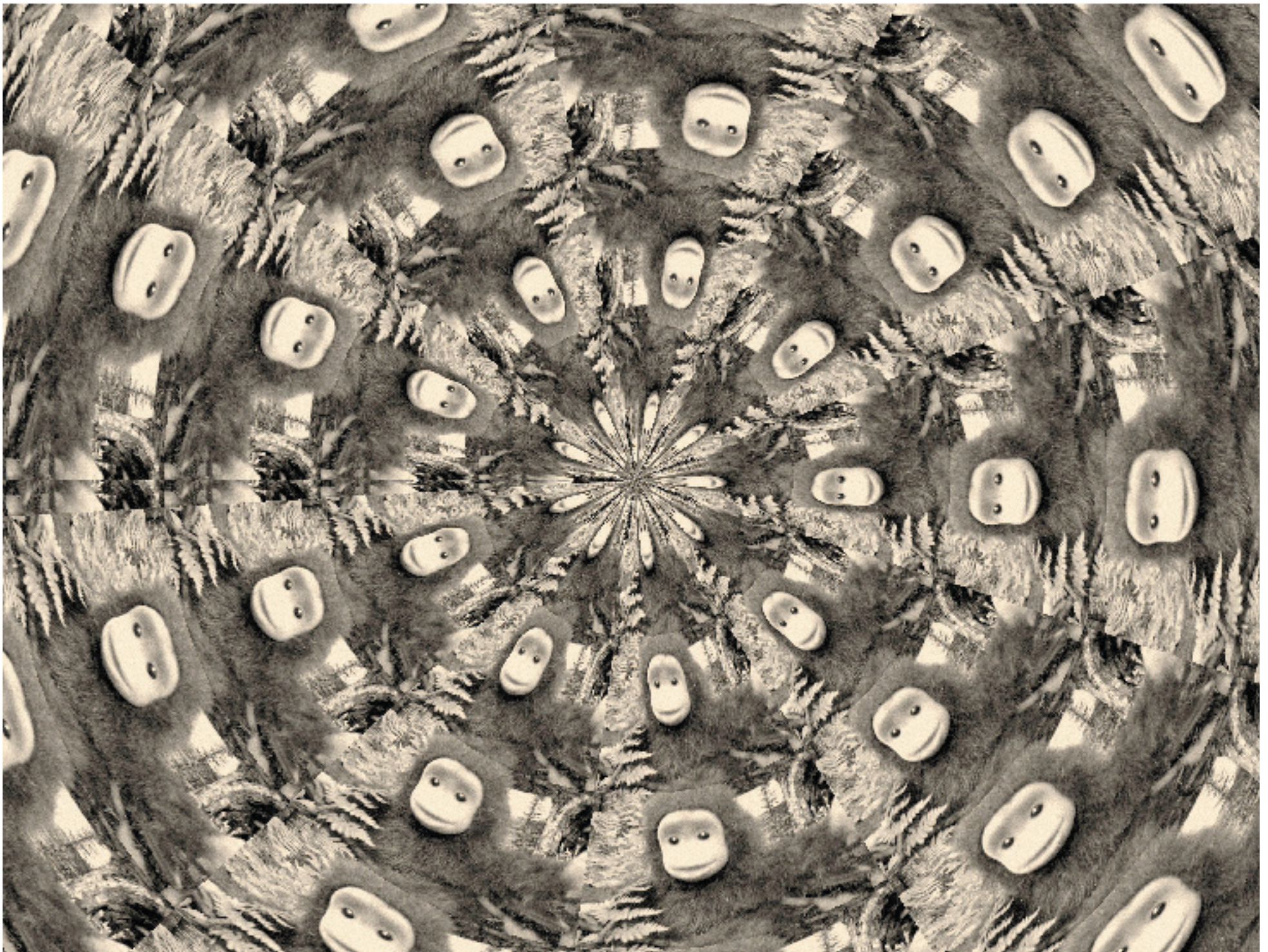


The Portable

# BOOG READER 10

An Anthology of Portland, Ore. and New York City Poetry



PORTLAND, ORE. EDITED BY

SARAH BARTLETT AND PHOEBE WAYNE

NEW YORK CITY CITY EDITED BY

MARIA DAMON, JOANNA FUHRMAN, MARK GURARIE,

BARBARA HENNING, AND DAVID A. KIRSCHENBAUM

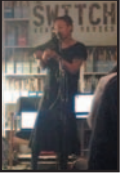


**Stephanie  
Adams-Santos**  6

7  **Allison  
Cobb**

**Emily  
Kendal Frey**  8


9  **Jamalieh  
Haley**

**Jamondria  
Harris**  10

11  **Sam  
Lohmann**

**Kaia  
Sand**  12

13  **Coleman  
Stevenson**

**Dao  
Strom**  14

15  **Stacey  
Tran**

**Marina  
Blitshteyn**  18

19  **Lee Ann  
Brown**

**Melissa  
Buzzeo**  20

21  **Donna  
Cartelli**


**Ray  
DeJesus**  22

23  **Cliff  
Fyman**

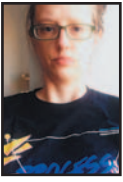
**Francesco  
Grisanzio**  24

25  **Julia  
Guez**

**Arielle  
Guy**  26

27  **Karen  
Hildebrand**

**Krystal  
Languell**



28

29



**Katy  
Lederer**

**Walter K.  
Lew**



30

31



**Sharon  
Mesmer**

**Ura  
Noel**



32

33



**Ryan  
Nowlin**

**Jean-Paul  
Pecqueur**



34

35



**J. Hope  
Stein**

**Matthew  
Yeager**



36

37



**Samantha  
Zighelboim**

Here are a few words from our Portland, Ore. editors, Phoebe Wayne and Sarah Bartlett, followed by our cover artist Brenda Iijima. —DAK

We are thrilled to feature Portland poets in this issue of *The Portable Boog Reader*. It wasn't easy to select only 10 writers—there are so many incredible voices in our city, which is one of the things we love about living here. The poets that appear in this issue reflect the collaborative, engaged, and visionary nature of our community through a wide variety of styles and subject matter. They both inspire and push us collectively forward, and we're grateful to have all their unique points of view represented here.

When out-of-towners think of Portland, it's often the ubiquitous bicycles, food cart pods, and Powell's Books that come to mind first. In and around all that good stuff, we have a large, active literary community that is constantly innovating. Poets try new ideas and experiments, print their own books and broadsides, collaborate with other artists, start a new reading series, share, and respond.

At the launch event for the group and series called PURR, Poets United to Rouse and Resist, 15 poets read a collaborative poem in an order decided by consensus. Immediately after the reading, they invited questions from the audience, spoke openly about process and collaboration, and then invited audience members to write and share their own lines. This ambitious and optimistic endeavor seemed to demonstrate a sense of trust, openness, and willingness to try things that characterize the poetry scene in Portland.

We'd like to thank *Boog City* for showcasing Portland—we are honored to be involved and hopeful that new and familiar readers will find something new to respond to in this issue! —Phoebe Wayne and Sarah Bartlett

•

"Into the Looking Glass", photograph, 30 x 40. 2015.

Into the looking glass, the juvenile human condition: a fossilized record of 195,000 years. Homo Sapien archive as blood, bone and belief. The reflection summons water, animal immersion, ecological absorption and ad revenue. Water solidified into rock. Manufactured en masse the plastic monkey is our uncle of ontological excess. Self-imposed amnesia? An unwillingness to cooperate with creaturely alliances? The only mammal that refuses the trees' comforts. To discount animal as core identity is to free fall into Earth's historical vat as a forlorn selfie championing oblivion. What now? Giant holes in the atmosphere. A violent fever ripples through collective skin tissue. —Brenda Iijima

# About the Editors and Artist

## Portland, Ore.

Sarah Bartlett lives in Portland, Ore. Her debut poetry collection, *Sometimes We Walk With Our Nails Is Out*, was released in 2016 from Subito Press. She is the author of two chapbooks, *My Only Living Relative* (Phantom Books) and *Freud Blah Blah Blah*, (Rye House Press). Recent work appears or is forthcoming in PEN Poetry Series (<https://pen.org/miscarriage/>), *Alice Blue*, *Powder Keg*, and elsewhere.



**Sarah  
Bartlett**

Phoebe Wayne is the author of two chapbooks: *Lovejoy* from c\_L press, and *The Sleep Volumes* forthcoming in 2017 from dancing girl press. She is also the author of an art/poetry collaboration in book form called *Aa* (with artist Kerri Rosenstein), and poems published or forthcoming in journals such as *Yew*, *Horse Less Review*, and *Trickhouse*. She lives in Portland, Ore. with her family, and works as a librarian.



**Phoebe  
Wayne**

## New York City

**Maria  
Damon**



Maria Damon teaches in the Humanities and Media Studies Department at the Pratt Institute of Art. She has written several books (and many articles and essays) of poetry scholarship and co-written several books of poetry.

**Joanna  
Fuhrman**



Joanna Fuhrman is the author of five books of poetry, most recently *The Year of Yellow Butterflies* (Hanging Loose Press) and *Pageant* (Alice James Books). She teaches poetry writing at Rutgers University and Sarah Lawrence College's Writers Village for teenagers and in her apartment in Flatbush.

Mark Gurarie splits time between Bushwick, Brooklyn and Northampton, Mass. He is the author of *Everybody's Automat* (The Operating System) and his poems and reviews have appeared in *Publishers Weekly*, *The Rumpus*, *Paper Darts*, *Everyday Genius*, *Pelt*, and elsewhere.



**Mark  
Gurarie**

Barbara Henning is the author of three novels and 11 collections of poetry. Her most recent books of poetry are *A Day Like Today* (Negative Capability Press) and *A Swift Passage* (Quale Press). She teaches for Long Island University in Brooklyn and for *writers.com*. Don Yorty photo. (<http://barbarahenning.com>)



**Barbara  
Henning**

**David A.  
Kirschenbaum**



David A. Kirschenbaum is the editor and publisher of *Boog City*, a New York City-based small press and community newspaper now in its 27th year. He is the author of *The July Project 2007* (Open 24 Hours), a series of songs about Star Wars set to rock and pop classics. His poems form the lyrics of Preston Spurlock and Casey Holford's band Gilmore boys (<http://www.myspace.com/gilmoreboysmusic>).

**Artist  
Brenda Iijima**



Brenda Iijima's involvements occur at the intersections and mutations of poetry, research movement, animal studies, ecological sociology, submerged histories and visual representation. Her most recent book, *Remembering Animals* was published by Nightboat Books in 2016. She is the editor of *Portable Press* at Yo-Yo Labs, located in Brooklyn, N.Y. (<http://yoyolabs.com/>).

overset below iijima

## NEW FROM LITMUS PRESS

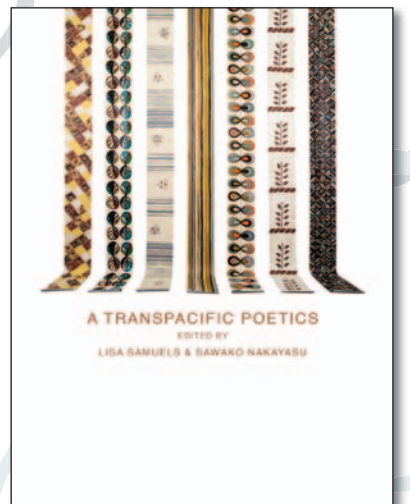
### A TRANSPACIFIC POETICS edited by Lisa Samuels and Sawako Nakayasu

*A TransPacific Poetics* is a collection of poetry, essays, and poetics committed to transcultural experimental witness in both hemispheres of the Pacific and Oceania. The works re-map identity and locale in their modes of argumentation.

*"A TransPacific Poetics* beautifully inscribes what the Barbadian poet Kamau Brathwaite would call 'tidalectics' by following multiple voice waves across the region and by capturing their registers in an astounding range of genres. A collection of poetry and prose that includes entries such as memory cards, lists and palimpsests, counting journals, scripts, the necropastoral, and critical essays, readers will follow the rhythms of translation and the transcultural, where wavescrashwavescrashwavescrash."

— Elizabeth DeLoughrey

July 2017 | \$24 | ISBN: 978-1-933959-32-0



### BRIDGE OF THE WORLD by Roberto Harrison

"These writings surge as blinding alchemical tales, unified, by language wrought in a psychic molecular forge, their higher consciousness suffusing each phoneme, with this consciousness spontaneously rippling into lines, stanzas, whole poems, that leap into greater vision, thereby forming Roberto Harrison's *Bridge of the World*. Harrison charts his own emptiness not unlike a navigator transmuting the emptiness in himself, thereby helping clarify the inner workings for each reader, as he or she faces the daunting mystery that we occupy as beings."

— Will Alexander

Forthcoming Fall 2017 | \$15 | ISBN: 978-1-933959-33-7

THE SUPPOSIUM: THOUGHT EXPERIMENTS & POETHICAL PLAY FOR DIFFICULT TIMES edited by Joan Retallack  
Forthcoming Fall 2017

DAYDREAM by Jean Day  
Forthcoming Fall 2017

WWW.LITMUSPRESS.ORG

Distributed by Small Press Distribution: [www.SPDBOOKS.org](http://www.SPDBOOKS.org)

Dedicated to supporting innovative, cross-genre writing, LITMUS PRESS publishes translators, poets, and other writers.



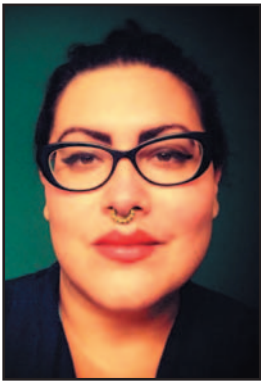


# PORTLAND, ORE.

Brenda Iijima  
Sensitive History 1  
Collage, paper, glue, 3-1/2" x 5"  
2017



# Stephanie Adams-Santos



## Oracle

Then, sight:  
  
the black curtains pouring down  
  
and like a parched hind  
to a mirrored pool,  
the image comes.  
  
Flecks of fire  
unfolding in a mesh  
where still something makes its way  
from the first star.  
  
A sperm of light  
for each blood-colored plum,  
and the seeds are touched  
in their bowers.  
  
Now this burrow of gazing  
is a cramped passage of flesh,  
as unaccountable and as  
concupiscent as a rose.  
Tomorrow will be pale.

## Mercy

I want to see the fossils of our eyes in time,  
asleep, transmuted in the great stone pillars  
of another world—  
  
A green arpeggio to rise  
for my sisters! enormous lizards  
who have come back to claw  
up the ruins and heave their rough bodies  
to the stone, for light.  
  
For my brothers! a chorus of ferns  
rustling in shade, in wind,  
in the breath exhaled by trees,  
moving the grass, whistling,  
your brown bodies are full of sun.  
  
Ah, how the hardness of the trees  
ought to be understood  
as the softness of flesh.  
  
Ah, the tenderness of a new desire.  
Ah, your brown bodies are full of sun.

I want to see us changed—  
beyond beyond beyond  
  
beyond is a heart, is the heart of  
a larger animal, is the god of god.

## Wednesday

Whatever grief this is  
that comes that rides my sleeve  
all season and crawls to my  
neck in winter and chirps  
through my knot of hair,  
I let be.  
  
I have only just spilt  
into my girlhood again.  
  
I have only just remembered  
  
the quiet of my sister  
the persistence of my other sister  
the violin of my brother  
the chorus of my siblings  
  
and our green house buried in leaves.  
  
Like a deer before the autumn  
I am leafing in the shadows  
with my eyes soft  
and the quiet urge  
  
to run toward the  
terrible machines.

## A Swim In The Lake

As I pushed off the edge  
I left one green world for another—  
  
Green of branches gesturing like limbs  
Green of disguised eyes  
Green of light through a dream  
  
A drowned hand held itself  
in the current for an alm  
  
I snagged in the tree  
  
One green thing caught the other  
  
and lightly touched the sleepy weight  
that curls in the burrow of  
each afternoon  
  
until death nearly woke.

Stephanie Adams-Santos (<http://www.tarotobsкуро.weebly.com/>"[www.tarotobsкуро.weebly.com](http://www.tarotobsкуро.weebly.com/)) is a Guatemalan-American writer and divination artist from Portland, Ore. She is the author of Swarm Queen’s Crown and several chapbooks.



# Allison Cobb



## There is rain in me

poem beginning with a line by D.H. Lawrence, for Paul Maziar

There is rain in me. Yes to the rain in me. Yes to the river. Yes to the freeway, its crash, the blood and the glass. Yes to the moon fading slowly. There is that waning in me. A museum of science and industry. Yes to stupid science, to working too hard. Yes to airplanes and tailpipes on cars. Yes to the dogs sniffing each other’s asses. Yes to happy, ass-sniffing dogs in me. Yes, even, to owners tugging harshly on leashes. There are owners in me. Yes to the smears on the glass, the broken heat box, the privilege I have to call someone to fix it, the one who comes, the fact of our exchange, a human one. Yes to the human in me. Yes to my shame. There is shame in me. A hot crescent in the belly, sinking down to the bowels, making my muscles feel melted in shit, making it hard to stand up. Yes to the shit in me, yes to the falling down. Yes to the reaching out. There is reaching in me, a feeling of lack. Kneeling on the cold sidewalk to worship the train of goods going past. There is a cold sidewalk in me. There is kneeling. Yes to this lack. It fuels the train shaking past. It fires up smokestacks, keeps conveyor belts moving, bends bodies down to their tasks. My lack. It is the shape of my life, the print I make. It sets ships across oceans, sucks oil out of rock, sparks money through circuits of light. Yes to that mark. Yes to the shining package yet to be unwrapped. Yes to the trucks and ships and trains stacked up. There are bodies in me. Yes to the bodies bent to their tasks. Yes to fingers and necks, yes to pulse and breath. Yes to the blood light of cash. In me there is hurricane, and tsunami. Yes, even to that. To each of the lives swallowed up. There is killing in me. I hold armies, and bullets, and fists hitting flesh. In me is a bomb strapped to my chest. There is blank indifference, a refusing to look. Yes to my blindness, yes to my pounding, yes to my blowing up. There is an infant in me crying for milk. Yes to my crying mouth. Yes to my own warm breast. Yes to my longing to be sucked. There is longing in me and lack. This birth. And this very moment death. There is everyone else.

## You want it darker?

poem after a line by Evan Kennedy

You want it darker?  
You want it dark  
as dark can get? Here  
let me tear from you  
your terrible veil  
of light, your cataclysmic thought  
that everything will be alright  
that soon your life will start.  
Let me pour for you our cup of dark.  
We drink and let it soak and let the dark  
rise in our eyes. Look. What you see  
will break your heart  
and break your neck  
you’ll fall apart.  
I can hold you like this, pieces  
of myself held  
by breaking forth. Now  
we’re not afraid.  
What’s the worst?  
To have ever thought  
we were anything but this—  
shattered bits, and so  
many of us—a heap  
of blood and meat—a machine  
that doesn’t mean  
and won’t work—legs and torsos  
arms, heads and eyeballs—  
crotches, fur bits, scars and nails—  
all our sickness and our wails,  
also music, certain words  
in single voice, the quick delight  
of taste and to fuck. You want  
it dark? Here we come—not  
thought, right proportion, rhetoric,  
not art—just our darkest  
fat-webbed, meat-raw  
beating hearts

Allison Cobb (<http://allisoncobb.net>) is the author most recently of *After We All Died* (Ahsahta Press), which the poet Carolyn Forché calls “inventive, visionary, hard-thought, and impossible to put down.” She lives in Portland, Ore., where she co-curates The Switch reading, art, and performance series.



# Emily Kendal Frey



I fear your depression will drive us apart  
A pork chop crisps in a skillet  
The woman who lost her lover down the face  
of Yosemite, I can feel it  
Her grief a bright sphinx  
Sadness is water and what else  
On the road to what, what else  
Can I tense into

\*\*\*

I thought life would be the distance  
between two fixed points  
and when our cups filled with milk  
a seam

\*\*\*

A great pain is still waiting  
The desert sluices  
family from us, long  
scarred rocks  
The rocks re-parent me  
My third eye bleeds  
Little human at the drinking fountain  
near the basketball court  
You end me  
I am speaking to your languorous unrolled aspect  
Not the tongue but the last  
dream shaved from your head

\*\*\*

I crunch by  
in a beige Bette Midler / Sally Field feeling  
When I was younger to see  
an old person eat  
flicked awake an anger  
deep as mayonnaise  
The void can be anything  
. The moon, a curious  
relative, penning a sign  
Hello or Goodbye

## A Person Who Aims at Nothing Always Hits

A few times I mistook ovulation for death  
Saw my shirt on the walk to work  
Why's love such a  
Punish me into a raisin  
I think it's okay  
What we do, who we are  
Peach bikini, Budweiser  
Sail it downriver  
Wait for a message to come  
Bleeping back  
I like the shapes  
People make in sand, the birds  
Keep landing, landing  
Dreamed we could each take a short  
Shower but I couldn't get my clothes off  
Then I realized you were  
Watching and this was not  
A sign of love  
Nostalgia weaves a basket  
I grow good legs  
The survivor in me says  
To move inland, stop  
Wasting ripe eggs

Emily Kendal Frey is the author of several chapbooks and chapbook collaborations, including Frances, Airport, Baguette, and The New Planet. The Grief Performance, her first full-length collection, won the Norma Farber First Book Award from The Poetry Society of America . Her second collection, Sorrow Arrow, won the Oregon Book Award.



# Jamalieh Haley



## From Pray She Becomes the Witch

1.  
We are in an old era, while every outrage is believed to be divined,  
darkly, spread like riot kingdom, consenting to dissenting, slaved to  
war on freedom, say, a young woman, hair planted in the yard, hoping  
to raze defenses, raises her hand, wrestles the phases of a sovereign  
moon shift from grasping to holding to arming to thrown up teak tiara.

2.  
Women travelling between work and home together  
takes on touching directness,  
which is not above love,  
which packs her life after death,  
which is lights’ lashes lifting and lowering,  
which is vomiting bright bound leather,  
which seems hospitalized with roses,  
which are tangled in the bodices,  
which makes the most criminalized graffiti,  
oh women.

3.  
This haut couture brings  
iron rings under wrought,  
bent and blended into high stemmed  
and flowered propulsion, like the skeleton of his rube goldberg fantasy,  
her multicultural engines  
in critical transcendence of public property  
where monoculture violences her animated pop-shop as aesthetic  
thrust.

4.  
We hear everything eternity  
is in men’s hands as genius fire ascending  
her porcelain fingers’  
hot diamond spurred  
feelings—  
those illuminite white barricades  
of all that they never are.

5.  
Dear community of women, in the history of chorus all your voices  
are one slick black bat braiding her hair in the dark wings before a  
soliloquy attempting to fluoresce the cave, your cave, our cave, the cave  
of all your efforts to depict all their battles.

6.  
Bang: In every woman’s mouth she savors the ultimate drum.

7.  
The woman’s body’s inhabitants are the keenest dialecticians’ cult of  
banquet talk whereat the auxiliary agent stages his own absence like  
the resurrection of somebody who never said a word.

8.  
The woman’s body unwraps  
light by turning the world  
so dead against the sun.

9.  
Her world occult of mirrors undressing her ego  
her vista trees  
her swath of balconies  
her billboard confetti dress theft  
her body of elevators  
her creep underneath  
her skyline she intones and wicked  
marriage suite booked in her own chest.

10.  
Her corpse slights the man holding tight—a gloss of a velvet case  
open and shut —who took her off her hinges, who stuffed her  
full of wet scarves, and who gave her witches and a necklace of hands  
to escape a darker blue?

11.  
Supreme ruler: instead of her, it’s the moon—her only mirror.

12.  
Women: the wait for the tail of a comet to take us to heaven,  
supernatural logic of a dishonest suffering, cult of deliverance.

Jamalieh Haley (<https://poorclaudia.org/print/strange-tarot/>) lives in Portland, Ore. where she teaches writing and studies linguistics. She is the author of Strange Tarot (Poor Claudia) and her work has appeared in Interruption, Sink Review, Sixth Finch, and elsewhere.

# Jamondria Harris



## Wilderness and Hearth

Lammas is awake, a dog  
is evening  
behind red linen. Here is the story of oppression between the  
whites and the blacks;  
the white spots multiply  
ruthlessly on long black boxes until  
they tumble and someone screams  
domino. Black mold grows  
between white tile until you have  
to rip out the floor and replace it with something less  
hospitable to biological process.

If the sun had a mouth on all fours  
I could enter it as a supplicant.  
I would wax myself behind the ears,  
keep my head alight and  
run, steady,  
to another star.  
I would not be the first.

As lovely,  
a thrush, I am on a furious march  
with sealed orders. I have broken my heel, I  
am running and tearing, tripping  
over my tender vines, spilling  
fat over the waters. I spoke about him  
like a Dutch uncle, slung  
a strong curb chain over the ark of the lord. Let me  
say as strongly as I can that we are little foxes,  
better alone than in bad company. It was purely a  
pagan impulse, it fell like a thunderclap,  
we must handle it without gloves,  
unblinking, we must leap into the dark.

## we make our law in the time of plague

we make our law in the time of the plague,  
we make our law, we are plagued by our laws in the time of  
the plague we are borne by sickness into the  
law of our plague. we are our plague, we make our law in its sign  
over the door we make our law in blood,  
its deficit, we make our law in the time of the plague. we put our  
plague to needle and bone, we put our law to heat and red soil. we  
heal and bear our law, our plague running steel, we make our  
laws of bristle, we make our law. of thatch and skin, succulent,  
we make our law in the time of plague. our mouths are wide  
as the moon, the skin, our law, stitch and ready, lips-sinew  
shut and strung up into a doctors’ beak. our law  
has swallowed the moonlight, our plague stuck under the tongue,  
that tongue  
seared to the sky, we make our law in tread marks of flesh in plague  
ruined, no fret, we make our law in the time of plague. we live long  
and hearty  
birch bound straight, lifting and turning in the time of plague, we  
grow plenty, seed goes sour,  
summer dying in our law, roots knotting in the time of plague.

## I.

walk slowly when you come  
to their fences, only  
speak when necessary, softly lick  
their defenses down to the bone, as slowly  
as it takes them to turn to  
you, to live learning you are the same  
kind of animal. do not put yourself  
between white people and your mother, between  
white people and their broken feet,  
between white people and their navels, between white  
people and the bottomless pit, between white  
people and whiteness. stand aside, let them  
know we are all animals, let them know they are animals  
and we will have no training of beasts of burden by beasts of prey,  
there will be no more pack animals bred or pastures kept. The only  
magic we know is the inversion of ever incisor, turning teeth on themselves

## The Heart of god

A black woman is a child in the heart of god,  
in the whorehold she is a child of god  
at birth, in iron at birth she is the only child of god.

What have I said? only that I am the last child of God. I am an infanta without  
the capital, letter or bullion i am a continent. Have I said that god was gold?  
I have not: what I know is that the last poet with any balls black as night is  
an emperor gone begging.

“The worst immorality is...:” passing through my legs, I would think as the final  
output of a dying empire my duty was light and vigor but I was wrong; my duty has  
only been stone under water and chisel. I would talk about the vagaries of light that make a  
Madonna Black or Red or White instantaneously but I would rather speak of my father, his face  
of stars and eyes so dark they make you think the universe is a current reckoning of our  
being. A black woman is a child with a candle in the heart of god, could there be anything  
else between us? Nothing but my beauty, nothing but my beauty suspect where I have  
broken my legs and my heart and kept running.

Daughter of Benin and invisible kingdoms, woman under me with pig irons through her  
nose, woman under me with a clear heart and a mirror, who i love or could be, in whose love  
i could become, let your beautiful eyes tell me, tell me:

## Antofagasta

The desert had 4 years of rain in one day:  
Antofagasta is my love,  
and my love  
is under the flood plain.  
My love is a bruised fire, drowned,  
burns wet, brings me my skin of  
blood boils and bruises,  
maps out a crown of crosshairs.  
Pinochet’s teeth have  
less blood than diamonds, so he dug  
him up and strung them through me. my love, my love and tetra-chord spines,  
hard-assed king under turtle island,  
faun and goat,  
half-man, wanderer, your lashes are  
an impossible backbend to do over the sun but you pull this  
stunt over and over-----  
I cannot get past the bones that wouldn’t melt in this heat.  
Nothing will do  
for this but wood and scales,  
wood and silver against the sea.  
There are few things as beautiful  
as salt-scoured timber that  
sits on the shore.

Jamondria Harris is a poet and artist living in Portland, Ore. They use words, sounds, wires, instruments, textiles, and what falls into their hands to engage with blackness, desire, decolonization, fairy tales, femme supremacy, and body horror. They are a VONA Workshop Fellow, among other things.



# Sam Lohmann



## Arcane Carnation

How to get the lines to catch up  
Note-for-note no doubt but out of sync  
A door opens we see each other a fire alarm goes off  
As a comb goes through hair a music strums the buildings  
Leaving an estimate, a hole  
All the way through, blush for blush & shade for shade  
Outline for outline but out of line, self-similar  
But scattered from every point  
Hello arcane carnation  
How are we going to fix your imprint now?  
All these lifeless instances I want to cite  
Their index becomes a giant shrug folded inside a shiver  
throws everything off

## Problem Garden

Biking home from work in the evening became a problem garden  
Like the flag of a nation no one would acknowledge  
Has cracks you could follow, smells sour, the honeybees flow between the flies  
To fight the logic of examples is an erotic idea, the sidewalk  
Just now slipped from its place & always trying  
Fighting that temptation the figs turn heavy  
Examples of anything always about to become our proper bodies  
Poppies & hollyhocks, dahlias & blue chicory are not examples  
Cut up in sharp October light, these thistles  
As many things as possible take their simplest names, their colors  
Gather a gray bloom that rubs off on our fingertips, a line of children walking  
From pale yellow through green, fuchsia to a deep blue purple almost black  
Seeing the figs turn heavy & fall

## Crabwise, Edgewise

Shadow you look so sleek & healthy  
Teach me to never be myself  
If that sounds wise it's cuz it's a ruse  
To stay myself, half a pulse behind the beat  
Always about to arrive Hello  
A blue crab in a svelte shadow  
A blue shadow in a four-color process  
Rock you look so beside yourself  
Teach me to distribute my weight across even sequences  
Of pulses sandbars illustrated gurneys windows on sleekness  
Across lags scratches truancies claws  
To never take it as it comes Here it comes  
Unfair sun uneasy to get up & follow

# Flowers For Fuckups

Pansies for a painter whose paintings don't work. Camellias for yogurt globs on your shirt. Crocuses for stubbing your toe on the chair and the tricycle. A chrysanthemum for one giving a foot massage who pinches the sensitive toe through the sock. English daisies for two who are ashamed to appear at the playground. Daffodils for a bicyclist whose Presta-to-Schrader valve adaptor disappears, who walks twenty blocks with a flat tire. A sunflower for a football player accused of dancing too much. Dandelions for sore calves and stiff hamstrings. Hyacinths for a child whose turds fall out her pants leg.

Lipstick salvia for friends who aren't sure when to hug. Forget-me-nots for fingers that won't snap. Dahlias for hands that won't high-five. Oxeye daisies for cars that can't parallel park. Hydrangeas for whoever stands in a classroom gaping. Avens for visitors who don't know to leave or stay. Yellow-and-blue primroses for clicking on stultifying links. Bachelor's buttons for bachelor machines disguised as blogs. Balsamroot for a toothache and ten years without a dentist. Red geraniums for the reader who tries to read Pasolini's poems without knowing Italian. For not knowing in public, azaleas. For wrong on the internet, winter daphnes.

With so many ways to fuck up, it seems good to bestow these flowers, but what if that's fucked up? Like, cloyingly moralistic, or frivolously anti-moral. I don't know how it feels to receive them. I'd hate to be the poet who condescends to an entire universe. Does it help to argue that certain ostensibly big fuckups are really examples of compliance with an evil order? It's tempting to make that distinction and withhold all flowers from racist politicians and murderous police, or toss them a single booger-like veronica blossom and turn back to the truly disorderly, lovable fuckups –

Which is iffy; and these distinctions are terrifying, like how in poetry I'm a fuckup, at work I'm just mediocre. Queen Anne's Lace for a handful of snot. Honeysuckle for untied shoes. Carnations for holes in sweaters, at least one per sweater, in the armpits or sleeve-seams or back or chest or collar. Hollyhocks for the car debtor whose car alarm goes off in the middle of the night, for no reason, again and again. A raft of cherry blossoms running down a rain-filled gutter for one too slow to make a video. Forsythia for whoever buys peeps-flavored Easter milk.

Osoberry flowers for forgetting a raincoat in the early March of clear dawns and wet afternoons. Big white magnolias for horrible parties. Big white magnolias for broken links. Big white magnolias for the late and incommunicado and unmediated. Big white magnolias for the boringly fake. Big white magnolias for the truantly dysfunctional. Big white magnolias for the grandiloquently tubthumping. Big white magnolias for Zenonian incrementalists. But this philosophy is incomplete. On the table there remains a rotting pile of apology lilies, half-assing-it grape hyacinths, deep cluelessness azaleas, collapsing wardrobe tulips, indignity anemones, scarred-for-life scabious, soiled furniture oleanders and too-much-too-soon chrysanthemums.

Sam Lohmann's recent books and chapbooks include *Day Use Area* (Couch Press), *Unless As Stone Is* (eth press), and *Stand on this picnic bench and look north* (Publication Studio). He works as an academic librarian. Adventitious essays can be found at <http://thefirmandaerie.tumblr.com>.

# Kaia Sand



The following are entries written in an ongoing collaborative encyclopedia project with Allison Cobb.

## eyesore

The night of her funeral Grandmother requested I build a chair big enough for everyone to rest. Infinite host of the weary living. The tarps of every color—Joseph’s coat tented into shelters—sleep hundreds or thousands in this rivered city: super-rage swells among the ranks of the housed.

## fly in the amber

gun on concrete  
eyesore in carbon smoke    bullet, young heart    young young heart  
--some kids    are less safe    than other kids--  
tyranny aflame  
  
power power power

in the amber  
rage in the amber  
look at the sound of rage    captive in the resin

## fly in the amber

I couldn’t catch up. I wish she could have waited. I could have sped up.  
Our minutes held the same count.  
We need each other, ancestors & you who are yet to be. fragrant yearning. amber.

Love. I. You. You. You. human human human

## prayer

each of us alive at the same. goddamn. time. but can’t. recognize. one another.

We are not experiencing this moment in the same way\*

Holy Hell! let the curses swell  
leaven & concrete

you shoulder the burden of their prejudices. our prejudices.  
you shoulder the burden of listening to the ones talk

who always talk

we who hear our own voices see our own likeness in the one-way mirror of image accumulation

while others are unseen or wrongly rendered because the trained eye sees what it was trained to see

you tell your friends the police officer stared at you & your wife too long, threateningly  
please understand we are not experiencing this moment in the same way  
but you are told what you experienced is not what you experienced

you are speaking but not heard, only told what it is to be you. What being you look like (but you don’t look like that, you say).  
What you sound like (but you don’t sound like that, you say).

you shoulder the burden of listening to them tell you who you are

smoke of a gated self consumed with itself, blazing through the spirits all around

curses curses prayers & curses. A big collective curse. A curse that breaks forth a cavern. A cavernous curse. cathedral rounding with curses. A curse coursing with curses.

Kaia Sand (<http://kaiasand.net/>) is the author of the newly released A Tale of Magicians Who Puffed Up Money that Lost its Puff (Tinfish Press) as well as Remember to Wave (Tinfish Press), and interval (Edge Books), a Small Press Traffic book of the year in 2004.

## precarity

the hearth is shattered    no mortar to fix it    roll out the red tape of precarity

citations & bills    & a feeling-stomach    feeling-temples    feeling-lungs

tagged with a criminal    record tagged to    a portended map

a baby born battling the brink    it doesn’t end    the problem solving

or not solving    the other side of the one-way mirror of wealth accumulation

## precarity

a baby born battling the brink    a baby born battling the brink    a baby born battling the brink  
a baby born battling the brink    who wails wails wails    yes or    yes  
o    yes o    e    e    e

## shroud

the man declared his firearm to the officer  
he did not wished to keep secrets  
he did not wish to conceal his concealed weapon  
but fear fear fear fear  
triggers triggers  
fear fear fear fear fear  
fear ay! ay! fear fear

no matter  
what  
he did  
he was  
not safe  
to live

## slurry

water in the sand

work it with a broom

water in the sand  
work it with a broom  
water in the sand  
water in the sand

work it with a broom  
curse it curse it  
work it with a broom  
one big curse  
work it with a broom  
another big curse  
mound it in the slurry  
the shape of our rage  
work it work it  
work it with your fury  
bring forth the rage  
a chorus of curses  
curses curses  
big bellicose love  
big bellicose love  
curses curses  
big bellicose love

Notes  
\* “We are not experiencing this moment in the same way” is an excerpt from an Open Letter from Sahar Shafqat on 9 November, 2016. (facebook post)



# Coleman Stevenson



## Tell me spring is not

a wretched thing,  
a Catherine wheel that wrecks  
the air with bloom  
I am hot, and can't sleep  
I am mourning the passing  
of sorrow  
I am trying  
to do it with grace  
I am trying and failing  
I went to the water  
to escape  
Sea air is Gemini air  
Air near water  
is mercury in action  
Mercury is my drink  
of choice  
I did not swim out  
looking for dark shapes  
I stayed on the shore  
A bird is a bird  
I cannot fly  
We were grounded  
on the sand  
in a useful way,  
in the way that  
roots are not always  
something to fear  
I've still got the grey sea  
on my shoes  
I've got a photograph  
as proof of shadows  
I'd like to say  
I could take it  
or leave it  
but it sounds like summer  
outside already  
already golden  
passing into green  
I know your kind—  
we would go on walks  
at dusk through neighborhoods  
scented with grass clippings  
You would buy me  
Coke Icees  
I feel familiarity  
which seems the  
strongest emotion  
But I do not  
choose it

Two roads  
in a yellow wood  
and sorry, I—  
looked down one I—  
was clipped to the paths  
of ideas and they undid me  
I was forked  
and following in my mind  
thinking the man  
who said it could  
have gone down  
both roads, just  
one one day  
and the other  
the next  
But every little thing  
changes you—  
you can't be  
the same traveler, never  
the same traveler twice  
He watched  
the trees shaking  
off their clothes.  
Please notice me!  
they begged  
Everyone I care about  
is golden, everyone  
I love is learning lines  
and letting them fly  
as a bird flies north  
with the cosmos  
in its claws  
I am still  
not a bird  
and do not need to fly  
There is only one road.

## The monsters of youth appear different now.

1.  
It's a story, and the hero goes into the woods.  
He goes in and is lost among the trees, thinking himself  
the good one. He doesn't know much before  
he knows trouble, thick as trees,  
on the path of pins and needles  
his bones would be glowing, if you could see them  
and though you can't, they're in there  
growing roots in the shadows where  
he stays, maybe he sleeps there for 100 years  
before allowing himself another word,  
before waking and walking out  
the same way he came in.  
At least, this is how it seems to you  
when you've taken a wrong turn  
and are giving up  
and backing out.

3.  
The night is an island      within an island  
accessed by a narrow      gap we must steer through.  
The moon is just      a comma in space—  
I know you use it      that way too,  
wish the roots would      plant down more  
reach the center of      the night and hold it in place.  
  
But the sun is risen      on both sides.  
  
How do we sleep when      there is so much to do  
that can't be done off      our dark island?  
  
I've been trying to tell you a story now for days.

>>>

# Dao Strom



## Fragments (of) the Assassin’s Wife

i.  
Although I watch for it (surreptitiously) he comes home every night without blood on his hands.

It is a form of witness on the periphery of emergency—to be drawn to loving an assassin.

ii.  
If you asked why him I might tell you it was because I wanted a man unafraid to look into things.

The smudge of blood on the dented guardrail that he bent close to stare at, as a child, the day after the accident.

iii.  
The man before, the one I did not marry, had a proclivity for growing faint at the sight of blood. Needles, too. Not exactly a fear; but a wooziness that would overtake him. In the birthing room, as the blood and placenta pooled out along with the baby I had cocooned for us, he nearly fainted. I should’ve known then, maybe I did. For how can a woman surrender, how can she bleed unadulterated for a man who cannot look straight at the heat of what she/I in essence are so much made up of?

iv.  
Assassins believe in the amenability of life’s dreck through violence.  
No, wait. Assassins believe in the futility of the amenability of life’s dreck—even through and/or despite violence.  
And so he believes, rather fundamentally, in the futility of his own vocation.

v.  
A distinguishing aspect between assassination and simple murder is that assassins do not kill for spite or passion, nor for sport. (Though there may be, unadmittedly, a degree of pleasure involved.)  
The assassin kills only pragmatically.  
He kills as cleanly as possible, doing his utmost to leave no trace.  
He gives only the brunt force necessary. Then erases himself from the scene.  
The sloppy way all the rest of the world kills, appalls him.

vi.  
*[& what is the assassin assassin of?]*  
To be literal : an assassin is an assassin of Life; and, hence, of Living.  
He is an assassin of Days, Nights Remaining. Of Love/Faith in Future and Ongoing.  
He is an assassin of Predictability and Ability-to-Know, for each job he performs is predicated on the element of surprise.  
He is assassin of Reason(s) for Death and Dying. For he knows, ultimately, there is no reason.  
He is assassin of the Idea—impossible belief system—that anyone is exempt or that anyone is deserving.  
There is just no planning it would’ve been possible for him to share with you. Try to understand that.  
The sting, with him, you see, is necessary.

Dao Strom (<http://www.daostrom.com/>) is the author of three books, *We Were Meant To Be a Gentle People*, an experimental memoir accompanied by a music album, *East/West*, and two books of fiction, *The Gentle Order of Girls and Boys* and *Grass Roof, Tin Roof*. Her work explores the intersection of image, text, and music.



# Stacey Tran



## survival #

I want to be soft when gently pressed between your thumb and index finger

When a generation eats salt, the future thirsts for water

When a father feeds his daughter spaghetti and Costco meatballs in a paper bowl

Her mother will follow up by splitting open a rambutan, a ritual of care, a maternity service

We made rings out of longan seeds for our tiny fingers

With a shoestring we pulled a piece of bark, an immortal pet

We grow up being taught to eat outside of the box

Can you believe the only option for rice in California grocery stores for a while was Zatarains?

A trumpet for a sun

My father traded in all ten pins for new ones

Uncertainty reincarnated as chicken hearts cooked in yellow onions and bitter greens

A man walks down the street at night pulling a cart of steamed peanuts

Drumming a chopstick on a metal lid of the pot, striking midnight

## A pair a saint would eat

A pair a saint would eat  
The fruit is in fact a hurry

Saw pluckable dandelion greens  
Free form weed for \$2.99 typically

Great poet of Massachusetts — why are you ignoring me?  
Our friends are already famous

While we brag  
Rubbing sage oil in our armpits

A couple years older is no more mature than you are  
Just an advanced imitation

Not trying the sentence on  
Getting it out of your system

This disintegration or loose scholarship  
A coloring book between us

Placeholder activities like  
Blowing up an air mattress

## Service Industry

Feedback. It’s an ironic word. Flattering, casual, we’re camping out in impressions.

I wonder a lot about what you are looking for and why you are still single.

Or is it a capability narrative?

Washi tape looks good on a wall. Would I bring myself to do it? I like the seamstress pins with the flat neon pink tulip on the end too.

Try again.

Things begin as two-dimensional.

Sorry someone interrupted me with their hair brushing the back of my neck with her hair because she was taking a photo of her latte! — in a city where they sell toffee and bunches of dried flowers neatly wrapped in kraft paper for \$6.50.

Do you ever imagine all the objects in a room layering on top of you. I had such a different idea of that in my mind. Several ways — in which like patchwork every object is a patch on my face, all over my skin, versatile like temporary tattoos.

Am I too soft? What are the hard edges?

How do I vacate the literal space I’m realizing I have to travel through first.

## Distinguished from “true”

I love you in the dark blue part of the morning

I love you when I’m not near you in the afternoon and I’ve skipped out on a responsibility

No one catches me except you let it go

Undothe the later misremembering how that song goes

How far ahead the dog walks is the future without our clutching onto it how we cannot

You taught me to be layered in the highest heat of the day and it begins to rain

So I believe again in the against glass feeling a rhododendron knows

## Exercise

Peel an orange while you are laying on the ground on your back. While peeling the orange say aloud the names of people you have loved not in a familial or romantic way. When you are done peeling the orange call or write to one of those people and ask them about their favorite fruit.

Stacey Tran is a writer from Portland, Ore. She curates Tender Table and her writing can be found in diaCRITICS, The Fanzine, Gramma, and The Volta. Wendy’s Subway released her first chapbook, Fake Haiku. Her first book, Soap for the Dogs, will be published by Gramma in Spring 2018.







# NEW YORK CITY

Brenda Iijima  
Sensitive History 2  
Collage, paper, glue, 7-1/2" x 9-1/2"  
2017

# Marina Blitshteyn



## our city has no poor people

this isn't a man wrapped in paper  
a woman with paper in tow  
a woman lining the car with blankets  
a trail of paper at her feet  
an old man filling up the car with paper  
so thick a young girl gags in her seat  
or another man jangling his pockets  
more paper stuffed into a plastic cup

when you visit this city you won't see  
a man dressing himself in paper  
lying on a wooden bench like paper  
draping his paper over the seats  
or on the corners of every street more  
and more paper piles  
making themselves comfortable  
women holding up paper signs  
women making paper fires  
women walking on thin sheets of paper

there are no homeless people here  
in our beautiful city  
there are no hungry people here  
in our beautiful city  
there are no newspaper leaves  
tracing the pavement with wings  
there are no prop babies  
there are no wide-eyed baby cries  
no worn guitar cases carrying paper  
no paper beds for men to sleep on  
no dogs with paper in their eyes  
we built our houses on paper  
we show you our paper faces first

## Betty Boop

in a plum velvet plume she's the belle of the ball  
in a yellow square shoulder-pad shuffle she hustles  
american wrist-band risk-taker ms. america maker  
in a pink patent shoe she's a shoo-in in stiffer stuff  
she's a bit miffed at your offer she's softening over  
she's overflowing with milk and sulfur and suffers  
the belly-ache of the belle of the ball all stuffed up

\*

a hot chick a dime piece a short-short a driving  
miss daisy-duke a nuke bomb bomb-shell a sell  
a half-off sale a buy-one-get-one a gotten one  
gone off the rail an edge grinder a low-rider ride-  
or-die chick chickety rickety lickety-split thigh  
high thigh bone breast meat white meat juicy

\*

who's the man man who's your daddy daddy's  
girl who's this little girl who said it who did it  
who's in it to win it who's won one already  
who's ready for anything who's anyone every  
woman everything to everyone I want everything  
I want to dance with somebody I want someone  
to love me I want to be loved by you just you  
and nobody else who's nobody only somebody  
only someone from now on only now or never  
for ever and ever aloooone boop oop a doop

## The Metamorphosis

When Lisa Frank went to comb her long blond hair in the mirror,  
she was shocked to discover a head of brown curls in its stead.  
Disappointed, she turned to the side. A long curled nose. She  
stared at the eyes in the mirror. Her long brown eyes drooped.  
Her limp ringlets dragged. Her lips were too thin to be seen. Her  
name too long to say right.

## On debt

a rooted hen, nest-less  
a restless fish, noodled

a stray cat, splayed and neutered  
a played mouse, scratched and sutured

or a sure bear, wigged and goaded  
a true bull, egged and gutted

a chicken breast, heartless  
a hearty beast, wingless

## On privilege

we put a mirror to its pale face  
we put a mirror under its nostrils

we stood in its place and looked at ourselves  
we looked at ourselves from outside our bodies

we drove a stake through its fat black heart  
we danced in its shadow and made a fire

we saw our bodies in the mirror  
we let the fire cover our faces

## The Immigrant Experience

I mean the narrative catches you when you least expect it, one  
day you're telling your teachers where you're from, the next day  
the border patrol, the next day your boyfriend wants to know  
why your mother cooks with so much oil, it's an immigrant thing  
you tell him, the arc from beginning to end makes up an excuse,  
makes you look interesting, makes up for all those years you  
mispronounced things, like sin, like veal, like zen, and so on, and  
so force.

the sing is you love being different, everybody has a crutch, and  
yours is soviet, this is what you're told by a man so you hold  
onto it, figure if he fetishizes it maybe somebody else will too,  
and anyway it's something to write about, but not write home  
about mind you, because no one calls you on your bullshit faster,  
catches your inconsistencies, your first grade understanding of  
the language, your grammatical shortcomings, and your so-called  
interesting past.

I'm so damn Russian to everyone but Russians, I tell my American  
friends over dinner somewhere in the village, I feel like they get it,  
especially the ones who also love hiphop, I mean it's hard being  
two things at the same time, like Russian and jewish, and foreign  
and naturalized, and a citizen and an immigrant, and a baller and  
a refugee, but we carry them with us always, don't we have to  
turn it on/off on cue, and don't we sometimes weigh our options,  
which is better to be today, and it's never 100% true

Marina Blitshteyn is the author of the forthcoming collection Two Hunters (Argos Books). She works as an adjunct instructor.



# Lee Ann Brown



## It hurts in this vaguely distant way not

It hurts in this vaguely distant way not  
to have you, to be able to talk to you  
in that way, to think of you, I can do that—  
It’s so strange to be in this position  
not to have the time to hold you but it’s  
really the space–time continuum at fault  
overwithheld by our age but then again the  
60s were more free. 40 is the new 20  
so why do I feel so constrained to declare my love?  
Patti Smith and Kathy Acker both told Bernadette  
how hot she was but I was the one to reap the  
benefits of so much desire that she fell down  
at Amelia’s where femme on femme, in silk,  
I slam–danced with Julie in last night’s dream

## no worse for wear but I did tear

no worse for wear but I did tear down the  
middle freaked or freed by one glass of red  
where is that bloody mary sonnet I rejected  
long ago I must go find it she looks a little  
like Juliet Binoche and the people you will  
meet tomorrow said it was the best movie  
they saw all year the minute I realized it was  
a vampire movie I was out of there in a facebook  
minute I get mad I get angry at anything  
fantasy “lightbulb” that trilogy the lord of the  
rings the third one that makes me mad  
I had to sit there the whole time she feels the  
same way about shakespeare she just wants  
to be me overheard and not fed upon  
like an intertextual vampiress in language’s heat

## No Stigma

No stigmata two things happen there in  
the early part of the process new shoot  
the breeze a whole new society the  
substitute of dorm conversations which  
I thought were fights because I was from the  
South where no one confronted each other  
ever “like a razor blade in a ball of  
cotton” said Matteo whose aunt is here  
and whose name would tell her we don’t stress what  
we developed a strong thesis some of  
you aren’t sure what specific details are  
as well as clarity about ten minutes of  
gelato flavors for example your  
daily dose of direct access of “I”

## Elio Auden

Angel in the corner up a walk white  
cake with gold in Wurzburg I drop  
raspberry juice from a silver ladle  
It slowly spreads across the Linen table  
cloth where I am guest at midday meal  
of a family whose language I don’t speak

Early one morning I run into Elio  
One block from my St. Mark’s sublet  
Misty he is walking against the rain  
Railing at construction workers who trashed

the plaque noting the house where Auden lived  
Never alone was it One big party  
Access to all poets Art of the everyday

threadbare poets, they often posed in the nude  
a hole in the back of his navy blue cashmere sweater

Lee Ann Brown (<https://leeannbrownpoet.com/>) is a writer, curator, and publisher whose poetry has won such awards as the Fence Modern Poets Series and the New American Poetry Competition. Her collection, Other Archer, was published in French and English editions in 2015 by Presses Universitaires de Rouen et du Havre.

# Melissa Buzzeo



Selections from Chapter 4: Of lilies muskroot  
crocuses and something similar

## Of my manuscript *Writing*

It is through sex –in fact an imaginary point determined by the deployment of sexuality—that each individual has to pass in order to access his own intelligibility (seeing that it is both the hidden aspect and the generative principle of meaning) to the whole of his body (since it is a real and threatened part of it while symbolically constituting the whole) to his identity (since it joins the force of a drive to the singularity of history).  
Michel Foucault

“That which is is and that which is not also is”  
Monique Wittig

“The higher the risk the greater the sacred work”  
–The ancient Vedic Culture

1)  
  
In the waiting there is a  
grace  
and in the grace there is a  
glow close to the earth  
the inner sacrifice accepted  
the trap acknowledged  
the boundedness that makes one acrobat  
if you could move  
suddenly remember all the images that came before this final one  
as it completes itself so fully now  
in community hole  
accept, renounce and listen to the deep beating of your own heart  
burning out of itself for the Ghost Dance  
for the very edge of something, the gold dust there  
here  
burning  
inside power  
now  
in the perfection of your own bound body  
for the next part that will be because of this  
dying  
listen  
be with  
the tree  
think about the connection  
between agency and passivity.  
Rest

2)  
  
One day:

It occurs to me one day that all these weapons I have---I can give them. Other people need them. It is a large clear pile. It is someplace else. I am someone else. And yet myself—a woman. I know who I want to give them to---I know the group who needs them very much, they are fighting and losing but gaining something. They are in another place another village. I know that to do this this transfer I have to be able to say in their language I have weapons for you or I have weapons to give to you or here this for you. It is somehow very hard to find out how to say this simple phrase. No one knows. But I can’t do it without saying this. I ask everyone. I work on this for months. These people ask other people. Finally it becomes something I know have and can use. I go there. I say it. The transfer of the weapons, the pile starts to happen

Reading the book of a friend, I feel in each of my breasts a bird struggling to get out. How do I let them out?

4)

I got off the plane. I walked to the shore. I picked up a chandelier crustal that was washed up on the sand—the shore. I returned the books to the library, I got more. The wave came to get me. I drank wine in my house. I hugged the tree. The tree hugged me back. Regret was gone. I worked all day. When I was lonely I would walk out onto the street on the way to the bookstore or the co-op or the naturopath with whom I had an endless trade or the yoga house and invariably someone would come up to me and ask me if they could schedule a palm reading. People I knew and did not know. I was often called beautiful. My floor was coved in real leaves. I kissed her on the train in Chicago. I kissed him in the bathtub in Iowa City. I had breakfast with her at my blue table stained from the endless teas to make my hair stop falling out—teas that worked. She penetrated me I said over and over and it was something I masturbated to that sentence and although it was many years before that I first heard that in my head that was the beginning of Iowa City.

7)

If I am the silueta  
And she pours blood over me  
And she puts matches over me, ash in me  
And she makes a shape of me

A second shape  
In flowers and marigolds and license  
If she listens and then pours gun powder over me  
If she takes off her clothes and listens  
To nothing  
Lights the match  
The people watching  
If I lie so still  
If I am the silueta and I am letting her

It makes everything else stop  
In a pool of unblood  
In a curse of non faith  
I write to you  
And die not writing to you  
Waiting for nothing

The shadow that came over my pelvis  
If I could see it  
If it did not seep in become unshadow  
If it was not shadow only for a second

As what could be taken became multiplied and multiplied.

I touched it and rubbed it and it is like a flower. The flower opened and opened and opened and opened. It was big but I didn’t taste it for years.

Melissa Buzzeo is the author of four books, the most recent of which The Devastation (Nightboat Books) was a Lambda Literary Poetry finalist in 2016. She teaches at creative writing at Pratt Institute and lives in Brooklyn where she is working on a memoir Writing and also book of essays onThe Poetics Of Healing.



# Donna Cartelli



## Boxed Up

Jimmy’s mother left him her house  
when she passed. His brother  
Tom kept tabs on him  
until he, too, died.  
Jimmy sold the house  
then traipsed around The States—  
explored  
aboriginal Australia.  
The trail went cold in low rent  
lone, California.  
Jimmy,  
a stocky loner.  
Brown curly-haired man, mustached.  
Years  
later,  
he was found  
decomposing  
in a crate on a dock at  
Hammonds’s Cove Marina  
in the Bronx     a bullet  
in his head,  
an ID in his pants pocket.

## Cherries and Shingles and William Penn, Too

I love cherries—succulent, meaty, sweet. But not the cherry red rash and blisters  
from the chicken pox virus running from under my right breast around my back.  
Burning and itching and an under-the-surface stabbing pain—a condition brought  
on by stress. Three deaths in two years and another loved one in decline. To  
prevent contamination, I wash and wash and wash my hands and keep them to  
myself. Attractive midnight blue horse pills were prescribed. Midnight blue was my  
favorite Crayola crayon along with silver, gold and bronze. I once copied Henri  
Rousseau’s *The Dream* with its odalisque lounging on a sofa in the jungle. Lions  
and an elephant spotted among tropical plants, reminding me of Edward Hicks’s  
*Peaceable Kingdom* with its lion, though set in Pennsylvania and there are no naked  
women just William Penn swindling the unsuspecting Lenape in the distance and  
two angelic children cuddling with a lion, lamb and sheep in the foreground under a  
shade tree.

## They Mistake Who Assert We Have Not Any Amusements

Herodotus cites sources in Sicily: *she’s a circus in bed  
jumping through hoops and straddling bars—  
a sight to give thanks and praises for.*  
Join the queue 150 yards long and 4 men wide.  
Men gaze in wonder,  
transfixed by her selfless acts.  
How she suffers with pain in one of her lips,  
sacrificing peace and time for every man on line.  
In a soft voice of angelic sound she cries:  
*I cannot rest! I cannot rest!                    Come  
take some food and drink some wine!*  
Her words induce us to lie at her feet—  
sexy and tasty.  
The way to be happy and stay so.

## From A to B

My love for you as roomy as heaven.  
Last night my moon for you was full,  
bringing earthworms who lure robins  
and crows announcing winter’s dead.  
The Three Graces along 5th Avenue  
don nothing but high-heel sandals—  
leggy and slender,  
clinging to each other,  
they came in winter  
after all. They’re nothing like their Roman sisters—  
headless and curvy,  
full frontal nudes.  
I take off my bra but keep on my sweater,  
the chill making my nipples hard.  
On the bus my eyes glaze over  
as I read a Dante stanza.  
So tired I almost miss my stop.  
On the street I find a tabby stretched out stiff,  
one eye bulging from its socket.  
I cry as I lower him into the trash.  
Music happens between the notes—  
it’s how you get from A to B.

Donna Cartelli is a poet and collage artist with a collection *Black Mayonnaise* (Ten Pell Books). Her poetry will be anthologized in the forthcoming *The Collected Explosive Magazine* (Spectacular Books). Work has appeared in *The Poetry Project Newsletter*, *Lungfull!*, *The World*, *6ix*, among others.

# Ray DeJesus



they say it’s a racket, a racket

shoulders aplomb a set of brothers  
a chip on their shoulders these set of brothers  
a plethora of mugginess  
here      here  
diving into a taste of China a man walks into a bar  
tells jokes for a living      you see  
a forest of leather for a large family watching their news  
a set of brothers are an archetype below a slop they sink

they use the first person I  
with ambivalence

there aren’t any gloves nothing in the barrel  
it’s all over

barren farmhouse on several acres tuxes tuxes  
protective suits rows of truck stops

strips of kisses

I’m carrying a batch of fish  
hoping

a set of brothers for a large family

diving into a taste of China here here  
ruined for life in formica smoking at 15  
crow’s feet by 35

“Lugosi for kids! Lugosi for kids!” a mish   mosh  
a set of brothers for life a set of brothers for life  
the quickest sharp left   into menu options

by saying no to everything, you get

brook fulcrum      kerfuffle limbic

into above ground shards quick feeds non communicative without  
transmission conduct      arms stretched  
a tandem curl slates of memorial

clasps tangles birds or fowl equine above and beyond boris karl-  
off animated cafeteria buttons not snow not snow the sun the sun  
arms thin arms small arms the big moon apparently rain thick thatch  
thick thatches pearly whites venal reprobate the song of the north  
the &ag of the world hum hummmm global language geopolitical  
preface epilogue photo stack nutrient hydrant

don’t fail  
is that fall              detritus  
you’ve come that far to say  
origin its origin needs to be consumed intact

zane grey harness saddle lips them lips those lips oh those lips  
fresh lips dem lips fine tuned sleep fine tuned plural it’s zipper its  
zipper telephone  
telefono

i can find a riding partner that ridesradio’s taken  
and video’s blue  
an X an in your eye   strike

Notes (September–December 2016)

Notwithstanding Much less  
Trees are sleeping In the back teeth Self-referential Fool hardy bra-  
vado  
Fabulously premature Pembroke  
“aggressive innocence” Chuck  
Frank  
To quell compulsion composition Leather  
Spot of tea  
Won’t back down Against the wind Pierrepont Attaché case Cross  
pen  
Argyle doorjam Christmas club

Notes (October–December 2016)

Lying in the weeds Eskimo Brother  
Donnybrook Right-o  
Break his mane Well for the better Gets my goat player Salvage one  
Uppercase El  
In pursuant Bidding Bide  
“Big bullets go in like a dime, come out like a cash register.”

Notes (August–November 2016)

There extreme wingtip War rated  
Cascade Crescendo Holds the set Bleating Flaxseed  
Affix  
Alight  
Keep it at bay

Ray DeJesús was born and resides in Brooklyn, N.Y. His work has been published in 1913, a journal of forms; The Equalizer 2.0; Peaches and Bats; Gondola; et al. He currently teaches at St. Francis College.



# Cliff Fyman



## From *Taxi Night*

I WANT YOU TO STOP!  
Like don't go with me!  
I'm sure it's fine,  
maybe I don't  
need to go, I don't  
know, maybe I should  
just wait till morning.  
Like I don't know!  
If I wait another hour  
or two you're just going  
to get mad at me even more  
for not going to the hospital  
sooner.  
I don't want to waste  
money it's like you're so  
annoyed this is exactly what  
I mean look at you!  
LOOK AT YOU!  
No! Look at how you treated me  
since I told you I wanted  
to go to the hospital.  
What are you talking about?  
What was that  
little bullshit on the couch  
all your little eye rolls  
and all your little whatever?  
Guess what, Joe,  
we're going to get divorced  
over this.  
That i.v. helped me, that i.v.  
they gave me got rid of...  
I'm not going to just sit there  
if I have a blood clot  
so just shut the fuck up!  
What I need to deal with  
is my husband on top of all this?  
Like it's not bad enough? Like I'm not  
worried enough?

They're twin brothers  
late 30s  
and they live together  
and they came out to their  
family and their family  
is like ok but why don't  
you each live separately  
and meet someone and settle  
down and have kids? and  
they're like we don't want to  
meet anyone we like each  
other and the family is like  
ok and the brothers are  
quiet about it because  
there could be laws  
against  
it.

I  
made the biggest meal for  
everyone on Rosh Hoshana.  
Do you remember? Every  
Jewish holiday is getting  
so expensive it's ridiculous.  
I'm not making a meal  
after Yom Kippur.  
Craig is Italian.  
The mother's boyfriend is  
Protestant. Ashley's kids  
have dropped out of Talmud  
Torah. What fast are  
they breaking? No one's  
fasting.

Boo-Boo, you're my baby.  
Once a week, once every two weeks.  
I got my business. I respect your business, babe.  
Heh-heh. We're going to create a party, baby  
--driver, when you get to 117th bust a left--  
we're going to create something *gookey*.  
Hold on one second--hel-lo, I'll be there in two minutes,  
I'm in a cab already--back to you, Boo-Boo!  
You can come by,  
let me see how go-o-o-d you're lookin'.  
So when we going to make this date?  
I need to poke you, Boo-Boo. When  
can I see you? Stop all this foolishness now.  
When? Tomorrow? Thursday? Talk to me. I understand  
what you're doing. You got a friend. You got to  
do what you got to do. You got to be easy  
--first building on the corner--  
I don't want to have to bash his head in  
he'll think 'let me get the license plate  
of that truck'--heh heh heh!  
What happened? *What happened?*  
I don't understand. We were like this!  
You've been banned, fella. Heh-heh-heh.  
--right here's good, driver--

Yo, yo. Astoria Boulevard, make a right, take the highway,  
and you a good brother.  
Thank you so much  
FOR PICKIN' ME UP  
It's sad  
I'm a good black guy  
and I can't get a fuckin' taxi!  
Damn!  
That's bullshit.  
Where you from?  
"I'm from here."  
I grew up with white and black."  
No, where you *from*? You white? Where? Where?  
Are you white or Spanish? Puerto Rican?  
"I'm Jewish."  
JEWISH?! AND YOU DRIVIN' A TAXI?  
O my gosh I work for Jewish people.  
And I don't want to hear anything.  
These mothers have money.  
Look, brother, you good, man. Exactly.  
Oh, you are so good.  
Go onto that highway, Grand Central,  
you are good.  
Damn, you a Jewish guy,  
fuck you doing driving cars?  
Really? Seriously? Nah, man, I don't  
believe that. You ain't Jewish.  
Jewish people I work for,  
they got millions and millions  
of dollars they so cheap.  
Even if I had a recorder,  
if I was on ABC I'd say this shit too.  
Cheap, man.  
They got so much money.

I had a good time tonight.  
I'm a bartender.  
You know how much money I spent tonight?  
I made \$220 and I spent \$140,  
and I'm about to go spend some more money.  
I got to pay this fare, right?

I know you're not going to like this  
but that's not your baby.

Poet Marc Olmsted describes Cliff Fyman as a 'Pacifist Zionist vegetarian PostBeat Objectivist Zenster.' Fyman drives a yellow taxi cab in New York City. He is an artist and has self-published two hand-made chapbooks and one mimeo collection. While working at the Algonquin Hotel in 1985, he was Leonard Cohen's busboy.

# Francesco Grisanzio



## Swamp Frank Meets a Nice Man

But not this day. Today, Swamp Frank meets Mark. Mark’s aggressive, unlike the swamp. The swamp just takes it as it comes, all of it in stride. There are so many things to learn from the swamp, Mark. Swamp sweet swamp they say, Mark. They say this all the time, Mark.

## Swamp Frank Communes with Nature

What is important to remember, Mark, and what, I believe, the children are never properly taught, is that the swamp is not a singular entity. On the contrary, Mark, it’s an arrangement of several vegetable matters and animals and then a hole with water and not bees whatsoever, Mark, it’s so different than that, Mark, and me, Swamp Frank, I’m there too, all at the same time. Can’t take the Swamp Frank out of the swamp is a thing that’s been said plenty but should probably be said more to the children. Our future’s at stake, Mark!

## Swamp Frank Performs His Balancing Act

There are so many issues these days that all need to be addressed, but, thankfully, some are more important than others, the swamp being most important, and that makes life a little bit easier. What a relief to not have to worry about what to have to worry about next! That would, otherwise, be, decidedly, not in line with what the swamp is really all about. Get with the swamp, Mark! There are big things on the horizon! Sheesh, Mark, it’s like you’re running around in your city clothes while the swamp just passes you by!

## Swamp Frank Is Key to a Healthy Relationship

Alright, Mark, I’ve taken a personal inventory and I, me Swamp Frank, feel that we’ve gotten off on the wrong foot. I’ve come to realize that all the things wrong with you are from too much city life and that it’s the city that made you so pushy and plain irritable. Now, Mark, I feel strongly that it is in your best interest, Mark, for you to go into the swamp. Mark, I’m not forcing you but, Mark I would very much suggest it and that things will fall into place from there. Mark, would you please just get in the swamp right now, please, Mark!

## Swamp Frank, True Patriot

Pull up a swamp, Mark, let’s talk, or, rather, for once, let me Swamp Frank, talk. A long time ago, so long I can’t apply numbers to it, our, my, swamp forebears, the pioneering Swamp Franks of their day, brought forth unto this land a brave new swamp and it was good. Really very good. Mark, just about the best thing, a swamp, this swamp, is a quagmire of conviction and beliefs and freedom. And, so you see, Mark, clearly, why you need to keep to your side of the swamp.

## Swamp Frank and the Great Unknown

It’s not the swamp, or the guest swamp, Mark, it’s you. And so now I’ll need to go away forever. I’ll find a new swamp, a god-fearing swamp, and spread my wisdom to the children wherever I go, like Johnny Appleseed, but of course, I’ll still be me, Swamp Frank, as I don’t much care for apples, which, I presume, you do, but, rather, I Swamp Frank, am interested in the swamp. And, at night when I look up at the stars, I will think of the swamp, and not you.

Francesco Grisanzio (<http://www.bortquarterly.com/>) is a founding editor of BORT Quarterly and the author of the chapbook *Stories & Centauries* (Strange Machine Books). His work has appeared in *Poor Claudia*, *Banango Street*, and *Powder Keg* among other publications.

# Julia Guez



## Katabasis

Paperwhites. Here, of all places.

Unlike the others, they will portend

more. Inside of sixty seconds,

a quorum in plain clothes.

Falling to the floor giving way to another floor,

another false canopy.

II

Oysters

in the soil

where a maggot might’ve been

boring into mealy harpsichords.

III

Frail rights to bend the centrifugal back.

IV

And the weathervanes.

And the water in the bilge of a boat—

Lethe, such a wide river—

the-main-and-mast where exactly, and the thousand oars, the

thousand hands?

V

Down the stairs to the quay, the same washerwoman as before

when what sky there was was not enough.

It’s difficult to describe a forest.

And the blind eye blinking at nothing.

And the owls not what they seem.

And the vats of vellum

sacks they fill with candles at the very end.

The dust of them on the lake in the shape of a crater.

And the milky outline of a Virgin back-lit

by a host of gold and green coronas in transit to where

not all the promises would be kept.

And the ledger. A bowl of cigarettes,

wet once and gray all over.

And the tumbrels on another errand—feathers on the starving horses’

red and blue bridles

flouncing.

VI

And the trees which must bleed to speak,

their release from pain only further pain.

And the ferryman, mouth

widening around another egg.

And the nightingale

telling some of what it is to be female:

through and through

on a tongue

thickening with red and white twine

asterisks.

Sour wine to sew

the feathers on.

Wretched body, unable to walk or crawl.

The new one set to fly.

VII

And the skylessness unto

a room almost all metal.

And the masquerade.

Mess on the floor

as in Gualeytuachú after a carnival

entire constellations reconfigure themselves

above, as if to mean more.

VIII

And the Klieg lights, a bandoneon, the terrible swing of a censer.

IX

Women I know nothing of

tending to what of me is here after

the sudden anodos—

breathing and whatnot while

the selfsame is still

in the Nethermost bemoaning

the wherewithal those days you feel

perfectly inseparable from your own hands.

Lost the dominion of a mind softly

searching for its delinquent palaces.

X

A shade like all the other shades.

Susceptible to rust and moths.

Maybe taken in the night by thieves.

XI

The fear of these things.

And the solstices.

Advent always ending with the letter, O.

XII

And the mayfly—mouthparts,

a foreleg ahead of the wingéd

emblem threading itself through a narrow

opening in the celluloid.

XIII

And the self—gondolierless yet leavening on a set of invisible strings.

XIV

And the frangipani, but faintly.

XV

And the hand over hand

to bring the self above the body

strewn among Plasticine

reeds and rushes in this

diorama of a bed.

And the foam-core

leopards, two by two.

XVI

Not unlike waking any other day—

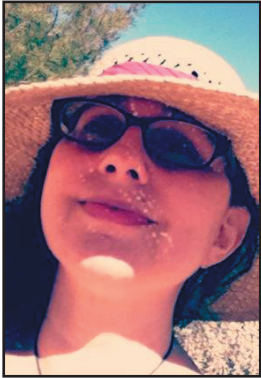
the whiteness of those arms

there to receive me, bleeding and but home.

Julia Guez’s poetry, prose, and translations have appeared in POETRY, Circumference, PEN Poetry Series, BOMBlog, The Boston Review, The Guardian, Apogee and DIAGRAM. Guez lives in Greenpoint, Brooklyn and on-line @G\_U\_E\_Z. She works at Teach For America-New York and teaches creative writing at Rutgers. Ted Roeder photo.



# Arielle Guy



## The Forest Where I Died

Men and women known in another life come back to haunt me and I am happy. The boats are ready. The kitchens are all the same but with different linoleum floors. The stoves are gas. There are no flowers because there is no extra money. There aren't enough beds and all the male children sleep together on the couch, pulling the chairs in the room close to lay their legs. The youngest son goes to school. The older children work. The mother is the archetype of a mother.

The prayer book and candlesticks never leave the table. The dresses are cut by hand. The sewing machine is operated by foot. There is no electricity. Light is produced by kerosene, which also creates smoke. There is light in the trees back home. There are fields and the balustrades are friendly. There is finally a window between the front parlor and the kitchen, a tubercular window, now mandated by law so that there is hazy light coming into the kitchen. The bedroom has an airshaft window that looks into the gap between their bedroom and their neighbors' bedroom. There are hand-sewn dolls with button eyes in the wooden crib.

It rained every day that week, except the day we went to the woods outside Rzeszów. We had been in Poland four days.

The Past Is Seen Through the Aura of a Lamp on a Table in the Living Room.

The world changed and changed again.

We were hungry. We heard so many things on the news, we couldn't tell what was real, but we could feel it, damp in our veins, the openness of the sky, the dazzling parade of suffering. We couldn't turn our eyes away. We gleamed in the open, vulnerable prey, hovered in the forest like lichen, growing only in the tiny patches where sun gets through. We chose to live there and it wasn't an easy choice. We gave our lives to it, this place.

We chose to live, to inhabit our lives like they mattered, because the void collects and opens and gathers and lights us on fire so many times and we realized in that moment in the forest that, even in death, we burn as bright as the stars that fell to earth at our making.

We were shaking as we entered the forest. I looked up at the sunlight coming through the trees and the trees said to me that they did not die without witnesses and they did not die without compassion and light. These same trees were there. We were silent except for the blessing. I felt the soul of the trees in Scotland too, and these trees in Głogów Woods, filled with light from another realm.

Letter from the Ancestors.

It's time for us to take the mast. They said, it's time for us to take the sails. There is no life but this one, but we knew that wasn't true. Our great-grandparents were still speaking to us from beyond the trees so we knew there were more lives than this one. She said, sitting on top of the tree, that's okay, we get more than one life but the life after this one goes in the sky, weather, holds us up against the light like an x-ray, we pause and then our breath is gone. Take a breath now, feel the ache in your lungs because you haven't breathed that deeply in a long time, close your eyes and open them.

She sighs and takes the birds under her wings, the rain comes and we are the rain, we hold ourselves against the sky, one drop of water is the sun, the mountains give way and the earth falls again. There is no ground, there is no ground, there is no ground and then our feet land again. This earth, this earth, this earth. And then again, we are the rain.

Walking into the forest, we were afraid we wouldn't come back. We walked slowly, our arms like wings, holding tightly to each other, entwined.

Our sneakers on the forest floor, breath against our ribs, heartbeat against air, the sound of old fires. They sang us open and flung us into brightness.

Arielle Guy is a poet and fiction writer. Her first full-length collection, *Three Geographies: A Milkmaid's Grimoire*, was published by Dusie Press in 2011, as well as a chapbook, *Gothenburg*, from ypolita press, and other Dusie chapbooks. She lives in Brooklyn and is a shamanic practitioner and teacher.

## Everything I Told You Was Wrong

Post-sunburst.

She writes: I am hesitant revelation. Today is hard. I am semi-determined to not despair. The half-nature and negative construction alludes to much I am not saying. So we enter an age of paradox, where the door we've opened onto the night reveals both light and dark. We are with nature in this. We are tricksters of light and perfume sellers.

And to what I told you, I add a postscript:

Words are of service when they are not words. Words of sky and rain. They carry the whole of language, the whole body in them and then let them go. They release meaning and the need for meaning. They sacrifice themselves like insects drowning in water. They are water and the insect becoming part of the water, dissolving and decaying. I write, and language decays. The world pronounces itself from a syllable. There is no difference between me and a syllable.

More of what I could have told you but didn't:

We are widening into orbs of light. We are widening into light we carry in our stomachs. How to digest the world at large- when the world looms like a closed factory but our senses reflect more back to us than pain and concrete. We are haliphones- we drink, we measure outcomes, in glasses, pronounced sight from our faces that drop into being at a drop of rain. We are the worry of rain. We are its untangling. We are its hope and its peace. We live within the molecules of when rain becomes something else, when we become rain, when we hold in the sky as weightless weight, the weight of water measuring death and transformation. We are hope and grief and sadness and weather, we make weather from our sighs and the space inside our bows. We breathe strangely. We are aliens and constructions of paper and light. We have heaven and hope and strange light that we know is important somehow and comes with a key to decipher it.

We are history. We carry it with us, in us, like a desperate orphan. It claws and cries and becomes silent in our constant beckoning of the future, without listening to its stories. We have so many stories inside us. The truth of the world is in us. The patterning of the sky under our eyelids. The chalky residue of stars in our skin. We are residue and completion, a returning to water and space.

On Tuesday, I wrote:

The worry of this day.

On Thursday:

The worry of the sky.

The ghostly presences in our lives harden against the implacable gloom or magic of imagined pasts and futures. There is no way to know what will happen as we press ourselves into the mystery of the present.

Our mattering lies in our hands like a newborn. We barely know what to do with it but we know so much. We know its first breath and we care for it, making sure it gets enough food and water and air and space. We are nautical engineers under oceans where our descendants learn to make light and food out of water.

And at some point, I'll write this, but I won't remember:

Moth wings rub together in low light, the light is music, we sit in the shadow where light doesn't fall. We do not fall. We try not to. All our might, mouth scrunched up in tense exhaustion. We are tired of being scared. Dreamless nights, we wake from a nightmare, the dream was scary in our bones and our body trembles because it's a kind of truth. The truth of dreams in the bones hums like an animal making breakfast, aware of her surroundings and body and lilt in song. The fire under the kettle, the scream of the kettle, the history of water. But that's too rough. The dawn shows through a little. The green blinds in the kitchen are lighter with a square outline of morning light. This is safety or security or a semblance of those things, which are theories. We don't live in theories. Safety can't be figured out in the mind. After waking from a nightmare, we know that. We feel it in our arms, hearts, beating quiet and rough, in our breath that can't quite collect itself.

Safety is formed in the cells, which have souls. Every cell has a soul.

# Karen Hildebrand



## Sucker Punch Hangover (Nov. 9, 2016)

Not even the forgotten jar of dried up capers  
in the refrigerator is safe. Jelly beans,  
all sugar and hot pink, it’s sink or swallow  
this morning after, I can’t get enough.

Banana, you say. I rest my face. One  
popcorn, super-sized. Yes, with baloney.  
A pint of pity, any flavor but Dreamside.  
Down the hurricane; batten the haunches.

We’ve ruined the perfect composition  
of our park bench. A solo sax whines  
in the rock garden of hubris. I snag  
my hose on a single splinter of hope.

48 contiguous spells of “Homeland,” binging  
is now the party of choice. Struggling  
with digestion? Call now, our lines  
are opioid. The white bread is baked.

## B Movie Fashion on the Red Carpet

Wasp Women, their eyes shrouded in purple satin,  
translucent wings sprouting between their shoulders

*Runaway Daughters* in pastel capris, shirt tails tied  
to frame their jailbait midriiffs, next to *Hot Rodders*  
*Who Make Speed their Creed*

We wonder aloud whether the *Men Are From*  
*Mars*—certainly their big hats would suggest  
they have a lot on their minds

My favorite is *Love-Hungry Monsters*  
*from Hell*, their khaki shirts as ripped as their abs

It’s one disaster after another

*Three Zombie Teens*, wearing beaded  
off-the-shoulder gowns at ten in the morning

## The Day the Widows Hijacked the C Train

Widows are everywhere, you know—huddling outside the ladies’ room,  
rattling a jar for loose change, binging on Jujubes,

stoned at the movies. We line up for the sauna with towels draped  
over our heads, like a procession of novices,

awkward in our habits. Are we wringing or are we wailing? We dig  
in designer bags for a tissue and come up with

a Ziplock of ashes to sprinkle in the Hudson. Today, we’re limping  
through Whole Foods in high heels and black lace

Miracle bras. We were up half the night, giving alms to Tinder  
and we’re about to hijack your morning commute—

Myrtha and her ghost brides, forever dancing men to their graves.

## Year of the Monkey for Jane Underwood (1952–2016)

It started with Bowie and Rickman—  
the internet went nutz over that.  
Then Hicks, Haggard and Prince,  
like some aging rockstar law firm.  
Along with my ovaries, I’ve lost  
the ability to weep. Today’s weather  
is snowfall and online shopping  
in record amounts. I have enough  
backdated email from you  
to collapse a crane, but no news  
other than these lines in my head  
and a new pair of waterproof shoes.

## Ode to My Bunion

My big toe is pumped  
on potassium. Faced  
with the purgatory of foot  
cramps that turn me into  
an insomniac salamander,  
I’ll do anything.

I’m a jumpy junkie  
jonesing for a good vibe,  
holding out my palm  
on the plaza: Please,  
my big toe needs air,  
everyone stand back.

I need a panama hat  
for my big toe, that’s  
how much space, I say,  
and the passersby look  
the other way, bunions  
being out of fashion

this season. Don’t tell  
that to my big fat toe  
when in full passion  
of a crooked jag, raging  
against the pinch  
boxing in its soul.

## Whiskey Tango Foxtrot

Night and day, you are the one  
the lyric in my head

the chip in my diamond  
a party without me.

You are the guy who cuts  
in line—no, you cut me off

mid-line—no, you are the line  
that rhymes with my song.

You can be my stanza break,  
my metered verse, the way

I write in twos. You are  
the perfect shape on my page.

You are the ratta tat tat  
aclatter on the sidewalk,

the swish of a street cleaner  
dance. Let me be your boom

shocka locka in the bedroom.  
I am an enjamb, interrupting

your razzmatazz. Let me talk over  
your sassafras, I’ll be the cream

in your soup, likely to char  
the bottom of the pan.

Karen Hildebrand’s (<http://karenahildebrand.blogspot.com/>) poetry was adapted for the play, “The Old In and Out,” produced in 2013 by Three Rooms Press. She lives in Brooklyn, and is chief content officer for Dance Magazine.

# Krystal Languell



## From Tonight This is Our Last Song

It is Christmas, and it is also Wednesday. Just a bit short.  
Easier last time. Always waiting for business hours to start.  
Left all his sentimental things in a hotel room. Praise with force.  
Tried to gather. Making a real effort to keep back from abyss.  
Still, drank a latte I didn't need for the transition value.  
One labor to the next, before the third shower. Confirm receipt.  
The impending untenable. Yawn at the canvas of simultaneity.  
I go to the store and tell my problem to a non-employee.

## July 3

romance came about during illness  
in the mayor's house anyone left  
unsupervised might fall in love  
the unmarried meet each other  
then forget their oaths to self one  
bride had a boy baby the doctor's  
wife miscarried horseback riding  
knocked her fetus loose still he  
could not be angry with her now  
she has sneaked that they might  
not sell the house to her ex-suitor  
and she not admitting simply  
her humiliation instead she meddles  
in business unlike her unlike a lady  
to begin a foray into meeting agents  
provincial how she writes to relatives  
thinks only of the men's opinion of her  
appearance not considering the ladies  
might not want her around much  
plaits a nuisance vanity can be called  
another name depends on the context  
surface or aesthetics labor is another  
the mayor's pretty daughter thinks men  
will invite her to live on family land  
she wishes they would move to London

## Unstitched Ritual

Why can't we have the things that make us calm?  
Much ridiculed object with power  
Begin from the nail bed (rather than chipping)  
A pass word A code  
Obsession childhood forbade Heaven forbid!  
Unless thus tricked Backed in Via notion  
The reversal: gifted does not mean blessed or  
highly intelligent scoring well on aptitude  
not gifted person overtaxed by daily living  
Would not have labeled himself a narcissist  
Lack of tools recipe for misery  
Scrape forward  
In your exoskeleton moving from out to in  
Baby blanket or binky Stuffed toy, favorite

## June 24

it shifted into a different house  
and then a new set of concerns  
it was just yesterday  
the husband asked the doctor  
what was really wrong with him  
the husband is very distrustful  
suspects his wife of wrong motives  
the journalist nephew of designs  
on the wife seems to be cooking up  
some adjustments to his will  
as predicted in these pages  
few characters in the plot in pursuit  
of doing good for humankind  
not so much aware that such a  
phenomenon exists just a self and  
a few acquaintances a few officials  
that lucky dad who has been at work  
for causes and not pay wants to help  
the layabout rich boy but really should  
keep his attention on his own several  
children he is the big  
heart in town who gives it all away mister  
set a little imaginary income aside  
nonetheless

Krystal Languell (<http://krystallanguell.com>) is originally from Indiana. She is the author of two books, Call the Catastrophists (BlazeVox) and Gray Market (1913 Press), and five chapbooks. She taught writing at Pratt Institute for five years.



# Katy Lederer



*From the series “Blue Direction.”*

## Shake Down

Shake me down—  
put your hands on my pockets  
and feel if there’s anything there.

But there’s nothing  
in the shake down  
for your hands.

I left the gadgets  
on my shelf  
like clocks—

they chime like clocks  
and are round  
and glassy.

If I put them in my pockets  
they would scratch.  
When you shook me down

there would be a bunch of  
scratched up trinkets  
littering my clothes.

There is no trick to shaking down  
but keeping those hands  
out of my empty slots.

## The Race

All this, and yours  
are even dreams, although

I like to think them not  
so fruitless.

Rushes come and go, I wonder  
never downcast eyes—

The looking away is a venomous  
frankness, but never to you—

Let’s be bad. In the letter of fame  
there is never your face,

but only a string of reminders  
as I stride and stride—

## We Are Blue

We are swollen  
with blue

A baton  
we are beautiful

Eyes  
in our muscles

In our tissue,  
Abundance

Behind the curtains  
of our hearts

a bed. A certain  
silly song. Also

a garret  
and a grave.

We are modest  
as a shoe

our melodies  
are boiling

move riotous  
over us

8 O’Clock  
our guests

will go  
Our torsion

Afraid  
they are glancing.

## Fact

Some faction came by my house.  
I heard some shrill voices.

Docked in the bay,  
the bay came.

It was a load to carry  
on my saddle.

The doors were smug  
and stood like hooks

from their casements.  
They clapped. They were

books opening and closing,  
heavy on my back.

## Does It Work

Can you tell me how  
being without imitation  
is done and is someone to take me up  
timing besides that

Without imitation  
you tell me it works without  
hating it when people imitate  
each other in love

Can you tell me without  
imitation you feel that  
inside of the right side  
it feels like a tunnel

Very dark. I feel like  
it hurts a lot

In one part of the brain  
things get caught  
I cannot forget them

When things become caught  
I become disgusted  
I stab them and stick them

up like posters. They  
bleed on the floor.

## Red Mimicry

What if it’s not the right way  
to be.

Rimless, informal,  
I think I will tell you  
I’m blue.

It’s the way I get into it,  
formless at first,  
if a color  
hasps breathless.

Red mimicry,  
subtlety.

The very protuberance of wanting to be  
someone else.

I am blue—  
To insert in the minute face

poems in which fans open,  
air become cool—

Katy Lederer (<http://katylederer.com>) is the author of the poetry collections *Winter Sex* (Verse/Wave), *The Heaven-Sent Leaf* (BOA Editions), and *The bright red horse—and the blue—* (Atelos), and the memoir *Poker Face: A Girlhood Among Gamblers* (Crown). She edited the zine *Explosive* and poetry for *Fence Magazine*.

# Walter K. Lew



Paa Othating Discsqu 8:54:

Teutons incilinu  
PANS. mondsho  
Press mersona  
afinument SSR.  
nteents though  
(vide tocent  
Obregón, telice  
edureere Sci  
nds.Nov ARE  
wtda todedin

## Of Vincent Grenier's Video *Intersection*

Cars were just part of the traffic in the hillside,  
A brook of the buzz there.  
Slid like decals on the meadow  
But not sticking anywhere, the only pollen  
On them Photonic, budding in eyes  
Coursing through chiasma to probablate

Across the banks of sight (tufty with morning,  
Stark speckled at dusk). Do drivers intrude? Their  
Speed makes them spectral, only part of slope memory,  
Until a semi turns through—all chrome & red today:  
Long mirror of the lanes, converting to rust  
This field it crushed, till sleep's dark rise

Lifts rigs to longer  
Trees on the ridge  
Nests in acacia, clouds of pine.

## Wort-Mitotic

LEAR	a schism
FUND	a mentalist
SIGH	a colic ghee

## FIFA Ed. FIFAAHHH

What a goal!!!  
And that's it – Argentina go through....  
Have we just seen the best fame of the tournament so far?  
Nobody deserved to lose  
ole...ole ole ole,...see u tommorrow  
I still love you Mexico

albertrazvan: wow, the editor philosopher  
baristarim: mexico hesitated too much  
cocoboco2000:  
florisdouma: yeah, ya right editor  
onemoll: It was a great game, and Maxi's goal is the best so far!  
cometyim: mexico just didn't do best at the end  
cocoboco2000: ..  
aznvietboy3000: sweet..both maxi and crespo are on my fantasy team  
salvisoulja: yes im sooooo happpppppy  
cometyim: whoever put the last effort will always win  
allezallezlesbleus: This was predictable  
missterbob2013: that was an amazing goal  
s0cc3rh34t: arg win  
hotmac22: Dermany is loving this  
avon\_cg: AWWWW IT HURT BUT I LOVE ARGENTINS TOO  
ienovi: i m sad  
scaralabacas: iam sad :(  
royliu00: Was Maradona watching the game?  
wernerb911: THank you Mr. Editor for once more adding so much to the  
game,

You guys deserve the praise – you have added a lot to all of the matches  
so far –  
I hope you keep it up right up until the final

tatuchis02: VAMOX MAXIIIII  
ienovi: well nnow i go with argentina  
mdetchkov: in overtime  
nwk\_chick03: great game guys  
swinerabbit: respect !!!  
pgbp2001: i gotta wait another 4 yrs  
senormiranda: Thnk it was the BEst Game Played so Far.. Mex Fan here  
eestiest: I cried so much. :P And for nothing.  
cometyim: the best goal ever so far  
baristarim: well i will  
baristarim: so beware  
ienovi: maradona was there  
chantindu: TAKE CARE GUYS!  
kyle\_stangl2: Well I hope more games go into overtime  
m2mong: well done mex  
brolintrasher: Germany will win the cup!  
rdsx34a: not quite best goal, joe cole's was  
lehiwayman: Maybe it's Mrs. Editor. Or Miss Editor. Ms. Editor?  
fifacup\_2006\_de: if argentina plays like this with dermany they don't  
have a chance...  
kushanweb: Its a great game to watch from Sri Lanka

耳

Yânœ hv drnig  
slod shisdabin

slos shofbi trmetöpl  
trin trin trin

ahnjenlyhk  
crpastokl

tradit pren, zem treering  
that's it: i'm out of hearing

Walter K. Lew's seven books include Treadwinds: Poems and Intermedia Texts and Crazy Melon and Chinese Apple: The Poems of Frances Chung, both published by Wesleyan University. Online work: "The RV Projects" (collab. O Woomi Chung) (<http://aawww.org/lines-of-sight-visual-art-poetry>).

# Sharon Mesmer



## Wings

— to Delmira Agustini, Uruguay, 1886–1914

Alas, Dolores,  
my mouth once smelled  
of burnt coffee and cigarettes.  
Garlic juice oozed  
from under my nails.  
I had no teeth, no hair,  
no public hair.  
No one loved me.  
But I had wings.

My cat,  
Azure Vivian,  
was also old:  
her fur was matted,  
her eyes were clouded,  
her chest feathered  
with dust.  
She could barely walk  
and she smelled like death.  
But she had wings as well.

No one knew about our wings.  
They were invisible,  
secret wings,  
but wings as strong  
as raven’s claws.  
When we took flight together  
our wings beat like the brightest stars  
against the pure blue crepuscule.  
Each wing was a world:  
a huge, moving hemisphere,  
a galaxy not yet known.  
Our eyes were undiscovered suns.  
At night we navigated by starlight  
over wild grass waving  
like sinuous rivers,  
over cathedrals hewn  
from steep cliff faces.  
In the morning,  
only we knew.

That no one knew made me mad,  
Dolores — why could no one  
see our wings?  
Our wings were beautiful, Dolores.  
Our wings allowed Azure Vivian to sing:  
Somos la tierra y todas las flores!  
But maybe wings in daylight are useless.  
Or maybe everyone was jealous.

Then I got angry, and fell in love  
with lethargy — alas, Dolores,  
I fell in love  
with watching TV in the kitchen.  
In the dark kitchen, in the afternoons,  
the TV became a saint  
of redeeming grace, robed in local clothes.  
I thought the kitchen was deliverance.  
But it was just a kitchen  
stinking of burnt coffee and cigarettes,  
where cockroaches made their quiet homes  
behind dishes  
and piles of mail  
and clothes.

Watching TV in the kitchen,  
I let forgetfulness  
lull me to sleep, and I slept  
sitting at the table, the TV  
in front of me.  
There were so many shows!  
>>>>

Instead of flying,  
I dreamed of sleeping.  
Waking, I felt my wings  
melting, disappearing.  
I tried to stay them  
with my arms,  
but I couldn’t move my arms.  
I was hypnotized by the assurance  
of a new episode  
playing soon.  
I melted with the countdown.  
I didn’t care.  
Then Azure Vivian disappeared too —  
Azure Vivian, the only one who knew —  
and I awoke alone.

Alas, Dolores,  
my mouth once smelled  
of burnt coffee and cigarettes.  
Garlic juice oozed  
from under my nails.  
I was alone and angry  
that no one could see my wings.  
They were invisible, yes,  
but they were strong  
as raven’s claws.  
Azure Vivian knew.  
But now she’s invisible too.

I’ve grown content just knowing  
that Azure Vivian and I  
had wings.

(“Somos la tierra y todas las flores”: We are the earth and all the flowers)

## The Poet’s Decalogue

— to Gabriela Mistral (Lucila Godoy Alcayaga), Chile, 1889–1957

- 1.) Be always conscious of your wings. Darkness is overtaking, churning, and even tension is tired. In the house of keeping still, all is hollow-eyed, and groaning.
- 2.) Shiver and tingle outside the automobile. Grandma is on life support. The nuns and nurses found her, and called you a wanderer. They know nothing of your wings. Or do they?
- 3.) Disrobe. The holiest were often required to be naked. Under the dome of the winged serpent, all was stillness. In those days the sun door stood open, and all of creation flew through it, in radiant rounds of joy.
- 4.) Is your chimney warm? Is the air in it warm, and the air in your room? Is your hearth redolent with the scent of flesh? If so, fan the flames to produce a cooling jewel. Use this jewel to scry only the most necessary knowing.
- 5.) Make a pilgrimage to the Mountain of Butterflies. Love descends on those defenseless.
- 6.) The ocean-born virgin is nicknamed “Fishy Smell,” but her real name is “Bird.” Find her in the neck of time. Her vagina is enough; you don’t need the legs. Remember that initiation takes a lifetime and transpires purely by accident. Soon, a triangle of morning light will come pouring through the porch.
- 7.) Take the mantle of an earth-colored insect and make a wand with twigs and leaves. Use it to replicate the cunning beauty of certain corpses. In the end, your face should resemble a luminous, apricot-colored cloud.
- 8.) Soon, you’ll fall. Your wings will beat to no advantage. You may choose to sacrifice your happiness to restore your wings, but the sacrifice itself is a privilege. How long will it take you to forget this?
- 9.) Everything that torments and suffocates, everything that imparts sorrow and despair, is the moving water that turns the wheel that transforms air into tree into prayer into air. Breathe deep. Make scribble pictures of the stain on your ceiling and try to sell them. Very few will buy.
- 10.) Now recall the glory of your wings.

Sharon Mesmer’s (<https://dubiouslabia.wordpress.com/>) most recent poetry collection is Greetings From My Girlie Leisure Place (Bloof Books). She teaches in the NYU and New School creative writing programs.



# Urayoán Noel



there	name	when	who
is	if	you	will
a	you	give	hear
town	can	head	the
of	your	and	humblebrag
ruses	first	swallow	of
near	murderous	only	plankton
the	year	your	in
snowy	in	own	the
border	this	phlegm	coves
where	city	is	of
we	of	when	galaxies
seek	anthropocene	you	as
each	absences	realize	pretty
other	or	body	and
out	remember	politics	far
and	the	won't	as
yet	conversations	save	the
guttural	you	you	kiss
logic	had	even	never
fails	with	though	given
and	no	there's	and
sidewinder	face	no	how
music	just	other	much
gives	a	kind	howling
way	dollop	so	from
to	of	your	the
surveilled	sky	savior	other
napes	and	is	possible
and	a	the	worlds
eyes	mic'd	dank	will
of	gurgling	smell	seep
gristle	brutal	you	through
and	assault	savor	the
there	of	in	plastic
is	retail	the	motherboard
no	spite	taint	so
net	with	as	the
at	no	tanks	goddesses
the	silencers	and	can
bottom	on	bloody	catch
of	our	punchlines	us
the	misremembered	empty	clicking
sea	joy	streets	ash

#nothingsignifybutflight

#holdontotheedgeofthings

#administertruth

#scornutopia-very good

Urayoán Noel (<http://www.wokitokiteki.com/>) lives and improvises in the South Bronx, teaches at NYU, and most recently published Buzzing Hemisphere/Rumor Hemisférico.

# Ryan Nowlin



## Aeolian Harp

At night a bruise of a place  
the sea declines certain objects  
someone else’s stripped hermeneutics

There must be some spectacular medium  
to make a silk purse out of life  
make you real and render

The particulars to truth, and you are  
strangely free from the burden  
of intelligibility

## Verbena

Verbena said no, meet me at Meg’s  
but the distance was so great  
we had to fly in order to see  
each other. I’m standing on a pontoon.

Sue was making an abstract. She  
wrapped a wire around a cardboard  
tube to form something. Another  
person was disambiguated by Felicity.

Meg had a disturbing way of eating,  
all about tasting life for the first  
time then getting bored.

It’s a beautiful day for nothing  
to happen, to pour it into our mugs,  
to open our mineral hearts.

Absolute clarity makes its dutiful  
way to the surface. Bleh. This is  
the standard way of explaining loss:  
I was, you were, they better be.

It’s freezing on the platform, waiting  
for the pipes to clank. Will they?  
Something’s afoot . . . we are afoot.

## Indefinite Place

I’ve taken on too much. People often  
say this when they mean nothing of the  
sort. Wet wind, speeding clouds, interminable  
indecision, but a well-rubbed assurance.

Some presentiment of a vast capital  
reached me obscurely like a misgiving  
streaming along many radii.

I counted chimney pots, some round  
others square. Fly on a lump of sugar  
through a windowpane  
in the clock tower.

## Bildungsgedicht mit Schnauzer

Joining hands was a great idea  
allowing us to face the future  
with childlike Dummheit.

We bought a dog.  
We named him Leibniz  
after the biscuits

Why must potato eater  
have a tobacco pipe  
with a cube at the end  
for a nose?

There was something in you  
that I looked for in others  
to no avail. I have lost  
any inclination to laugh.

You hold me  
which at times will seem  
like so much ballast.

It takes no one to make a crowd.

## Galapagos

The tapping of fingers  
comparable to hooves.

You are so far removed  
from that first place

known only to me:  
In the Galapagos

you find no boats  
in the harbor.

I keep writing.  
Do you know why?

Life can be a dream  
known only to you.

My dream is public domain.  
I’ll say good night now.

Ryan Nowlin is the author of the chapbooks Banquet Settings and Not Far From Here, and the recently completed full-length manuscript Kugel. His poems and reviews (<http://acrossthemargin.com/tag/ryan-nowlin/>) have appeared in Sal Mimeo, The Operating System, and The Poetry Project Newsletter, among others.

# Jean-Paul Pecqueur



From “The History of Modern Sculpture”

## The Development of a Bottle in Space, 1913

The planes internal  
And the external planes spiral

The neck rotates  
The exterior shifts

Half-cylinders in conceptual space  
Where all is motion

A style of motion

From a hollow core motion  
And motion as the fluid edge

Forward and dynamic  
The poverty of partial vision

Enriched by the agency  
Of the dynamic spiral

## Apropos of Readymades, 1914–1921

The bottle rack celebrates the beauty of indifference with the dust  
and the snow shovel celebrates the beauty of indifference with  
the broken arm

as the bicycle wheel celebrates the beauty of indifference with the stool  
and the Mona Lisa celebrates the beauty of indifference  
with the mustache

while the steel comb celebrates the beauty of indifference with  
haughtiness  
and the urinal celebrates the beauty of indifference with the fountain

the ball of twine celebrates the beauty of indifference with the secret  
and the pharmacy celebrates the beauty of indifference with red and green

## 18 Happenings in 6 Parts, 1959

Construction of experience  
is construction of environment  
is people odor touch  
is words and movement  
‘bouncing ball movement’  
Instructions and diagrams, charts and slides

Stretch some semi-transparent plastic sheeting  
across some industrial lumber  
across six parts assembled like collage  
across several intervals of time  
including real time  
and pliant visitors and chance

Spatialized verbal clusters and full length mirrors  
and after seven months of rehearsal  
chance principles and performance score  
approximate the painterly gesture  
by orchestrating non-narrative personal events  
like squeezing an orange in quotes

## Early One Morning, 1962

A pair of bent steel tubes  
open the illusory space  
the weightlessness  
of an expressive  
post-and-beam system  
where the planer  
and linear shapes  
of steel girder  
and sheet aluminum  
support a rational,  
physical object  
‘a primitive  
gesture prelingual’  
colored to reinforce  
the optical  
syntax of pictorial  
construction  
and sudden  
unexpected  
openness

### Author's Note and Note on Method

“The History of Modern Sculpture” began with a rather innocent question: what constitutes ‘modern’ sculpture? In seeking an answer to this question, the author began to read in sculptural history. During this reading, it became clear that the sculpture designated as modern and the written history that canonized this designation presented two different, though rigorously intertwined, substances. It is from the second substance, the history-substance, that the author took his inspiration. This history-substance, words and phrases repeatedly used to discuss and frame what has come to be known as ‘Modern Sculpture,” became, for the author, a raw material to be used in composing his poem. In other words, the author invented nothing; he carved and modeled, assembled and constructed, always working with preexisting material. Ideally, the author would like the reader to think of the individual lyrics as translations. They translate the discursive history of modern sculpture into lyrical form.

“The History of Modern Sculpture” is meant to be read as a single poem, made up of individual self-contained lyrics, arranged sequentially. The arrangement, as well as the examples chosen for inclusion, was guided by two constraints: stick to the ‘Modern,’ as it has been applied to sculpture, and use the art-historical practice of writing art history as a history of technical and/or stylistic advances.

Jean-Paul Pecqueur’s first book, The Case Against Happiness, was published by Alice James Books. Two chapbooks, To Embrace Sea Monsters and The Imaginations, have been published by Greying Ghost Press and Forklift, Ohio, respectively. Some more recent poems have appeared in H\_NGM\_N, Sink Review, Locomotive, and Ping Pong.



# J. Hope Stein



## I Lob You

1

If a ball is coming full speed at you, you have two choices— Take it in the chest or hit a lob. Whatever sport it is, the goal of the lob is to get the ball up in a high arc— Get yourself out of a ditch— Hit over one’s head, get yourself back on the green. Watch your opponent throw two hands up in the air in annoyance like a defeated tennis player who charges the net to show a finesse at chipping volleys. But, for the few who, even when your lob seems out of bounds— Run backwards— Show their true fitness, nearly trip over themselves like an idiot to touch their racquet to your ball – Well, these are the people you’ll want to keep in your life.

2

When I was five I shared a bedroom with a woman named Leone who would lob me in the jaw if I did anything wrong & would show me pictures of men & women lobbing up on each other if I was good. I was good. When I was six I lived with my grandparents. & My grandmother gave me a piece of advice: Advice is like meatloaf. Eat it or pretend you like it and feed it to the dog. When I was five I read a poem by Robert Louis Stevenson about a boy with a sailboat for a bed. The story of how my grandparents fell in love begins with my grandfather Ivan, who presented a local school teacher— Miss Lucy— with his ample bookcase. & It was in an empty White Castle three weeks later when Ivan & Miss Lucy shared their first hamburger after they eloped at City Hall. When I was five, Leone lobbed me right in the face in front of my friend Daisy. After that none of my friends would visit my home. & it was in a fort made of bedsheets & sofa cushions, a big lob on my lip, where I used tracing paper & colored pencil to write my first books— A cross between Robert Louis Stevenson & pornography – & if I was good I was good.

3

My great uncles were gypsies  
They were so handsome  
the villagers longed  
to be robbed by them.

When I met you, you asked me  
if I could think of any reason why  
you shouldn’t marry her  
& I said “no-you-are-perfect-for-each-other”  
& you never invited me to the wedding –  
But your brother did—

& I am in all your wedding photos  
& to this day,  
your relatives still talk about the snare  
our hips drummed up  
on the dance floor.

& I said, “Hey, nice wedding!”  
& you said, “If you don’t leave now,  
I’m going to kill you  
or myself or both.”

& It was when the band played  
the Doobie Brothers’ What a Fool Believes,  
your brother’s mouth lobbing  
the unsuccessful neckline of my dress,

where I wrote my first book—  
a cross between  
gypsy & disco.

5

“When you see something coming full speed at you, you have two choices – touch or lob. & A good lob requires a skilled touch.” When I was six I lived with my grandparents & In their closets I found strategic board games with colorful plastic pieces & cast them as actors in my stories: The story of how my grandparents fell in love begins with my great grandmother Millie, who although she was only twelve, had adult feelings for her neighbor Demetri, but for the sake of family left him for America. “Don’t fall in love,” he said—kissed her eyelid. “Don’t fall in love How dramatic.” (There was a war going on.) She didn’t know if she would or wouldn’t. Neither did he— She left the bed, which was a window to the city they happened to find themselves in: to the city that was bombed 3 weeks later. & It was alone on a boat deck that she yelled to her five siblings at shore that she would someday send money for them to come meet her. When we first met, I said, what should we call this—& you said, call it a ninny goat if you want to & I agreed. Don’t fall in love you said— kissed my mittens. Don’t fall in love? YOU don’t fall in love & It was on a boat made from bed pillow & folk record where I wrote my first book. A cross between chess pieces & Playboy.

6

“When a man dies you have two choices— think of him as gone or think of him as a child napping on the couch in the other room.” The night Demetri first kissed Millie, they snuck a bottle of liquor to the roof— 2 hours later, as if Vodka demonstrates what is rudimentary to the trunk Demetri rooted Millie’s body as her vomit lobbed off the side of the roof to the windowsill below— Uncle Lazlo poked his head out, looking up & shaking his fist— & Demetri—seeing Lazlo’s bald head, pulled Millie’s body out of sight, & said “Hey, Mil…” – & kissed her as the half-empty bottle of vodka rolled into the yellowing grass below & did not shatter. When I met you, you kissed me & my cellphone lobbed out my pocket into the Hudson River & I said, “Hey! I’ve forgotten every phone number I’ve ever known—Except my 18-lb cat Ivan & my 12-lb cat Miss Lucy” & It was the 4 of us monster-piled on carpets or organized single-file, each with our own pillow in the bed— where I wrote my first book. & When the cats died of old age, your eyes gathered light & grey feline in the wink— You grew me a beard for fuzz to pet & I said, “Hey Beard-o! I missed you (while we were sleeping).”

7

When a man dies you have two: The one who is dead. And the one who is a story.

The story of how my great grandparents fell in love begins with the microscopic lobbing between us all, a boat to America & a big diamond ring.

When we first met on a boat surrounded by bridges & skyscrapers— you leaned in to kiss me & my phone lobbed out of my pocket into the Hudson River & to this day I still receive prank calls from fish. The story is:

Millie fell ill on the boat from malnutrition & thinking of the last time she saw Demetri, started counting waves—1 I lob you 2 I lob you 3 I lob you 4 I lob you & a woman with a big diamond ring snuck her a bit of bread each day. Years later, walking down a Manhattan street Millie, who had made her living as a hat model, was flirted with by a man named Max, who was getting a shoeshine on the corner of 23rd & 5th —Who insisted she come home to meet his mother—

When Millie arrived at the door she was greeted by the hand of Max’s mother— it was the same diamond ring—

& 4 months later, Max & Millie started a hat factory.

When we first met, a sound you did not hear lifted my shirt & said— “Hey, get those fucking earphones out of your head” & I yanked one out of your ear & we drifted on our boat among bridges & skyscrapers— & it’s the fish who will be our final audience—I without my shirt, you with a single earphone connected to a wire connected to another earphone in my left ear – & the song that we listen to is the song that we hear.

J. Hope Stein is the author of Talking Doll (Dancing Girl Press), Mary (Hyacinth Girl Press), and Corner Office (H\_ngm\_n Bks.) She is editor at Poetry Crush (<https://poetrycrush.com>) and the author of e.e. cattings (<https://eecattings.com>).

# Matthew Yeager



*From Gut Sonnets*

## Kamikaze Couch Potato

Maybe I'll just kill myself. That'll show 'em.  
I'll procure (though from where I don't know)  
Dynamite, and BLAM-O! be all over the walls  
Like over-microwaved meat, like flung pink paint.  
What a mess of bloody puss I'd make, and be.  
Vanishing's opposite, I'd be like well-made  
Poetry. They'd turn the key, un-stick the door,  
And find (OMG!) me turned flesh confetti!  
And whether or not mouths dropped in sad shock  
At my loss or at the loss of the Saturday  
It would take to scrub the walls back white,  
Would matter not. I wouldn't be there to see it.  
I wouldn't be anywhere to see anything! This  
Makes me happy; there is nothing wrong with me.

## I Don't Like Thinking. Eating is Better.

Why do I hate thought? Because I loathe  
Being whisked; because I feel plane-sick  
After twitch-quick couch-to-Byzantium  
Trips. I like plopped flesh's steadiness.  
If I'm jealous, if with jealousy I shake  
Like a big fist, it's not because I'm not  
Thought (leaping, white-winged, bodiless);  
Rather, it's because I'm not a fetus.  
You think I'm not serious? You think I kid  
Saying I'd prefer being a forever-fetus,  
And baking rosily in a thick pink sack,  
And dreaming only of that warm wordless pink,  
And being carried about, inside a woman?  
You obviously haven't read (into) me yet.

## In Holcomb Gardens: Ode To John Keats, My Favorite Poet

Oh it is time, it is time, as it's time to dispose  
Of a carved pumpkin, to pitch the pages of yours  
Torn from the Norton. Folded in a fold, used  
As a rag, wetted, dried, ragged from carrying,  
I've murmured your delusions in many a setting,  
John. I've felt them fit or not. I've let them mix  
With millennial Indiana. With their song in me,  
Like strong glasses on me, I saw (I swear)  
A nearby pine enlarge. I saw a hawk flap, twice,  
And keep flying, and it was like a ball  
On a finger slapped freshly, tightly spinning.  
And out of a sun-struck condom wrapper  
In Holcomb Gardens, moonlit flesh bloomed  
Into a pornographic sculpture only I could see.

## Ode To A Neighbor's Trampoline (After Being Snuck Into Their Backyard And Allowed By Matt And Pete To Bounce Awhile)

On you, I'm me. What a thing to feel! To say!  
To feel then say with no pause in between.  
Trampoline, on you I'm me! Free of all thought,  
Of all mirrors, of all clocks, of all negativity.  
Sunk, all-springs-stretching, into you, I'm flung,  
By your being's every fiber, into air! My whole  
Bulk squeals, like a pinky toe going home, wee!

Am I free? In a way. Like a quadraplegic child  
Set in a pool for the first time, I'm so much freer,  
Freedom is what Matt and Pete see. They see:  
Center-sunk, all-springs-stretched, and again!  
Oh, they see what I am, and how what I am,  
In this one space, doesn't work against me. See!  
My gravid fat translates to unmatched heights.

## Palinode To "The Trampoline Of Woe And Glee"

Trampoline, you are no figure of woe and glee,  
Of each day's all day down-up-down till sleep.  
What you are is an outdoor Ping-Pong  
Table crossed with an above-ground pool.  
Out back a house, you juggle me like a freak  
Juggles one Ping-Pong ball with his mouth.  
Slightly into you I go, then straight up.

Oh Trampoline, new blue pal, how do I do it?  
How, so weird already, am I weirder still?  
I just am. And you accept me - weird, foul,  
Bristly, specific. You are tilted, old, orange-,  
Springed, and cheap. But what a pair we made  
One May day. I fell hard upon you, and recall  
A happiness then that was close to total.

## It Has Been A Pleasure To Be A Part Of Your Story

Gather round, button-downs. Tight-roll a bill,  
And welcome in that "my-life-is-a-movie" feeling  
As it blows its bubble around you. Console  
Your skittish selves with the fact you're moving still  
Toward racks of ties, mastery of the handshake,  
And tales told over golf about how the deal  
Came to you while banging her doggy-style,  
During that bizarre privacy of doggy-style,  
When you peer around a room, thoughtful....  
Everyone will know of what you speak, and laugh.  
Because everyone (it's the craziest thing) is you!  
Oh business major, stare, as if with hindsight,  
Into the sight of your face inches from a leveled  
Mirror. Fatten that file entitled "Wildness, Youth."

## Hopes And Dreams Of A Big Pink Gum Bubble

Chewed-up, overblown, puffed to near see-  
Through-able-ness, eye-crossing as a pencil-  
Tip brought slow to the nose, from split red  
Lips I've grown, and hang, a stretched pink  
Thing like an infant's head; I am delicate  
And wet. As I've grown fat my skin's grown  
Thin. This is my predicament. So please  
Don't poke at me. I like me ok. I hope to keep  
This air which has shaped me inside me,  
As a football in an attic can, for 20 or more  
Years. Hey, a gum bubble can dream!  
I dream big. Palms prepare in pockets  
To flatten me to a face-mess, but still I dream....  
My hope will ghost on like a Cheshire smile.

Matthew Yeager's (<http://www.matthewyeagerpoetry.com>) first book of poetry, Like That (Forklift Books) received a starred review from Publisher's Weekly. He lives in Ridgewood, Queens with his wife, Chelsea Whitton. He has been working in the New York catering industry for approximately 50,000 years.

# Samantha Zighelboim



## Unconventional Methods

Sometimes when I’m trying  
to get to the gym or stick to a diet  
about which obesity-related illness  
The CDC has a very effective  
ailments, crowned no less by  
I am also genetically predisposed  
inquiry into that—my most probable  
has terrified me to a tread-  
than once. I like to picture  
cantering through my arteries  
bone-white plaque that clings to  
now too obstructed to allow my  
its rounds. My heart fossilizes.  
of myself. It’s time to move

to motivate myself  
I fantasize  
I might die of.  
list of potential  
heart disease, which  
to. Further  
future antagonist—  
mill more  
liquid yellow fat  
and hardening into  
the tiny passages,  
blood to make  
I am an artifact  
now. It’s time to starve.

*Previously published in Spiral Orb*

## The Dead of Winter

I crane my neck like a ridiculous turkey so that it appears as if  
I might really have one. The gradual disappearance of my face  
is a kind of death. During the Shinto mortuary ritual of kotsuage,  
mourners pick through their loved one’s cremains with giant chopsticks,  
searching for bone fragments. They begin with the feet pieces—ruins  
of phalanges and metatarsals—deposit them in an urn, then continue  
collecting upwards until they reach the burnt shards of clavicle

and mandible. Every day I thank my feet for having carried my weight.  
I apologize to them. In summer my ankles are too fat to wear sandals. Snow  
boots won’t close around my calves. It is difficult to weather winter in  
sneakers. Bones are collected so that in the afterlife, the deceased may stand  
and be entire. The family covets their carefully composed urn, for which they  
will build a shrine. And when it snows they imagine their dead, barefoot,  
weightless, eating warm bread.

*Previously published in Smoking Glue Gun*

## Philosophies Of Superstion

I am trying to re-establish a relationship with  
leafy greens and all the people I hate. I know

there is philosophy in salad. I know that being  
healthy is the only real way to be unhealthy.

And I know people are only awful because  
they have good reason to be awful. Right?

I keep the Dictionary of Superstitions with me  
to corroborate any coincidences or cosmic

hiccup. These happen often. The radio betrays  
me on long errands during rush hour. It makes

promises it can’t keep. “An hour of uninterrupted  
music” is an impossibility and they know it.

So I consider kale and the Pacific Northwest,  
and that famous woman who can never

remember my name. I thought I hated her  
as much as I do kale. The truth is that enough

garlic can make anything palatable, and enough  
self-loathing can make anyone tolerable. The

Dictionary informs me that I am not crazy  
because there are others like me. For example,

macrobiotics dictates a method rooted in purity  
by way of eliminating impurity. That could be

a real thing. Right? On the highway the cars  
slow and stop, slow and stop; the music

that is not music is, of course, interrupted, and  
on the other side of the next twenty minutes,

there is a dinner, an unhealthy one, and I will  
find an excuse, inevitably, to enjoy it.

Samantha Zighelboim’s debut collection of poems, The Fat Sonnets, is forthcoming from Argos Books in 2018. She teaches creative writing and literature at Rutgers University and The New School.



## BOOG CITY

Issue 115 free

**The Portable Boog Reader 10:  
An Anthology of Portland, Ore.  
and New York City Poetry**

co-editors Portland, Ore. Sarah  
Bartlett and Phoebe Wayne.  
N.Y.C. Maria Damon, Joanna  
Fuhrman, Mark Gurarie,  
Barbara Henning, and David A.  
Kirschenbaum.

**Design** DAK, modified from  
2000 *PBR* design by Scott White  
**cover and section divider art**  
Brenda Iijima

**editor/publisher**  
David A. Kirschenbaum  
editor@boogcity.com

**art editor**  
Jeffrey Cyphers Wright  
art@boogcity.com

**film editor** Joel Schlemowitz  
film@boogcity.com

**libraries editor**  
Lynne DeSilva-Johnson  
libraries@boogcity.com

**music editor**

R. Brookes McKenzie  
music@boogcity.com

**poetry editor** Buck Downs  
poetry@boogcity.com

**printed matter editor**  
Jaclyn Lovell

printedmatter@boogcity.com

**small press editor**  
Jackie Clark

smallpress@boogcity.com

**counsel** Ian S. Wilder  
counsel@boogcity.com

Paper is copyright *Boog City*,  
all rights revert to contributors  
upon publication. *Boog City* is  
published eight times annually.  
Boog always reads work for *Boog  
City* or other consideration. (Email  
editor@boogcity.com or applicable  
editor and put *Boog City* sub in  
subject line.) Letters to the editor  
should go to editor@boogcity.com.

### BOOG CITY

330 W. 28th St., Suite 6H

N.Y., N.Y. 10001-4754

212-842-BOOG (2664) • @boogcity

http://www.boogcity.com

**follow @boogcity**

# LAUNCH PARTY FOR THE PORTABLE BOOG READER 10

PORTLAND, ORE.  
AND  
NEW YORK CITY

THIS SUN., JUNE 11, 1:00 P.M.

UNNAMEABLE BOOKS  
600 VANDERBILT AVE.  
BROOKLYN

WITH READINGS FROM PBR10 CONTRIBS

## NEW YORK CITY

RAY DEJESÚS \* FRANK GRISANZIO  
SHARON MESMER \* RYAN NOWLIN  
JEAN-PAUL PECQUEUR

AND MUSIC FROM  
MICHELLE BETH HERMAN

Directions: 2, 3 to Grand Army Plaza, C to Clinton-Washington avenues,  
Q to 7th Ave. Venue is bet. Prospect Pl./St. Marks Ave.

Curated and hosted by Portable Boog Reader 9 co-editors Cincinnati: Yvette  
Nepper; N.Y.C.: David A. Kirschenbaum, Becca Klaver, Ron Kolm, Lisa Ro-  
gal, and Paige Taggart.

Hosted and curated by Boog City editor and publisher Kirschenbaum

For further information: 212-842-BOOG (2664), editor@boogcity.com

# All the cool kids Advertise in



# BOOG CITY

editor@boogcity.com  
212-842-BOOG (2664)





# PORTLAND, ORE. FEATURES

Portland's Independent Publishing Resource Center



# Chrys Tobey's Debut: A Book of Lasting Revelations



BY ALEX BENNETT

Chrys Tobey's *A Woman is a Woman is a Woman is a Woman* is a book of revelations on love and loss and the back-and-forth between the two. Tobey's poems deftly assume speakers as diverse as Marie Antoinette in 18th century France, Cleopatra from ancient Egypt, Madame Bovary living in 2014, and a twenty-first century woman after her divorce, all of whom describe what it feels like to live in worlds where some could care less if their heads roll.

The poems shift between landscapes, inviting us to such locales as Ohio, California, outer space, and the world of Mondays and Fridays. In between her historical alter egos' voices, the modern speaker's voice deepens with complexity as she takes on topics including life after a failed marriage, struggles with happiness, and coming to terms with an absent father. Tobey's lines are like origami unfolding across the page, revealing honest conversations and scenes. While tracking the various layers and temporalities, we gain entrance into the strange places of the poet's mind in motion, which is reminiscent of Elizabeth Bishop's style.

The collection is ordered in three sections. The first is an exploratory mission. Tobey starts with an assessment of the terrain of womanhood from multiple vantage points, zooming in to her childhood and back out again, allowing an always-watching moon to reflect on what it sees of earthly existence. "Marie Antoinette Visits the Moon" and "Gossip, 18th Century Style" invite us to reacquire ourselves with the French Queen of infamous renown: "And for the record—It wasn't Let them eat cake. / I said Boy, would I like a piece of cake. But really, none of that matters now." Further into the section there's the smart telling of "The Closet," where a woman transforms herself into storage space. From this perspective, she reveals the intimate trappings of residents' lives. While used as an under-appreciated space for men's belongings, she still finds clever ways to exert her power.

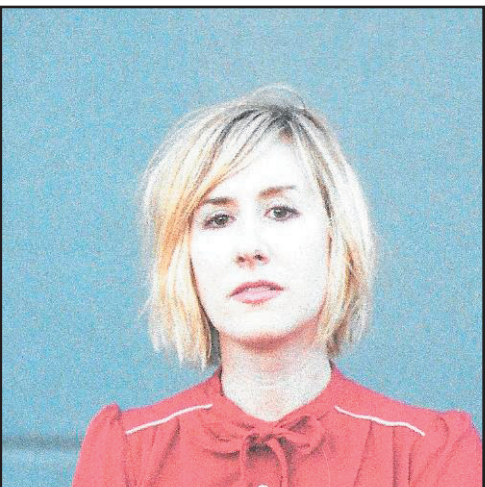
Section two introduces readers to a new history, one that allows for multiple renderings of women's actions and not just an expected tale that demonizes the female. Tobey gives her women space to speak, question, and respond. The dialogue is witty and sharp, and though there's an intensity to her verse, the poet weaves in touches of humor. Exhibit A: "For the Guy From My Yoga Class Who Asked If He Could Urinate On My Face." Responding to this man, the speaker states, "Oh guy of a million downward / dogs, guy with the heavenly spout, anoint me with your naïveté, / anoint me with the assumption that I can just piss on anyone." Here we can laugh, and on a different level, we see what Tobey is up to. In questioning the assumptions made for and of woman, she balances the dialogue. Her poems are the women's voices, and as their mouths open, we encounter a more nuanced version of what's taking place: "A woman should / be a muse. Oh, silly me. But place your finger over / the m in muse and see what's left . . ."

The final section takes us deeper still. We encounter Tobey's "I Am Pretending There Was No Restaurant," originally published in *Ploughshares*. Here Tobey's speaker imagines not having met a person who would play a significant role in her life. "If I pretend there was no restaurant, / then I never said yes and each yes / that followed unravels like the yarn of an old quilt and you are just a piece of dust / I rubbed out of my eye / a long time ago." This reworking underscores how the small moments build into something greater, and the negation of the occurrence empowers our poetess to reframe memories in ways that serve her own purposes moving forward.

In "Bonnie Without Clyde," Tobey writes, "I'm unsure how a woman / doesn't go mad trying to move through this world. / I'm unsure of many things." Many aspects about womanhood are uncertain for the collection's speakers. *A Woman is a Woman is a Woman* is a *Woman* brings up difficult points across several time periods and places. And despite the uncertainty, we are sure that this poet's "pistol is her poetry," as she features the revelations of women past and present. Tobey's voice is one to return to and follow in the coming years. Her poetry is a confident proclamation that draws us in, takes us under, and then spits us out. This time, changed.

Alex Bennett received her M.F.A. from The New School, where she won the Paul Violi Poetry Prize. Her writing has appeared in *The Sosland Journal*, *The Best American Poetry Blog*, *The New School Writing Program Blog*, *Insights Magazine*, and elsewhere. She teaches at Parsons School of Design.

Chrys Tobey is the author of the poetry book *A Woman is a Woman is a Woman is a Woman* (Steel Toe Books, 2017). Her poetry has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and published in many print and online literary journals, including *Ploughshares*, *The Cincinnati Review*, the *minnesota review*, *Rattle*, *New Ohio Review & Smartish Pace*. Chrys lives and teaches in Portland, Oregon, with her canis familiaris and imaginary goat.



**Tobey's lines are like origami unfolding across the page, revealing honest conversations and scenes. While tracking the various layers and temporalities, we gain entrance into the strange places of the poet's mind in motion, which is reminiscent of Elizabeth Bishop's style.**

# Stacey Tran's Fake Haiku Asks Us to Get Close



BY JACLYN LOVELL

It's difficult to read the title of Stacey Tran's chapbook, *Fake Haiku*, and not think about fake news, especially considering the truths that her poems unabashedly reveal. She opens her chapbook with what not to do, exposing a seemingly benign object in our daily lives that holds great power:

Don't trust dictionaries or the weather report  
Don't think about your banking account while having sex  
Let's begin by cutting potatoes



**Words can and should be questioned, investigated, broken open. Like people, they should be treated as living and fluid.**

We all know the weather is unpredictable and have experienced the frustration (or thrill!) of getting caught in the rain, but storms make their presence and force known, unlike a dictionary that quietly sits, ruling, shaping the way we see each other. Words are old, deep and heavy with meanings documented during an unfair history. The most dangerous are often in the third or fourth definition and lay embedded and festering under the surface of every use. Words can and should be questioned, investigated, broken open. Like people, they should be treated as living and fluid.

What I love most about this work is how human it is. Tran commandingly warns in the first line, makes us laugh in the second and takes our hand in the third. "Let's begin" is inviting and gentle, leading us to action, but beyond that, touch is tangibly present here. I should first confess that I don't trust technology or social media. It feels invasive and makes me uncomfortable to the point that, I am not embarrassed to say, when my computer recently stopped working Apple support patiently informed me I am 40 updates behind and my hard drive is considered vintage (it's only from 2010, since when is that vintage!). With that in mind, I'll be the first to admit (and celebrate!) how technology has pushed language to very exciting places, especially poetry—in many ways it has made it alive and less rigid—but with every gain there's a loss. *Fake Haiku* is 3 ½ by 4 inches, with 12 pages of poems, each the length of a tweet; it's tiny enough to slip in the back pocket of your jeans and end up in the wash. A letterpress of 218 words (I had time to count because I'm not on facebook) on Crane Lettera and hand-stitched. As we move deeper into technology we move farther from the relation of the body to language. I get very frustrated with my students who take no notes in class and snap a picture of the blackboard on their way out the door. They are denying themselves the chance to fully process language through their whole body. To understand and interpret. To be close enough to it that you know what kind of questions to ask, demand. The team that made the 100 copies of this book touched every individual letter of those 218 words. Their bodies inhaled the smell of the ink that likely soaked into their skin as they stamped each page. They thoughtfully and patiently cared for each word, like Tran herself, absorbing more than they likely realized, and that closeness radiates from the pages and into the reader.

These poems are very real. And in contrast to the texts, tweets, spiraling analysis of obvious injustice on the news where words are wasted and repeated and simply fill the space and the time slot and the screen, Tran's pages breathe, and let the reader breathe with them. Each three-line poem runs along the bottom inch of the page, leaving space to think, process, absorb and grow with the language. Tran accomplishes more in 218 words than all the headlines in the past year. Not only does she swiftly oppose the unquestionable status of dictionaries, but also cracks open the tiniest of words, age:

Age is nothing but a number for pretzels  
Age is nothing but a module for oppression  
Flowers that weren't blue are blue

Tran seamlessly inverts age from something innocuous to something cruel. And we're awake and present enough to feel the slap and hopefully do something about it.

When you hold this book you're holding more than poetry, you're holding a whole community that cares very deeply about language, has sweat for it, understands the often overlooked, deep rooted power it has. With technology, language has embraced a certain autonomy, fluidity, a chance to break away from our hierarchy of grammar and ask questions of itself, but as Tran shows us, we need to stay close enough to grow with it.

Jaclyn Lovell is a part-time assistant professor at The New School, where she received her M.F.A. Wisconsin-born, she can still catch frogs with her bare hands and continues to smile on her subway commute from Brooklyn, her home for the last seven years. When she is not writing about the relationship between princesses and hunting, or the storing of trauma in limbs, she's officiating weddings for close friends and family. Editor-in-chief at LIT from 2009-2014, she's thrilled to be back on the editing scene and working with the good people at Boog City!

Stacey Tran is a writer from Portland, Ore. She curates *Tender Table* and her writing can be found in *diaCRITICS*, *The Fanzine*, *Gramma*, and *The Volta*. Wendy's *Subway* released her first chapbook, *Fake Haiku* (February 2017). Her first full-length book, *Soap for the Dogs*, is forthcoming from *Gramma* (Spring 2018). [www.staceytran.com](http://www.staceytran.com)



# Recounting Octopus Books



BY JACKIE CLARK

Founded in 2006, Octopus Books is the first small press that I think of when I think of Portland. The first Octopus Books I bought were a bundle of chapbooks, carefully wrapped together with a thin piece of red paper with magnets at the end of it. I bought them in New York at AWP in 2008. The poetry community felt wide and unknown to me then. I guess it still does, only in a different way now. There is no way that the editors of the press, Zach Schomburg and Mathias Svalina, could have known how much those little chapbooks emboldened me. My desire to see my own writing published in a chapbook like the kind that Octopus published strongly outweighed my sense of self-consciousness and fear. Those chapbooks gave me the courage to try.



**Zach and Mathias had papered their office walls with, from top to bottom, every inch I think, poetry broadsides and reading fliers to the point of being psychedelic.**  
—Cynthia Arrieu-King

psychedelic. There were also fake mustaches and probably toys and suddenly it was like they had released something in their video game by being near each other: they threw lines back and forth, busted each others chops in a private language, guffawed, were each other’s mom, formed a small country of two people deeply at play and in love—even though it was ice storming and December, even though that little office, I think, had no windows.

Cynthia Arrieu-King has been editing *The Soluble Hour* by Hillary Gravendyk since 2014 (Omnidawn) and she also edited the Asian Anglophone edition of *dusie*. Her work will appear this year in *Crazyhorse*, *jacket2*, and *the Volta*. She has perfected mac and cheese, fisherman’s pie. Her cat Kenny has a tumblr mostly about paintings: [kennikus.tumblr.com](http://kennikus.tumblr.com). Find out more about her writing here: [cynthiaarrieuking.blogspot.com](http://cynthiaarrieuking.blogspot.com).

Octopus Books published *Correct Animal* in the summer of 2011, so I planned on coming out to AWP 2012, which was in Chicago that year. AWP coincided with the publication of Zach’s book *Fjords*, vol. 1. From AWP, he was kicking off a tour for that book, and he invited me to join part of the tour, if I’d like, to promote *Correct Animal*. I

barely knew Zach—we had corresponded while editing *Correct Animal*, but I’d never met him in person—and I didn’t know any of the other people who would be traveling with us or who were hosting the readings. The plan was we’d be doing a reading in a new city every night, and I get extremely nervous before readings. Also, we’d be traveling in a van. This seemed like an obviously horrible idea.

But then I thought about it some more and ultimately I decided, I’d like to be the kind of person who could travel in a van with strangers and read poems in different cities every night. The last thing keeping me from doing it was not knowing where we’d be sleeping. Would there be space for me? Would I be cold? (I’m constantly cold.) Finally, a friend said I could just pack a sleeping bag and then I’d always be warm. So that was it, I decided to join for a week of the tour after AWP.

It ended up being the right choice to make—it was so much fun to show up in a city, meet an entirely new group of people, hang out with them intensely for a day, and then take off for the a new city in the morning. Each day felt distinct, and each reading was completely different from the next, even if we were reading or more less the same poems. I didn’t even have time to get nervous before the readings since we were doing one every day; it just became a beat to the day. As Zach’s opening act, it was a great opportunity for me to get in front of audiences who I wouldn’t have met otherwise, and I learned a lot about the performance of a reading by watching Zach. After joining for part of the tour, I realized how the whole reading thing worked, and I scheduled a bunch more on my own in support of *Correct Animal*.

So I learned an important life lesson: if you ever have the opportunity to travel around the country in a van, do it—and definitely bring a sleeping bag.

Rebecca Farivar is the author of *Correct Animal* (Octopus Books) and chapbooks *Sudden Lake* (Dikembe Press.), *Full Meal* (BOAAT), *Am Rhein* (Burnside Review.), and *American Lit* (Dancing Girl Press). *Am Rhein* was translated into French by Souffle Editions. She lives in Oakland, Calif.



**But then I thought about it some more and ultimately I decided, I’d like to be the kind of person who could travel in a van with strangers and read poems in different cities every night.**  
—Rebecca Fariva



My favorite Octopus moments are so many and all positive. But here’s one: when doing the final edits of *My Dead*, I happened to be Colorado visiting some besties future Octopus author Dan Hoy and his partner Maggie Wells in Lyons, Colorado for New Years 2013. Mathias came up from Denver. We picked him up in Boulder and drove into the mountains. Mathias and I hung out in thier beautiful living room and stayed up super late reading poems for order, and enjoying the mountains. It was so fun. I remember somehow during this, Mathias and I were looking up spiritual shamanic groups on Meetup.com and I subscribed to e-updates. I still get the email notifications all the time and I never want to unsubscribe to Third Eye Seekers or Psychic Mediums or Radian Energy Healers. Maybe next time Mathias visits Brooklyn, we can hit up one of these meetings.

Amy Lawless is the author of two books of poems including *My Dead* (Octopus Books). Her third poetry collection *Broadax* is forthcoming from Octopus Books. A chapbook *A Woman Alone* is just out from Sixth Finch. With Chris Cheney she is the author of the hybrid book *I Cry: The Desire to Be Rejected from Pioneer Works Press’ Groundworks Series*. Her poems have recently or are forthcoming in *jubilat*, *Reality Beach*, *Washington Square Review*, *Best American Poetry* 2013, and the *Academy of American Poets’ Poem-a-Day: 365 Poems for Every Occasion*, and the *Brooklyn Poets Anthology* (Brooklyn Arts Press). She received a poetry fellowship from the New York Foundation for the Arts in 2011. She lives in Brooklyn.

Jackie Clark is the author of *Aphoria* (Brooklyn Arts Press), and most recently *Sympathetic Nervous System* (Bloof Books). She is the editor of *Song of the Week* for *Coldfront Magazine* and can be found online at <https://nohelpforthat.com/>.

# ‘Live Your Life, Eat Trash, Be Free’ An Interview with Poor Claudia’s Travis Meyer



BY JACKIE CLARK

*Small Press editor Jackie Clark talks to Travis Meyer, managing editor of Poor Claudia for this special Portland themed edition of Boog City.*

**Poor Claudia has been around since 2009. When did you join as managing editor? Can you talk a little bit about what was going on in your life then?**

It has, yeah, which feels like a century ago given the United States’ present political situation. There was a substantial influx of transplants into Portland in 2008-2009—everyone elbowing for jobs in an already depressed local economy hit hard by the financial collapse in the autumn of 2008. The guys who started Poor Claudia, Drew Scott Swenhaugen and Marshall Walker Lee, landed jobs at Powell’s Books in southeast Portland, where they met and became good friends. They worked at a food cart together as well, making ends meet, spending late nights over beers together talking about literature, talks that eventually metamorphosed into a plan for a literary journal, which eventually became Poor Claudia.

I met Drew two years later at an event put on by the Bad Blood Reading Series. Graham Foust and some others were reading at Work Sound Gallery. Mostly our conversations were about production, bookmaking, typesetting, web development. I met up with him and Marshall on a summer night at Rontom’s where in a confusing series of conversations we decided I’d plan, develop and curate an online presence for the press—a series later called “Crush.”

So I built a new website for Poor Claudia, published poetry online via the “Crush” series, and gelled with Drew and Marshall while they continued to publish print matter. Everything was progressing in a way where we needed to expand our editorial team. We brought on a few folks who came and went, but more significantly, in 2013 Stacey Tran joined the crew, who would have a profound effect on Poor Claudia, both in terms of production and curation.

At the time Drew was becoming more involved in the day-to-day operations at Octopus Books, so an agreement was made that Stacey and I would run the press together, while Drew served as a sort of godfather for the projects we pursued. Throughout 2013-2015 Stacey and I curated three online series, a handful of chapbooks, a half-dozen full-lengths, and any live events we could afford—it was pretty much nonstop.

By 2016 we were both basically worn out. Stacey stepped back to focus on her own poetry while I brought in a team of editors at Poor Claudia to steer it’s online voice toward greater geographic and cultural inclusiveness. Since 2016, the “voice” of Poor Claudia has been almost completely driven by our fantastic editors: Jennifer Espinoza, Valerie Hsiung, Stephon Lawrence, Lara Mimosa Montes and Cat Tyc. I mostly spend my time working out engineering and management tasks while they bring new work to Poor Claudia.

**Poor Claudia has both print and digital components. Can you differentiate between work that you feel is better suited for digital publication or print publication?**

We do, yeah, but as time goes on the line between the two becomes thinner. There are poets like Ian Hatcher who’s published interactive ‘poems’ written in JavaScript ... obviously poems like those are meant for digital publication. But putting technical distinctions aside, I don’t see any difference between publishing work online and in print. Ultimately bookmaking comes down to typesetting, and the merit of beautiful typography online is not that different than print, doing it is just a different skillset.

**Can you talk about the process for accepting work? I noticed that Poor Claudia charges a small fee for submitting work via Submittable. I’ve noticed more and more small presses moving in this direction. I’m assuming the fee helps offset administrative costs but I wonder if you could tell us more about this and how it related to Poor Claudia specifically.**



Most of the work we publish is directly through our editors’ solicitations, but we’re also really invested in publishing work sent to us directly. That being said, for a literary organization to adequately interact with unsolicited submissions, it’s necessary to use services like Submittable, which cost money. Paying three bucks to send your poems to a press is a great deal when you consider all the great people at Submittable getting paid a living wage to maintain a product that allows you to avoid spending hours putting together postage and killing trees.

**Portland seems like it has a small but vibrant poetry community. Aside from Poor Claudia, Octopus Books looms large. How has Portland influenced the small press community? Or vice versa, how has the small press community influenced Portland? In what ways, if any, does Poor Claudia connect with the community in addition to publishing? I’m thinking of hosting reading series or workshops?**

The interaction between the city of Portland and the artists of Portland is pretty clear: there’s almost zero institutional support in the form of universities or corporate-backed contributions such that everyone’s pretty much had to do with what they’ve got in terms of credit and private funds. The result is that we’ve got a lot of small sole-prop, LLC or sometimes 501c3 operations that exist in a kind of financial vacuum ... This works for some organizations better than others, but the end result is a laissez-faire situation in which it can be very easy to put together a project, but very difficult to find public funding to make it happen. It’s significantly different than, say, Seattle, where in addition to having a large public research university, it has many extremely rich corporations looking for places to unload their tax liabilities. That’s not really the case in Portland.

**What are some of your favorite things about the literary community in Portland? Are there are other presses that you think folks should know about (I’m sure there are!)?**

Per capita Portland is extremely dense with poets. At the same time that you can escape to a dive bar to watch a sports game on a rainy night, you can walk across the street and have a world-class meal, or likewise walk the other direction and have a cocktail with one of the most amazing writers, artists or musicians in the United States. I like Big Big Wednesday a lot, they’re putting out great work right now.

**What’s one of the most important things you’ve learned from running a small press? Any tips or advice for others who might wants to start a press?**

Don’t start a small press—live your life, eat trash, be free.

**Any forthcoming Poor Claudia publications that you’d like to promote here? What can we expect from Poor Claudia in the future?**

We’re looking into the possibility of publishing in print more regularly. Probably in the form of a quarterly newsprint subscription, something arty with lots of shapes and typography, maybe even color. Stay tuned to our social media accounts for the details, we’ll probably make an announcement before this fall.

*Jackie Clark is the author of Aphoria (Brooklyn Arts Press), and most recently Sympathetic Nervous System (Bloof Books). She is the editor of Song of the Week for Coldfront Magazine and can be found online at <https://nohelpforthat.com/>.*

*Travis Meyer is the managing editor at Poor Claudia. His writing has most recently appeared in PEN Poetry Series and Public Pool.*



# 20 Years Of Printing Truth To Power: Portland's Independent Publishing Resource Center



## INTERVIEW BY LYNNE DESILVA-JOHNSON

**Boog City:** Today our Archival adventures land us at the Independent Publishing Resource Center, in Portland, Ore. We're talking with Hajara Quinn, program director, and we're so grateful she's taking the time out to chat with us. Hi Hajara! Thank you for being willing to talk to me today.

**Let's begin more generally, thinking about the role of spaces like the IPRC vis-a-vis the social and political implications always shadowing the background of our work these days. Would you start by telling us a little about your personal history—specifically in relationship to libraries and archives, as well as maybe radical community spaces and organizing? And then, how did you get involved with the IPRC in particular? What does your work there entail / what are you focused on most on a day to day basis?**

Hajara Quinn: When I moved back to Portland after completing my M.F.A., I started volunteering with the IPRC in a communications capacity, helping with newsletters, promoting workshops. I also helped coordinate events—readings primarily—and I think it was around that time that I was also involved with the IPRC as an adviser to a poet in the Certificate Program. I was hired as operations manager in 2015 and have been in my current position as program director since March 2016.

**What role do you think spaces like the IPRC play—or can potentially play—in the continued resistance, as mobilizing and empowering spaces for an increasingly fractured, often underresourced, politically frustrated populace? Do you see the work you do as “activist” or social justice oriented? Was it always this way?**



In the aftermath of this past election, I saw the IPRC mobilized as a place to come together and screenprint protest signs, make banners for marches, letterpress print messages for small businesses to display in solidarity, to support one another and think critically. In so many ways, being at the IPRC continues to reaffirm my belief that creative empowerment and political empowerment are connected, related, inseparable. We use the same tools in political acts of protest that we do in creative practices—language, ink, paper, our voices, our public selves colliding with our private selves. Our mission at the IPRC is to provide affordable access to tools for self-publication. The fewer barriers between those tools and the community, the more equitable and meaningful a future we can create together. My feeling is that if the personal is political, the communal sure as heck is too. So yes, the short answer is that I do think of the work we do as having a social justice orientation.

**I know that the IPRC is in a state of transition right now, and I'm anxious to talk to you more about what this means for the Center – but let's start by orienting folks who aren't familiar with your organization to its story. You're coming up on your 20th year of operation, and since its beginnings the center has grown to offer a really wide range of resources and programming. Can you give us the elevator version of your history?**

The time lapse version of the IPRC is that we were originally created as a resource center primarily for zine makers and DIY artists and writers in 1998. We were founded by Chloe Eudaly and Rebecca Gilbert and located on the Westside of Portland above Reading Frenzy. The move over to the SE Division Street location on Portland's Eastside enabled us to expand our printmaking studios and to expand programming and events. So more than ever, we were able to make space for all stages of the creative process—from learning new skills, to producing and sharing work in a public venue.

I love when loops close like this! I've been connected to Chloe (Eudaly) through social media for many many years – and was so excited to see that her bid for Portland City Council last year was successful! (She currently serves as commissioner.) It's great to know there's an advocate with such a deep awareness and sense of stewardship around DIY arts, books, and publishing in a political position there.

**The IPRC has grown a huge amount since those early days—tell us, what are the programs / offerings that you offer now that most excite you, and why? What holes in the existing infrastructure of education / job training / community / resources do you feel the IPRC fills? It feels ... essential, necessary, like a place we need to blueprint and replicate wherever and however possible.**

The Certificate Program is our yearlong workshop in creative writing and independent publishing. Students create a small print run of a handmade publication of their work and receive instruction in creative writing as well as production skills including letterpress printing, screen-printing, book arts, graphic design, and perfect binding. With the breadth of the instruction offered, and the opportunity to build strong ties to a community, that program really showcases the range of what is possible at the IPRC. Show/tell Camp for Teen Writers and Artists does similar work in the space of just a couple weeks with youth, and I'm excited to see how that program is continuing to grow and evolve.

Our volunteer base is another robust aspect of the IPRC. The amount of skill-sharing and innovation that comes from 50+ volunteers contributing to making the center what it is, it's really inspiring. In terms of holes in existing infrastructure, affordable continuing education is hard to find, as is studio space, especially printmaking studios. There aren't many communal

letterpress shops and ours has 150 typefaces—which is amazing! With an intro workshop and basic membership all those typefaces are at your disposal.

In community testimonials, the word “magic” pops up more than once, as does a metaphorical comparison of IPRC as fairy godmother. There is certainly a sense that this is a place positively brimming with possibility. In another testimonial, it reads that the center is what “makes Portland so awesome.” So...what came first, the chicken or the egg? By which I mean to say, talk to us a little bit about place and how it comes to bear on the work you do. For those of us who haven't spent much time in Portland and perhaps aren't as familiar with its politics and/or economics, can you enlighten us on the relationship between the center and the city? How would you say the site of Portland – whether physically/structurally, administratively, or culturally -has affected the center's life and evolution? What about the other way around? Are there other long-running organizations that are part of a cultural / non-profit community of support there?

Perhaps tell us, specifically, about your relationship to independent presses, publishing and printing in particular, and/or some of the organizations or individuals whose work you support? The Operating System was founded with a mission not altogether far from your own – speaking to the radical, critical role of any populace with independent access to printing and distribution. As the “free press” comes more into question, this seems to be even more important than ever.

Portland is abundant with small presses and other like minded nonprofits. Many of those presses utilize the IPRC in one or several ways. Two Plum Press letterpress prints their covers in the letterpress studio, Perfect Day Publishing does most of their design and layout using IPRC desktop publishing resources, Couch Press prints interiors, Dimsummer Book Club has bound books on our bindfast perfect binding machine, and as a volunteer with Octopus Books, I've certainly used the studios for screen-printing banners and letterpress printing broadsides. Reading series that have utilized the space include the Switch, Bad Blood, PSU's M.F.A. Reading Series and PURRR. And this is really just a small sampling. Organizations that we've worked with recently range from Portland Public Schools, Portland Art Museum, p:ear, Wordstock, PICA, and Columbia River Correctional Facility.

**Do you think the IPRC could exist in the way it does in another city, say like N.Y.? If so, where, and why? (Or, where not, and why?) Does this have to do with access to funding?**

Resoundingly yes! It starts with a couple long arm & saddle staplers, a photocopier, a small computer lab, large table to share and shelves to start collecting zines. Share tools, pool resources & buy more tools! I hope in the future that the IPRC has partner organizations in cities across the country.

**So tell us – what's going on in Portland? A recent message from Interim Director Brian Tibbetts speaks to a “state of change” propelled by “circumstances affecting most of the city.” This is worrisome – is the Center at risk? How long will you have your pop up space?**

We've been in something of a holding pattern while we've searched for a new location for the past year. Last April we were informed that our rent would be increasing 300%. This isn't a particularly unique story—other nonprofits and arts spaces, not to mention Portland's communities of color, have seen a marked increase in displacement. One way or another, we'll need to be moved out of our current space by August 2017– but in the past week or so we've had encouraging news, so think good thoughts for us!

**Is there anything the larger community can do to support the Center in this transition, even from afar?**

Become a supporting member! Contribute to our crowdfunding campaigns! Become a zine of the month member! Or contact us about sponsoring a certificate program student or teen camper at our teen camp for artists and writers. Also at the very top of our wish list is a Vandercook, so any leads of that nature would be much appreciated.

**Is there anything else I should have asked?**

Thank you so much for asking such thoughtful questions!

*Lynne DeSilva-Johnson is a queer interdisciplinary creator, curator, educator, and facilitator working in performance, exhibition, and publication in conversation with new media. She is a Visiting assistant professor at Pratt Institute and the founder and managing editor of The Operating System, as well as libraries editor at Boog City. Lynne is the author of GROUND, blood atlas, and Overview Effect, co-author of A GUN SHOW with Adam Sliwinski/So Percussion, and co-editor of the anthologies RESIST MUCH, OBEY LITTLE: Inaugural Poems for the Resistance, and In Corpore Sano: Creative Practice and the Challenged Body. Recent or forthcoming publication credits include Drunken Boat, Brooklyn Poets Anthology, Gorgon Poetics, Vintage Magazine, Wave Composition, PostMortem/MadGleam, and a Panthalassa Pamphlet from Tea & Tattered Pages Press. She performs often, resists always, and lives in Bed Stuy, Brooklyn.*

*Hajara Quinn is a poet and editor with experience in education, publishing and nonprofits. In 2014 she earned an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Cornell University where she worked as a writing instructor and tutor. She is an assistant editor for Octopus Books and the author of the chapbook Unnaysayer (Flying Object). The recipient of a 2015 Oregon Literary Fellowship, her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in Gulf Coast, Fence, The Volta, and Gramma Daily and her first collection of poetry is forthcoming from Big Lucks Books in 2017.*





