

# Best of 2015: Best Poetry Books & Collections

written by Entropy | December 7, 2015



Continuing with our series of “Best of 2015” lists curated by the entire *CCM-Entropy* community, we present some of our favorite selections as nominated by the diverse staff and team here at *Entropy*.

This list brings together some of our favorite poetry books & collections published in 2015.

**In no particular order:**

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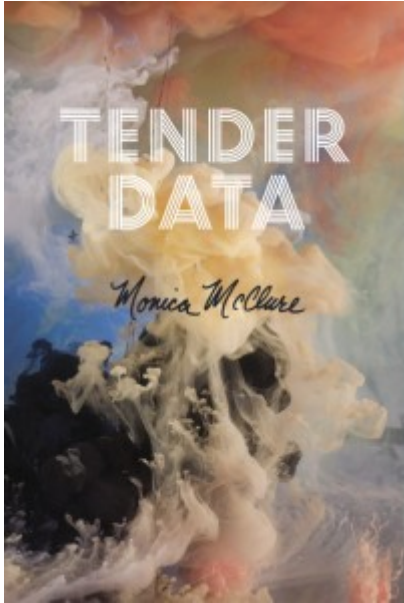
## **1. *Dead Horse* by Niina Pollari (Birds LLC)**



Niina Pollari’s poems unfold with a phrasal clarity I didn’t know I needed, and which disturbs me: “like an animal/enjoying the warm sunshine with blood in my mouth.” Her poems deploy the vatic informality of Tytti Heikkinen or Hiromi Ito, indubitably of the

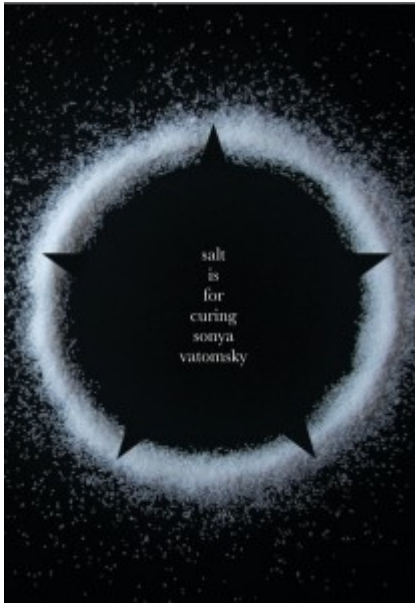
present yet of a material insoluble to the present, a voice that issues from a Grecian urn or can of Coors. This is resolved, odd, clear-complicated stuff, lovely “like a fakey arcade.” – Joyelle McSweeney

## 2. *Tender Data* by Monica McClure (Birds LLC)



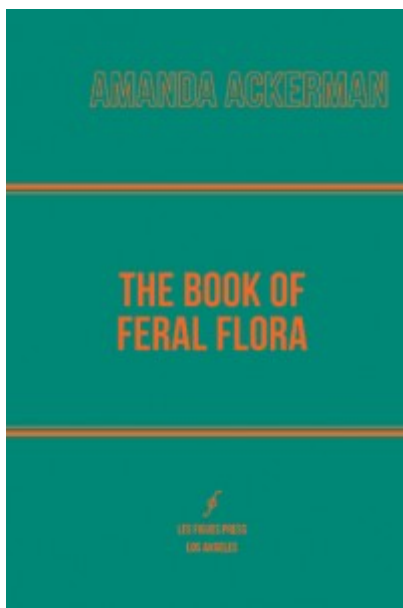
“In ***TENDER DATA*** Monica McClure breaks down and breaks into various identities, each of them hashtagged in the discourses of their time and place, whether macha or chiflada, couture or fast fashion, acephale or technocrat: “I want to be so skinny people ask if I’m dying.” Down the blood-red lanes of gender-making, class warfare, and vexed relationships goes the unstable subject, hailed yet hailing back. Nobody comes out looking good. The slippery self, surveilled yet ready with her mask, performs a peep show–booth opens wide, yet somehow the dancer isn’t there. She’s in character. She’s “cut off the head to let the humors hose through.”

## 3. *Salt is for Curing* by Sonya Vatomsky (Sator Press)



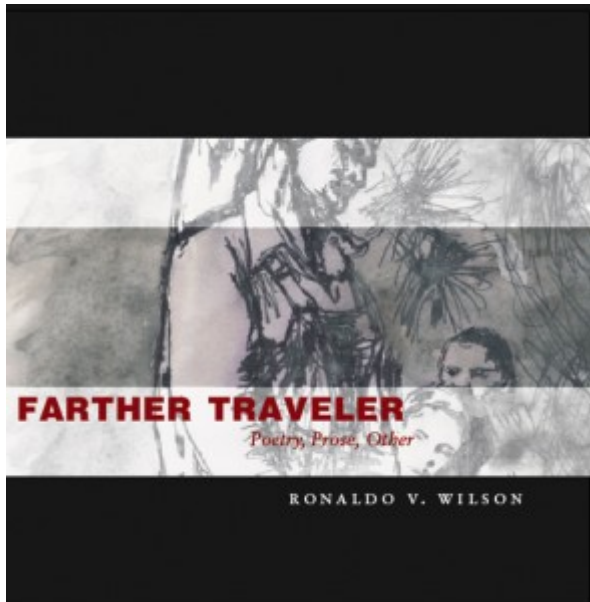
Sonya Vatomsky's *Salt Is For Curing* is many things: a feast, a grimoire, a fairy tale world, the real world. It's also too smart for bullshit and too graceful to be mean about the bullshit: a marvelous debut. I love it. – Ariana Reines, author of *Mercury*

#### 4. *The Book of Feral Flora* by Amanda Ackerman (Les Fignes Press)



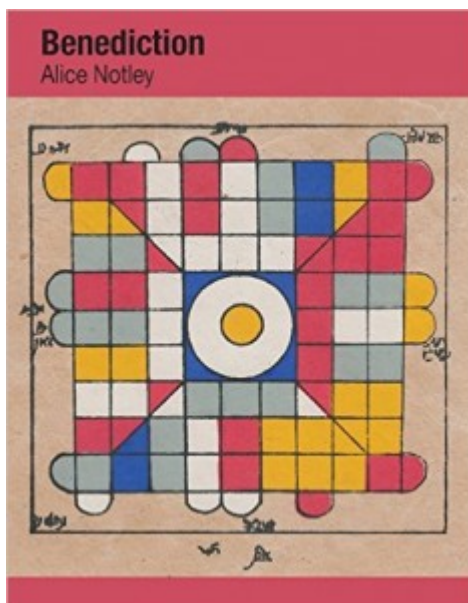
*The Book of Feral Flora* seems to be slowly undoing the aesthetic stylization of the symmetry of the plant-form—which removes us from flora and carries us to florid—and returning it towards the unpredictable feral place of the weed. –Divya Victor

#### 5. *Farther Traveler* by Ronaldo Wilson (Counterpath Books)



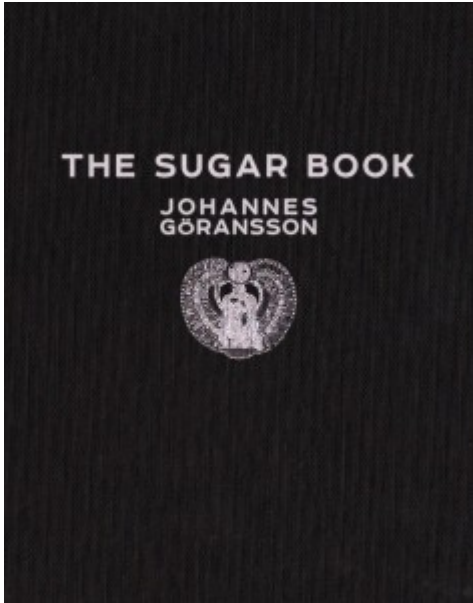
"There's a Fanonian trumpet Fanon couldn't imagine, a dance all his own he could neither own nor step to, Ronaldo V. Wilson's otherwise inconceivable graph, whose beauty and power reaches new depths and new heights in *Farther Traveler*, an erotic history of loss that is, therefore, an erotic theory of finding, its iridescent contacts, its eruptive grammars, its fluid, fleshly, aromatic loves. In the fabric of the general catastrophe, every silver and impossible daddy, every soft and possible father, gone further and farther away, Wilson works something new for us, an encounter of which we are made wonderfully aware—texture, scene, caress." —Fred Moten

## 6. *Benediction* by Alice Notley (Letter Machine Editions)



More than twenty years in the writing, BENEDICTION is Alice Notley's single long poem of mourning, desire, loss, and vitality.

## 7. *The Sugar Book* by Johannes Göransson (Tarpaulin Sky)



Doubling down on his trademark misanthropic imagery amid a pageantry of the unpleasant, Johannes Göransson strolls through a violent Los Angeles in this hybrid of prose and verse... The motifs are plentiful and varied, including constant reworkings of image-driven ideas, among them prostitution, pubic hair, Orpheus, law, pigs, disease, Francesca Woodman ... and the speaker's hunger for cocaine and copulation.... Fans of Göransson's distorted poetics will find this a productive addition to his body of work.

—*Publishers Weekly*

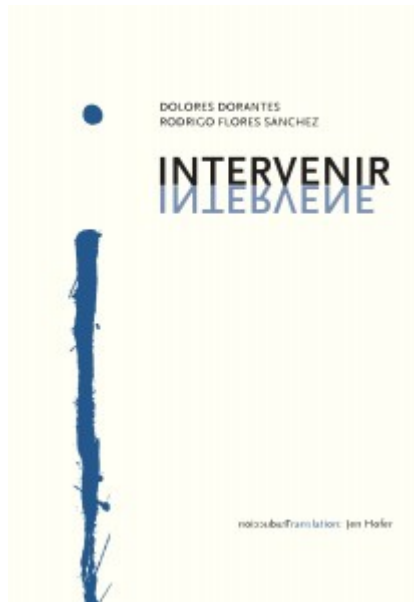
## 8. *I'M ALIVE / IT HURTS / I LOVE IT* by joshua jennifer espinoza (Boost House)



*i'm alive / it hurts / i love it* is joshua jennifer espinoza's

first full-length poetry book in print. her writing engages with subjects such as coming out as a trans woman, “surviving and thriving w/mental illness, and attempting to reconcile [her] anger/sadness at the state of things w/ [her] love for all the beauty that exists.”

**9. *Intervenir/Intervene* by Dolores Dorantes & Rodrigo Flores Sánchez, Translated by Jen Hofer (Ugly Duckling Presse)**



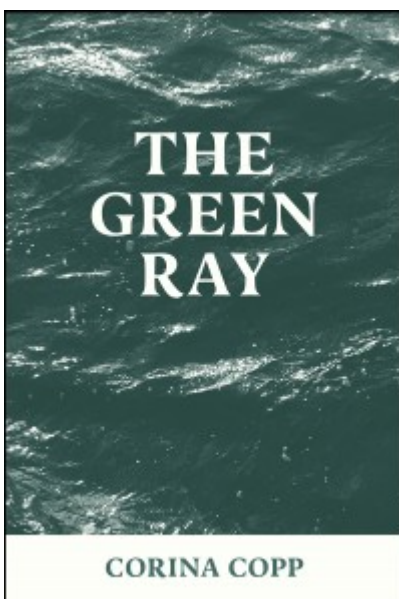
*Intervenir/Intervene* is a searing, tender, unflinching collaboration between two Mexican poets—Dolores Dorantes, who lived in Ciudad Juárez for 25 years and now has political asylum in Los Angeles, and Rodrigo Flores Sánchez, who lives in Mexico City. *Intervenir/Intervene* asks questions no one should have to ask: in a climate of state-sponsored violence, what kinds of speech, writing, relation are possible? We are being intervened. How do we collaborate? How do we resist?

**10. *Circle of Dogs* by Amandine Andre, Translated by Kit Schluter & Jocelyn Spaar (Solar Luxuriance)**



"This poem lingers and moves like slime mold across language in patterns similar to Allemann's *Babyfucker* and Krasznahorkai's *Animalinside*, taking the "corpse of words and mix[ing] words with words" to summon language as an alchemized, feral mixture brewing below the surface of an absurd politics. André conjures a devotion to the breakdown of the border between mind and body in a world where the most resonant gesture against an overwhelming violence is the shoe of Muntadhar al-Zaidi spiraling through time, space, and media towards the idea of G. W. Bush's blank and inscrutable masks. Power functions on the world stage as language degenerates in poetry: here is a poem about dogs giving head to head; here is a poem reminiscent of your own powerless and beautiful life." –Aaron Apps

## 11. *The Green Ray* by Corina Copp (Ugly Duckling Presse)



Brand names and their attendant ®s might be sprinkled throughout *The Green Ray*, yet, except for these registered trademarks, this exquisitely dissociative book seems free of any utterance previously registered in English. Copp's liminal language—unmoored from identifiable references, its syntax and articulations torqued to the point of estrangement—asserts, above all, her material's plasticity and unfixity. Its effect is such that straight talk rings deadeningly ordinary. May promo be a case in point. *The Green Ray* is gloriously unblurbable.—Mónica de la Torre

## 12. *Evening Oracle* by Brandon Shimoda (Letter Machine Editions)



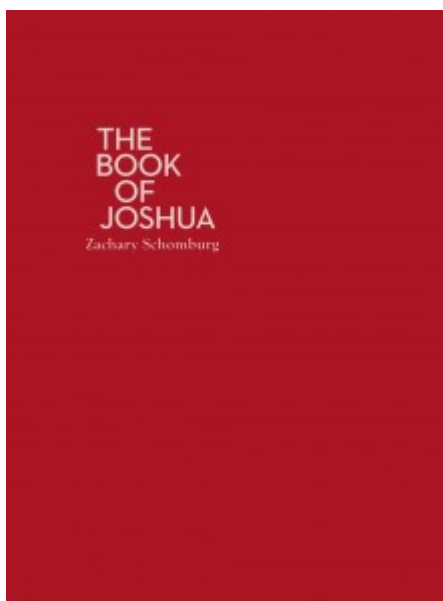
In *EVENING ORACLE*, Brandon Shimoda encounters shadows, specters, and women—young and old, living and undead—and finds himself standing in a graveyard in the middle of a rice field in a town that no longer exists. *EVENING ORACLE* is composed of poems originally handwritten at night before sleep in the beds of friends and strangers in Japan (2011-2012), and passages from emails and letters to and from friends and family on the subjects of fruit, vegetables, and dying grandparents.

## 13. *Companion Animal* by Magdalena Zurawski (Litmus Press)



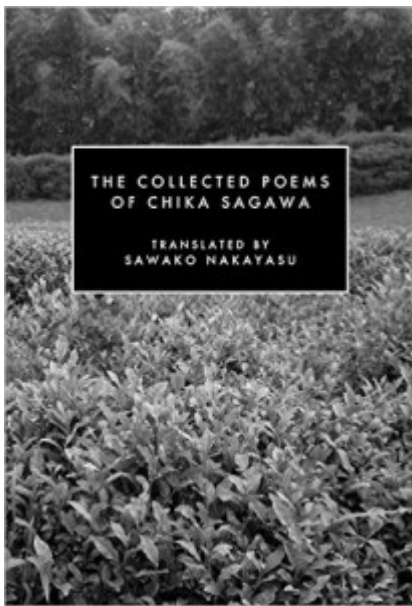
"A few years ago, armed with seven books, and guided by a small dog, Magdalena Zurawski decided to start over as a poet. She was in the kind of mood where extravagant poetic language can appear dishonest, so, for the most part, she limited the contents of her poems to what was strictly necessary. But in each poem she did exactly one unnecessary thing – often the unnecessary thing was the appearance of the small dog – and that was how she reinvented poetry. Rarely has the poetic impulse been isolated with such intensity. Rarely has it cohabited so successfully with plain speech. Here are the eagerly anticipated results. Wise, forceful, honest, clean as a whistle yet with a shockingly foul mouth, and very doggy. Sometimes the nastiest parts are also the nicest parts. I find that inspiring." – Aaron Kunin

#### 14. *The Book of Joshua* by Zachary Schomburg (Black Ocean)



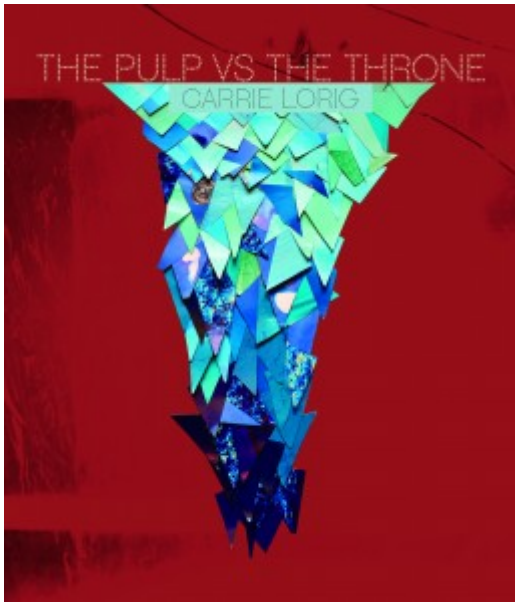
Zachary Schomburg has delivered his latest work from a dark place, where little machines repeat in a hollow voice, "*this is only further proof of your badness.*" Presented in a single narrative, *The Book of Joshua* is a sorry heart begged out of dreams, death & a horse's eye. It is an epic journey not only affirming that "*there is a difference between sadness and suffering;*" but that Schomburg is one of the most unusual poets writing today, pushing his work beyond our familiarity. These poems have a thirst for blood, but they don't yet know exactly what to do with their hands. *The Book of Joshua* calls out in hunger and loneliness, "I didn't feel like living in anything not shaped like me anymore."

**15. *The Collected Poems of Chika Sagawa*, Translated by Sawako Nakayasu (Canarium Books)**



Chika Sagawa was the pen name of Aiko Kawasaki, who was born in 1911 in Hokkaido, Japan. One of the first female modernist poets of Japan, she was a member of the literary community surrounding Kitasono Katue and was highly esteemed by many of her contemporaries. She died of stomach cancer at the age of 25.

**16. *The Pulp vs. The Throne* by Carrie Lorig (Artifice Books)**



In her boundless collection *The Pulp vs. The Throne*, Carrie Lorig collides literary forms and rides their cataclysmic energy through extremes of language. Drawing from a diverse roster of writers and thinkers, she searches for the fundamental frequencies beneath all resonance – the thought, the word, and the poem – and folds them into an immense song that spans time and culture. The eight landscapes of poetry that result are at once critical and political examinations of self, human community, violence, despair, oblivion, and love.

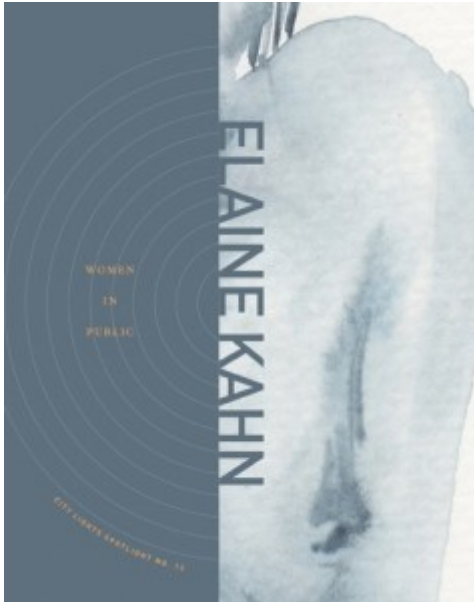
## 17. *Diadem Me* by Bethany Carlson (MIEL)



Bethany Carlson's *Diadem Me* shimmers with accumulations of feeling and experience. These poems map a surface at once interior and exterior, and, as they do, they offer their readers new ways of moving through a world which is at once arbitrary and ordered. In

mourning, jubilation, and wonderment Carlson breaks the hymn in a Dickinsonian way, offering us something like transcendence—except her poems never forget their earthly, bodily roots.

**18. *Women in Public* by Elaine Kahn (City Lights)**



“‘Do you think that you are greater than a mom?’ This is an intensely honest, honestly intense poetry. Humorous, carnal, accusatory, celebratory—*Women in Public* tells me to get lost so I do. When I find myself later, I’m re-reading *Women in Public*.” —Rod Smith

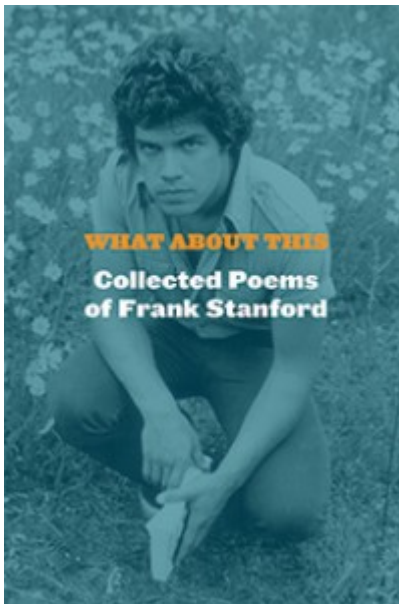
**19. *The Incoming Tide* by Cameron Pierce (Broken River Books)**



“It’s been a long time since I’ve encountered an author whose

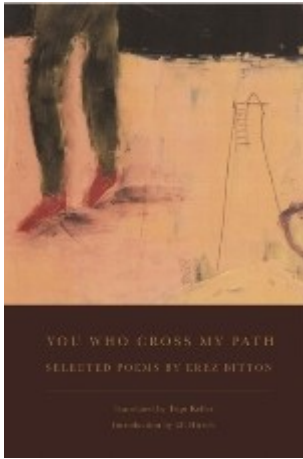
work instills that feeling of discovery and fascination that could keep me reading long into the quiet hours, and then bring me right back again for another go because there's still more to uncover. Cameron Pierce is such an author [...] If you like books that stretch the bounds of convention and celebrate the beauty of life and language, *THE INCOMING TIDE* is a book you want to read, and then read again." – SHOTGUN LOGIC

**20. *What About This Collected Poems of Frank Stanford* by Frank Stanford (Copper Canyon Press)**



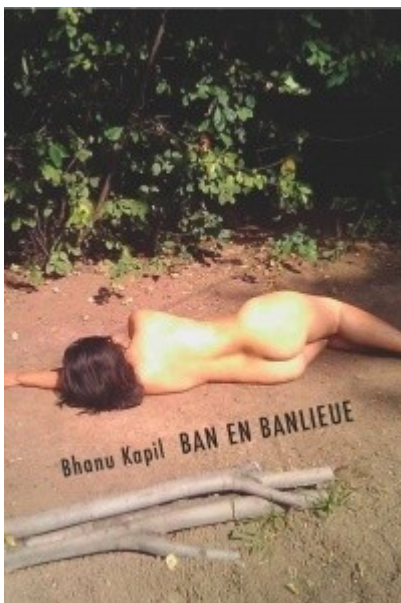
"Frank Stanford's *What About This* is a monumental achievement. So much of Stanford's work was unpublished, scattered about in limited-edition, hard-to-find volumes, but now it has been collected and readers will rejoice to discover (or rediscover) a distinct poetic voice.... He was a voracious reader and was heavily influenced by Thomas Merton and French writers. He loved the Surrealists and Rimbaud, Mallarme, Follain and the French filmmakers Cocteau and Buñuel. His poetry is wildly imagistic, imbued with Southern folklore and culture, and it's—to use Stanford's own word—'strange.'"—Tom Lavoie, *Shelf Awareness*

**21. *You Who Cross My Path* by Erez Bitton, Translated by Tsipi Keller (BOA Editions)**



"One cannot overstate the importance of Erez Bitton's poetry. At least one of the reasons for this is self-evident: Bitton is the dominant figure in the creation and development of a new and significant tradition in the history of Hebrew poetry—the tradition of Israeli Mizrahi poetry. Many consider him the founding father of this tradition, which dramatically expanded the scope of the biographical experience and cultural memory and became a vital part in the formation of contemporary Hebrew poetry during the last few decades. . . . One is hard-pressed to name another Israeli poet who can claim such an achievement." —Eli Hirsch

## 22. *Ban en Banlieue* by Bhanu Kapil (Nightboat Books)



Trying to offer a clear critical comment on Bhanu Kapil's *Ban en Banlieue* is particularly challenging because it so stridently seeks to side-step the rational, hierarchical, closed-system imaginations which generate race riots, which churn women's bodies into sexual fodder and carcasses tossed out of vans, which demand that we see mental illness as an individual disorder rather than as a human soul crying out amidst inhuman cultural paroxysms. "Centered"

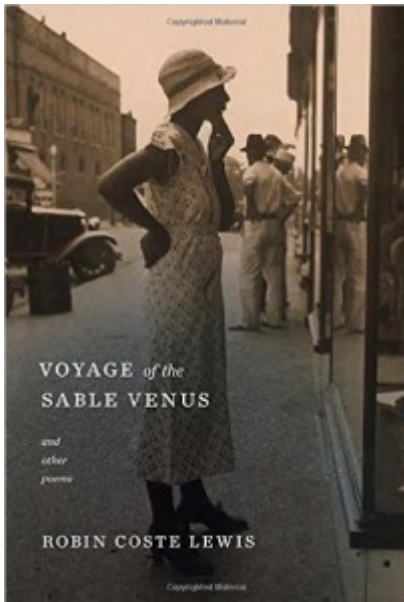
around a race riot in 1979 London, Kapil's text belies the notion of fixed centers or single origins of cultural violence. Instead, she offers a variety of emotional, psychological, and spiritual loci around which her text coalesces. To cry out. To fail. To rise like diesel smoke in a hot summer wind. –Sueyeun Juliette Lee

### **23. *Swan Feast* by Natalie Eilbert (Bloof Books)**



Eilbert's lush, dense debut collection records a woman's journey to take back sovereignty over her body from the anorexia that has swallowed it. The poems take a number of forms—including epistles, epithalamiums, modified sonnets, and discursive free verse—and center on the conjured spirit of the Venus of Willendorf: a small, limestone figurine of a female with exaggerated features that dates to the Paleolithic period. –*Publisher's Weekly*

### **24. *Voyage of the Sable Venus* by Robin Coste Lewis (Knopf)**



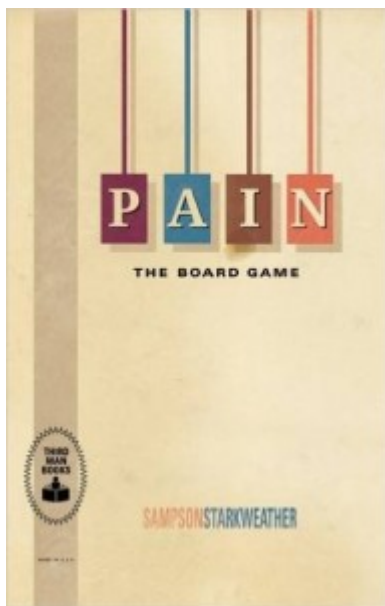
*"Voyage of the Sable Venus and Other Poems* reframes the black figure, most specifically the black female, by pointing out the borders of black beauty, black happiness, and black resilience in our canonical visual culture. Tender and masterful opening and closing poems bookend the archival, lyric masterwork, "Voyage of the Sable Venus," at the center of the collection. This title poem upends the language of representation, collected from the cataloging of the black body in Western art. Robin Coste Lewis takes back depictions of the black feminine and refuses to land or hold down that which has always been alive and loving and lovely. Altogether new, open, experimental and ground-breaking, Lewis privileges real life in all its complications, surprises and triumphs over the frames that have locked down the scale of black womanhood."—Claudia Rankine

## 25. **UNSUB** by Divya Victor (Insert Blanc Press)



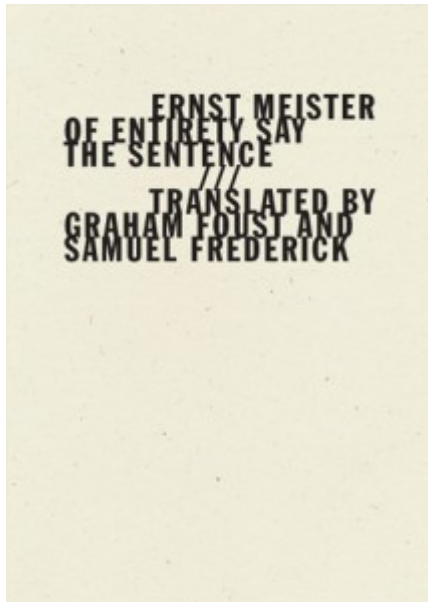
"By turning the forensic onto the forensic, Divya Victor splays the bodies of those wanted into bits of want: soldered-over scars and moulding desires, that glut of gut tissue and the rotting tongue's ability to speak another tongue. To *UNSUB* is not, as turns out, to unsubjectify, but to subjectify too highly. High as how meat goes when left too long by the side of the road. Like a graveyard, the poems make a more permanent point than its peoples: What we want is enough. And always too much."—Vanessa Place

**26. *PAIN: The Board Game* by Sampson Starkweather (Third Man Books)**



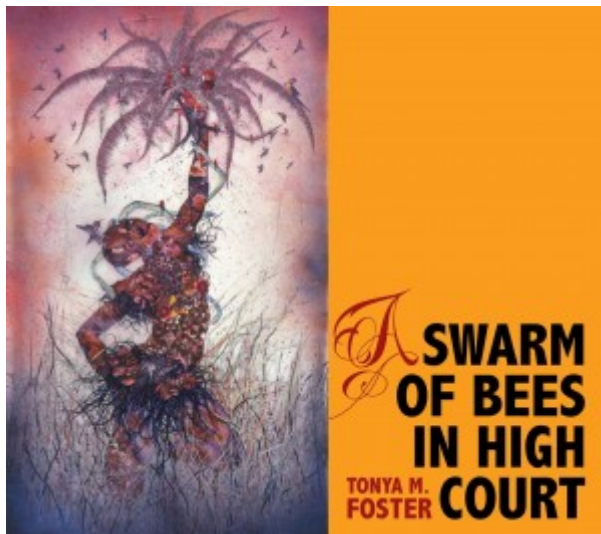
"[A] provocative reinterpretation of poetry's function...Here is devastating meta-poetry for the board game-playing, smartphone-scrolling masses, both accessible and enlightened."—*Publisher's Weekly*

**27. *Of Entirety Say the Sentence* by Ernst Meister, Translated by Graham Foust & Samuel Frederick (Wave Books)**



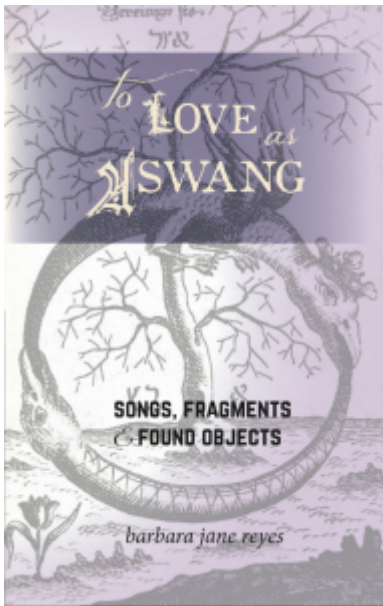
"Meister compacts a meditation on the nature of space, nothingness and our interaction with the two in the work's sparse, dense lines." –Lindsay Choi, *The Daily Californian*

## 28. *A Swarm of Bees in High Court* by Tonya M. Foster (Belladonna)



With consummate care, skill, and attention, Foster limns the anomie, alienation, and unbelonging of a near-dystopic urban landscape filtered through insomniac wanderings (and wonderings) of her female protagonist. Employing the restrained form of the haiku, Foster puts her material, replete with feminist impulses, under pressure, allowing it to build until it explodes into a poetry that excites even as it destabilizes, leaving the reader on edge as s/he reaches after meaning, finds it, only to lose it again in the rush—the urgency to become Witness to what it means to be. □ –M. NourbeSe Philip

**29. *To Love as Aswang: Songs, Fragments, & Found Objects* by Barbara Jane Reyes (PAWA Publications)**



The Philippine aswang is a mythic, monstrous creature which has, since colonial times, been associated with female transgression, scapegoating, and social shaming, known in Tagalog as hiya. In the 21st century, and in diaspora, she manages to endure. Barbara Jane Reyes's *To Love as Aswang*, the poet and a circle of Filipino American women grapple with what it means to live as a Filipina, or Pinay, in a world that has silenced, dehumanized, and broken the Pinay body. These are poems of Pinay tragedy and perseverance, of reappropriating monstrosity and hiya, sung in polyphony and hissed with forked tongues.

**30. *The Last Two Seconds* by Mary Jo Bang (Graywolf Press)**



*"The Last Two Seconds* is alive to impermanence. . . . Although

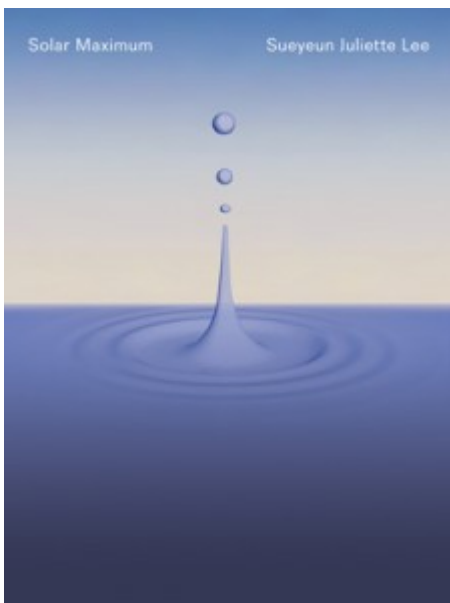
Eliot asserted that the world ends not with a bang but a whimper, this particular way of shoring an era's fragments against emotional ruin, by adding lyrics to 'a song of no mercy,' begins and ends with Bang." –*American Poets*

**31. *Greetings from My Girlie Leisure Place* by Sharon Mesmer (Bloof Books)**



Sharon Mesmer's poetry is a stream of indomitable spunk . . . tough and lush . . . a fabulous tissue of language which floats out to inhabit other bodies, opens their mouths and makes them speak.  
–Alice Notley

**32. *Solar Maximum* by Sueyeun Juliette Lee (Futurepoem)**



If *Solar Maximum's* speculative fictions are more concerned with presents than futures, its rigorous calm is deeply disquieted, its

systematic clarity vying with diffusion, blindness. Is it a reckoning of human success or error that the cannibalistic clouds over Lee's blanched landscapes are full of weather and information? That they break themselves down as a body and communications must? Why poetry otherwise? These are stunning poems written to haunt a house we're in the process of building or, in another light, gently dismantling. – Douglas Kearney

**33. *Other People's Comfort Keeps Me Up at Night* by Morgan Parker (Switchback Books)**



"I can and have read Morgan Parker's poems over and over....She writes history and pleasure and kitsch and abstraction, then vanishes like a god in about 13 inches and I mean \*that\* is really cool." –Eileen Myles

**34. *Orphan Machines* by Carrie Hunter (Black Radish Books)**



"In ORPHAN MACHINES, Carrie Hunter stages a kind of cyborgian theater where ideology is brilliantly dismantled to unmask the real. With each startling construction, spaced across aerated pages or set in tight prose blocks, she discovers a form of liberation struggle. Her subjects—philosophy, sexuality, sociality, music—always interpenetrate, because it is life that is at issue, and life is mixed up. She writes, 'The important thing about what I am is its not black and white.' She asks, 'Should I fake normalcy or be real?' Read this book and find out: Carrie Hunter is the real deal."—Kit Robinson

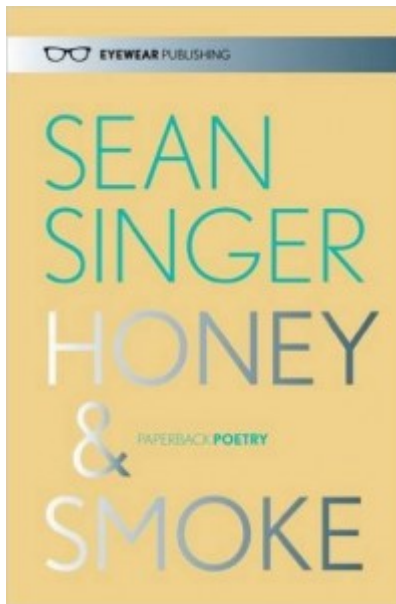
**35. *Room Where I Get What I Want* by S. Whitney Holmes (Black Ocean)**



A house echoes with the footfalls of wild men running behind the walls in S. Whitney Holmes's debut collection, *Room Where I Get*

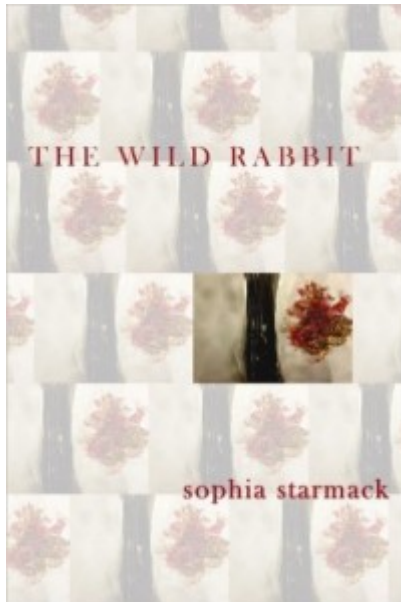
*What I Want*. Here in the house that is not a house, Holmes destabilizes the architectural structure by relishing in the details: a German man builds a mnemonic castle, a hero swallows a tulip bulb, and a woman opens a book to place in its hollowed center a gun. Debating space and intimacy, power and pleasure, Holmes constructs a spellbinding education as erotically charged as it is dangerous.

### **36. *Honey and Smoke* by Sean Singer (Eyewear Publishing)**



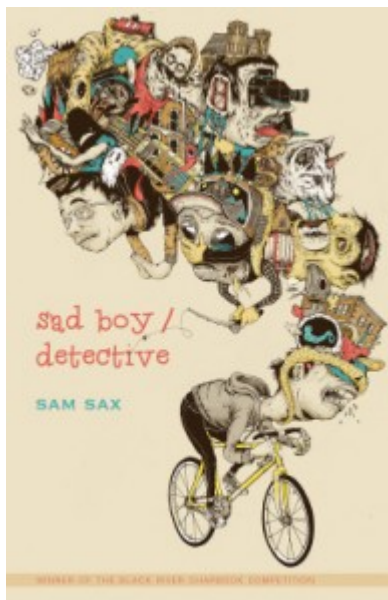
Sean Singer's second book of poems uses a range of hybrid forms including lyric poetry, long lines, nonfiction non-poetry, and lyrical essay to address the ghosts of history: historical figures, the lives of other writers, jazz music, and writing itself. The poems show humor, intimacy, and a range of voices; language and music of obsession; the meaning of creative energy.

### **37. *The Wild Rabbit* by Sophia Starmack (Deadly Chaps)**



"The poems in THE WILD RABBIT grant priority to the female in wildly enchanting and evocative ways. Inside their understated beauty and sensuality, one feels also the presence of the forbidden, the suppressed – a sense of surveillance, transgression, secrecy. Through the lens of a partly told story, Sophia Starmack transforms the phrase: i have become a woman. She is that rare, most welcome sort of poet who sees both the Cage and the unlatched gate." –Jennifer Tseng

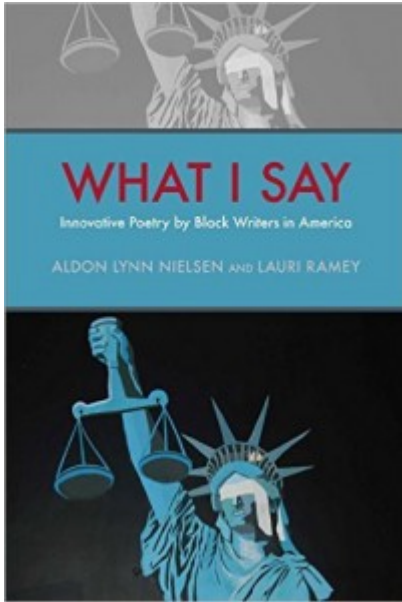
### 38. *sad boy / detective* by Sam Sax (Black Lawrence Press)



Sam Sax's *sad boy/detective* uses the unholy sonnet in ways that would make Jarman marvel and sigh. The entirety of this volume destabilizes our ideas of what it means to write the coming of age novel, what it means to be undetectable. And Sax is forever fighting the fight of a poet who is made aware of his separation

from the world by the fact that he is—in sorrow, sex, danger, or celebration—moored to all he sees because his seeing is a searchlight. —Jericho Brown

**39. *What I Say: Innovative Poetry by Black Writers in America*, Edited by Aldon Lynn Nielson and Lauri Ramey (University Alabama Press)**



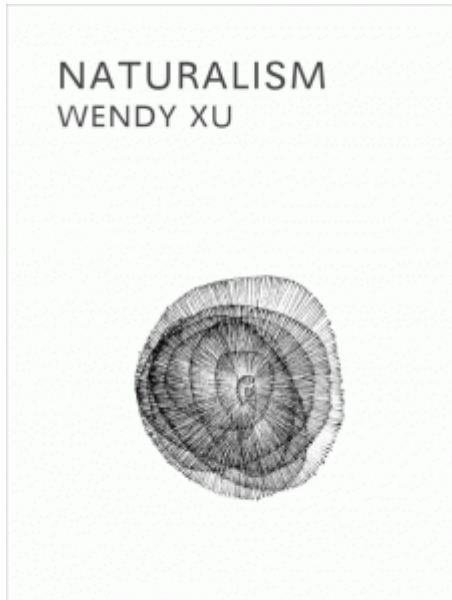
“This anthology offers a uniquely valuable range of poems by contemporary writers that is as necessary and expansive as air while as imaginatively fluid as the equally essential property of water. *What I Say* deserves a prominent place on the shelves of readers, writers, and scholars interested in the literary and aesthetic future of black American poetics. Yet, since it is such a compelling read, it won’t stay on those shelves!” —Meta DuEwa Jones

**40. *Blue Fasa* by Nathaniel Mackey (New Directions)**



"Mackey, winner of the 2006 National Book Award for poetry, "continues *Nod House's* continuation of *Splay Anthem* and the work that came before it" as he extends two interwoven and ongoing serial poems: *Song of Andoumboulou* and "Mu." Commanding in their cerebral and musical reach, the poems do not require knowledge of previous installments, though hints to the themes here are found in the collection's title, which references the West African griot tradition and jazz trumpeter Kenny Dorham's song "Blue Bossa." Mackey's epic mode is one in which place, time, and personae collide and shapeshift, rendering a definitive origin or conclusion somewhat irrelevant. [...] What exists always exists in relationship to its negation, opening an elastic space in which form and dissolution maintain a fast paced, flexible dialectic dance. Mackey tracks a knowledge "gone by the time we heard/ it, galactic light's late arrival/ an acoustic standin, lightyear like/ but shrunken. Moment's remit/ an/ odd sonic perfume." The book itself follows in this pattern of continual departures, sustained in Mackey's remarkable erudition and singular lyric virtuosity." —*Publishers Weekly*

#### **41. *Naturalism* by Wendy Xu (Brooklyn Arts Press)**



“Wendy Xu’s verse nonchalantly approaches, coffee in hand, whispering *Can we talk?* Earnest and with a quick wit, Xu moves through a contemporary landscape where a ‘*half slower good death,*’ is the best that can be desired, where the speaker can only visualize a connection of disambiguation, ‘*The it of love was on my mind.*’ Through diction and syntax Xu creates unsettling juxtapositions that make us think and feel, make amorous intellectualizations. I highly recommend *Naturalism.*” –David Tomas Martinez

**42. *This Blue Novel* by Valerie Mejer Caso, Translated by Michelle Gil-Montero (Action Books)**



Full of smoke and ghosts and giant saints, Valerie Mejer Caso’s

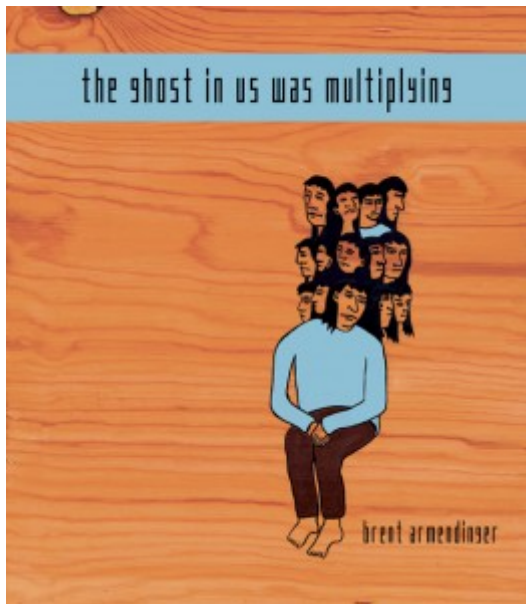
THIS BLUE NOVEL traces maps layered onto maps: desert spaces, family lineage, and memory filtered through watery paper. Mejer Caso leads the reader through dark tangles of vegetation on tattooed horses, hot on the trail of a damaged recollection under the elemental sky. Reading THIS BLUE NOVEL is like a rapture never quite complete, like being caught in a moment of “rotational velocity,” simultaneously dizzying and thrilling.

**43. *Mess And Mess And* by Douglas Kearney (Noemi Press)**



The joy in reading *Mess and Mess and* comes from the way Douglas Kearney’s writing performs and transforms the sensations of the historic, imagined and real black body into a kind of jive signification system of pun, gesture and resistance through time, space, etymology, gloss. Jive meaning: some mess, some movements, some secrets glyphed behind the hand, continually decoding and decoying the code. “Here, the body shifts to its proxy, language,” as Kearney creates his own methods for naming and theorizing not just creative process but the experience of art and utterance as a relationship with the various phenomena of living, dying and getting free. Evoking the heady erotics of Nathaniel Mackey and the critical interventions of Adrian Piper, Douglas Kearney’s meticulous and playful *ars poetica* illustrates the unseen dimensions of what makes his work necessarily graphic, totally vulnerable and admirably outrageous. –Tisa Bryant

**44. *The Ghost in Us Was Multiplying* by Brent Armendinger (Noemi Press)**



The poems in Brent Armendinger's *The Ghost in Us Was Multiplying* are hushed, as if spoken the morning after a heavy snow. They are also admirably attentive to sadness, breath, and desire. Their speaker laments being "too permeable," but it's precisely that translucence that matters here: it makes audible the music of his "almost way of touching," as well as delivering the sometimes melancholy, perennially essential sound of "how the heart opening always feels." —Maggie Nelson

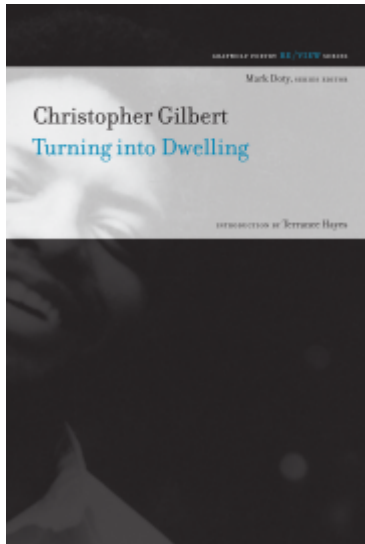
**45. *Dirty Poem* by Ferreira Gullar, Translated by Leland Guyer (New Directions)**



*Dirty Poem* was written in 1975 in Buenos Aires when Ferreira Gullar was in political exile from the Brazilian dictatorship. An epic work, it draws on the poet's memories of his seaside adolescence during World War II and deals openly with the "dirty" shamefulness

of a socioeconomic system that abuses its citizens with poverty, sexism, greed, and fear. The scholar Otto Maria Carpeaux wrote: “*Dirty Poem* deserves to be called ‘National Poem’ because it embodies all of the experiences, victories, defeats, and hopes in the life of the Brazilian citizen.”

#### **46. *Turning Into Dwelling* by Christopher Gilbert (Graywolf Press)**



“Restlessly introspective. . . . To read [Gilbert] is to hear him ask how the mind works. . . . Superb, dissatisfied, explorations of African-American identity.”—*American Poets*

#### **47. *War of the Foxes* by Richard Siken (Copper Canyon Press)**



In reviewing Richard Siken’s first book, *Crush*, the *New York Times* wrote that “his territory is [where] passion and eloquence collide and fuse.” In this long-awaited follow-up to *Crush*, Siken turns

toward the problems of making and representation, in an unrelenting interrogation of our world of doublings. In this restless, swerving book simple questions—such as, *Why paint a bird?*—are immediately complicated by concerns of morality, human capacity, and the ways we look to art for meaning and purpose while participating in its—and our own—invention.

**48. *The Mario Kart 64 Poems* by August Smith (Cool Skull Press)**



“We know these roads because we have traveled them before—eyes ahead on the changing colors, our shoulders leaning into every turn as if our bodies can make our avatars tip up on two wheels. In *The Mario Kart 64 Poems*, Smith serves as tour guide, kart master, all-knowing Lakitu: changing our perception of the worlds we race through—that the obstacles we have come to expect are comforting; that we should’ve been paying attention to the landscapes: the spaces beyond the course path, the loved ones sitting one couch cushion over.” —Brian Oliu, author of *Leave Luck to Heaven*

**49. *At Night* by Lisa Ciccarello (Black Ocean)**



Told in an age we can't quite put our finger on, the poems in Lisa Ciccarello's debut collection twist up from tales of witchcraft and the punishing morals of the *Newgate Calendar*. Vulnerable in the darkness as the dead watch behind salt-lined windows, we are led to explore a world of simple objects through a complex fog of cruelty and longing, strength and feebleness, folklore and familial traditions. Violence, love, death, jealousy, sex, and shadows fill the pages of *At Night*. If you seek comfort, you will find none here.

## 50. *Oracle* by Cate Marvin (W.W. Norton)



The speakers of *Oracle* occupy the outer-borough cityscape of New York's Staten Island, where they move through worlds glittering with refuse and peopled by ghosts—of a dead lover, of a friend lost to suicide, of a dog with glistening eyes. Marvin's haunting,

passionate poems explore themes of loss, of the vulnerability of womanhood in a world hostile to it, and of the fraught, strangely compelling landscape of adolescence.