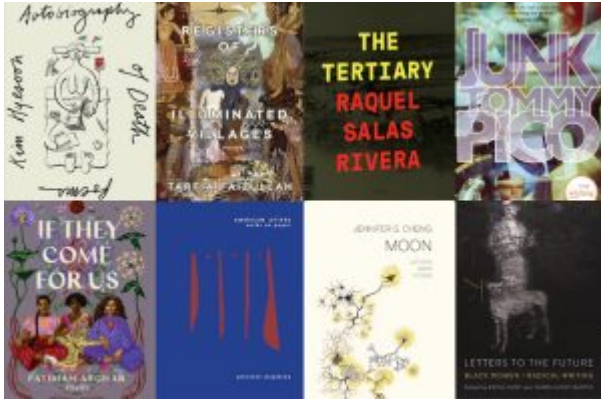


Best of 2018: Best Poetry Books & Poetry Collections

written by Entropy | December 3, 2018



Starting off our series of “[Best of 2018](#)” lists curated by the entire *Entropy* community, we present some of our favorite selections as nominated by the diverse staff and team here at *Entropy*, as well as nominations from our readers.

This list brings together some of our favorite poetry books & collections published in 2018.

([For last year’s list, click here.](#))

In no particular order...

1. [Ghost Of](#) by Diana Khoi Nguyen (Omnidawn)



Ghost of is truly a brilliant book. Amazing poetry happens inside

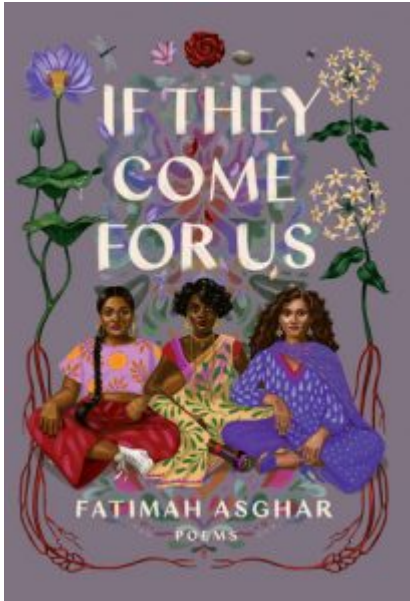
visual innovations where “There is nothing that is not music, the pouring of water from one receptacle into another a coat of bees draped over the sack of sugar caving in on itself.” Poetry is found in the gaps, silences and ruptures of history. In “An Empty House Is a Debt” the poet writes: “There is a house in me. It is empty. I empty it. / Negative space: the only native emptiness there is.” These poems mean to make a song of emptiness and the spaces we house. They sing to and for the ghosts of identity, exile, and history. They sing like a ghost who looks from the window or waits by the door. Lyric fills in the holes in the story. Ghost Of is unforgettable. –Terrance Hayes

2. [American Letters: works on paper](#) by giovanni singleton (Canarium Books)



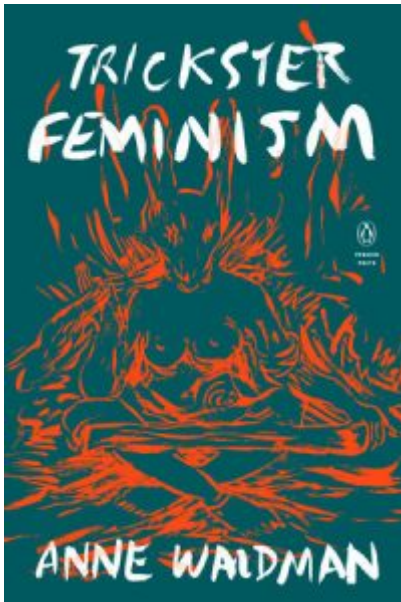
an ingenious hybrid work—as much poetry as art object and musical score. It demands its readers’ collaboration, their imagination, especially in her mesostic and concrete poems saturated with sites for improvisation. Similar to singleton’s first collection, *Ascension*, her second is an experience of acute listening. Her readers listen suspended, as if to jazz musician Alice Coltrane, but not only to each note that singleton plucks from the harp, but for the spaces that exist between notes, between white-space and letter, image and text. – Madeline Vardell, *The Arkansas International*

3. *If They Come for Us* by Fatimah Asghar (One World)



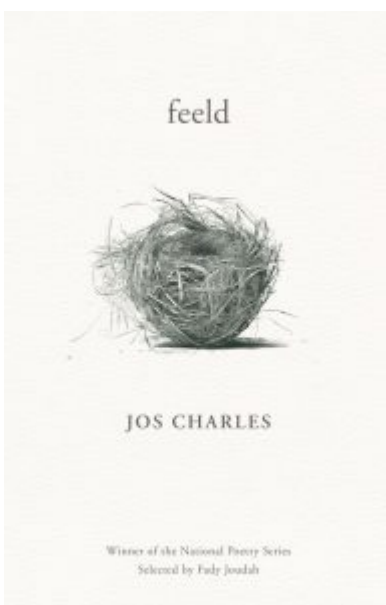
In forms both traditional . . . and unorthodox . . . Asghar interrogates divisions along lines of nationality, age, and gender, illuminating the forces by which identity is fixed or flexible. Most vivid and revelatory are pieces such as 'Boy,' whose perspicacious turns and irreverent idiom conjure the rich, jagged textures of a childhood shadowed by loss. —The New Yorker

4. *Trickster Feminism* by Anne Waldman (Penguin Poets)



Mythopoeitics, shape shifting, quantum entanglement, Anthropocene blues, litany and chance operation play inside the field of these intertwined poems, which coalesced out of months of protests with some texts penned in the streets. Anne Waldman looks to the imagination of mercurial possibility, to the spirits of the doorway and of crossroads, and to language that jolts the status quo of how one troubles gender and outwits patriarchy. She summons Tarot's Force Arcana, the passion of the suffragettes, and various messengers and heroines of historical, hermetic, and heretical stance, creating an intersectionality of lived experience: class, sexuality, race, politics all enter the din. These are experiments of survival.

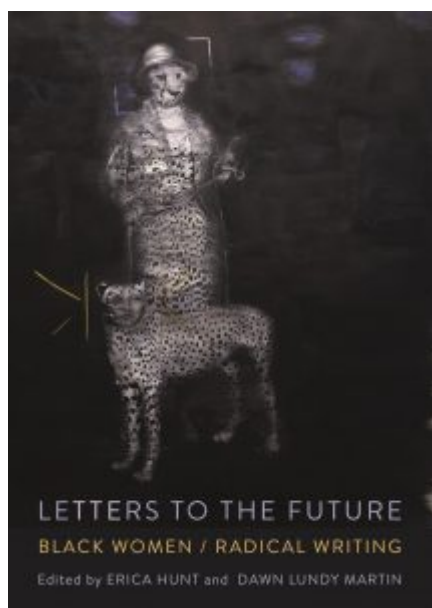
5. [feeld](#) by jos charles (Milkweed Editions)



"i care so much abot the whord i cant reed." In *feeld*, Charles stakes her claim on the language available to speak about trans experience, reckoning with the narratives that have come before by reclaiming

the language of the past. In Charles's electrifying transliteration of English–Chaucerian in affect, but revolutionary in effect—what is old is made new again. “gendre is not the tran organe / gendre is yes a hemorage.” “did u kno not a monthe goes bye / a tran i kno doesnt dye.” The world of *feeld* is our own, but off-kilter, distinctly queer—making visible what was formerly and forcefully hidden: trauma, liberation, strength, and joy.

6. [*Letters to the Future: Black WOMEN/Radical WRITING*](#) Edited by Erica Hunt & Dawn Lundy Martin (Kore Press)



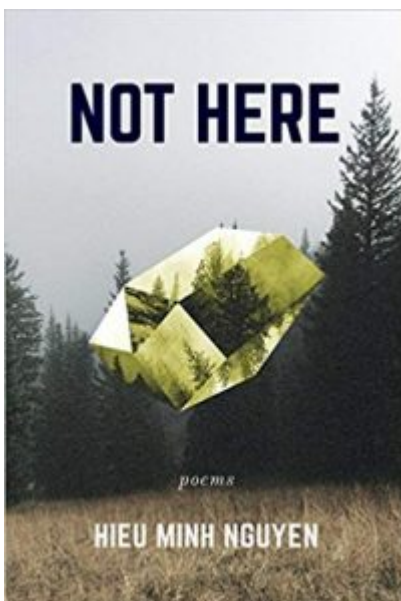
A collection of poems, essays, elder conversations, and visual works, *Letters to the Future: Black WOMEN / Radical WRITING*, celebrates temporal, spatial, formal, and linguistically innovative literature. The anthology collects late-modern and contemporary work by Black women from the United States, England, Canada, and the Caribbean—work that challenges readers to participate in meaning making. Because one contextual framework for the collection is “art as a form of epistemology,” the writing in the anthology is the kind of work driven by the writer’s desire to radically present, uncovering what she knows and does not know, as well as critically addressing the future.

7. [*Junk*](#) by Tommy Pico (Tin House)



The third book in Tommy Pico's Teebz trilogy, *Junk* is a breakup poem in couplets: ice floe and hot lava, a tribute to Janet Jackson and nacho cheese. In the static that follows the loss of a job or an apartment or a boyfriend, what can you grab onto for orientation? The narrator wonders what happens to the sense of self when the illusion of security has been stripped away. And for an indigenous person, how do these lost markers of identity echo larger cultural losses and erasures in a changing political landscape? In part taking its cue from A.R. Ammons's *Garbage*, Teebz names this liminal space "Junk," in the sense that a junk shop is full of old things waiting for their next use; different items that collectively become indistinct. But can there be a comfort outside the anxiety of utility? An appreciation of "being" for the sake of being? And will there be Chili Cheese Fritos?

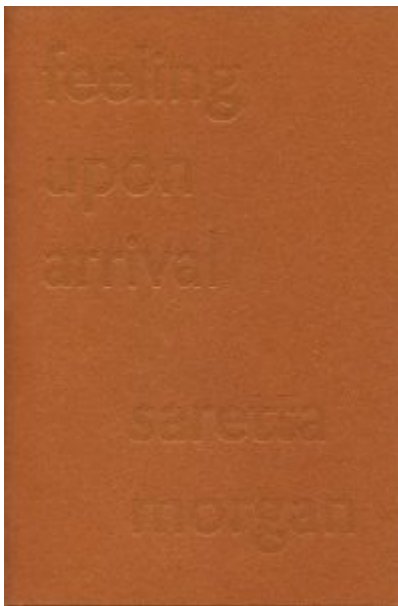
8. [*Not Here*](#) by Hieu Minh Nguyen (Coffee House Press)



Being queer and Asian American; families we are born into and ones we chose; nostalgia, trauma and history—all dissected

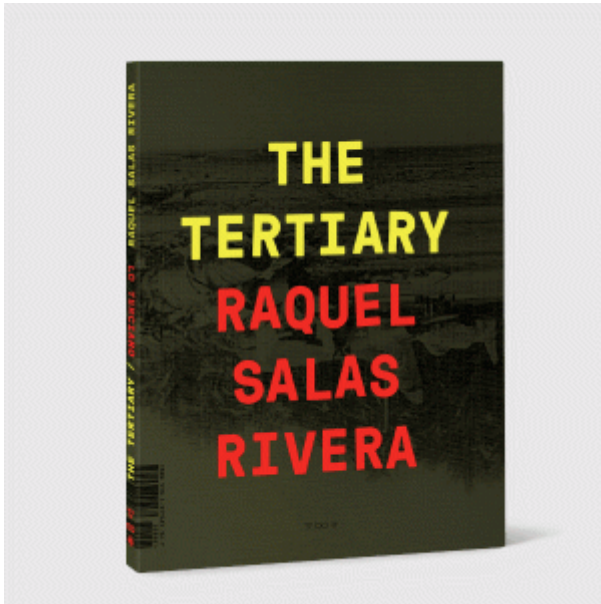
fearlessly. Not Here is a flight plan for escape and a map for navigating home; a queer Vietnamese American body in confrontation with whiteness, trauma, family, and nostalgia; and a big beating heart of a book. Nguyen's poems ache with loneliness and desire and the giddy terrors of allowing yourself to hope for love, and revel in moments of connection achieved.

9. [Feeling Upon Arrival](#) by Saretta Morgan (Ugly Duckling Presse)



The precision of language in *Feeling Upon Arrival* seems to feint, only to land the blow elsewhere. In this text, the language of theory takes on the character of a metaphysics—I think that's what the feint is about. It is a good and hungry almost finding itself in the speaker's body. —Douglas Kearney

10. [Lo Terciario / The Tertiary](#) by Raquel Salas Rivera (Timeless Infinite Light)



Written in response the PROMESA bill (Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act) bill, *lo terciario/the tertiary* offers a decolonial queer critique and reconsideration of Marx. The book's titles come from Pedro Scaron's, *El Capital*, the 1976 translation of Karl Marx's classic. Published by Siglo Veintiuno Editores, this translation was commonly used by the Puerto Rican left as part of political formation programs. *Lo terciario/the tertiary* places this text in relation to the Puerto Rican debt crisis, forcing readers to reconsider old questions when facing colonialism's newest horrors.

11. [Be With](#) by Forrest Gander (New Directions)



Drawing from his experience as a translator, Forrest Gander includes in the first, powerfully elegiac section a version of a poem by the Spanish mystical poet St. John of the Cross. He continues with a long

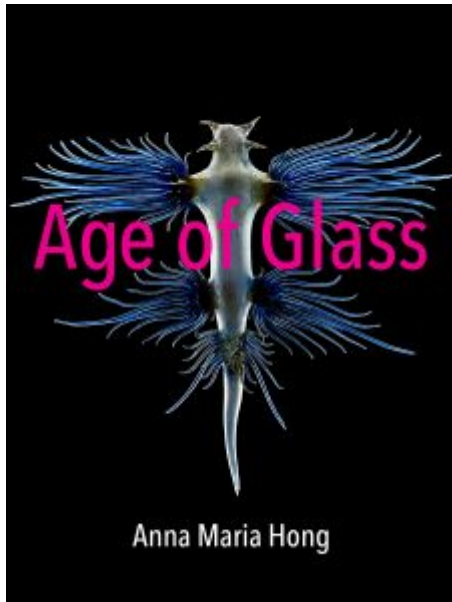
multilingual poem examining the syncretic geological and cultural history of the U.S. border with Mexico. The poems of the third section—a moving transcription of Gander’s efforts to address his mother dying of Alzheimer’s—rise from the page like hymns, transforming slowly from reverence to revelation. Gander has been called one of our most formally restless poets, and these new poems express a characteristically tensile energy and, as one critic noted, “the most eclectic diction since Hart Crane.”

12. [Outside of the Body There is Something Like Hope](#) by Joshua Jennifer Espinoza (Big Lucks)



In *Outside Of The Body There Is Something Like Hope*, Joshua Jennifer Espinoza reclaims a cloudy, dream-like girlhood and simultaneously reckons with the dense trauma of being trans in a world so often interested in literally trying to kill her. Espinoza invokes both the lightness and heaviness of living, loving, struggling, and thriving within a trans body and outside it: she brings the celestial plane down to our gritty Earth and we are better for it. A narrative of growing pains & a triumphant call-to-arms for the liberation of all bodies, this tiny book allows us to breathe this air beyond the clouds and * ultimately requires us to return anew & changing & filled with (something like) hope.

13. [Age of Glass](#) by Anna Maria Hong (CSU Poetry Center)



The sonnet, that most venerable of verse forms, can never go out of fashion for long, because there's always someone out there revitalizing it. One such someone is Anna Maria Hong, whose terrific book, AGE OF GLASS, consists almost exclusively of sonnets that revel in the intricacies of their artifice. Anna Maria Hong will build a poem on variants of a rhyme (misogynist, grist, zest, testy, beast), exulting in the surprises in store when you let the sounds of the words direct you to their meanings: 'Like a moron one persists, like a priest / or catechist chanting at a bris.' But her verbal brilliance is not all this poet offers. She gives us life in its raw vitality. We see through AGE OF GLASS darkly but accurately. Sometimes she makes us laugh: 'The fuck you in me crosses the street to / avert the fuck you in you.' Fierce intelligence is always at work, whether the subject is a figure of myth or fable (such as Cassandra, Pandora, Circe, and Medea) or the 'ages' of woman and man. —David Lehman

14. [*Surge*](#) by Etel Adnan (Nightboat Books)

SURGE

Etel Adnan

Nightboat

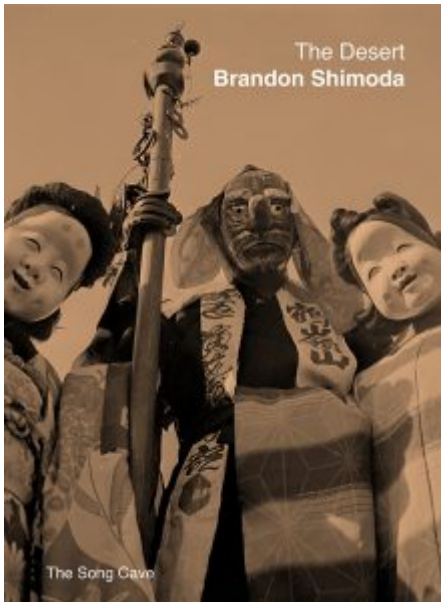
A new volume of aphoristic prose and philosophical poetry from Etel Adnan, whose work The New York Times recently described as the “meditative heir to Nietzsche’s aphorisms, Rilke’s *Book of Hours* and the verses of Sufi mysticism.” She writes: “Reality is messianic/ apocalyptic/ my soul is my terror.”

15. [*Soap for the Dogs*](#) by Stacey Tran (Gramma Poetry)



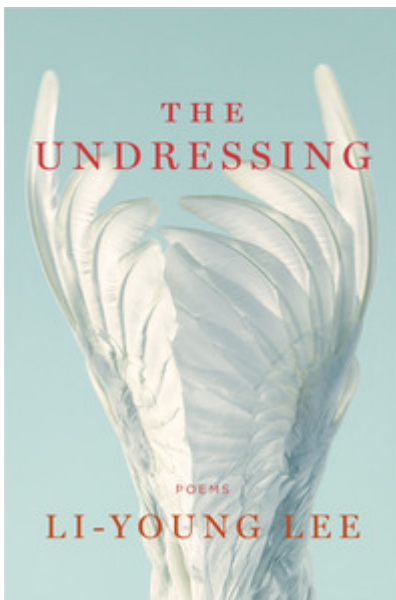
Bilingually laced and sensually pulled from the taut form of her enigmatic being, Stacey Tran's SOAP FOR THE DOGS is a refreshing gastronomic architecture made of razor-sharp, ancestral ingredients, chic aphoristic haikus, and narratively charged self-contained imperial, experimental lines of terse, stark prose. It's minimal without sacrificing depth and verve. It's energetic and lush without resorting to prolixity. It has the ability to expand, surprise, and transform itself after your eyes and hearts leave the page. Stacey Tran's first poetry collection is acutely warm, witty, inventive, piercing, and elegantly and acutely designed to congeal postmodernity with tradition, poetry with history, family with food while pulling you into the intimate, liminal, tight, flexible, and unexpected spaces of her brilliant imagination. –Vi Khi Nao

16. [*The Desert*](#) by Brandon Shimoda (The Song Cave)



Brandon Shimoda's *THE DESERT*, a sequel to his William Carlos Williams Award-winning book *EVENING ORACLE*, guides us deep into, and then back out of, a rich yet desolate North American landscape. Divided into seven sections—featuring poems, letters, diary entries, and photographs—the desert's multiplicity emerges through a ranging exploration of its Japanese American incarceration sites, homeless population, flora and fauna, violence, beauty, and how they combine to reflect this poet's contemporary view of history. Written over three years in the deserts of Arizona, the poet introduces us to the souls of the living and dead, their shadows still residing over the landscape and its mythology.

17. [*The Undressing*](#) by Li-Young Lee (W. W. Norton)



The Undressing is a tonic for spiritual anemia; it attempts to uncover things hidden since the dawn of the world. Short of achieving that end, these mysterious, unassuming poems investigate the human violence and dispossession increasingly prevalent around the world, as well as the horrors the poet grew up with as a child of refugees. Lee draws from disparate sources, including the Old Testament, the Dao De Jing, and the music of the Wu Tang Clan. While the ostensive subjects of these layered,

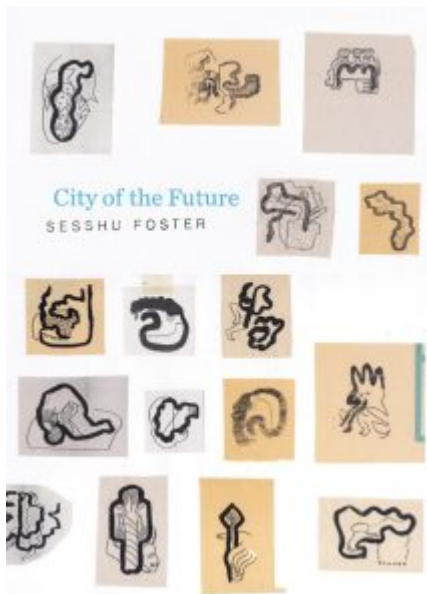
impassioned poems are wide-ranging, their driving engine is a burning need to understand our collective human mission.

18. [*Brown*](#) by Kevin Young (Knopf)



Divided into “Home Recordings” and “Field Recordings,” *Brown* speaks to the way personal experience is shaped by culture, while culture is forever affected by the personal, recalling a black Kansas boyhood to comment on our times. From “History”—a song of Kansas high-school fixture Mr. W., who gave his students “the Sixties / minus Malcolm X, or Watts, / barely a march on Washington”—to “Money Road,” a sobering pilgrimage to the site of Emmett Till’s lynching, the poems engage place and the past and their intertwined power.

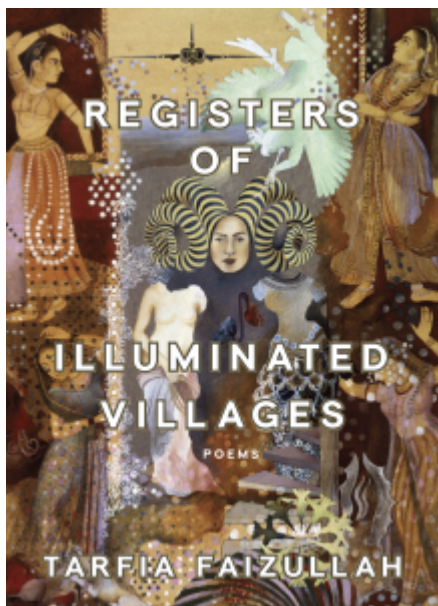
19. [*City of the Future*](#) by Sesshu Foster (Kaya Press)



These poems are, in the poet’s words: “Postcards written with ocotillo and yucca. Gentrification of your face inside your

sleep. Privatization of identity, corners, and intimations. Wars on the nerve, colors, breathing. Postcard poems of early and late notes, mucilage, American loneliness. Postcard poems of slopes, films of dust and crows. Incarceration nation 'Wish You Were Here' postcards 35 cents emerge from gentrified pants. You can't live like this. Postcards sent into the future. You can't live here now; you must live in the future, in the City of the Future."

**20. [Registers of Illuminated Villages](#) by Tarfia Faizullah
(Graywolf Press)**



Registers of Illuminated Villages is Tarfia Faizullah's highly anticipated second collection, following her award-winning debut, *Seam*. Faizullah's new work extends and transforms her powerful accounts of violence, war, and loss into poems of many forms and voices—elegies, outcries, self-portraits, and larger-scale confrontations with discrimination, family, and memory. One poem steps down the page like a Slinky; another poem responds to makeup homework completed in the summer of a childhood accident; other poems punctuate the collection with dark meditations on dissociation, discipline, defiance, and destiny; and the near-title poem, "Register of Eliminated Villages," suggests illuminated texts, one a Qur'an in which the speaker's name might be found, and the other a register of 397 villages destroyed in northern Iraq. Faizullah is an essential new poet, whose work only grows more urgent, beautiful, and—even in its unsparing brutality—full of love.

**21. [New Poems of Native Nations](#) Edited by Heid E. Erdich
(Graywolf Press)**

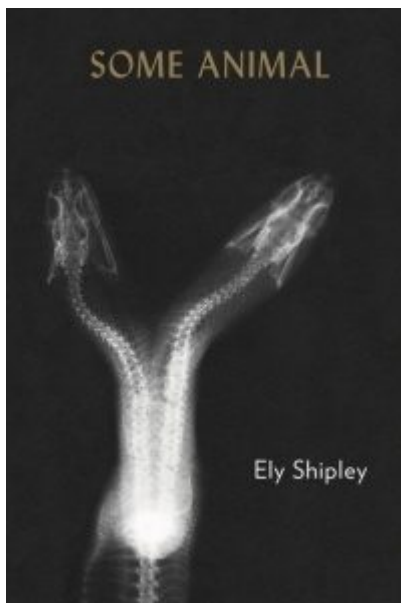


NEW
POETS OF
NATIVE NATIONS

EDITED BY HEID E. ERDRICH

New Poets of Native Nations gathers poets of diverse ages, styles, languages, and tribal affiliations to present the extraordinary range and power of new Native poetry. Editor Heid E. Erdrich has selected twenty-one poets whose first books were published after the year 2000 to highlight the exciting works of poets coming up after Joy Harjo and Sherman Alexie. Collected here are poems of great breadth—long narratives, political outcries, experimental works, and traditional lyrics—and the result is an essential anthology of some of the best poets writing now.

22. [*Some Animal*](#) by Ely Shipley (Nightboat Books)



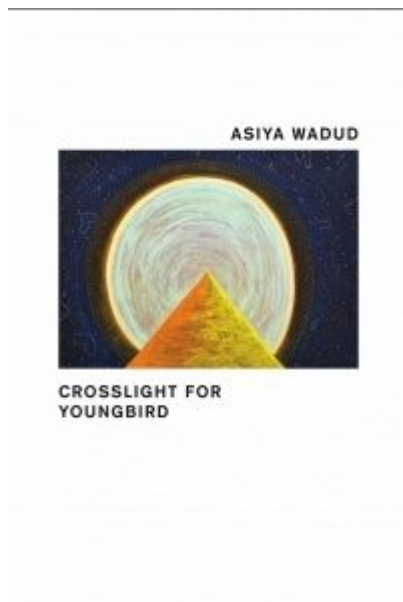
This remarkable, brilliant and brave poetry by Ely Shipley is an emblem for our time when US-lawmakers are making LGBTQ bodies outlaw in many states, their Christian extremism telling an entire generation they are subhuman. Float out of body with these poems then come hurtling down to land on our feet together and demand safety, equity, and a place at the table for all people. I love

23. [Autobiography of Death](#) by Kim Hyesoon, Translated by Don Mee Choi (New Directions)



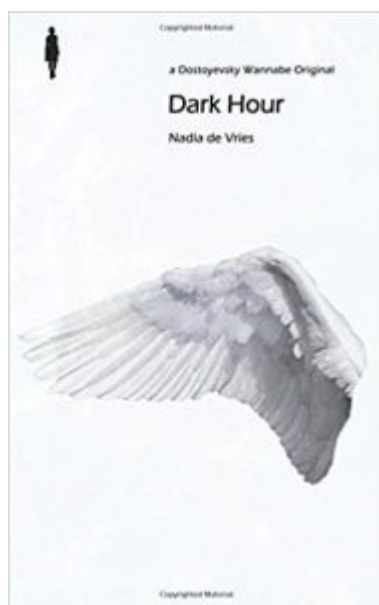
The title section of Kim Hyesoon's powerful new book, *Autobiography of Death*, consists of forty-nine poems, each poem representing a single day during which the spirit roams after death before it enters the cycle of reincarnation. The poems not only give voice to those who met unjust deaths during Korea's violent contemporary history, but also unveil what Kim calls "the structure of death, that we remain living in." *Autobiography of Death*, Kim's most compelling work to date, at once reenacts trauma and narrates death—how we die and how we survive within this cyclical structure. In this sea of mirrors, the plural "you" speaks as a body of multitudes that has been beaten, bombed, and buried many times over by history. The volume concludes on the other side of the mirror with "Face of Rhythm," a poem about individual pain, illness, and meditation.

24. [Crosslight for Youngbird](#) by Asiya Wadud (Nightboat Books)



This strong and sensitive book, *Crosslight for Youngbird*, by Asiya Wadud is crafted, timely, caring. Now, when we may feel overwhelmed with the litany of painful stories about our most vulnerable in the world everyday, Asiya's poems offer us a way in. This heartfelt work presents a more profound understanding of the harmed, resilient, resigned. Wadud's sparse, immersive language puts questions into high relief: "What would we do if we found ourselves lost?", "What would we do if we found ourselves? –TRACIE MORRIS

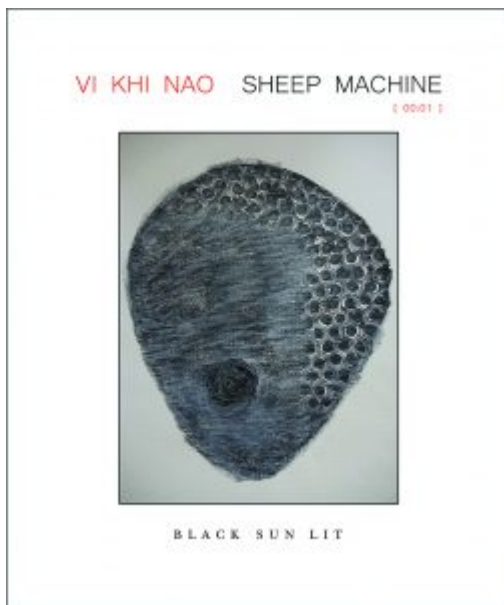
25. [*Dark Hour*](#) by Nadia de Vries (Dostoyevsky Wannabe)



Dark Hour collects forty-five epigrammatical, elusive poems; while often pointed, pithy and direct, the voice speaks from a kind of

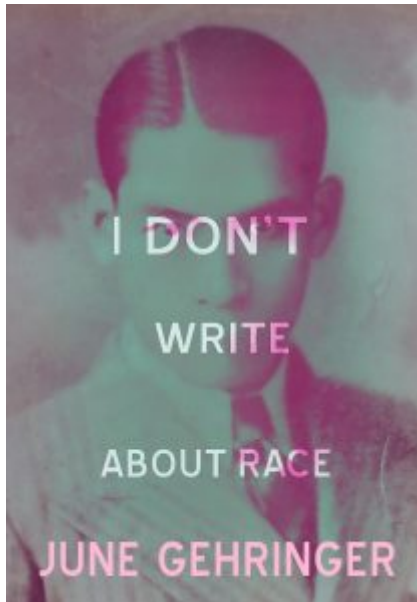
torpor. It's solitary, bereft, ingrown, prone to gothic moments (angels and vampires flit past the curtains) – as if a childhood fever was prolonged into adolescence, when desire made itself available through movie tropes. In this convalescent atmosphere, an exterior perspective is imagined, and out of her perceived weakness, the speaker manufactures an image of her “cuteness.” –Sam Riviere, The Poetry Review

26. [Sheep Machine](#) by Vi Khi Nao (Black Sun Lit)



SHEEP MACHINE is a textual inscape, a poetically painted nonfictional pasture where mechanical violence and visceral fear coalesce into a kind of science prosody, a post-human panorama whose beauty lies in the ruins of reality it depicts. Influenced by Leslie Thornton's film of sheep feeding in a field as a conveyor belt of cable cars ascend and return from a mountain in the Swiss Alps, Vi Khi Nao takes perception into tumultuous terrains, into a pastoral-celestial void in which temporality is transcended, progress is a bourgeois invention, and god is a liability for our life spent in hunger and grazing. Vi Khi Nao's SHEEP MACHINE is grace said at the ontological last supper.

27. [I don't write about race](#) by June Gehringer (Civil Coping Mechanisms/The Accomplices)



I don't write about race is a poetic exploration of identity, as told through apologies, anecdotes, and admonitions. An autofictional cosmogony of a girl who has been alive too long, this collection of poems represents both the absolute culmination and the ultimate failure of the author's lifelong search for identity. As its speaker becomes ever more estranged from conventional sources and modes of meaning and kinship, delving from relationship to bar, bar to relationship, from one city, partner, and job to the next, juggling relationship between families both biological and chosen, she becomes intimately acquainted with alienation. *I don't write about race* engages ever more intimately with one of the fundamental questions of literature: what do you do when you wake up again, alone, and somehow still yourself?

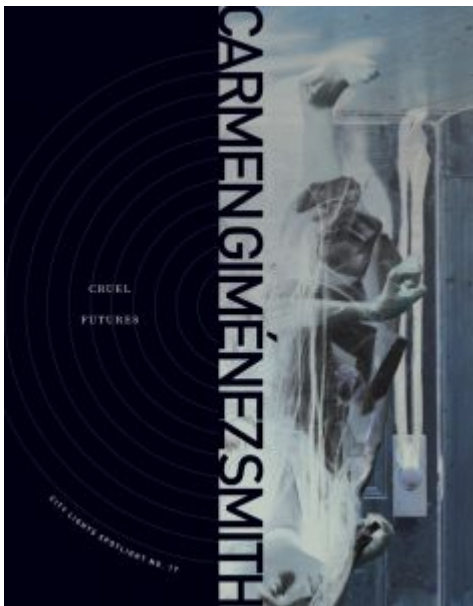
28. [Inside Song](#) by Steve Dickison (Omnidawn)



Inside Song is what Jean Toomer might have written after *Cane* had he lived long enough to be alive "today," after, say, 1964, 2009,

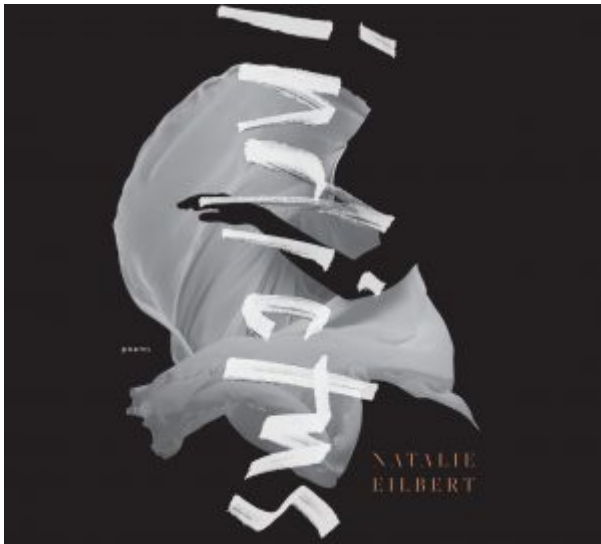
Michael Brown, after— in brief—impossibility, a cognate—not
antonym—of “liberation.” Titled with sass (“ is poem is called Zora
Neale Hurston because.”), directed by a historical consciousness
nimble enough to glide among the iterations of what Amiri Baraka
once called the blues impulse (from jazz to r&b and “after”) and
confounding master and slave narratives of evolution or decline,
Inside Song orients itself toward the horizon that is black music,
that prospect of, and model for, a freedom which beckons and warns:
“Study the bee. Study the baited bird.” —Tyrone Williams

29. [Cruel Futures](#) by Carmen Giménez Smith (City Lights)



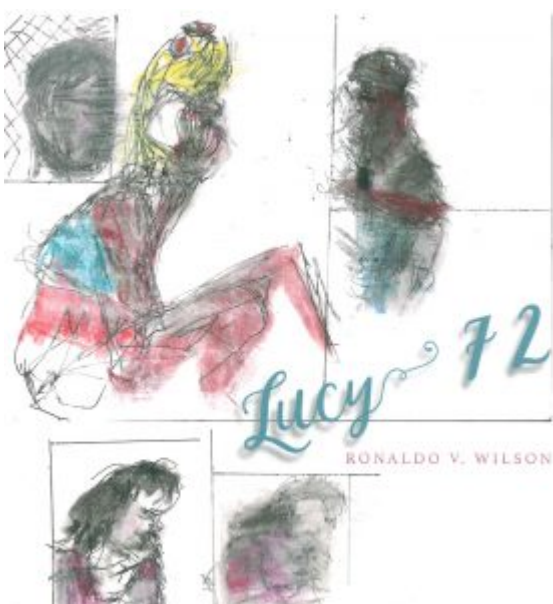
Cruel Futures is a witchy confessional and wildly imagistic volume that examines subjects as divergent as Alzheimers, Medusa, mumblecore, and mental illness in sharp-witted, taut poems dense with song. Chronicling life on an endangered planet, in a country on the precipice of profound change compelled by a media machine that produces our realities, the book is a high-energy analysis of popular culture, as well as an exploration of the many social roles that women occupy as mother, daughter, lover, and the resulting struggle to maintain personhood—all in a late capitalist America.

30. [Indictus](#) by Natalie Eilbert (Noemi Press)



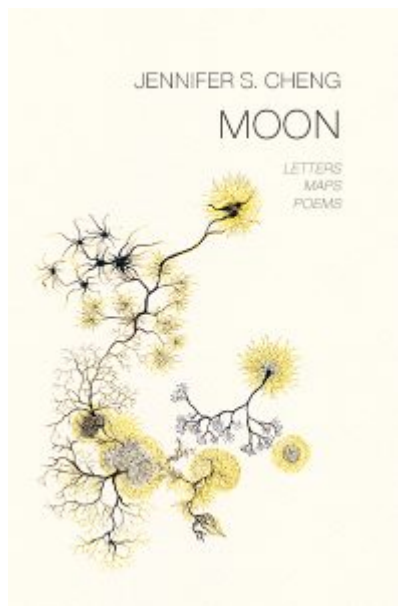
Natalie Eilbert's *Indictus* summons what cannot be said while finding a way to articulate, with ferocity and exuberance and a clear and brutal vision, the violence of misogynistic systems and cultures and the ways in which they devour and destroy their inhabitants. Its not just that this book doesn't waste words. It goes further than that. Each sound, line, breath is charged with an energy that is explosive. *Indictus* lays all its cards on the table so there are no doubts about just how high the stakes here are: "I didn't mean to assemble my whole career on lies, so now I blast holes in the men." Yet in this world of broken bodies, Eilbert's tenacity, her sheer drive to get to the end of a thought, to get the words onto the page, conveys a demand: to be honest, to resist, to live. –Daniel Borzutzky

31. [Lucy 72](#) by Ronaldo V Wilson and LUCY (1913 Press)



Ronaldo V. Wilson explodes all over the mouth of whiteness in LUCY 72 like Césaire stroking the Latin root 'niger,' courting its deranged figuration. With satire, grace, deep lyric reflection—all inside of the persistent strangulation of a rigorous couplet—the radiant poems in LUCY 72 are a working out and a working on this thing we call 'race.' In these poems, whiteness is abstracted away from color and made manifest in gesture, a relaxed state, a non-awareness, and certain preferences and unperceived privileges. Wilson strips down the symbolic figure, Lucy, exposing her blind and deaf obsession with her own whiteness—'One of my favorite words is alabaster'—and cranks our eyes toward these brutal cultural tropes: there is 'a black' and then there is the effortless abstraction of whiteness; blackness is opaque; whiteness is transparent; blackness, hard object, whiteness, effervescence. LUCY 72 is a haunting, gorgeously written, and absolutely necessary book for our times. When Lucy speaks, we should all listen closely.
—Dawn Lundy Martin

32. [Moon: Letters, Maps, Poems](#) by Jennifer S Cheng (Tarpaulin Sky)



Mixing fable and fact, extraordinary and ordinary, Jennifer S. Cheng's hybrid collection, *Moon: Letters, Maps, Poems*, draws on various Chinese mythologies about women, particularly that of Chang'E (the Lady in the Moon), uncovering the shadow stories of our myths – with the belief that there is always an underbelly. *Moon* explores bewilderment and shelter, destruction and construction, unthreading as it rethreads, shedding as it collects.

33. [Eye Level](#) by Jenny Xie (Graywolf Press)



EYE LEVEL

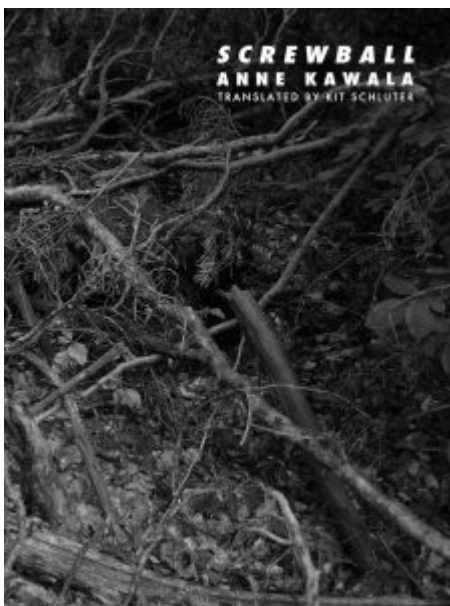
POEMS

JENNY XIE

WINNER OF THE WALT WHITMAN AWARD
OF THE ACADEMY OF AMERICAN POETS

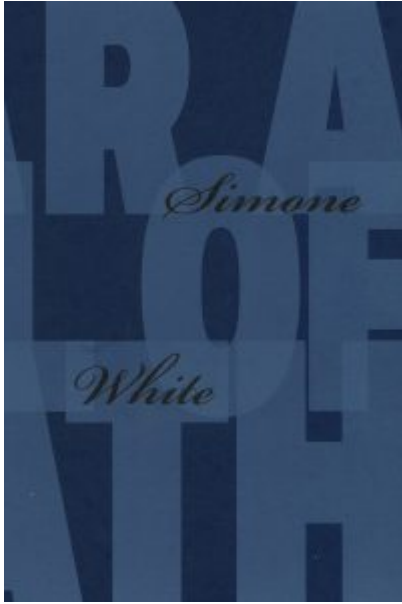
Jenny Xie's award-winning debut, *Eye Level*, takes us far and near, to Phnom Penh, Corfu, Hanoi, New York, and elsewhere, as we travel closer and closer to the acutely felt solitude that centers this searching, moving collection. Animated by a restless inner questioning, these poems meditate on the forces that moor the self and set it in motion, from immigration to travel to estranging losses and departures. The sensual worlds here—colors, smells, tastes, and changing landscapes—bring to life questions about the self as seer and the self as seen.

34. [Screwball](#) by Anne Kawala, Translated by Kit Schluter (Canarium Books)



An experimental epic poem or novel, *SCREWBALL* (the indispensable deficit) follows a huntress-gatheress from home in the icy north on a journey to the other side of the world. Along the way it explores questions of aesthetics, gender, language, and love.

35. [Dear Angel of Death](#) by Simone White (Ugly Ducking Presse)



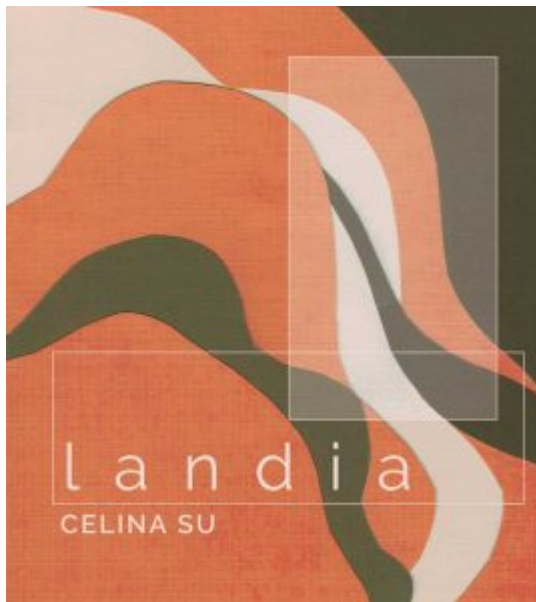
Half poems, half prose, *Dear Angel of Death* braids intimate and public thinking about forms of togetherness. Is one woman a mother, a person in an artworld, a “black”? What imaginary and real spirits are her guides? The title essay proposes disinvestment in the idea of the Music as the highest form of what blackness “is” and includes many forms: philosophical divergence on the problem of folds for black life, a close reading of Nathaniel Mackey’s neverending novel *From a Broken Bottle Traces of Perfume Still Emanate*, and an impassioned defense-cum-dismissal of contemporary hip hop’s convergence with capitalism

36. [Nepantla: An Anthology Dedicated to Queer Poets of Color](#)
Edited by Christopher Soto (Nightboat Books)



The first major literary anthology for queer poets of color in the United States: In 2014, Christopher Soto and Lambda Literary Foundation founded the online journal *Nepantla*, with the mission to nurture, celebrate, and preserve diversity within the queer poetry community, including contributions as diverse in style and form, as the experiences of QPOC in the United States. Now, *Nepantla* will appear for the first time in print as a survey of poetry by queer poets of color throughout U.S. history, including literary legends such as Audre Lorde, James Baldwin, June Jordan, Ai, and Pat Parker alongside contemporaries such as Natalie Diaz, Ocean Vuong, Danez Smith, Joshua Jennifer Espinoza, Robin Coste Lewis, Joy Harjo, Richard Blanco, Erika L. Sánchez, Jericho Brown, Carl Phillips, Tommy Pico, Eduardo C. Corral, Chen Chen, and more!

37. [Landia](#) by Celina Su (Belladonna)



Landia excavates literal and figurative borderlands—redrawn boundaries, architectural palimpsests, underground transport systems—to reckon with the historical and cultural forces that shape our cities and our intimate lives. The book serves as a meditation on imagined and real and hoped-for migrations—of course, Su’s own history permeates, but these poems also draw upon more than a decade of fieldwork, collaborative projects, and long-term relationships with specific immigrant communities and social justice organizations in southeast Asia, Latin America, and throughout the United States. Echoing tensions in social research, *Landia* is also a reflexive project, questioning documentation as intervention. “A map is not the territory, / but it becomes so over time.” Fueled by fragmentation, the poems act as plaintive pleas to elude and resist the violent institutions that govern us, to trace the contours of new imaginaries and border crossings.

38. [*I Think I'm Ready to See Frank Ocean*](#) by Shayla Lawson
(Saturnalia Books)



Each poem of I THINK I'M READY TO MEET FRANK OCEAN riffs on a Frank Ocean song, paying homage to the man but also investigating oceans, The Ocean, and the similarity between heartbreak and break beats by blending Frank Ocean's musical catalog with personal narrative and social critique. I THINK I'M READY TO MEET FRANK OCEAN builds upon historicized representations of Ocean's career in ekphrasis, carefully examining the intent of each composition as a metaphoric parallel to Black American legibility.

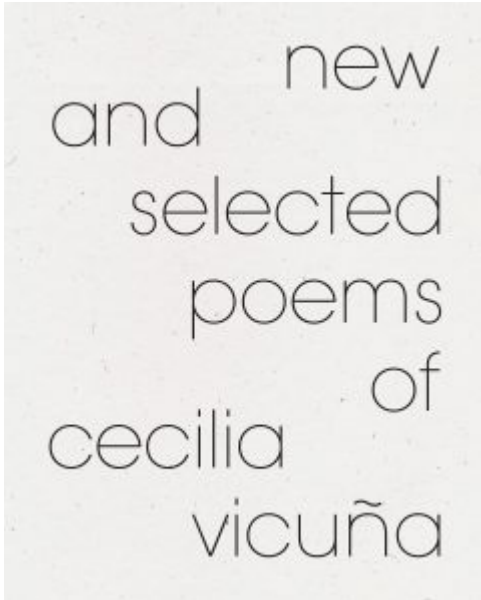
39. [*Don't Let Them See Me Like This*](#) by Jasmine Gibson (Nightboat Books)



In *Don't Let Them See Me Like This*, Jasmine Gibson explores myriad intersectional identities in relation to The State, disease, love, sex, failure, and triumph. Speaking to those who feel disillusioned by both radical and banal spaces and inspired/informed by moments of political

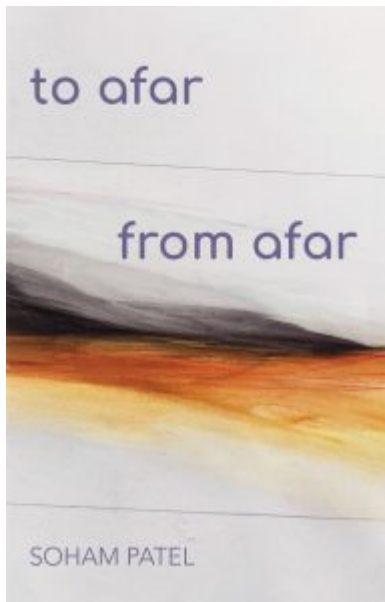
crisis: Hurricane Katrina, The Jena Six, the extrajudicial executions of Black people, and the periods of insurgency that erupted in response, this book acts as a synthesis of political life and poetic form.

40. [New and Selected Poems of Cecilia Vicuña](#) by Cecilia Vicuña, Edited by Rosa Alcalá (Kelsey Street Press)



NEW AND SELECTED POEMS OF CECILIA VICUÑA is a telling of old cultures, modern nation states and lives in exile. Rodrigo Toscano calls Vicuña's poetry "the outer out, beyond nation states, passed 'inter state' affairs, in other words, close in, as close as we get to our fair planet's sources, and to each other." In this bilingual collection, Vicuña and her translator, Rosa Alcalá, are artist witnesses to a natural world that is a storehouse of sacred words, seeds, threads and songs. Present everywhere, they are sources for a rebalancing in human relationships and for new forms of grace and healing. In Vicuña's vision, art is life and intimacy with it is transformative.

41. [to afar from afar](#) by Soham Patel (Writ Large Press/The Accomplices)



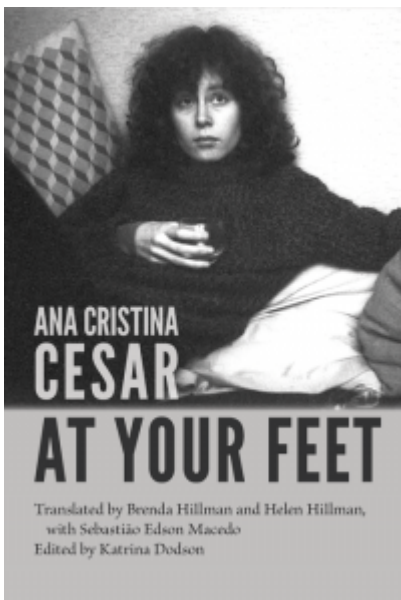
to afar from afar are deft poems that are full of fact, tumult, and the wisdom of the sharp-eyed narrator. Poems which investigate how “Songs try/ To put us to sleep/ But we were never tired”...with their emphatic human turn to the cousin-brothers, cousin-sisters, and the familial that sleep nearby to the narrator, to the speaker, and who “stretch and sweat and swat the air by your ears.” These poems linger by your ears and your squints. They are at first modest and then spit truths. They decipher how “landscapes dwell here in permanent recall.” They abject and object. I am taken by Patel’s cadence as its own “acoustic creature” and am haunted by the bodies, figures, violence and speech that push for intensity through the pronouns and their “dictator’s face.” These are tremendous dream-poems that attend to tradition, cultural idioms, and a sorting through of centuries of superstition and disillusionment. –Prageeta Sharma, author of Undergloom

42. [When the Bird is Not a Human](#) by HR Hegnauer (Subito Press)



WHEN THE BIRD IS NOT A HUMAN floats the reader through domestic structures. Here, stillness ruptures the domestic hum. Here, rooms are animated principles haunted by dreams and revisitations. When every room in the house leads to a road inside a cloud under a lake, we wake in the double-take as we walk through the doorway again. What seems inanimate, isn't.

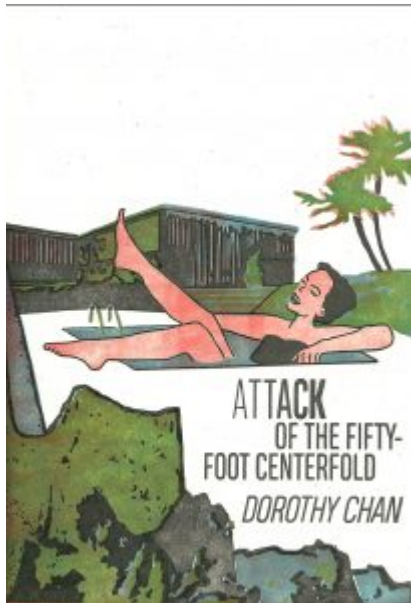
43. [*At Your Feet*](#) by Ana Cristina Cesar, Edited by Katrina Dodson, Translated by Brenda Hillman & Helen Hillman w/ Sebastião Edson Macedo (Parlor Press)



Ana Cristina Cesar (1952-1983) has posthumously become one of Brazil's best known avant-garde poets. After her suicide in 1983, her innovative, mythic, and dreamlike poetry has greatly influenced subsequent generations of writers. *At Your Feet* was originally published as a poetic sequence and later became part of a longer hybrid work— sometimes prose, sometimes verse—documenting the life and mind of a forcefully active literary woman. Cesar, who also worked internationally as a journalist and translator, often found inspiration in the writings of other poets, among them Emily

Dickinson, Armando Freitas Filho, and Gertrude Stein. Her innovative writing has been featured in Sun and Moon's classic anthology *Nothing the Sun Could Not Explain—20 Contemporary Brazilian Poets* (2000). Poet Brenda Hillman and her mother Helen Hillman (a native speaker of Portuguese) worked with Brazilian poet Sebastião Edson Macedo and translator/editor Katrina Dodson to render as faithfully as possible the intricately layered poems of this legendary writer. *At Your Feet* includes both the English translation and original Portuguese.

44. [Attack of the Fifty-Foot Centerfold](#) by Dorothy Chan (Spork Press)



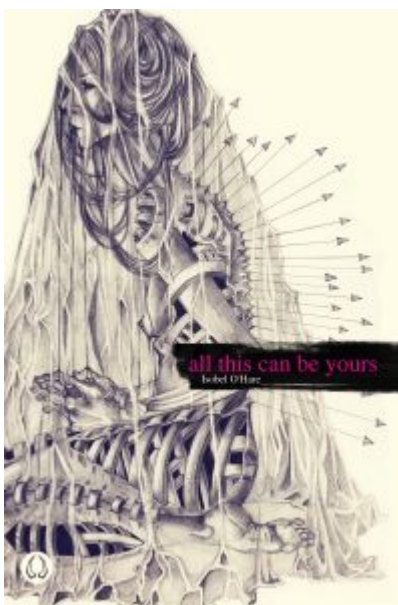
These poems are steam punk on steroids. They're plutoniumpowered and neon-lit. These poems describe the world as it should be, as we want it to be, as we fear it will be, as it is every morning between 3:00 and 5:00 when our dreams are invaded by Godzilla, Tarzan, Wonder Woman, King Kong, Sinatra. If *ATTACK OF THE FIFTY-FOOT CENTERFOLD* were a holiday, it'd be Hallowe'en for grown-ups, Christmas for space aliens, and the Fourth of July for everybody, because each of these poems is a little present, and like the best presents, they don't just please us—they set us free.

45. [For an Ineffable Metrics of the Desert](#) by Mostafa Nissabouri, Edited by Guy Bennett, Translated by Guy Bennett, Pierre Joris, Addie Leak and Teresa Villa-Ignacio (Otis Books/Seismicity Editions)



This bilingual edition of the selected poems of Mostafa Nissabouri brings together writings from throughout his career, from early texts that initially appeared in *Souffles* in the mid-1960s to selections from a current, unfinished manuscript—*Divan de la mer obscure* [*Dark Sea Divan*—still unpublished in the original French. With the exception of a translation of *Approche du désertique* [*Approach to the Desert Space*] by Guy Bennett, until now the only complete work of Nissabouri’s available in English, the trade editions of all of his books are out of print and difficult to come by. The present volume seeks to remedy this lack, making available to francophone and anglophone readers more than half of Nissabouri’s published poetry. It concludes with a lengthy interview with the poet.

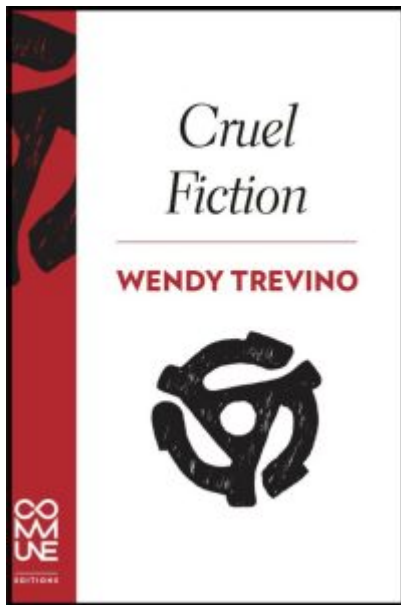
46. [*All This Could Be Yours*](#) by Isobel O’Hare (University of Hell Press)



Through *all this can be yours*, poet Isobel O’Hare reveals the truth behind apology statements made by powerful men—in effect reversing what these men have done to their victims. By shrinking abusers and their fraught stories of what did or didn’t happen, what they did or didn’t

mean, see, expect, or believe, O'Hare, equipped with intention and a Sharpie, opens the wider conversation of necessary systemic change. Poet Jody Gladding: "Isobel O'Hare calls this remarkable project erasure, but I would call it redaction. Only it subverts that political tool by blacking out in these testimonies all that is—finally—anodyne, to expose the most sensitive information, or rather, to let the abusers expose themselves. Brilliant! We need such radical poetic methods to change the discourse around sexual abuse. And we need poets like Isobel O'Hare. *all this can be yours* slyly fulfills its promise."

47. [Cruel Fiction](#) by Wendy Trevino (Commune Editions)



Cruel Fiction brings together new material with celebrated work published here for the first time in book form, including the provocative and charged "Brazilian Is Not a Race," a sonnet sequence meditating on race, nation, and history seen from the author's native Rio Grande Valley. This is a spectacular debut trying to puzzle through the insurgencies, context, and kinesis of our present, from the workplace to the pop charts but most of all to the politics of struggle.

48. [Not My White Savior](#) by Julayne Lee (Rare Bird Books)



Not My White Savior is a memoir in poems, exploring what it is to be a transracial and inter-country adoptee, and what it means to grow up being constantly told how better your life is because you were rescued from your country of origin. Following Julayne Lee from Korea to Minnesota and finally to Los Angeles, *Not My White Savior* asks what does “better” mean? In which ways was the journey she went on better than what she would have otherwise experienced?

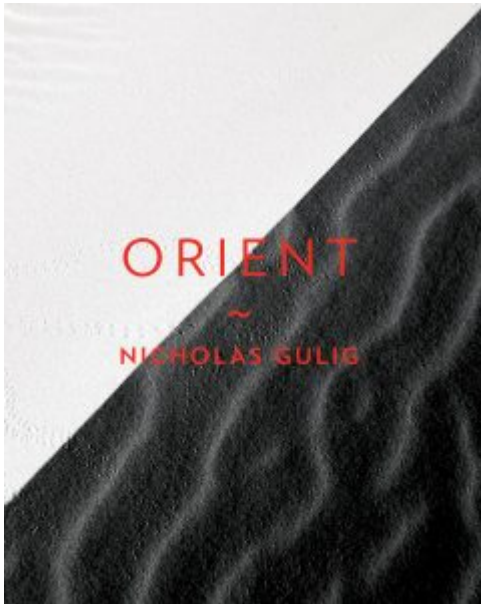
49. [Attendance](#) by Rocío Carlos and Rachel McLeod Kaminer (The Operating System)



Reading ATTENDANCE trains your attention on plants and animals until you can't stop noticing them. It's a way of moving through the natural world—which turns out to include the whole world. An almanac, a logbook, a devotional, a witness statement, poetry. A documentary not in the sense of capturing but in the sense of being a creature paying attention to the world we already live in. It's a hybrid text: One year of two people reaching their arms across styles and genres. At times notes, at times lists, or run-on sentences, or poems, or things that want to be poems, but always plants, and always animals. The words are offered up with no correction or

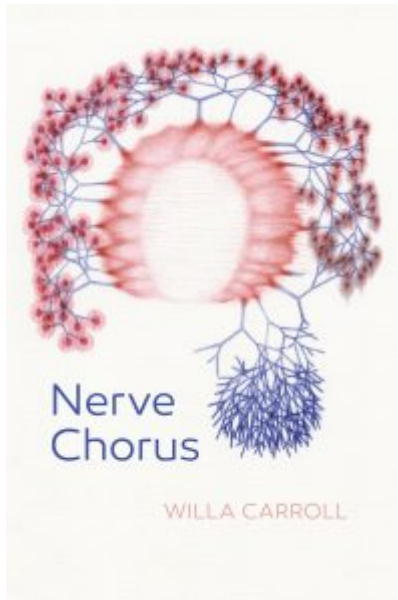
with the revision exposed. This is writing that includes where it comes from or writing that painfully doesn't become. We hold so many questions about love and attention and violence.

50. [*Orient*](#) by Nicholas Gulig (CSU Poetry Center)



Nicholas Gulig's riveting new collection *ORIENT* considers what it means to be a global citizen in the information age. These urgent, exciting poems ask us how we mediate the distance between the person at a computer watching the war on the news and the person who is in a war zone. How do we mediate language when one is writing about war that happens elsewhere but is intimately felt? The muscular sound and syntax of these poems jostle and pull us uneasily into its fragmented, tension-filled world. 'Language is a residue. / I cling,' states the speaker, and the words 'residue' and 'cling' are at once tender, hopeful, and tenuous. *ORIENT* is challenging, breathless, innovative, and stunning. This is a necessary work in a difficult time. —Hadara Bar-Nadav

51. [*Nerve Chorus*](#) by Willa Carroll (The Word Works)



Here is a miraculous poet made of music. She writes what the world needs to hear—what I needed to hear. She takes on our greatest mysteries and inheritances: love, desire, loss, family, activism, art, justice—and every poem changes the air we breathe. This debut reworks the mind as it breaks the heart with its beauty. To be fully alive, in the face of devastation, grief, and longing, a poet must make a song that could be eternal. Willa Carroll is fearless in the face of that challenge. Her music deserves to be sung everywhere—in the church of our earth, in the peace between lovers, in the halls of our learning, in the quiet places of illness and death and mourning. Hers is an art of perpetuity, and she is a genius whose words I hold my breath to hear more clearly. —Brenda Shaughnessy

52. [*The Length of this Gap*](#) by Kristen E. Nelson (Damaged Goods Press)



In *the length of this gap*, Kristen E. Nelson does the trembling work we so often try to avoid. Here she makes eye contact with the abyss – seeking to understand how we metamorphose in the moment of (and days, weeks, years following) inexplicable loss. This is a book of great courage, striving to put the world back together with long lists of what now is and can become. How thankful I am to have her and her work as my guide – she who dares to “wish to go back and walk through the wasps,” and returns full of “love and love with some commas. –tc tolbert

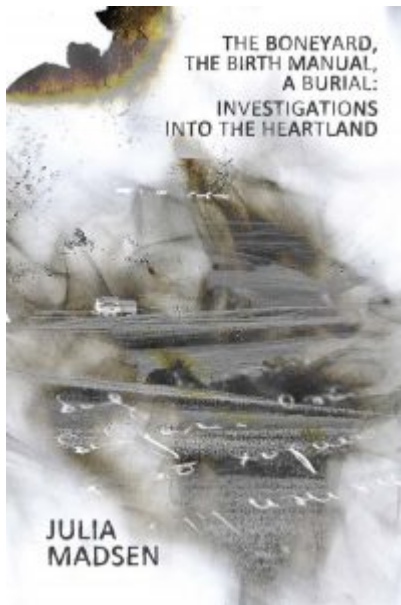
53. [*I Have Never Been Able to Sing*](#) by Alexis Almeida (Ugly Duckling Presse)



An experiment in creating an autobiography's negative, *I Have Never Been Able to Sing* draws inspiration from the discursive, non-linear sentences of Rosmarie Waldrop's *The Reproduction of*

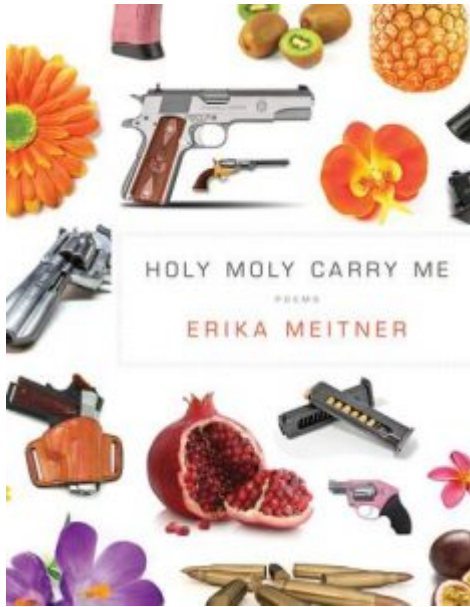
Profiles and Édouard Levé's *Autoportrait*, as well as from the intricate curvature of Leon Ferrari's heliographic drawings and Leslie Hewitt's multi-layered photographs. Unfolding through a series of discrete moments and overlapping fragments, the poem explores the unstable ground of dichotomy, the constant slippage between past and present, real and imagined selves.

54. [*The Boneyard, The Birth Manual, A Burial: Investigations into the Heartland*](#) by Julia Madsen (Trembling Pillow Press)



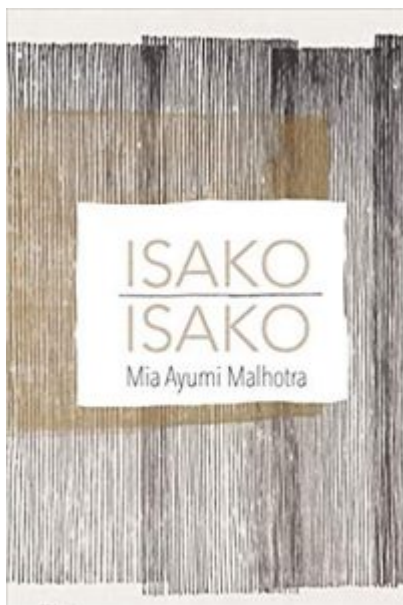
What connects capitalism and everything else? Meat. Julia Madsen's language sees the reasons and hears the reasons. Her language divines the traces remaining in the rust-blooded wake of the reasons. And also: I feel this book as a psalter. A meat psalter: a psalter for where machines, landscapes, and bodies conjunct. It is a powerful book and I am grateful it is in the world. – Selah Saterstrom, author of *Slab* and *Ideal Suggestions*

55. [*Holy Moly Carry Me*](#) by Erika Meitner (BOA Editions)



Erika Meitner's fifth collection plumbs human resilience and grit in the face of disaster, loss, and uncertainty. Her narrative poems take readers into the heart of southern Appalachia—its highways and strip malls, its fragility and danger—as the speaker wrestles with racial tensions, religious identity, gun violence, raising children, and the anxieties of life in the 21st century. With a refusal to settle for easy answers, Meitner's poems embrace life in an increasingly fractured society, and they never stop asking what it means to love our neighbor as ourselves.

56. [Isako Isako](#) by Mia Ayumi Malhotra (Alice James Books)



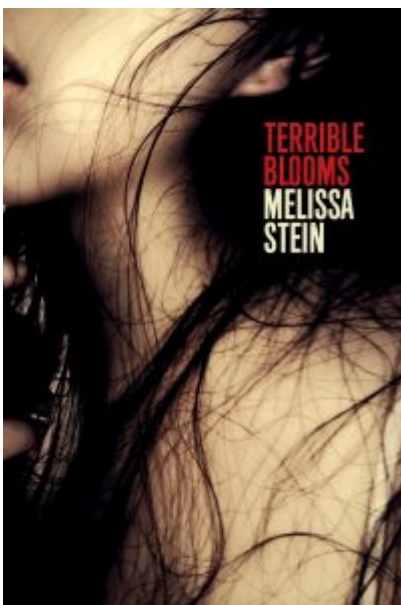
Isako Isako follows a single family lineage spanning four generations of female Japanese Americans to explore the chilling historical legacies of cultural trauma—internment, mass displacement and rampant racism—in the United States, and how it weaves together with current events.

57. [*The Book of Cord*](#) by Leona Chen (Tinfish Press)



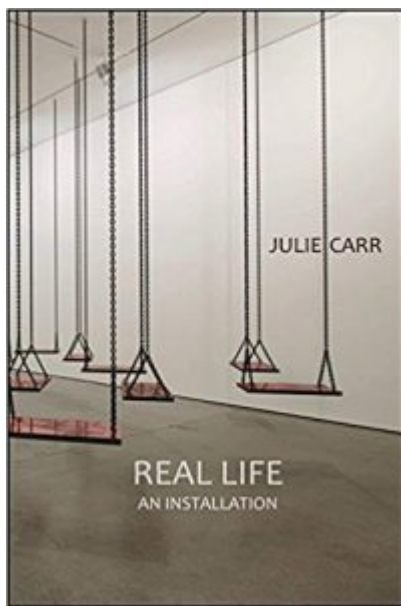
In her debut collection *BOOK OF CORD*, Leona Chen confronts the loss of Taiwanese identity through colonization and emigration. As she acknowledges her heritage and claims herself as Taiwanese American, “a radical act” with “profound implications,” her poems explore histories both recognized and erased. She composes her narrative by way of a series of fragmentary lyric poems in English that is interspersed with Taiwanese Hokkien. *BOOK OF CORD* is Chen’s protest, journey of self- discovery, and rallying cry for the Taiwanese American community. Or, as novelist Shawna Yang Ryan writes in her comprehensive introduction: “The history she depicts is implied and embodied, making it emotionally accessible to readers unfamiliar with Taiwan’s history and deeply affecting to those who are familiar. This is a powerful inscription of an effaced history.”

58. [*Terrible Blooms*](#) by Melissa Stein (Copper Canyon Press)



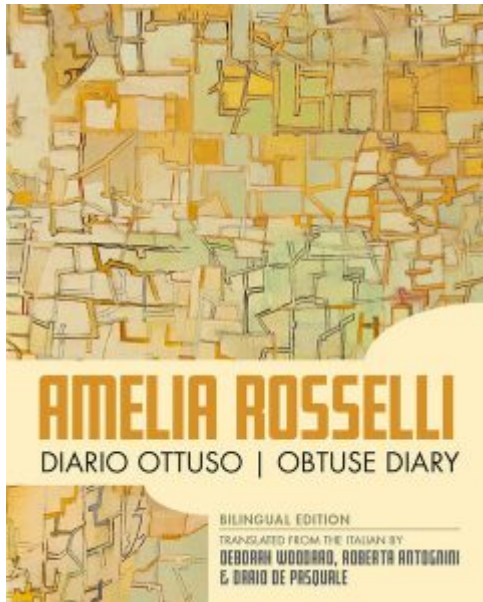
In this lush, disturbing second collection from Melissa Stein, exquisite images are salvaged from harm and survival. Set against the natural world's violence—both ordinary and sublime—pain shines jewel-like out of these poems, illuminating what lovers and families conceal. Stein uses her gifts for persona and lyric richness to build worlds that are vivid, intricate, tough, sexy, and raw: “over and over // life slapping you in the face / till you're newly burnished / flat-out gasping and awake.” Breathless with risk and redemption, *Terrible blooms* shows how loss claims us and what we reclaim.

59. [*Real Life: An Installation*](#) by Julie Carr (Omnidawn)



In a book rich with formal variety and lyric intensity, Carr takes up economic inequality, gendered violence, losses both personal and national, and the crisis of the body within all of these forces. *Real Life: An Installation* is a terrifying book, but one that keeps us close as it moves through the disruptions and eruptions of the real.

60. [*Obtuse Diary*](#) by Amelia Rosselli, Translated by Deborah Woodard, Roberta Antognini, Dario de Pasquale (Entre Rios Books)



OBTUSE DIARY, published in 1990 as *Diario Ottuso*, is a collection of three “rational” prose experiments by one of Italy’s most distinctive post-war poets. These early texts (1954-1968) by Amelia Rosselli reveal an “unintentional unity” through trilingual wordplay, experiments in syntactic structure, and the music possible in prose. The texts are deeply personal, awkward, and often startling—never simply a diary or an autobiography. Rosselli reclaims Italian on her own terms as she grapples with her felt experience as a “refugee.” This bilingual edition includes an audio download of selections read in both Italian and English by translators Dario De Pasquale and Deborah Woodard.