editor and designer at Sibling Rivalry Press, which he runs with his husband, Bryan Borland. The American Library Association honored him as editor of *Joy Exhaustible: Assaracus* Presents the Publishers by inclusion on its “Over the Rainbow Books” list of recommended reading. Operations ensue from Little Rock, Ark., where he is also developing his first full manuscript, “Onion,” and taking photographs.

Opening Paths with Four Way Books



Boog City’s small press editor Joe Pan is excited to bring our readers a series of interviews between small press publishers and their authors. In this interview we have author J. Mae Barizo, author of *The Cumulus Effect*, in conversation with Ryan Murphy, associate director of Four Way Books.

J. Mae Barizo: I’m really happy to see that Four Way authors encompass a wide variety of styles: lyric and experimental, emerging and established writers, poets of color. Can you talk a little bit about why variety in all these aspects is important to Four Way?

Ryan Murphy: I think that the variety that you mention is not just essential to the identity of Four Way Books, but to literature in general. And we want to play as significant a role in the conversation of contemporary American literature as we can.

As a writer, what kind of conversations do you want to have with your readers?

Barizo: That’s an interesting question. Sometimes I think, what is a poem, in the context of, say, the Syrian war, the refugee crisis, or the aftereffects of climate change? In this hyper-connected, media-saturated world, the potential for words to persist, to remain indelible, becomes manifold. That has its pros and cons, I suppose. But the ability to narrate is a powerful thing, and it means being fearlessly attentive to the world around us. Poetry offers readers what we as poets cannot offer ourselves: to stop time, to capture a moment of this crumbling, modern ecosphere as we know it. I like that Four Way authors engage in these conversations.

What is your favorite part about editing a book? About the publishing process?

RM: I find the entire process, from acquisition to printing, exciting. One of the great things about working at a place like Four Way Books is that all of us, the entire staff, are very involved in the entire process. I think that as a result we all feel very close to everything that we publish, not just professionally, but personally.

What was it like for you, having your first book come out with Four Way?

Barizo: Having *The Cumulus Effect* published by Four Way, seeing it out in the world, was a beautiful thing. Working with Four Way has been so easy and effortless on my part. You have incredibly smart and attentive publicists, editors, designers. Not to mention the community of other Four Way writers; I’m happy to be press-mates with writers such as Kamilah Aisha Moon, Rachel Eliza Griffiths, Greg Pardo, Maya Pindyck, and many others. And I’m so thrilled that Four Way has its first Pulitzer Prize winner, with Gregory Pardo. Can you tell me a little bit about the aftermath of this? Do you still feel like a small press?

RM: The Pulitzer was an absolute thrill for us, the author, emerging writers, small press publishers, and the African-American literary community at large. The overall reception to his book and the press that resulted from the honor was exciting for us. Four Way Books is a small press, of course, in that we publish 15 books a year. That we can support our publishing program professionally and dynamically has resulted in the fact that I haven’t thought about us as a “small press” for some time. I would put the quality of the books that we publish up against any publisher in the country.

Barizo: As a writer yourself, what engages you? Is there an overlap between your work as both an editor and a writer?

RM: I think as an editor I am trying to help the author compose the best poem/book by that specific author, not coerce them to write a “Ryan Murphy” poem.

Is there an overlap in your work, as a poet, critic, and performer?

Barizo: Sometimes I think there must be a constant battle for attention in my head at every given moment! But honestly, there has never been a question of “how to be all things.” Working across mediums—poetry, music, essays—gives a material form to my thoughts, a kind of balancing of my conceptual frameworks. Anyway, we’re post-genre now, aren’t we?

J. Mae Barizo (<http://www.jmaebarizo.com/>) is a poet, critic, and performer. Recent work appears in AGNI, Bookforum, Boston Review, and The Los Angeles Review of Books. She is the recipient of fellowships and awards from Bennington College, the Jerome Foundation, and Poets House. A classically trained musician and a champion of cross-genre work, Barizo has performed sound/text collaborations with musicians from The National, Bon Iver, and the American String Quartet. *The Cumulus Effect* is her first book. She lives in New York City. For more information, visit the above url.

Ryan Murphy is the author of *The Redcoats* (Krupskaya Books) and *Down with the Ship* (Seismicity Editions). He has received grants from The New York Foundation for the Arts and the Fund for Poetry. He is an associate director of Four Way Books.



Abraham Smith

Tuscaloosa, Ala.

From Only Jesus Could Icefish in Summer

darling cutting
all the trees in alabama
all at once now out-
side my window crazy
throaty chainsaw ha
haw hackled hackneyed
ain't no acne of smoke
swoon and bode and bad bowtie
boas on the leatherface
nape of aubade a bum a saint
a bomb a ray
curves curds by dint of worldly
like a tracer or a pill
the gravitational ends
the bride's split ends
the just out of jail peering
in through the bonds office
through a wreath hung against
giving no one
there buddy they are sleeping off
walker you paid for
at the lock up
but how saw gas scent hounds
the rabbits of yesteryear
corn stub's poor thwart
former den dog know no mind
is all legging nose and closing
forgive the dog the foaming
teeth nothing no one needs forgiving
only let us live in a lather and
what the hell wish me fast hole
now or i am sugar darkly sweetly
penned some sickly fog night punky
ohhh fallen fruit can't fall
farther than fair ground fat lie hoo
hoo how bout i
bird my rabbit and gone

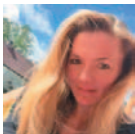


Ryan Nowlin

South Plainfield, N.J.

In a Borrowed Apartment

In trying to escape by changing the subject
or presenting a blank look, gradually
I came to value the awkward stage
when what we aspire to seems harder
than we thought. Who's this 'we'?
Eating nothing is easy. So is the empty glass
or a full one. We're meant to go hungry.
There's that moth again, part of my life.
I must return this purloined ash
to the western territories. I mean
the library, where you are listed
as a street, i.e. planet.



Julie E. Bloemeke

Atlanta

Electric Mail

You chime in, shock
me from the dull of work.

And I am sudden: swift shot,
crown-to-toe electric in you,
ravenous to read.

Your name presses
from pixels, a promise
of no more silence.

I trace your bends and twists,
letters that stand up in your name,
remember the seventeen years

I searched, my fingers curving
over the imprint of your initials,
your spell. And now you rise
over my screen, come back to me.

It would have been too much
to visit with my body, call
with my voice, send my cursive
to your door. But now I can read

your words, arced at last for me,
savor the scatter of your type without
the loops and dips of your written.

I cannot press your stationery
to my face, see the smudges
you erased on the page, breathe
the scent of you lingering
in the lines. I cannot pocket

you, as before, make an altar
of the few things your hands
once made for me.

We have wires to protect
us now. You are an ocean
away. Still we type, touch
without touch, come closer,

arrive more, and I let you in: my car,
my coat, my sheets. I hold you

in my hand, shocking. I tell myself
these are only letters, pushed through
anonymous keys. We have not lifted

a pen, committed to paper. But already
we are in my deepest vacant room. I take
you to the bed I never left. We fall

together, insisting there is safety
in letters, as we write more, seal
ourselves furiously into what

we already know.

Poetry Bios

Julie E. Bloemeke (<http://jebloemeke.com/>) recent publications include *Drunken Boat*. Her manuscript *Slide to Unlock* is a finalist for the 2016 May Swenson Award. Poems and reviews by Ryan Nowlin (<http://acrossthemargin.com/tag/ryan-nowlin/>) have appeared in many places in print and online, including *Sal Mimeo* and *The Operating System*. Abraham Smith's (<http://english.ua.edu/user/115>) books include *Hank* and *Only Jesus Could Icefish in Summer*, both from Action Books.

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Hugo Bastidas

Hugo Bastidas was born in Quito, Ecuador in 1956 and moved to the United States in 1960. He received an M.F.A. from Hunter College. He is the recipient of numerous awards. He shows regularly at Nohra Haime Gallery in New York City. His work poses questions about sustainability, responsibility, and the artist's role in society.

Artist's Statement

The approach behind the artwork is firstly visual and secondly conceptual. I apply paint to the surface with quick, even short strokes that build and amount to the image. The result is that of a blurry monochrome photograph encouraging closer inspection. I purposely generate a journalistic photographic appearance to capture the attention for the narrative.

<http://www.hugobastidas.com/>

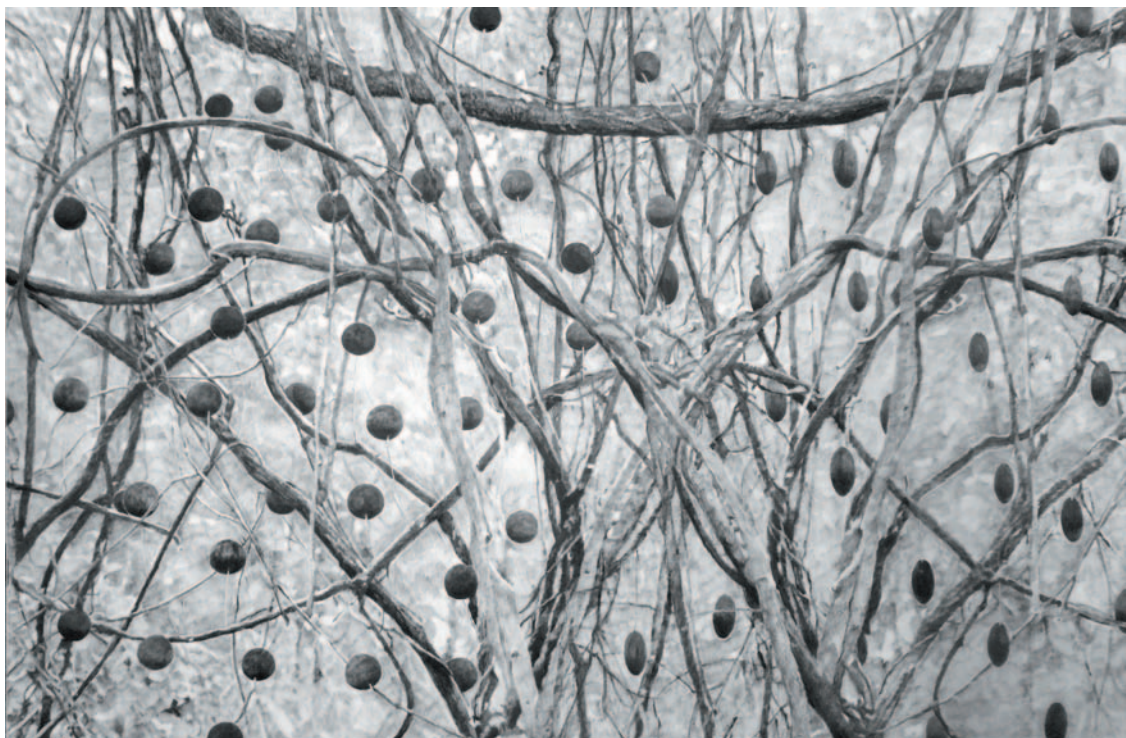
All images courtesy Nohra Haime Gallery.



How Grand 2015, oil on linen, 48" x 72"



One Sided 2015, oil on linen, 50" x 60"



So Similar 2015, oil on linen, 40" x 60"



Illumination 2015, oil on linen, 48" x 60"

Adolfas Mekas at his Bard College retirement party from Joel Schlemowitz’s short film *For Adolfas*.

Courtesy Joel Schlemowitz.



BY JOEL SCHLEMOWITZ

As spring emerges two book parties will blossom shortly, each taking the form of a screening, naturally enough, for one is the diaries of the waggish Adolfas Mekas (1925-2011), and the other a comprehensive guide to experimental filmmaking by the Boston-area filmmaker and Emerson College professor Kathryn Ramey. Anthology Film Archives (32 E. 2nd St. and Second Avenue, The East Village) hosts the book release event of *The Adolfas Diaries* - book 1 at 7:00 p.m. on Sun., May 8.

The diaries (<http://www.hallelujaheditions.com/books/>) cover the time from 1941 to 1946 when Adolfas Mekas and his brother Jonas were fleeing Lithuania during the Second World War only to be sent to work as forced laborers in a German-run factory. The end of the war found them in a displaced persons camp in Germany before the brothers eventually were able to emigrate to New York and begin their notable careers in the film community.

Adolfas would later teach at Bard College, a professor both demanding (he would blithely use the term “bullshit” when unimpressed with students’ work) and mercurial (bestowing upon the department the sobriquet: “The People’s Film Department” and canonizing the cinema-loving St. Tula as the department’s patron saint). Both of these qualities were evident in the fabled “final exam” for his class, which consisted solely of a day-long screening of Japanese filmmaker Masaki Kobayashi’s epic masterpiece, the nine-hour and 39 minute film cycle bearing the title *The Human Condition*. To pass the final one had to sit through the entire film, an assessment that eventually caused ire among the administration at the college: Why didn’t this final exam have a paper or a test or some other written component? It did not seem sufficiently academic to just have students watch a film to pass a final exam. Eventually Mekas begrudgingly relented, and a cursory written component was tacked onto the screening.

It is no startling insight to understand of the jovial Adolfas’s admiration for this acutely bleak masterwork of cinema. *The Human Condition* is the story of the protagonist’s unavailing quest for human empathy as a Japanese conscripted soldier in a world of labor camps and prisoners in occupied Manchuria during and shortly after the Second World War.

The book release event will feature readings from the diary by Pola Chapelle along with music and performances. A screening of Mekas’ film *Going Home*, a travelogue of his visit back to Lithuania in the company of his brother Jonas and his wife Pola, will also be featured. Adolfas’s drollery is on display in *Going Home* as he and Pola every so often take a break from the matters at hand to dance a little soft-shoe number before the camera. The film includes a visit to the factory where he and Jonas labored during the war, meeting with the factory foreman whom the workers had nicknamed “Jesus Christ” because, as Adolfas explains: “Wherever you were on the factory floor, he was always watching you.”

Adolfas’s drollery is on display in *Going Home* as he and Pola every so often take a break from the matters at hand to dance a little soft-shoe number before the camera.

Hanley, and Steve Cossman. I am also profiled in the book.

Experimental Filmmaking: Break The Machine takes on the ambitious goal of being a textbook for how to make an experimental film. While books on the techniques of traditional filmmaking are plentiful, writing on alternative approaches are much more scarce. This is due in part to the nature of avant-garde film as an artistic subculture, but also to the formidable challenge of delineating the content of such a book: What is experimental film? It can take so many forms, incorporate such an array of ideas, be worked out with so many different technical means, as to send the writer off on an expedition with no end. There always is some new form of experimentation to be found, some alternative approach to be investigated further, some fundamental filmmaking rule to be dismembered.

Ramey concentrates on the alternative means that bypass the dependence on depleting one’s meager finances on the most expensive shiny, new equipment, staggering film laboratory bills, and the framework of traditional filmmaking in the division of labor of gaffers, grips, cinematographers, production assistants, line producers, boom operators, assistant directors, and directors. The filmmaker takes on the roles not only the cinematographer and director: In the case of her chapter on hand-processing the filmmaker becomes the laboratory as well. With a detailed set of instructions on making hand-coated film emulsion the filmmaker even may usurp the role of Eastman Kodak in the DIY process.

The book is acutely thorough in its amassing of this information: Chapters on hand-processing contain charts with chemical dilutions and temperatures, recipes for alternative processing with instant coffee, vitamin C, or potato juice. A chapter on the optical printer—the versatile tool of rephotographing existing film images and creating numerous visual effects—is followed later in the book by a chapter on DIY optical printing, including detailed instructions for how to build your own optical printer. The numerous how-to sections of the book come not just from Ramey’s own experimentation but are profiles of the tinkering of many different film-artists, with reproductions of notes and diagrams, interviews on their idiosyncratic innovations within the alternative approach to filmmaking.

Ramey’s book serves not only as comprehensive guide to many methods of experimental film, but through these encounters it also gives us an endearing portrait of a community of artists, interacting, sharing resources through networks of the countercultural film world, finding camaraderie in the commonly held spirit of trailblazing away from and nimbly bypassing the filmmaking mainstream.

Joel Schlemowitz (<http://www.joelschlemowitz.com>) is a Park Slope, Brooklyn-based filmmaker who makes short cine-poems and experimental documentaries. His most recent project, *78rpm*, is in the final stages of post-production. He has taught filmmaking at The New School for the past 19 years. Robyn Hasty photo.

Kathryn Ramey, with Bolex camera. Cheryl Hess photo.



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FILM

MUSIC

What the Purple One Taught Me in 1984

BY ROGER HITTS

This piece originally appeared in Boog City 17, June 2004, prior to our *Classic Albums Live* performance of Prince and the Revolution’s *Purple Rain* album.

By the year 1984 we were still growing out of our short pants musically. Understand, growing up in Flint, Mich., we were rock-n-roll boneheads fed a steady diet of local heroes like The Nooge, Seger, and that Funky Railroad. Artists like Iggy Pop were to be scorned, not celebrated.

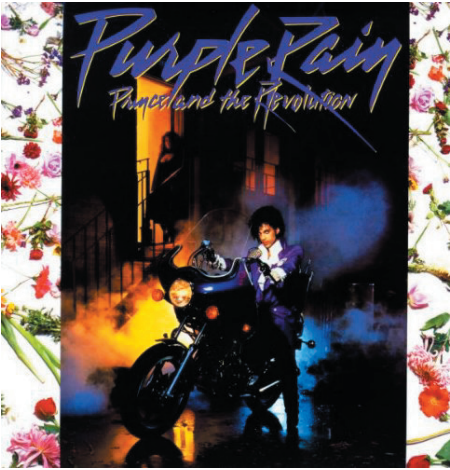
But oh, those college years—the birth of alternative radio, called college rock back then, and my ears, along with me pals, pricked up to sounds a bit more rash at times, a bit more subtle at others, but all fell into the challenging category while Journey, Foreigner, and Styx fell by the wayside. There were the first fumbling steps toward appreciating new, up-and-coming groups like the Psychedelic Furs and U2, then barreling straight ahead on into a brave new world of music. REM’s *Murmur* of 1983 was a watershed, as was Gang of Four’s *Songs of the Free*. X gave us *More Fun In The New World*. By 1984, being made editor of my college paper at Central Michigan University gave me a once-in-lifetime opportunity to be a tastemaker for 17,000 people between the ages of 18 and 22, and I took the challenge seriously. I immediately hired myself as chief album reviewer.

Sure, we made missteps along the way. Buddy Rich (the friend, not the drummer) and I made the 150-mile trek to Detroit to catch the hottest of new bands, Big Country. We thought they were the dizzying height of new music—even with a set list so sparse they played their eponymous FM hit Big Country twice in an hour. Big Country ran out of gas before they had even filled ‘er up.

Still, we were making a snail’s progress toward building a better musical understanding and better record collections. And that was thanks in no small part to record labels that finally realized there was gold in them thar hills of college campuses and bombarded us with new releases from XTC, Dream Syndicate, Eurythmics and, er, Kajagoogoo. We would

sit around rapt listening to that first Violent Femmes record—we never heard anything like it, and 20 years on, still never have. Their angst-filled, masturbatory loser groove, as filtered through Gordon Gano’s Lou-Reed-with-balls-squeeze vocals was something we all could relate to.

That all sounds well and good, but to be honest, a lot of our tastes in music still revolved around which bands sounded best while clutching a bong. We were white-bread bobos who had only a passing knowledge of what went down in our own state at Hitsville, U.S.A., and James Brown was more likely to conjure up images of the kid sitting next to you in Moral Ethics class than the Godfather of Soul.



There was a purple man who wore a purple suit and put out a purple album, a soundtrack for a movie that hadn’t even been released called Purple Rain.

But nothing could have prepared us for what came across the reviewer’s desk in June 1984. There was a purple man who wore a purple suit and put out a purple album, a soundtrack for a movie that hadn’t even been released called *Purple Rain*. As stated before, we were all woefully ignorant when it came to black music—we knew of Prince through the video for “Little Red Corvette,” which, truthfully, didn’t turn anyone’s head or turn anyone onto the Minny musicologist. All we knew was that he was dirty but he didn’t belong in the rock lexicon that to us stretched from Rush to Millions of Dead Cops.

What a record! On from the get-go, Prince putting a decidedly rock spin on “Let’s Go Crazy”—even ending it with a blistering guitar God break that gave us a reference point to our past musical idols—Michael Schenker would be proud. The absolutely charming “Take Me With U,” with a chorus that

stuck in your head like a rivet to the Chevy’s our fathers built, followed up. “When Doves Cry” was carried by a beat that sounded like it didn’t come from any place on this world as we knew it. “Purple Rain” was a genuine rock anthem, all nine minutes of simmering, slow jam glory that could stand next to the canon of rock anthems. Finally, a new “Stairway to Heaven,” a new “Bohemian Rhapsody.” And best of all, the whole album sounded great with *Columbian Gold*! It was black music as filtered through our Midwestern Caucasian sensibility—which probably made sense, since Prince was a Midwesterner himself, around our age, and probably heard most of the same shit we did growing up.

I wrote enthusiastically about *Purple Rain* in the student paper. I called the record “a major statement from an up-and-coming artist who sounds like he still has plenty of musical mountains left to climb.” In retrospect, I’m not sure he ever climbed them or ever reached the heights of *Purple Rain* again in his career. And even though he’s back again, it’s rare indeed that someone finds a new mountain to scale this late in the game.

Still, it changed the way we thought about music, and everything else, for that matter. Slapping on *Purple Rain* was a much better prelude for getting a coed to bed down than Agent

Orange. *Purple Rain* became the ubiquitous soundtrack for at least one year of college—it blasted from every beat-up LeSabre cruising down So. High Street, every frat house window, and every dormitory on campus.

Many of the aforementioned bands did amazing things to our eggshell minds and managed to shake the Flint out of us—no small feat. They paved the way for a lifetime of musical pleasure that continued with Hüsker Dü and the Jesus and Mary Chain riding up through the grunge era and our current love of bands from The Stills to The Soundtrack of Our Lives. And yes, we learned to appreciate our Midwestern Mitten man Iggy to boot. But it was Prince who raised the stakes and challenged us to not only look at Sly and the Family Stone as a profound musical statement for the first time in our goofy little lives, but opened the possibilities of what a song could be by structure, texture, and emotion.

CHLOE: With ‘An Enthusiastic Roar for Everything Literary,’ a Library Grows in Southeast D.C.



INTERVIEW BY LYNNE DESILVA-JOHNSON

If we’re going to talk about how to evolve our library system, how to adapt for a digital age, indeed how to build alternative libraries and archival spaces both online and off, we must also engage in a consideration of who we’re building and evolving for: a cultural landscape that is rife with anti-intellectualism, even inside its schools. Young minds that have literally, biologically been conditioned in an environment wherein the book is often absent in the classroom and the home; where mobile devices are in every hand, at every meal; where the reading of books is never experienced or observed as a chosen behavior outside of assignments (which, in turn, too often have an unfortunate association with “the opposite of fun,” a punishment or burden to complete before treats or rewards can be received.)

The founders of CHLOE, (<http://chloesociety.com>) Yaani Supreme and Britney Crawford, who have begun an entirely community-donated library in Southeast Washington D.C., feel the same way, and they’re working to create a groundswell of DIY change, with books as a central engine.

Perhaps that’s why their tag line is:

At Chloe Every Book Has a Story. Our Purpose is to Make Writers as Relevant as Rappers.

I spoke with them shortly before CHLOE’s opening.

Boog City: Hi Yaani and Britney! Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to me today.

I’ve been thinking a lot about our personal relationship to libraries and archival spaces, both as makers and users of these spaces. It means I’ve been asking myself a lot of questions about libraries that I’ve never really paused to consider before, so I’ll do the same with you, as radical libraries of the near future:

Do you have positive associations with libraries (or other archival spaces)? Did you spend much time in libraries (or...) growing up? Do you now? Who do you know who does have an ongoing relationship with libraries (or...)? How has your relationship with your library (or...) represented a relationship with your community, neighborhood, or culture? Do you feel your experience is representative of a particular group, geographic place/neighborhood, generation?

Britney Crawford: My association with libraries and books has always been positive. I remember in elementary school the library was across the hall from my class and whenever my teacher was absent we would get sent to the library for the day. As I got older, my love for books developed from my eagerness to become a teacher and fond love for nineties novels. I was always a sucker for a good story with an exaggerated title. It was not until I was in college that I really understood, let alone knew anything about, an archives. My mom worked at The National Archives for almost 20 years before I ever knew much of anything about the nature of the work. She was never an archivist nor did she want to be. That place was always just a job for her. I have never even seen my mother read a book. I remember going to her job when I was young and sitting in the stacks while she pulled records. I had no clue 15 years later I would be an Archivist myself. My mom got me my first part time job at the same archives she worked at, when I was a freshman in college, and I never left. I became an archivist in 2010 after graduating from the School of Library and Information Science at the University of Maryland at College Park. So I guess you can say for me ... it was meant to be. My experience is definitely different than many of my friends. Just imagine the looks on faces when you tell them you are in library school in your early 20s. *silence* Eventually I got used to the laughter or awkward responses and began to preface my title with an explanation of my love for reading and learning. I stopped that years ago though. Now I prefer to show how cool my passion for libraries, archives, and books are through my work. I found readers. I surround myself with them. I don’t even go to people’s houses who don’t have books. I talk about books and documents every chance I get and, ironically, people became interested.

Let’s talk a little more about the hows and whats of CHLOE in its current incarnation, and then we’ll talk a little more about both of you and how you came to start this project, and your goals for the collection/organization as it grows. On your website we learn that you are currently hosted as a “literary installation” at Nomad Yard Collective, for “RETAIL + READING HOURS, LITERARY EVENTS, AND EVERYDAY MAJIC.” Tell us a little more about this first manifestation, and how it came to be that a free/shared library co-exists with a retail space. For our NYC readers who might not be aware, can you explain how Nomad Yard works and why it’s a natural match for CHLOE?

Yaani Supreme: On paper, Nomad Yard (<http://www.nomadyardcollectiv.com>) is a small business incubator specializing in vintage. It’s expertly curated, 28 small businesses share the space in NoMA, D.C. Most of those businesses are women owned. And CHLOE is the latest addition to the family. In my heart, it’s legit a gift from the creator.

Last fall, I moved, I left everything in New York. Quit my job, gave my little sister my furniture, and came back to D.C. with one purpose: Open Chloe, open A library. There were a few setbacks, right? But that’s another story. One day I’m in Nomad Yard and I wanted to buy one of the books. I asked Desiree Venn Frederic, the owner, and she was like, “No, they’re not for sale.” I said, I wanted to open a library, she offered her space, one thing led to another, and here we are. We’ve moved in, getting situated and really breathing into it. We launched April 7. And then that’s when the real majic begins.

I can’t speak to why Nomad Yard + CHLOE work, right? Those are brands, businesses, projects, public spaces, right? Tangible, manmade objects, whatever you want to call them. What’s happening with myself, with Britney, with Desiree, with countless other women around Washington is collaboration. It’s cooperative economics. It’s building wealth and infrastructure and opportunity for our city.



Yaani Supreme and Britney Crawford

and how this differentiates from your “stacks?” The website says you have 1,000+ books and counting, a notable number for a new project! Where are they housed, are they all at Nomad?

Supreme and Crawford: Collections are special curated titles based on an author(s); donor; or season, genre. Donors can pay to have a collection of their own in our space with a description of its significance. There are also collections specific to one author, especially Toni Morrison. Her collection is called CHLOE (named after our business which is also Toni’ Morrison’s birth name). The collection was curated with all first editions of her work. Each season there is also a collection we feature for advertising based on themes we create ... a promotional branding. This is where we take mainstream issues/topics and curate a collection of titles around it, giving the public the opportunity to read about what is going on. We like the idea that things are better together so that’s the basis for our collections. (A Toni Morrison book is great but all of her books are the BOMB.)

When you walk into CHLOE at NOMAD, you can browse our main stacks. Our stacks are everything. Everything on our library shelves. Within these stacks are collections of books based on titles we created. You will not find traditional themes on our stacks. Every collection title is created at CHLOE.

Yes. It’s true we have an estimate of 1,000 books (most of which are at NOMAD). We have been hosting dope book drives all over, and we personally collected at least 20 percent of our titles. However some of our first editions are in storage for special curated collections, programming. There are also new books we sell because we are about “reading + retail” and we are building collections for specific donors. Some books will only be available online.

I’d also like to hear more about reading hours, events, and majic—are there volunteers or specific hours in which one or both of you is at the space? How do visitors interact with the books/collection/CHLOE? Do you have literature that folks can take, and/or can books be taken out?

Supreme: If it’s ever wintertime and you want to hang out with a friend, or just get out of the house but don’t have anywhere to go, because you don’t want to spend money? CHLOE is public space. Me and Britney are both really chill, we welcome everybody. Come + read, come and volunteer with the library, come buy a book, come to a free workshop. Most importantly, we invite folks to get involved in the process of building what we claim to be: a sanctuary for books + people who love them. Folks can visit our website, or visit us this spring/summer Thursday-Sunday, 11:00 a.m.- 7:00 p.m.

Are there, or do you plan on there being, other ways for folks to stay connected, either through the installation version at NOMAD, or through the website/a more virtual, non-place based collective understanding of CHLOE as an amorphous entity? Do you envision this to be a membership organization, from which books can be taken out, a la a traditional library? If so, will membership be free or paid? (And I guess for all of these things, why or why not?)

Supreme and Crawford: As we evolve in-store so will we virtually. We also plan to maintain a growing public programming interest which will not be exclusive to D.C. or NOMAD. We envision the CHLOE installation version to be what the member prefers, which is why membership will be an important part. Membership is available immediately (\$35, \$60, \$100 annual) to all those interested. We recognize CHLOE will not be for everyone, but we do take special interest in our members. Members will have the ability to name collections, vote on public programming, and have an active role in curation of titles. We love the idea of exclusive lending. Our CHLOE catalog is in production which will include all of the books in our main stacks for virtual access. Visitors will also have an opportunity to browse our stacks online and order online.

I guess we’re sort of naturally veering into future plans here. I’m curious to hear what you see being the future for CHLOE in terms of the possibility of a permanent brick and mortar location, or locations, for the project.

I’ve always been very interested in the potential of hybrid spaces and collectives—I find that in a primarily consumer society spaces of consumption are normative culturally in ways that libraries that are solely, institutionally libraries and other cultural institutions perhaps aren’t any longer, which in fact is inspiring great change to these institutions in a desire to remain more relevant, as libraries and museums increase their storefront and dining/cafe offerings.

What is your hope/vision for CHLOE in this regard? It’s actually quite transgressive in a radical way to interrupt spaces of consumption with a free library, with individuals offering change, dialogue, conversation, and peer-to-peer education. I’ve personally considered doing similar with my own organization/press, The Operating System.

Do you see yourself somewhere that’s ever solely a library? Or do you imagine or plan to always exist in collective, interdisciplinary spaces with hybrid usage?

Supreme and Crawford: I know everything changes, must change. So what’s happening with institutions, libraries, businesses. It’s all, always going to evolve.

As long as we have a strong company, a commitment to community, and feel like everyday we’re sharing a loud, enthusiastic roar for everything literary, I think CHLOE will be alright.

I know you both come from interdisciplinary backgrounds, with Yaani’s experience in film and event production and Britney with your strategy consultancy, corporate leadership, and information science—you make a seriously impressive team. Can each of you tell us a little bit about your path to CHLOE, both personally, and professionally, in terms of how a project like this one became important and interesting to you, and how you came to work together?

Crawford: Outside of what was mentioned earlier, I met Yaani Supreme years ago in high school. We teased one another because we share the same best friend. We grew closer over the last three years. One day Yaani called me and said “I want to start a library.” I figured that was because I was probably the only black librarian/archivist she knew. We talked about this project for about a year, me giving her advice from a library perspective and her sharing her vision. About a year ago I invited Yaani to a summer program at the UCLA library school for African-Americans. I figured if she still wants to start a library after this, then so will I. And she did. We did.

As soon as we returned from California we began discussing the location of the library then who would have to move. At this time Yaani was living in Brooklyn. She decided CHLOE would be in D.C. where we are from so she moved back and we immediately got to work. The connection at NOMAD was all Yaani. I tell people i just do what she tells me. Yaani has a gift of passion and she inspired me to take this journey. Her passion for this project inspired me to make sure it happened. And here we are.

Britney Crawford is a modern day, ‘Informationista’ and strategy consultant. For 10 years she’s worked to create change within the information industry by building connections and sharing information to build ideas and networks. She’s spearheaded a series of information sessions, campaigns and initiatives among public and private partners that have landed her corporate leadership and national recognition. She is also founder of Informationista, a network of information seekers, leaders and lovers across the globe. She has gained tons of education and experience through her work as an Archivist and information professional and also studied at institutions such as University of Maryland’s School of Information Science and the California Rare Book School at University of California.

Lynne DeSilva-Johnson (<http://www.theoperatingsystem.org/people/>) is a slinger of image, text, sound, and code, a frequent collaborator across a wide range of disciplines, a community activist, and a regular curator of events in NYC and beyond. She has served as an adjunct in the CUNY system for a decade, and as a K-12 teaching artist since 2001. Also a social practice artist and poet, she has appeared at The Dumbo Arts Festival, Naropa University, Bowery Arts and Science, The NYC Poetry Festival, Eyebeam, Undercurrent Projects, Mellow Pages, The New York Public Library, The Poetry Project, Industry City Distillery, Independent Curators International, and the Cooper Union, among others. She is the founder and managing editor of The Operating System, which is based in Brooklyn, where her family has lived since the 1890s. Follow her birdsong at @onlywhatican.

Writer and Producer, Yaani Supreme fka Jade Foster (http://www.pw.org/content/jade_foster_hits_the_ground_running), founded and led salon-styled poetry tour, The Revival for five years. The international effort reached thousands of queer women across the country, and presented poets like t’ai freedom ford, Natasha T. Miller, and Nikky Finney. Supreme featured as a regular castmember on web series, The Peculiar Kind, appeared in Terence Nance’s short film, *How To Recall What I Already Knew* and made her feature film debut as a producer with documentary, *Women & The Word: The Revival Movie*, a 2016 Outfest Film Festival Selection. Supreme was honored as one of *Go Magazine*’s 100 Women We Love in 2015 and continues her love of writing with new literary imprint, CHLOE.

It is one thing to open a business where you are from and another to actually be able to provide a platform for others just like you. DC is so rich with readers, writers and intellectuals but often those things go unnoticed. So this is an opportunity to say “ we are from DC and so are they, take a look at this”. Big business is so cliché. Local is the shit. We love our city and our people.

—Britney Crawford and Yaani Supreme

I saw the teaser for the “LOCAL AS FCUK” collection, and of course I want to hear more. Am I right that this is or will be a collection of books from D.C.-based writers, either contemporary or historical?

Supreme and Crawford: Yes. This collection excites us the most both being from D.C. For the spring season we will feature all local artists and writers in the store through in-store and online promotion, public programming, and curated display/sales of their work. We have learned personal stories and inspirations from the artists and writers about their work and we will convey those same messages to everyone that steps foot in our space.

It is one thing to open a business where you are from and another to actually be able to provide a platform for others just like you. D.C. is so rich with readers, writers, and intellectuals but often those things go unnoticed about us (the ones who are born and raised in D.C.). It’s always frustrating when you tell people you are from D.C., and Southeast D.C. at that, and you are doing something positive. As if that can’t happen. So this is an opportunity to say “we are from D.C. and so are they, take a look at this.” We are local and there is power in that. Look at D.C.’s rich history of communal empowerment and local business. Big business is so cliché. Local is the shit. We love our city and our people. And we are super excited to share with our community based on common interest—books.

Can you tell us a little bit about how your “collections” work or how they will work,