

[Best of 2020-2021: Poetry Books & Poetry Collections](#)

written by Entropy | December 1, 2021



Starting off our series of “[Best of 2020-2021](#)” 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 thousands of nominations from our readers. The lists this year are especially meaningful as they mark the final time we’ll be doing them, and some of the last content that will be going up on the website. (Read [the farewell post](#) from our founder here.)

This list brings together some of our favorite poetry books & collections published in 2020 and 2021.

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

In no particular order...

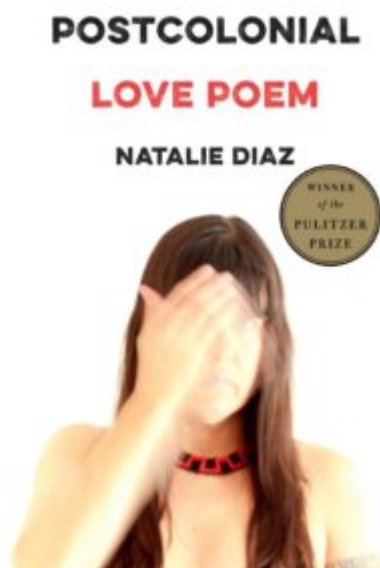
1. *DMZ Colony* by Don Mee Choi (Wave Books, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Wave Books](#)

Woven from poems, prose, photographs, and drawings, Don Mee Choi's *DMZ Colony* is a *tour de force* of personal and political reckoning set over eight acts. Evincing the power of translation as a poetic device to navigate historical and linguistic borders, it explores Edward Said's notion of "the intertwined and overlapping histories" in regards to South Korea and the United States through innovative deployments of voice, story, and poetics. Like its sister book, *Hardly War*, it holds history accountable, its very presence a resistance to empire and a hope in humankind.

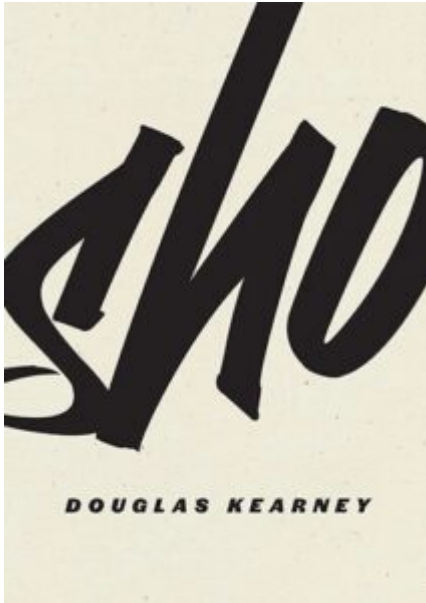
2. *Postcolonial Love Poem* by Natalie Diaz (Graywolf Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Graywolf Press](#)

Postcolonial Love Poem is an anthem of desire against erasure. Natalie Diaz's brilliant second collection demands that every body carried in its pages—bodies of language, land, rivers, suffering brothers, enemies, and lovers—be touched and held as beloveds. Through these poems, the wounds inflicted by America onto an indigenous people are allowed to bloom pleasure and tenderness: "Let me call my anxiety, *desire*, then. / Let me call it, a *garden*." In this new lyrical landscape, the bodies of indigenous, Latinx, black, and brown women are simultaneously the body politic and the body ecstatic. In claiming this autonomy of desire, language is pushed to its dark edges, the astonishing dunefields and forests where pleasure and love are both grief and joy, violence and sensuality.

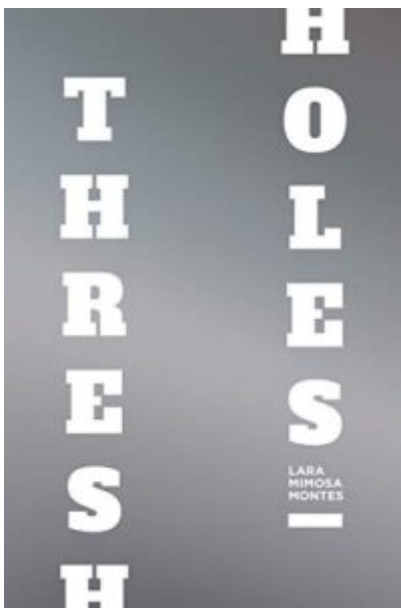
3. *Sho* by Douglas Kearney (Wave Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Wave Books](#)

Eschewing series and performative typography, Douglas Kearney's *Sho* aims to hit crooked licks with straight-seeming sticks. Navigating the complex penetrability of language, these poems are sonic in their espousal of Black vernacular traditions, while examining histories, pop culture, myth, and folklore. Both dazzling and devastating, *Sho* is a genius work of literary precision, wordplay, farce, and critical irony. In his "stove-like imagination," Kearney has concocted poems that destabilize the spectacle, leaving looky-loos with an important uncertainty about the intersection between violence and entertainment.

4. *Thresholds* by Lara Mimoso Montes (Coffee House, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Coffee House Press](#)

THRESHOLDS is both a doorway and an absence, a road map and a remembering. In this almanac of place and memory, Lara Mimoso Montes explores the passage of time, returning to the Bronx of the '70s and '80s and the artistry that flourished there. What is the threshold between now and then, and how can the

poet be the bridge between the two? Just as artists of that time highlighted what was missing in the Bronx, this collection examines what is left open in the wake of trauma and loss.

5. *Descent* by Lauren Russell (Tarpaulin Sky, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [SPD](#)

In 2013, poet Lauren Russell acquired a copy of the diary of her great-great-grandfather, Robert Wallace Hubert, a Captain in the Confederate Army. After his return from the Civil War, he fathered twenty children by three of his former slaves. One of those children was the poet's great-grandmother. Through several years of research, Russell would seek the words to fill the diary's omissions and to imagine the voice of her great-great-grandmother, Peggy Hubert, a black woman silenced by history. The result is a hybrid work of verse, prose, images and documents that traverses centuries as the past bleeds into the present.

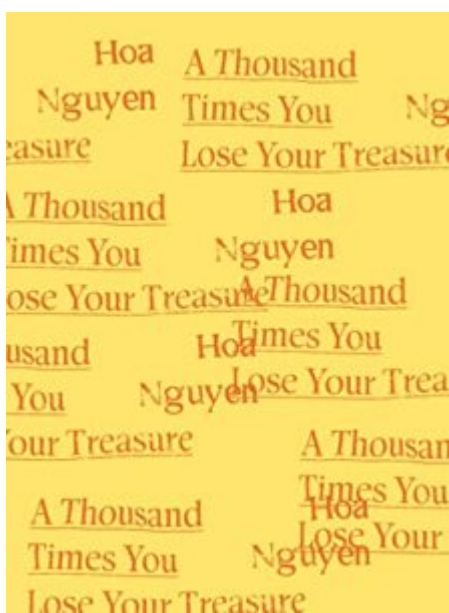
6. *A Treatise on Stars* by Mei-mei Berssenbrugge (New Directions, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [New Directions](#)

A Treatise on Stars extends Mei-mei Berssenbrugge's intensely phenomenological poetics to the fiery bodies in a "field of heaven...outside spacetime." Long, lyrical lines map a geography of interconnected, interdimensional intelligence that exists in all places and sentient beings. These are poems of deep listening and patient waiting, open to the cosmic loom, the channeling of daily experience and conversation, gestalt and angels, dolphins and a star-visitor beneath a tree. Family, too, becomes a type of constellation, a thought "a form of organized light." All of our sense are activated by Berssenbrugge's radiant lines, giving us a poetry of keen perception grounded in the physical world, where "days fill with splendor, and earth offers its pristine beauty to an expanding present."

7. *A Thousand Times You Lose Your Treasure* by Hoa Nguyen (Wave Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Wave Books](#)

Hoa Nguyen's latest collection is a poetic meditation on historical, personal, and cultural pressures pre- and post-"Fall-of-Saigon" and comprises a verse biography on her mother, Diep Anh Nguyen, a stunt motorcyclist in an

all-woman Vietnamese circus troupe. Multilayered, plaintive, and provocative, the poems in *A Thousand Times You Lose Your Treasure* are alive with archive and inhabit histories. In turns lyrical and unsettling, her poetry sings of language and loss; dialogues with time, myth and place; and communes with past and future ghosts.

8. *The Sunflower Cast a Spell to Save Us From the Void* by Jackie Wang (Nightboat Books, 2021)

THE SUNFLOWER

CAST A SPELL TO SAVE US FROM THE VOID

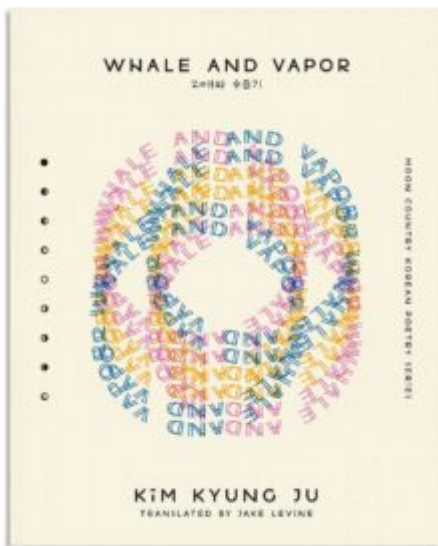


JACKIE WANG

[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Nightboat Books](#)

The poems in *The Sunflower Cast A Spell To Save Us From The Void* read like dispatches from the dream world, with Jackie Wang acting as our trusted comrade reporting across time and space. By sharing her personal index of dreams with its scenes of solidarity and resilience, interpersonal conflict and outlaw jouissance, Wang embodies historical trauma and communal memory. Here, the all-too-familiar interplay between crisis and resistance becomes first distorted, then clarified and refreshed. With a light touch and invigorating sense of humor, Wang illustrates the social dimension of dreams and their ability to inform and reshape the dreamer's waking world with renewed energy and insight.

9. *Whale and Vapor* by Kim Kyung Ju, Translated by Jake Levine (Black Ocean, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Black Ocean](#)

The poems in *WHALE AND VAPOR* emphasize exhaustion—physically, mentally, and as an existential condition. Kim Kyung Ju playfully turns toward the lyric in this work as a way to reconcile himself with the contemporary world by engaging in dialogue with his Korean literary ancestry. Masterfully translated by Jake Levine in close conversation with the author, this collection by one of the most popular and critically acclaimed poets to come out in South Korea in the new millennium explores the cold tunnels of today's tired, dark times.

10. *Gentle Women* by Megan Kaminski (Noemi Press, 2020)

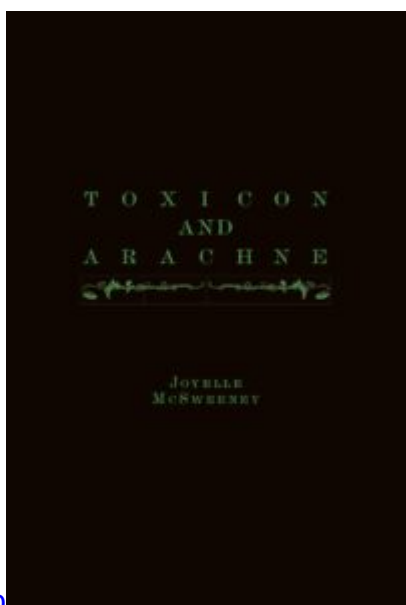


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [SPD](#)

How do we care for a broken world, especially when we ourselves are broken-hearted? How do we nurture others when we have scarce resources? How do we maintain our own sense of self under these pressures? The work of care falls disproportionately on women and often renders them lacking and unacknowledged in their labor. *GENTLEWOMEN* explores personal and historical trauma, bonds

between mothers and sisters, and our estrangement from the natural world and from ourselves due to an exploitative and extractive relationship to land and peoples (human and otherwise). Through an allegorical envisioning of a world that is like our own but heightened through the individual lives and responsibilities of three sisters, Natura, Providentia, and Fortuna, the poems sound out in mourning and frustration-and try to imagine the world otherwise. A transformative journey through the shadows towards reconciliation both between sisters and with oneself.

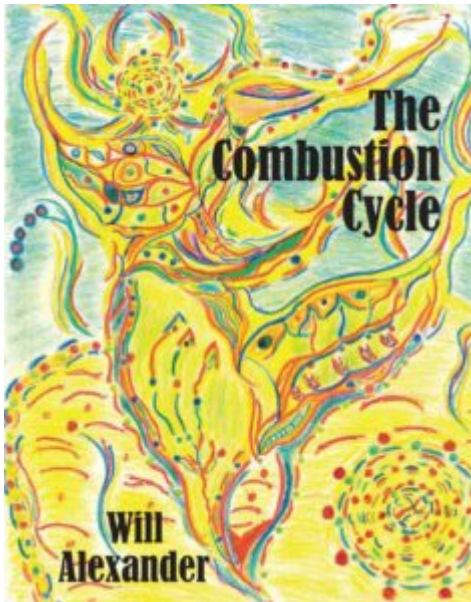
11. *Toxicon and Arachne* by Joyelle McSweeney (Nightboat Books, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Nightboat Books](#)

In *Toxicon & Arachne*, McSweeney allows the lyric to course through her like a toxin, producing a quiver of lyrics like poisoned arrows. *Toxicon* was written in anticipation of the birth of McSweeney's daughter, Arachne. But when Arachne was born sick, lived briefly, and then died, McSweeney unexpectedly endured a second inundation of lyricism, which would become the poems in *Arachne*, this time spun with grief. *Toxicon & Arachne* is the culmination of eight years of engagement with lyric under a regime of global and personal catastrophes.

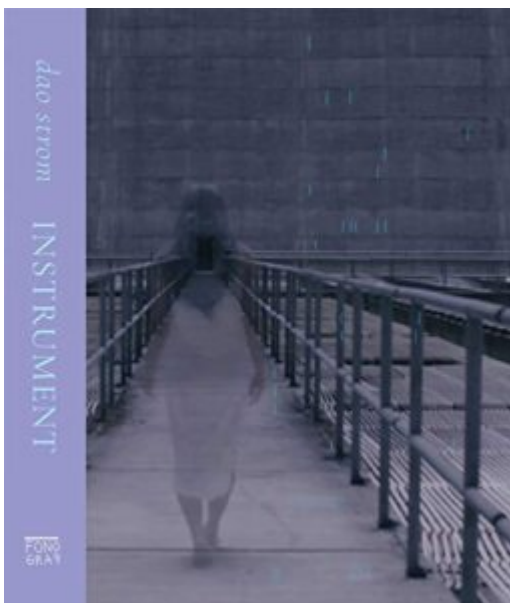
12. *The Combustion Cycle* by Will Alexander (Roof Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [SPD](#)

“A long-distance runner extraordinaire, Will Alexander parses and devours information, code and arcana lest they parse and devour him, parse and devour us. What but deep seas and distant galaxies would make such a demand his extended soliloquies implicitly ask and overtly answer. These high-toned reflections and imprecations unfold in a march mode almost, an ever insistent rat-a-tat on the rim of a snare, flame and flame’s gnarled ignition. Here wonder and menace meet and reconnoiter, a singular, major addition to an already singular, major body of work.”

13. *Instrument* by Dao Strom (Fonograf Editions, Antiquated Future, 2020)

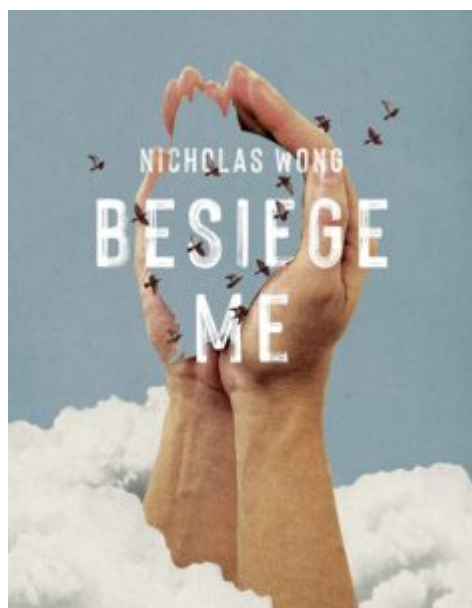


[Amazon](#) / [SPD](#) / [Fonograf Editions](#)

Dao Strom’s *INSTRUMENT* is an experiment in multimodal poetics-inhabiting a synergistic blend of poetry, music, and visual art: the artist’s three forms of “voice.” Born in Vietnam and leaving the country at the age of two for Northern California, Strom’s life and work speaks to fragmentation-of/within

selves, histories, cultures, groups of people, and places-yet within this configuring lies her art's fluid mastery. Combining color photography, personal biography and gripping, restless poetry, *INSTRUMENT* represents a unique melding of literature and art. The poems are augmented by an album, *Traveler's Ode*, of ambient and folk-tinged songs featuring ethereal assemblages of sung-poetry, vocal layering, spare guitar and piano, and field sounds from sources such as rivers, sea, jungle, birds. *Traveler's Ode* is a collaborative release between Fonograf Ed. and Antiquated Future.

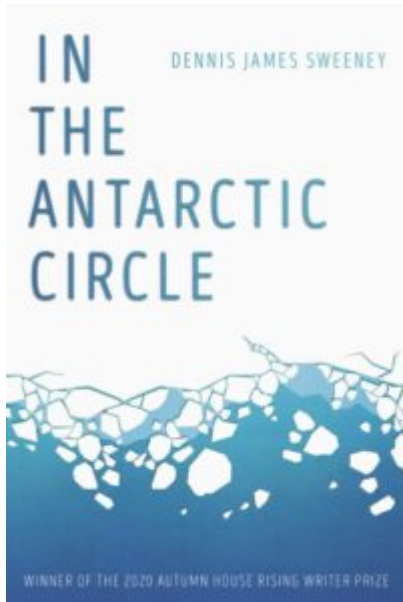
14. *Besiege Me* by Nicholas Wong (Noemi Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [SPD](#)

A new collection six years after Nicholas Wong won the Lambda Literary Award for Gay Poetry, *BESIEGE ME* opens with a timely mocking tone that confronts the tension between China and Hong Kong. Poems in the book speak queerly of urban existences crushed by political and economic powers –“What cities & bodies deny a sometime-crisis, / not knowing they’re a series of which?” Behind the portrayals of the speaker, his parents, his home city, and domestic migrant workers there, the collection boldly outlines the vulnerability of entrapment and its masochistic pleasures. *BESIEGE ME* seeks for a redefinition of transcultural poetics with its linguistic playfulness.

15. *In the Antarctic Circle* by Dennis James Sweeney (Autumn House, 2021)

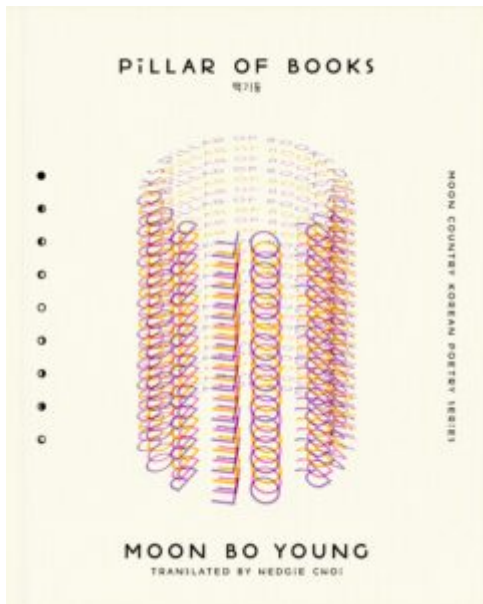


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Autumn House](#)

This collection addresses issues of identity as two people find themselves living in an uncommon landscape. Through hybrid narrative prose poems, Hank and an unnamed narrator try to navigate their relationship and understand their identities amid a landscape that offers them almost nothing. The continent at first seems empty, but something emerges in the vacuum of Antarctica. The narrator's gender skips and changes, and the characters' self-awareness grows into a sort of horror. Dennis James Sweeney's poems consider the fullness of emptiness, revealing attempts to love and grow when surrounded by a white and frigid landscape that seems to go on forever.

The space of these poems is something beyond the Antarctic of scientific exploration, the icy outpost that has served for so long as a masculine proving ground for polar explorers. This is the Antarctica of domestic disharmony, of love amid loneliness, where two people encounter themselves in the changeless breadth at the end of the world.

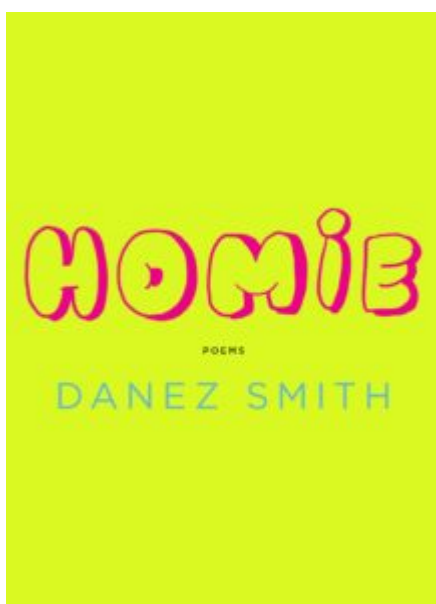
16. *Pillar of Books* by Moon Bo Young, Translated by Hedgie Choi (Black Ocean, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Black Ocean](#)

This debut collection in English from Korean poet Moon Bo Young insists that you, as a reader, put down your expectations of what should be important or serious. While these poems are about god, death, love, and literature, they are also just as much about a hat with a herd of cows on it, science experiments on monkeys' attention, the eating of cherry tomatoes, weeping carrots, and pimple popping. The surrealism and humor in these poems allow them to travel so far in the span of a stanza. Reading this book is like going on a picnic with your weirdest best friend and asking them what-if questions until the sun goes down—there's room for everything, from dark anecdotes to funny quips and surprising vulnerability. This book is like that: there's room for everything. Skillfully rendered by award-winning translator Hedgie Choi, this is a book that will change the way you think about what a poem can accomplish.

17. *Homie* by Danez Smith (Graywolf Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Graywolf Press](#)

Homie is Danez Smith's magnificent anthem about the saving grace of friendship. Rooted in the loss of one of Smith's close friends, this book comes out of the search for joy and intimacy within a nation where both can seem scarce and getting scarcer. In poems of rare power and generosity, Smith acknowledges that in a country overrun by violence, xenophobia, and disparity, and in a body defined by race, queerness, and diagnosis, it can be hard to survive, even harder to remember reasons for living. But then the phone lights up, or a shout comes up to the window, and family—blood and chosen—arrives with just the right food and some redemption. Part friendship diary, part bright elegy, part war cry, *Homie* is the exuberant new book written for Danez and for Danez's friends and for you and for yours.

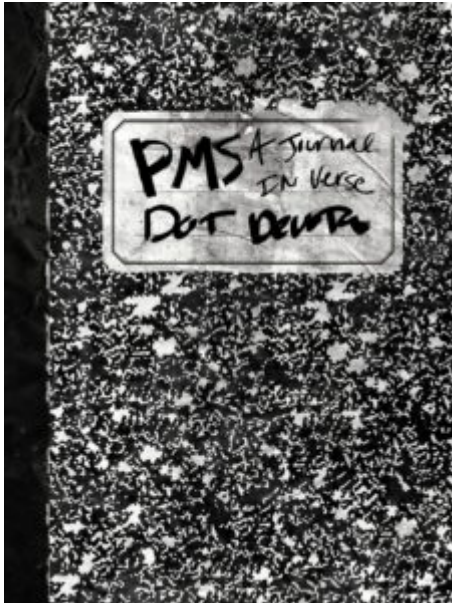
18. *Curb* by Divya Victor (Nightboat Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Nightboat Books](#)

Divya Victor documents how immigrants and Americans navigate the liminal sites of everyday living: lawns, curbs, and sidewalks, undergirded by violence but also constantly repaved with new possibilities of belonging. *Curb* witnesses immigrant survival, familial bonds, and interracial parenting in the context of nationalist and white-supremacist violence against South Asians. The book refutes the binary of the model minority and the monstrous, dark “other” by reclaiming the throbbing, many-tongued, vermillion heart of kith.

19. *PMS: A Journal in Verse* by Dot Devota (Rescue Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [SPD](#)

"[O]ne / writes a journal // to create the / guise of reading / creation. // It's all already / not there!" writes Dot Devota in her newest collection of explosive, visionary rage-songs sung in the private-public space of a journal toward the public-private space of "community." *PMS: A JOURNAL IN VERSE* is a radical rejection of artistic perfection and false relationship; a record of the mind's neon blaze, flickering light upon such underworldly irritants as brost psychosis, compulsive self-reflection, failed artistic support structures, and literary theory. This is a formidable, darkly humorous collection fueled by the intelligence of an electric, revelatory state.

20. *How to Kill Yourself Instead of Your Children* by Quincy Scott Jones (C&R Press, 2021)

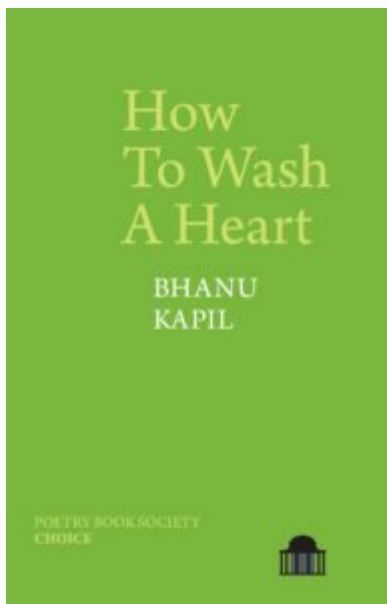


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [C&R Press](#)

Renisha McBride. Tamir Rice. Jordan Davis. Trayvon Martin. Michael Brown. Freddie Gray. Aiyana Stanley-Jones. At a certain point, BIPOC families must have "the Conversation," a discussion and set of instructions for surviving a

world of policing, presumed guilt, and the racial inequities that threaten our very lives. It's labeled "the Conversation," but this discussion is never an intimate moment, never a one-time event. Instead it's a constant choir of dissent and disembodied voices whispering and wailing night and day. Through a mix of lyric, found text, and hybridity, *How to Kill Yourself Instead of Your Children* highlights some of these voices: adults and children, murderers and victims, bookshelves and wanted posters, carnival barkers and political pundits. Inspired by Audre Lorde's "Power" *How to Kill Yourself Instead of Your Children* calls upon the past and present in an attempt to find a language higher than the circular rhetoric that falls in and out of mass media, to hold a conversation that is constant even in silence, to escape the cycle of violence and Black death.

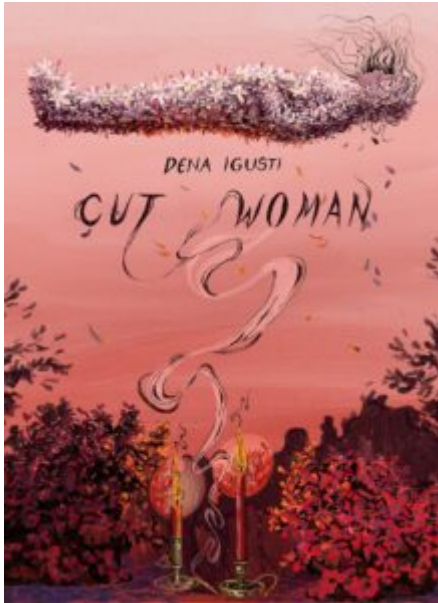
21. *How To Wash A Heart* by Bhanu Kapil (Liverpool University Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

How To Wash A Heart, Kapil's first full-length collection published in the U.K., depicts the complex relations that emerge between an immigrant guest and a citizen host. Drawn from a first performance at the ICA in London in 2019, and using poetry as a mode of interrogation that is both rigorous, compassionate, surreal, comic, painful and tender, by turn, Kapil begins to ask difficult and urgent questions about the limits of inclusion, hospitality and care.

22. *Cut Woman* by Dena Igusti (Game Over Books, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Game Over Books](#)

In a post-colonial world shaped by what is and what will be lost, what is there left to celebrate? In Dena Igusti's debut collection *Cut Woman*, Igusti is overwhelmed by the loss of their people. The loss includes but is not limited to: the deaths of Muslims around the world due to xenophobia and Islamophobia; the deaths of Indonesians as a result of post-colonialism, state violence, environmental racism, and overall media negligence and prioritization of white people over their own; the mortality of friends, lovers, and family facing economic disparity and gentrification in New York City; the loss of their body that could've been their body if they didn't undergo female genital mutilation. They knows that one day, their time will be up too. Rather than stay in mourning, they tries to turn these wakes, both current and future, into the biggest celebrations of their life.

23. *Anodyne* by Khadijah Queen (Tin House, 2020)

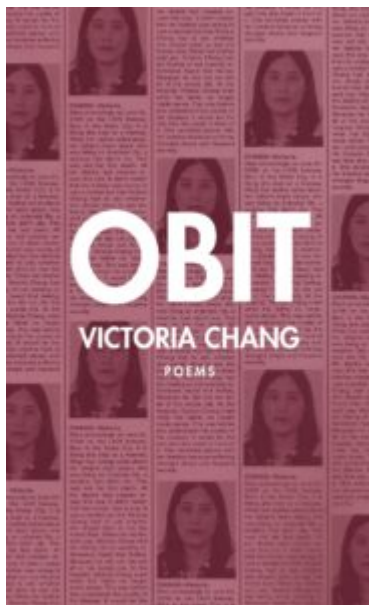


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Tin House](#)

The poems that make up *Anodyne* consider the small moments that enrapture us

alongside the daily threats of cataclysm. Formally dynamic and searingly personal, *Anodyne* asks us to recognize the echoes of history that litter the landscape of our bodies as we navigate a complex terrain of survival and longing. With an intimate and multivocal dexterity, these poems acknowledge the simultaneous existence of joy and devastation, knowledge and ignorance, grief and love, endurance and failure—all of the contrast and serendipity that comes with the experience of being human. If the body is a world, or a metaphor for the world, for what disappears and what remains, for what we feel and what we cover up, then how do we balance fate and choice, pleasure and pain? Through a combination of formal lyrics, delicate experiments, sharp rants, musical litany, and moments of wit that uplift and unsettle, Queen's poems show us the terrible consequences and stunning miracles of how we choose to live.

24. *Obit* by Victoria Chang (Copper Canyon Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Copper Canyon Press](#)

After her mother died, poet Victoria Chang refused to write elegies. Rather, she distilled her grief during a feverish two weeks by writing scores of poetic obituaries for all she lost in the world. In *Obit*, Chang writes of “the way memory gets up after someone has died and starts walking.” These poems reinvent the form of newspaper obituary to both name what has died (“civility,” “language,” “the future,” “Mother’s blue dress”) and the cultural impact of death on the living. Whereas elegy attempts to immortalize the dead, an obituary expresses loss, and the love for the dead becomes a conduit for self-expression. In this unflinching and lyrical book, Chang meets her grief and creates a powerful testament for the living.

25. *be/trouble* by Bridgette Bianca (Writ Large Press / The

Accomplices, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [The Accomplices](#)

be/trouble is, in many respects, a love letter to Los Angeles. Even when the city isn't formally mentioned, it is always in the backdrop, always present, and we are always aware that Los Angeles offers as much danger as it does glamour as much grit as beauty. This is the Los Angeles not shown on television and movies: the everyday minutiae of Black Angeleno life. If you're lucky enough to be a part of it then you know this heritage was handed from one generation to the next. You know that many reservoirs of that heritage are disappearing with little acknowledgment or news. If you are lucky enough to know then you've already had the best catfish, you've been to the best card games, you've seen the low riders glide up Crenshaw Blvd, you've heard the drum circle from Leimert Park. bridgette bianca has written a book that highlights these experiences. The very least we can do is pay attention.

26. *Borderline Fortune* by Teresa K. Miller (Penguin Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Borderline Fortune is a meditation on intangible family inheritance—of unresolved intergenerational conflicts and traumas in particular—set against the backdrop of our planetary inheritance as humans. As species go extinct and glaciers melt, Teresa K. Miller asks what we owe one another and what it means to echo one’s ancestors’ grief and fear. Drawing on her family history, from her great-grandfather’s experience as a schoolteacher on an island in the Bering Strait to her father’s untimely death, as well as her pursuit of regenerative horticulture, Miller seeks through these beautifully crafted poems to awaken from the intergenerational trance and bear witness to our current moment with clarity and attention.

27. *sur vie* by Youna Kwak (Fathom Books, 2020)



[Fathom Books](#)

The poems in Youna Kwak’s *sur vie* are—to a piece—moving, profound, plangent, touchable. Touchable: like a figure emerging from the sacristy, one arm loaded with relics, the other waiting, warmly, to hook yours. They proceed

from a vital breadth to reveal the small parts of vitality.

28. *Upend* by Claire Meuschke (Noemi Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [SPD](#)

The book loosely navigates the archived immigration trial of Hong On, a biracial Alaska Native-Chinese man, in 1912 on Angel Island, CA, during the Chinese Exclusion Act. Hong On was born in San Francisco, CA, in 1895 and was orphaned shortly after. The concepts of U.S. government-designated recreational spaces, genocide, and intergenerational trauma are examined by Hong On's granddaughter, the author, who sees imperialistic residue in product, place, and color naming. At the core of this book is the speaker's Alaska Native great grandmother who is named "Unknown: Indian" on Hong On's birth certificate.

29. *Imagine Us, The Swarm* by Muriel Leung (Nightboat Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Nightboat Books](#)

Following the death of the poet's father, *Imagine Us, The Swarm* contemplates vengeance, eschews forgiveness, and cultivates a desire for healing beyond the reaches of this present life. In this collection of essays in verse, Leung reconciles a familial history of violence and generational trauma across intersections of Asian American, queer, and gendered experiences. Moving between the past and the present, Leung imbues memories with something new to alter time and design a different future.

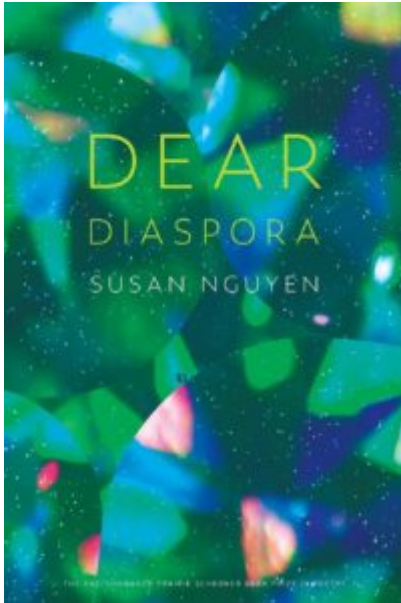
30. *The Past* by Wendy Xu (Wesleyan University Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

The poems in Wendy Xu's third collection, *The Past*, fantasize uneasily about becoming a palatable lyric record of their namesake, while ultimately working to disrupt this Westernized desire. Born in Shandong, China, in 1987, Wendy Xu immigrated to the United States in 1989, three days ahead of the events of Tian'anmen Square. *The Past* probes the multi-generational binds of family, displacement, and immigration as an ongoing psychic experience without end. Moving spontaneously between lyric, fragment, prose, and subversions in "traditional" Chinese forms, the book culminates in a centerpiece series of "Tian'anmen Square sonnets" (and their subsequent erasures), to conjure up the irrepressible past, and ultimately imagine a new kind of poem: at once code and confession.

31. *Dear Diaspora* by Susan Nguyen (University of Nebraska Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Dear Diaspora is an unapologetic reckoning with history, memory, and grief. Parting the weeds on a small American town, this collection sheds light on the intersections of girlhood and diaspora. The poems introduce us to Suzi: ripping her leg hairs out with duct tape, praying for ecstasy during Sunday mass, dreaming up a language for buried familial trauma and discovering that such a language may not exist. Through a collage of lyric, documentary, and epistolary poems, we follow Suzi as she untangles intergenerational grief and her father's disappearance while climbing trees to stare at the color green and wishing that she wore Lucy Liu's freckles.

32. *Emporium* by Aditi Machado (Nightboat Books, 2020)

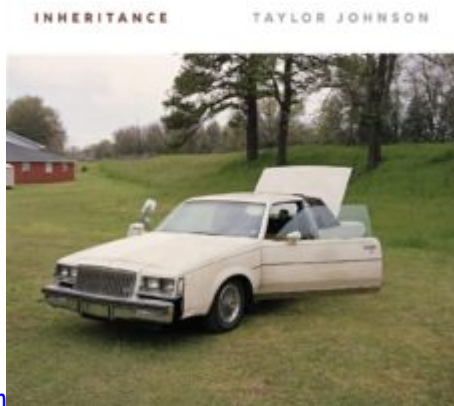


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Nightboat Books](#)

In *Emporium*, Aditi Machado investigates transnationalism and translation in poems that follow a merchant woman as she travels a twenty-first century "silk route." As on the original silk route, this merchant is engaged in

economic transactions but also cultural exchanges, un-monetizeable reciprocities, the sensory excesses of the marketplace: coins moving from hand to hand, the smell of food and sweat infusing the air, the “noise” of translation and multilingualism. Is this tradeswoman in control of her “destiny”/business or is she a commodity of impenetrable global forces? Her investigative, digressive travel seems a way to interrogate history and money and her own entanglement in such irresistible threads.

33. *Inheritance* by Taylor Johnson (Alice James Books, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Inheritance is a black sensorium, a chapel of color and sound that speaks to spaciousness, surveillance, identity, desire, and transcendence. Influenced by everyday moments of Washington, DC living, the poems live outside of the outside and beyond the language of categorical difference, inviting anyone listening to listen a bit closer. *Inheritance* is about the self’s struggle with definition and assumption.

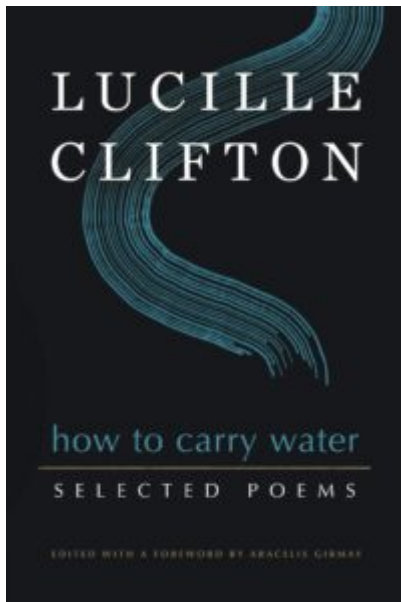
34. *Lean Against This Late Hour* by Garous Abdolmalekian, Translated by Ahmad Nadalizadah, Idra Novey (Penguin Books, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

The first selection of poems by renowned Iranian poet Garous Abdolmalekian to appear in English, this collection is a captivating, disorienting descent into the trauma of loss and its aftermath. In spare lines, Abdolmalekian conjures surreal, cinematic images that pan wide as deftly as they narrow into intimate focus. Time is a thread come unspooled: pain arrives before the wound, and the dead wait for sunrise. Abdolmalekian resists definitive separations between cause and effect, life and death, or heaven and hell, and challenges our sense of what is fixed and what is unsettled and permeable. Though the speakers in these poems are witnesses to the deforming effects of grief and memory, they remain alive to curiosity, to the pleasure of companionship, and to other ways of being and seeing. *Lean Against This Late Hour* illuminates the images we conjure in the face of abandonment and ruin, and finds them by turns frightening, bewildering, ethereal, and defiant. “This time,” a disembodied voice commands, “send us a prophet who only listens.”

35. *How to Carry Water: Selected Poems of Lucille Clifton*, Edited by Aracelis Girmay (BOA Editions, 2020)

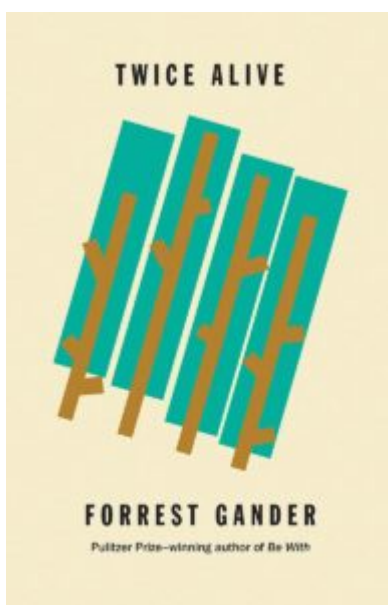


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

How to Carry Water: Selected Poems of Lucille Clifton celebrates both familiar and lesser-known works by one of America's most beloved poets, including 10 newly discovered poems that have never been collected.

These poems celebrating black womanhood and resilience shimmer with intellect, insight, humor, and joy, all in Clifton's characteristic style—a voice that the late Toni Morrison described as “seductive with the simplicity of an atom, which is to say highly complex, explosive underneath an apparent quietude.” Selected and introduced by award-winning poet Aracelis Girmay, this volume of Clifton's poetry is simultaneously timeless and fitting for today's tumultuous moment.

36. *Twice Alive* by Forrest Gander (New Directions, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In the searing poems of his new collection, *Twice Alive*, the Pulitzer

Prize-winner Forrest Gander addresses the exigencies of our historical moment and the intimacies, personal and environmental, that bind us to others and to the world. Drawing from his training in geology and his immersion in Sangam literary traditions, Gander invests these poems with an emotional intensity that illuminates our deep-tangled interrelations.

While conducting fieldwork with a celebrated mycologist, Gander links human intimacy with the transformative collaborations between species that compose lichens. Throughout *Twice Alive*, Gander addresses personal and ecological trauma—several poems focus on the devastation wrought by wildfires in California where he lives—but his tone is overwhelmingly celebratory. *Twice Alive* is a book charged with exultation and tenderness.

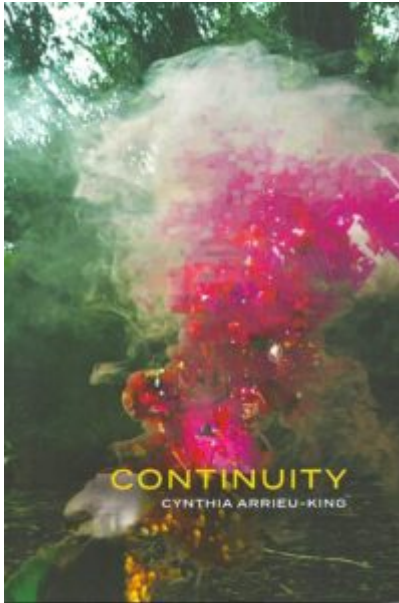
37. *Bionic Communalilty* by Brenda Iijima (Roof Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [SPD](#)

BIONIC COMMUNALILITY demonstrates floral, faunal and mineral consciousness as a cacophonous, all-encompassing intensity of being together, collaboratively holding a space of lived histories and emergent matrixes of meaning. In a terrestrial and cosmic forcefield of vibrant interconnectedness, emergent relational and positional engagements are negotiated. Taking cues from motile and audiovisual sensation, improvisations and choreographed dances performed throughout Iijima's hometown inform language as it becomes active in 360 degrees. Submerged social facts are laid bare: femicide, ecocide, genocide. This is a work of the intimacies of civic participation. Liberational struggles find coalitional power. Dying is attended to, as is living. *BIONIC COMMUNALILITY* is a vibrant catalyst for social transformation.

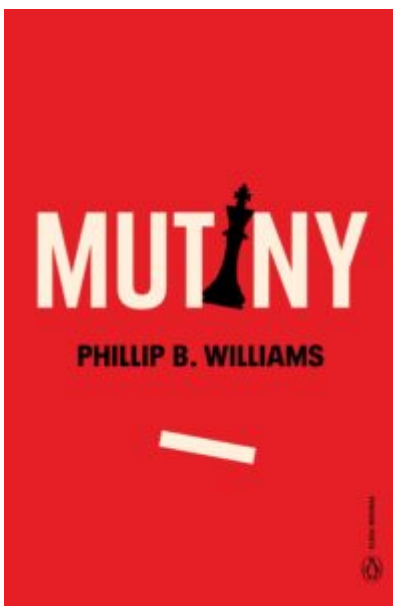
38. *Continuity* by Cynthia Arriue-King (Octopus Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [SPD](#)

“Cynthia Arrieu-King’s beautiful new book manages to feel written on the occasion of both a birth and a death, and perhaps it means to remind us that the passage of time necessitates both, as it brims with energy and elegy at once. I love the urge and pull of her richly textured language, her vision of what sorrow can teach us, her poem-as-jeweled-time-traveling-mausoleum, a place where we keep both our beloveds and our own past selves. Elegy doesn’t resurrect, but in *CONTINUITY* it does teach, distill, unveil. It folds time. Thus it reaches for, thus it does reach. ‘They keep / saying your place / isn’t a room, but / a kind of paragraph.’ Yes. Here. My gratitude to this poet for showing me new languages for feelings I thought I knew.”—Wendy Xu

39. *Mutiny* by Phillip B. Williams (Penguin Books, 2021)

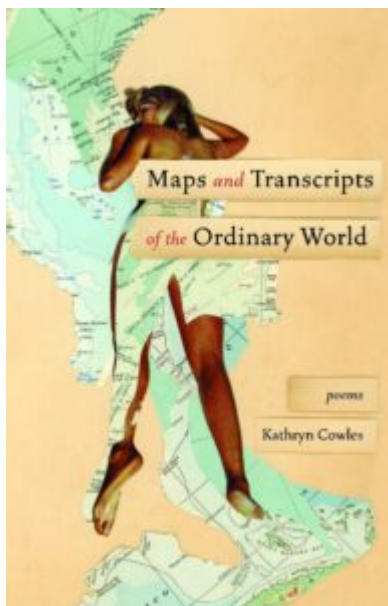


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Mutiny: a rebellion, a subversion, an onslaught. In poems that rebuke classical mythos and western canonical figures, and embrace Afro-Diasporanfolk and spiritual imagery, Phillip B. Williams conjures the hell of

being erased, exploited, and ill-imagined and then, through a force and generosity of vision, propels himself into life, selfhood, and a path forward. Intimate, bold, and sonically mesmerizing, *Mutiny* addresses loneliness, desire, doubt, memory, and the borderline between beauty and tragedy. With a ferocity that belies the tenderness and vulnerability at the heart of this remarkable collection, Williams honors the transformative power of anger, and the clarity that comes from allowing that anger to burn clean.

40. *Maps and Transcripts of the Ordinary World* by Kathryn Cowles (Milkweed Editions, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Maps and Transcripts of the Ordinary World both puzzles over and embraces the valley between literature and lived experience. Along the way, Cowles's language is light but recursive, rotating around beloved places: a new house, a garden, a seemingly endless plane ride, a battery-operated spit of lamb, a photograph of a battery-operated spit of lamb, dogs, Sue, Ohio. This collection defamiliarizes and refamiliarizes the "actual world," while navigating toward the clear and substantial stuff of living.

Arresting on both visual and textual levels, *Maps and Transcripts of the Ordinary World* is executed with the utmost intelligence, humility, and tenderness.

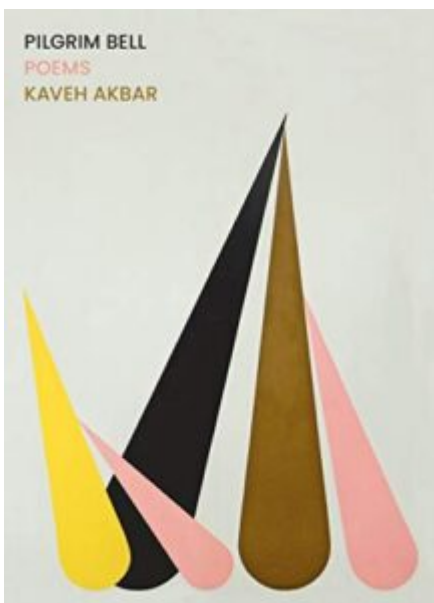
41. *Waterbaby* by Nikki Wallschlaeger (Copper Canyon Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Copper Canyon Press](#)

In her astounding third collection, Nikki Wallschlaeger turns to water—the natural element of grief—to trace history’s interconnected movements through family, memory, and day-to-day survival. *Waterbaby* is a book about Blackness, language, and motherhood in America; about the ancestral joys and sharp pains that travel together through the nervous system’s crowded riverways; about the holy sanctuary of the bathtub for a spirit that’s pushed beyond exhaustion. *Waterbaby* sings the blues in every key, as Wallschlaeger uses her vibrant lexicon and varied rhythms to condense and expand emotion, hurry and slow meaning, communicating the profound simultaneity of righteous dissatisfaction with an unjust world, and radical love for what’s possible.

42. *Pilgrim Bell* by Kaveh Akbar (Graywolf Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Graywolf Press](#)

With formal virtuosity and ruthless precision, Kaveh Akbar’s second collection takes its readers on a spiritual journey of disavowal, fiercely attendant to the presence of divinity where artifacts of self and belonging

have been shed. How does one recover from addiction without destroying the self-as-addict? And if living justly in a nation that would see them erased is, too, a kind of self-destruction, what does one do with the body's question, "*what now shall I repair?*" Here, Akbar responds with prayer as an act of devotion to dissonance—the infinite void of a loved one's absence, the indulgence of austerity, making a life as a Muslim in an Islamophobic nation—teasing the sacred out of silence and stillness.

43. *Water I Won't Touch* by Kayleb Rae Candrilli (Copper Canyon Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Copper Canyon Press](#)

Both radically tender and desperate for change, *Water I Won't Touch* is a life raft and a self-portrait, concerned with the vitality of trans people living in a dangerous and inhospitable landscape. Through the brambles of the Pennsylvania forest to a stretch of the Jersey Shore, in quiet moments and violent memories, Kayleb Rae Candrilli touches the broken earth and examines the whole in its parts. Written during the body's healing from a double mastectomy—in the wake of addiction and family dysfunction—these ambitious poems put new form to what's been lost and gained. Candrilli ultimately imagines a joyful, queer future: a garden to harvest, lasting love, the insistent flamboyance of citrus.

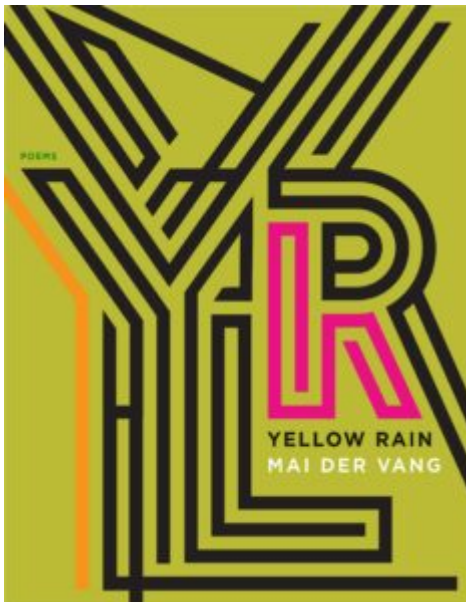
44. *No Knowledge Is Complete Until It Passes Through My Body* by Asiya Wadud (Nightboat Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Nightboat Books](#)

Through a series of transmissions and proposals, the poems in *No Knowledge Is Complete Until It Passes Through My Body* explore the intelligence of the body, especially bodies under duress. Wadud evokes the hum and chorus that fills us when we write to explore methods and modes of circulation, continuum, and claustrophobia. Drawing from the performance practice of Okwui Okpokwasili and Peter Born, Wadud asks, how does a thread of logic form? How do we extend the thread on either end so we see the lineage and continuum of our thoughts?

45. *Yellow Rain* by Mai Der Vang (Graywolf Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Graywolf Press](#)

In this staggering work of documentary, poetry, and collage, Mai Der Vang reopens a wrongdoing that deserves a new reckoning. As the United States abandoned them at the end of the Vietnam War, many Hmong refugees recounted stories of a mysterious substance that fell from planes during their escape from Laos starting in the mid-1970s. This substance, known as “yellow rain,”

caused severe illnesses and thousands of deaths. These reports prompted an investigation into allegations that a chemical biological weapon had been used against the Hmong in breach of international treaties. A Cold War scandal erupted, wrapped in partisan debate around chemical arms development versus control. And then, to the world's astonishment, American scientists argued that yellow rain was the feces of honeybees defecating en masse—still held as the widely accepted explanation. The truth of what happened to the Hmong, to those who experienced and suffered yellow rain, has been ignored and discredited.

46. *How Not to Be Afraid of Everything* by Jane Wong (Alice James Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Explores the vulnerable ways we articulate and reckon with fear: fear of intergenerational trauma and the silent, hidden histories of families. What does it mean to grow up in a take-out restaurant, surrounded by food, just a generation after the Great Leap Forward famine in 1958-62? Full of elegy and resilient joy, these poems speak across generations of survival.

47. *Essential Voices: Poetry of Iran and Its Diaspora*, Edited by Christopher Nelson (Green Linden Press, 2021)

ESSENTIAL VOICES



Poetry of Iran
and its Diaspora

Edited by Christopher Nelson
Introduced by Kaveh Bassiri

[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [SPD](#)

ESSENTIAL VOICES series intends to bridge English-language readers to cultures misunderstood and under- or misrepresented. It has at its heart the ancient idea that poetry can reveal our shared humanity. The anthology features 130 poets and translators from ten countries, including Garous Abdolmalekian, Kaveh Akbar, Kazim Ali, Reza Baraheni, Kaveh Bassiri, Simin Behbahani, Athena Farrokhzad, Forugh Farrokhzad, Persis Karim, Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, Sara Khalili, Esmā'il Kho'i, Abbas Kiarostami, Mimi Khalvati, Fayre Makeig, Anis Mojgani, Yadollah Roya'i, SAID, Amir Safi, H.E. Sayeh, Roger Sedarat, Sohrab Sepehri, Ahmad Shamlu, Solmaz Sharif, Niloufar Talebi, Jean Valentine, Stephen Watts, Sholeh Wolpé, Nima Yushij, and many others.

48. *Phone Bells Keep Ringing For Me* by Choi Seungja, Translated by Won-Chung Kim, Cathy Park Hong (Action Books, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [SPD](#)

This volume selects poems of many decades by one of the most startling, distinctive, and influential feminist voices in contemporary Korean poetry.

Against the limits society would erect around her, Choi Seungja's poetry trains a keen attention on everyday objects and situations until loneliness, time, emptiness, love, death and even brief-lived delight glow with uncanny luster. Won-Chung Kim and Cathy Park Hong's translations accentuate the simplicity and boldness of Choi's vision, her perfect aim.

49. *Rough Song* by Blanca Varela, Translated by Carlos Lara (The Song Cave, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [SPD](#)

Returning to Lima in the '60s, she established herself as one of Peru's key literary intelligentsia. The poems in *ROUGH SONG*, these "flowers for the ear," range wildly in form, from two lines to seven pages long, and each presents a world of intense precision in language, fully conscious of reality and its metaphysical limits—"yes / the dark matter / animated by your hand / it's me." Varela's deceptively simple poems hold a mysteriously delicate weight far beyond their length. A formidable voice in Latin American literature, Blanca Varela is destined to inspire awe and summon new readers for years to come.

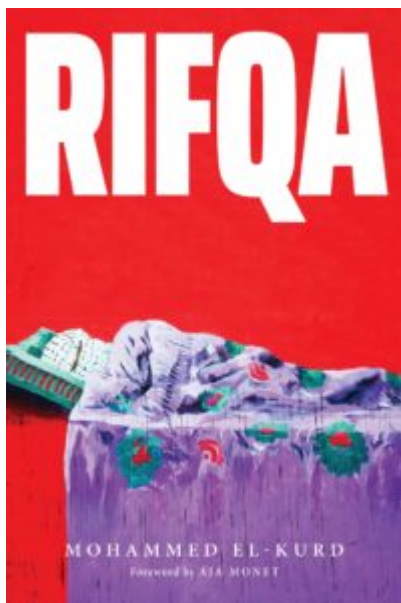
50. *Pierrot's Fingernails* by Kit Schluter (Canarium Books, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [SPD](#)

PIERROT'S FINGERNAILS is the much-anticipated first collection of poetry by Kit Schluter, known to many as an acclaimed translator of French and Spanish literature. Like a garden labyrinth, the poems in this book offer unexpected pleasures and revelations, of curiosity, weirdness, society, solitude, and warmth.

51. *RIFQA* by Mohammed El-Kurd (Haymarket Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Each day after school, Mohammed El-Kurd's grandmother welcomed him at the door of his home with a bouquet of jasmine. Her name was Rifqa—she was older than Israel itself and an icon of Palestinian resilience. With razor-sharp wit and glistening moral clarity, El-Kurd lays bare the brutality of Israeli settler colonialism. His poems trace Rifqa's exile from Haifa to his family's current dispossession in Sheikh Jarrah, Jerusalem, exposing the cyclical and relentless horror of the Nakba. El-Kurd's debut collection definitively shows that the Palestinian struggle is a revolution, until victory.

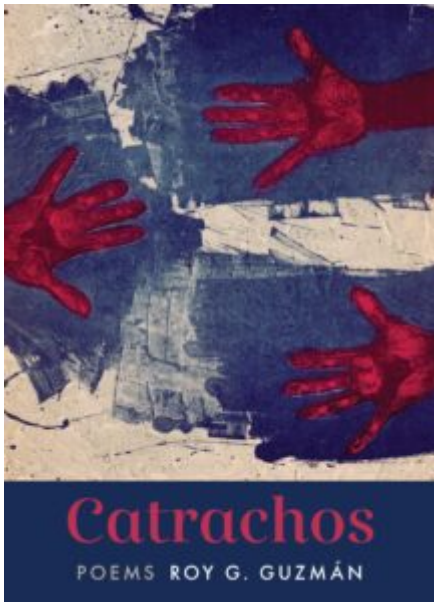
52. *Popular Longing* by Natalie Shapero (Copper Canyon Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Copper Canyon Press](#)

The poems of Natalie Shapero’s third collection, *Popular Longing*, highlight the ever-increasing absurdity of our contemporary life. With her sharp, sardonic wit, Shapero deftly captures human meekness in all its forms: our senseless wars, our inflated egos, our constant deference to presumed higher powers—be they romantic partners, employers, institutions, or gods. “Why even / look up, when all we’ll see is people / looking down?” In a world where everyone has to answer to someone, it seems no one is equipped to disrupt the status quo, and how the most urgent topics of conversation can only be approached through refraction. By scrutinizing the mundane and all that is taken for granted, these poems arrive at much wider vistas, commenting on human sadness, memory, and mortality. Punchy, fearlessly ironic, and wickedly funny, *Popular Longing* articulates what it means to share a planet, for better or more often for worse, with other people.

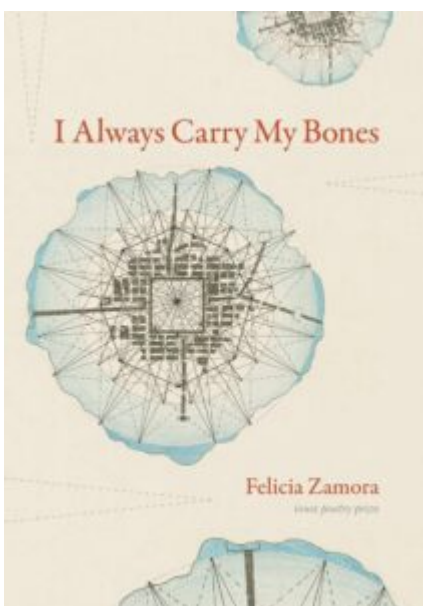
53. *Catrachos* by Roy G. Guzman (Graywolf Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Graywolf Press](#)

A name for the people of Honduras, *Catrachos* is a term of solidarity and resilience. In these unflinching, riveting poems, Roy G. Guzmán reaches across borders—between life and death and between countries—invoking the voices of the lost. Part immigration narrative, part elegy, and part queer coming-of-age story, *Catrachos* finds its own religion in fantastic figures such as the X-Men, pop singers, and the “Queerodactyl,” which is imagined in a series of poems as a dinosaur sashaying in the shadow of an oncoming comet, insistent on surviving extinction. With exceptional energy, humor, and inventiveness, Guzmán’s debut is a devastating display of lyrical and moral complexity—an introduction to an immediately captivating, urgently needed voice.

54. *I Always Carry My Bones* by Felicia Zamora (University of Iowa Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

The poems in *I Always Carry My Bones* tackle the complex ideation of home—the

place where horrid and beautiful intertwine and carve a being into existence—for marginalized and migrant peoples. Felicia Zamora explores how familial history echoes inside a person and the ghosts of lineage dwell in a body. Sometimes we haunt. Sometimes we are the haunted. Pierced by an estranged relationship to Mexican culture, the ethereal ache of an unknown father, the weight of racism and poverty in this country, the indentations of abuse, and a mind/physicality affected by doubt, these poems root in the search for belonging—a belonging inside and outside the flesh. This powerful collection is a message of longing for a sanctuary of self, the dwelling of initial energy needed for the collective fight for human rights.

55. *Exquisite Bloody, Beating Heart* by Courtney LeBlanc (Riot In Your Throat)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

This collection takes the reader on a journey through the injustices women face – in their careers, their daily lives, in the way they walk to their cars late at night; to smashing the patriarchy and claiming their rights over their bodies and their ideas; to a love better left remembered; to eventually finding a balance with a love that stands up and fights beside the poet.

Courtney LeBlanc's *Exquisite Bloody, Beating Heart* understands that the body "is a war / zone," especially, the female body, which LeBlanc explores through the lens of fairy tales, the story of Eve, her own journey through girlhood, womanhood, destruction, rebirth, and self-discovery. Each word in each poem is as necessary and life-giving as a heartbeat.

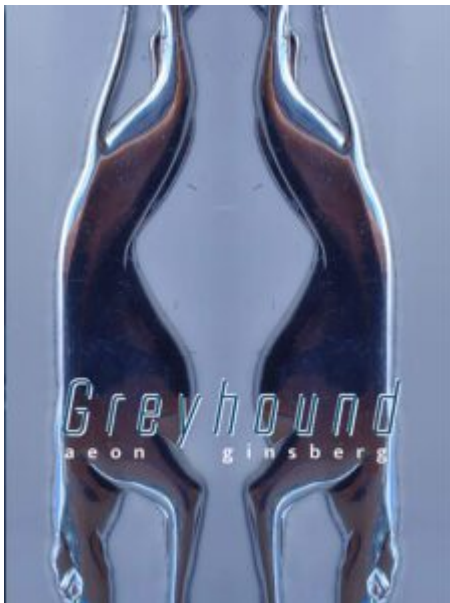
56. *If This is the Age We End Discovery* by Rosebud Ben-Oni (Alice James Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Rosebud Ben-Oni's *If This Is The Age We End Discovery* is a work of speculative Latinx and Jewish poetry. Combining Kabbalah, Gematria, science, and experimental punctuation, the collection explores how nullification and chaotic energy can lead to transformation.

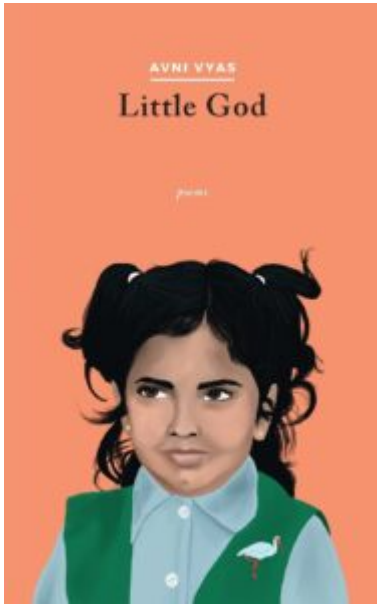
57. *Greyhound* by Aeon Ginsburg (Noemi Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [SPD](#)

A memoir-in-verse about the links between movement and how it influences gender identity, perception, and performance, utilizing the bus terminal as a throughway to discuss transition. The book discusses issues that deal with safety, passing, rural and city queerness, police and prison abolition, and autonomy. GREYHOUND is one poem, routed in the authors life, that is the journey and the destination and how those two places are linked through the movement between each other. It is a book for outcasts, true-freaks, weird-o's, and forever and always anyone trans.

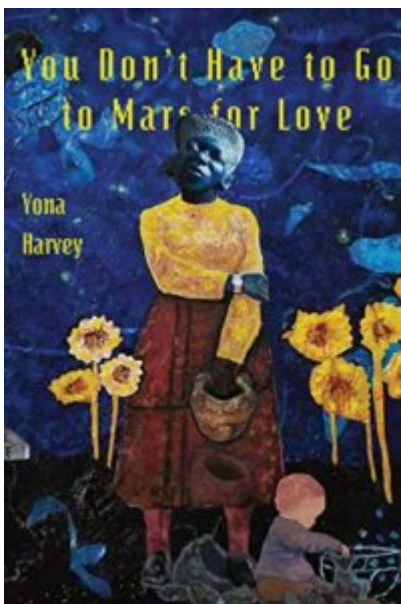
58. *Little God* by Avni Vyas (Burrow Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In the wake of a miscarriage, a speaker looks outside of herself for a sign. In looking through her past, the figure of Little God arrives to shape-shift grief into self-knowledge. Unlike benevolent deities who receive prayers and bestow blessings, Little God offers faulty insight and callous love. Through these poems, Little God explores family, diaspora, grief, loss, and landscape. Set in southwest Florida, the Gulf of Mexico, ibises, and manatees echo possible lives that never arrive in the form one expects. These poems negotiate finding one's place in the world, and the courage to leave that place. With original illustrations by Mimi Cirbusova.

59. *You Don't Have to Go to Mars for Love* by Yona Harvey (Four Way Books, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

The poems of award-winning poet Yona Harvey's much anticipated *You Don't Have to Go to Mars for Love* follow an unnamed protagonist on her multidimensional, Afro-futuristic journey. Her story stretches the boundaries normally constraining a black, female body like hers. Half-superhero, half-secret-identity, she encounters side-slipping, speculative realities testing her in poems that appear like the panels of a comic book. Music directs readers through large and small emotional arcs, constantly retributed by lyric experimentation. Harvey layers her poems with a chorus of women's voices. Her artful use of refrain emphasizes the protagonist's meaning making and doubling back: "Who am I to say? The eye is often mistaken. Or is it the mind? Always eager to interpret." Our hero is captured, escapes, scuba dives, goes interstellar, and she emerges on the other end of her journey renewed, invoking the gods: "taunt the sharks. & when the glaciers get to melting, / all God's River's we shall haunt."

60. *Winter Phoenix: Testimonies in Verse* by Sophia Terazawa (Deep Vellum, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

A book of testimonies in verse, *Winter Phoenix* is a collection of poems written loosely after the form of an international war crimes tribunal. The poet, a daughter of a Vietnamese refugee, navigates the epigenetics of trauma passed down, and across, the archives of war, dislocation, and witness, as she repeatedly asks, "Why did you just stand there and say nothing?" Here, the space of accusation becomes both lyric and machine, an "investigation" which takes place in the margins of martial law, the source material being soldiers' testimonies given during three internationally publicized events, in this order—The Incident on Hill 192 (1966, Phù Mỹ District, Vietnam); The Winter Soldier Investigation (1971, Detroit, USA); and The Russell Tribunal (1966, Stockholm, Sweden; 1967, Roskilde, Denmark). Ultimately, however, *Winter Phoenix* is a document of resilience. Language decays. A ceremony eclipses its trial, and the radical possibilities of a single scream rises from annihilation.

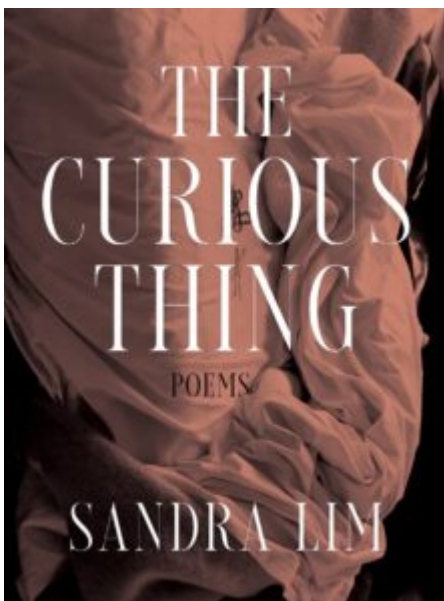
61. *Wild Peach* by s*an d. henry-smith (Futurepoem, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [SPD](#)

WILD PEACH is a multisensory roaming of landscape and interior, often (but not always) in near stillness and varying light. The power to disrupt and obscure language is an essential tool in protecting this multimodal endeavor; in this project, poetry and photography warm the taste of memory, exploring nonlinear, non-narrative time through the sonic offerings of image and text –and the Outdoors, the interpersonal, and all offered onto. Black Secrecy demands and provides a spirit of collaboration, study, and play. Rest without guilt. Two steppin’ in the parking lot. Screaming into the night sky. In the garden and the noise, what must be learned from the garble? We listen. The ocean is always just over your shoulder.

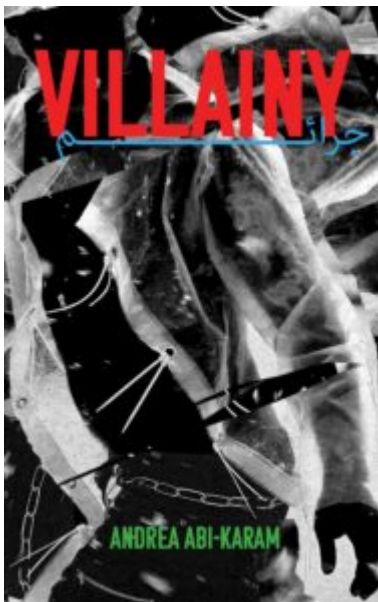
62. *The Curious Thing* by Sandra Lim (W.W. Norton, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Truthful, sensuous, and intellectually relentless, the poems in *The Curious Thing* are compelling meditations on love, art making, solitude, female fate, and both the mundane and serious principles of life. Sandra Lim's poetry displays stinging wit and a tough-minded approach to her own experiences: She speaks with Jean Rhys about beauty, encounters the dark loneliness that can exist inside a relationship, and discovers a coiled anger on a hot summer day. An extended poem sequence slyly revolves the meanings of finding oneself astray in midlife. A steely strength courses through the volume's myriad discoveries—Lim's lucidity and tenderness form a striking complement to her remarkable metaphors and the emotional clamor of her material. Animated by a sense of reckoning and a piercing inwardness, these anti-sentimental poems nevertheless celebrate the passionate and empathetic subjective life.

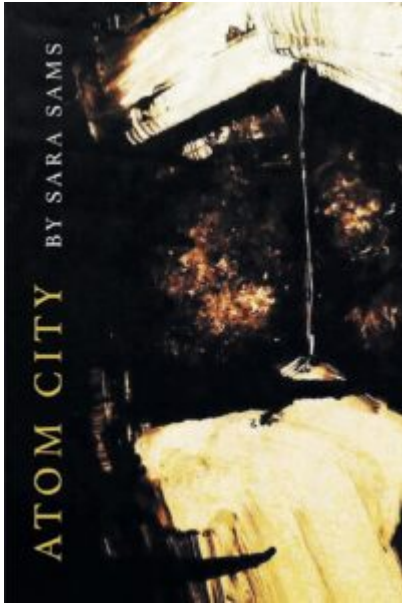
63. *Villainy* by Andrea Abi-Karam (Nightboat Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Nightboat Books](#)

Andrea Abi-Karam answers the call to action for poetry itself to become the radical accomplice it was destined to be in their second book, *Villainy*. In order to live through the grief of the Ghostship Fire & the Muslim Ban, *Villainy* foments political action in public spaces, and indexes the various emotional states, such as rage, revelry, fear, grief, and desire to which queers must tend during protest. In scenes loaded with glitter, broken glass, and cum, Abi-Karam insists that in order to shatter the rising influence of new fascism we must embrace the collective work of antifascists, street medics, and queer exhibitionists and that the safety that we risk is reckless and necessary. Disruptive and demanding, these punk poems embody direct action and invite the audience into the desire-filled slippage between public sex and demonstration. At heart, *Villainy* aims to destroy all levels of hierarchy to establish a participatory, temporary autonomous zone in which the targeted other can thrive.

64. *Atom City* by Sara Sams (Finishing Line Press, 2021)

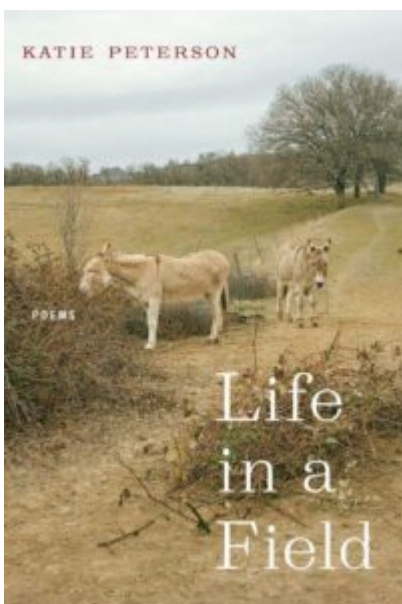


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

“Sara Sams’ *Atom City* opens with a caution, “But Think, Are You Authorized to Tell It.” In poems of sharp wit and riveting investigation, tell it she does! Aware of the irony of “grow[ing] up happy / in a town that knitted / mushroom clouds,” Sams documents government duplicity and the revisionist history of developing the atomic bomb. The volume is punctuated by poems rich in details of her Appalachian roots and a magnificent series about local legend “Prophet John,” who foresaw the bomb a century ago. Exploratory poems from the “vast archive of the atoms” are tempered by tender poems of loss and love. This is a bold debut by a major new poet.”

– Cynthia Hogue, author of *In June the Labyrinth*

65. *Life in a Field* by Katie Peterson (Omnidawn, 2021)

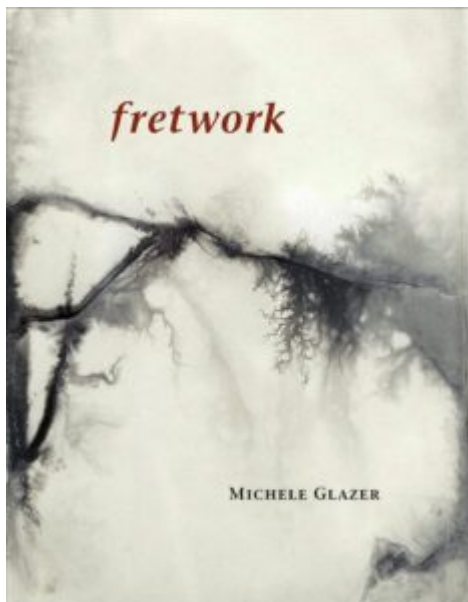


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

A lyric fable, *Life in a Field* intersperses Katie Peterson’s slow-moving,

cinematic, and sensual writing with three folios of photographs by Young Suh. Introspection, wish, dream, and memory mark this tale, which is set in a location resembling twenty-first-century California—with vistas and orchards threatened by drought and fires. This is also a place of enchantment, a fairy-tale landscape where humans and animals live as equals. As the girl and the donkey grow up, they respond to the difficulties of contemporary civilization, asking a question that meets our existential moment: What do you do with the story you didn't wish for? A narrator's voice combines candor with distance, attempting to find a path through our familiar strife, toward a future that feels all but impossible, and into what remains of beauty and pleasure. *Life in a Field* tries to reverse our accelerating destruction of the natural world, reminding us of "the cold clarity we need to continue on this earth."

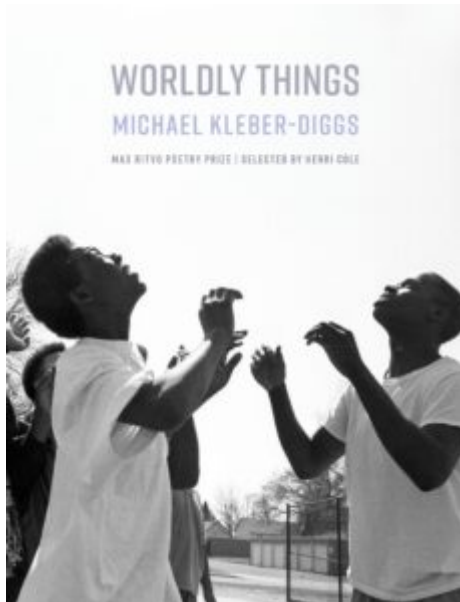
66. *fretwork* by Michele Glazer (University of Iowa Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Fretwork hazards a response to its dilemma by turning, skeptically and resiliently, toward the materials of lyric poetry and empathetic action, however fragmented and fragile. Glazer's poems are sculpted word by word, their forms evoking both organic process and machined exactness. Their voice blends command and humility, openness and terseness, generosity and rigor, gravity and mordant humor.

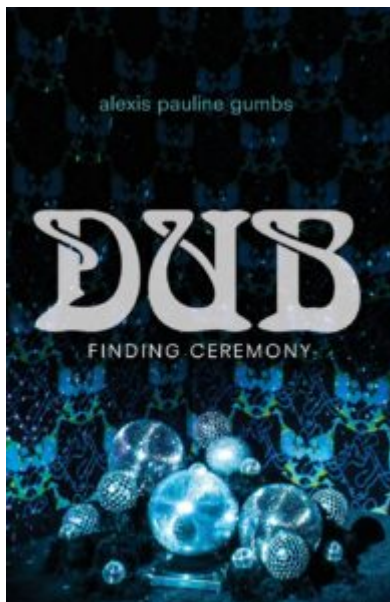
67. *Worldly Things* by Michael Kleber-Diggs (Milkweed Editions, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In these poems, Kleber-Diggs names delight in the same breath as loss. Moments suffused with love—teaching his daughter how to drive; watching his grandmother bake a cake; waking beside his beloved to ponder trumpet mechanics—couple with moments of wrenching grief—a father’s life ended by a gun; mourning children draped around their mother’s waist; Freddie Gray’s death in police custody. Even in the refuge-space of dreams, a man calls the police on his Black neighbor.

68. *Dub* by Alexis Pauline Gumbs (Duke University Press, 2020)

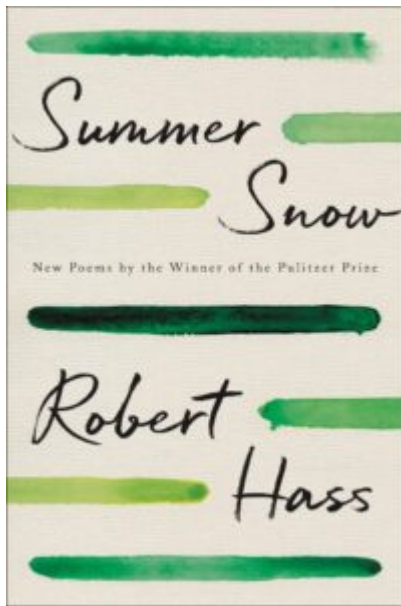


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

The concluding volume in a poetic trilogy, Alexis Pauline Gumbs’s *Dub: Finding Ceremony* takes inspiration from theorist Sylvia Wynter, dub poetry, and ocean life to offer a catalog of possible methods for remembering, healing, listening, and living otherwise. In these prose poems, Gumbs channels the voices of her ancestors, including whales, coral, and oceanic bacteria, to tell stories of diaspora, indigeneity, migration, blackness,

genius, mothering, grief, and harm. Tracing the origins of colonialism, genocide, and slavery as they converge in Black feminist practice, Gumbs explores the potential for the poetic and narrative undoing of the knowledge that underpins the concept of Western humanity. Throughout, she reminds us that dominant modes of being human and the oppression those modes create can be challenged, and that it is possible to make ourselves and our planet anew.

69. *Summer Snow* by Robert Hass (Ecco, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

A new volume of poetry from Robert Hass is always an event. In *Summer Snow*, his first collection of poems since 2010, Hass further affirms his position as one of our most highly regarded living poets. Hass's trademark careful attention to the natural world, his subtle humor, and the delicate but wide-ranging eye he casts on the human experience are fully on display in his masterful collection. Touching on subjects including the poignancy of loss, the serene and resonant beauty of nature, and the mutability of desire, Hass exhibits his virtuosic abilities, expansive intellect, and tremendous readability in one of his most ambitious and formally brilliant collections to date.

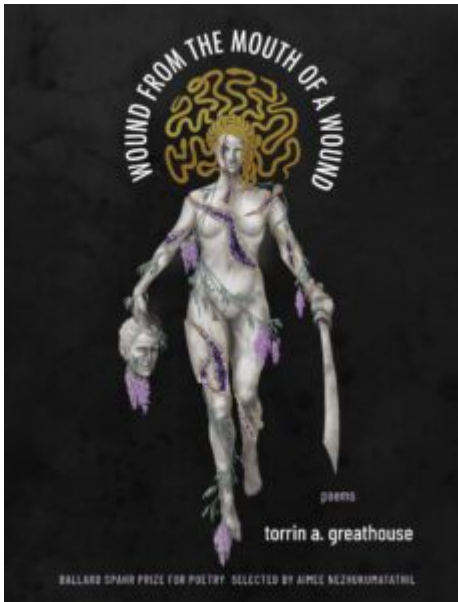
70. *The Way a Line Hallucinates Its Own Linearity* by Danielle Vogel (Red Hen Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Danielle Vogel’s newest collection creates a latticework for repair—the repairing of past trauma, the calling-into-presence of a dissociated self—but does so while keeping the material of this net of thinking in a fragmented, diaphanous state, glowing in the space between the poem and essay. Across three sections of “displacements,” “miniatures,” and “volume,” Vogel initiates readers into the séance of the book; she asks the reader to hold vigil for the most crucial phase of its composition, which can only happen when the reader and she meet at the site of the page, within a “new, interrupted unity.” In *The Way a Line Hallucinates Its Own Linearity*, accord—writing *with*, reading *with*—is always a verb, always kinetic, alchemical, and alive. “It only takes one letter on the page,” Vogel writes, “and we are already inside one another’s lungs.” To consent to walk through these spaces is to give up that part of you that wishes to remain anonymous and un-entrained. You will be grateful that you did.

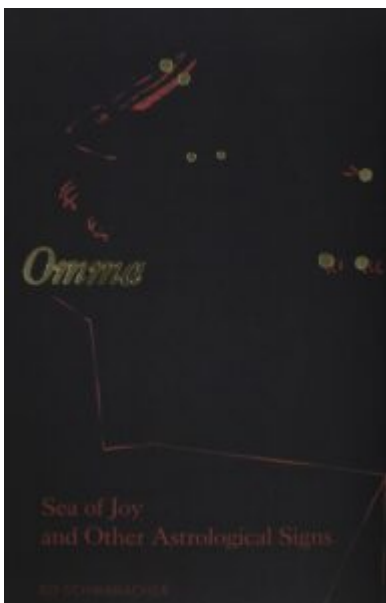
**71. *Wound from the Mouth of a Wound* by torrin a. greathouse
(Milkweed Editions, 2020)**



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

“Some girls are not made,” torrin a. greathouse writes, “but spring from the dirt.” Guided by a devastatingly precise hand, *Wound from the Mouth of a Wound*—selected by Aimee Nezhukumatathil as the winner of the 2020 Ballard Spahr Prize for Poetry—challenges a canon that decides what shades of beauty deserve to live in a poem. greathouse celebrates “buckteeth & ulcer.” She odes the pulp of a bedsore. She argues that the vestigial is not devoid of meaning, and in kinetic and vigorous language, she honors bodies the world too often wants dead.

72. *Omnia, Sea of Joy and Other Astrological Signs* by Bo Schwabacher (Tinderbox Editions, 2021)

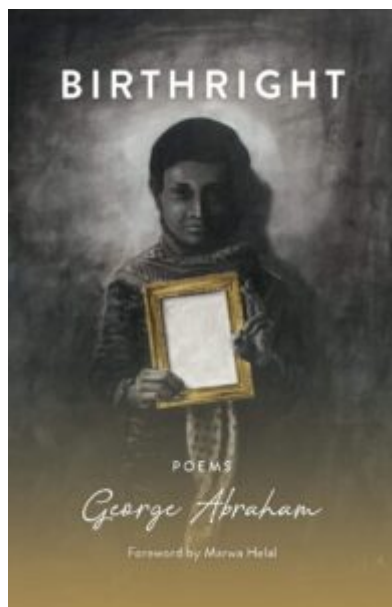


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [SPD](#)

Bo Schwabacher’s *OMMA, SEA OF JOY AND OTHER ASTROLOGICAL SIGNS* is a book of equal parts defiance and grief. The Korean adoptee narrator speaks from a place often heavy with silence. Short lines suspended in white space speak to the tenuous grip, the narrow stairs that allow the narrator to contain

herself, with great effort. Madness, spiritual cannibalism, and grief are ritualized, even washed here; each poem seems to bleed and then purify what was invoked in the last. These poems are exquisite—spiritual drama inside the charged theater of language.” – Sun Yung Shin

73. *Birthright* by George Abraham (Button Poetry, 2020)

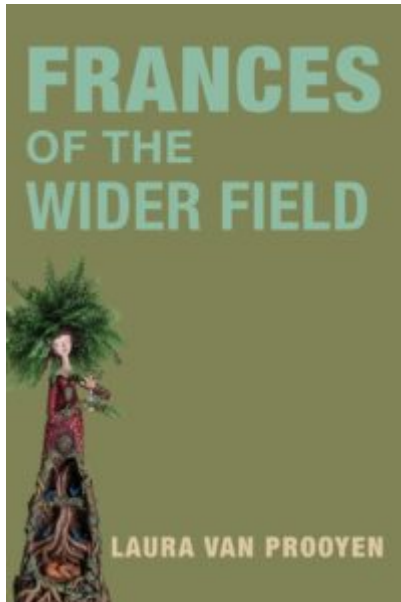


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Abraham’s highly anticipated debut *Birthright* constructs a dialogue in which “every pronoun is a Free Palestine.” Through poems of immense emotion, and the use of alluring form, Abraham crafts work that examines what we come to own by existing.

Birthright begs readers to stay, to stay lucid, to stay alive, to stay present in this very moment; as it knows now is all we are guaranteed. As trauma seeps through generations, can the body deconstruct its own inheritance? In a world that only takes, what is owed? What is your *Birthright*, and where is home?

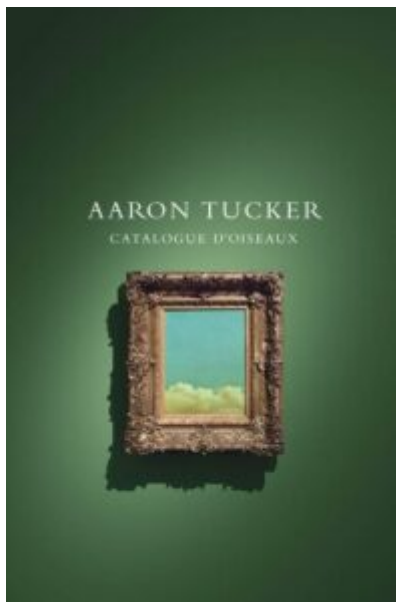
74. *Frances of the Wider Field* by Laura Van Prooyen (Lily Poetry Review, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Frances of the Wider Field is about mothers, daughters, time, mortality—the loss of memory and meaning. Van Prooyen’s poems have clarity and ferocity, a wild imaginative grace that captures the joy and strangeness of our most intimate and familiar experiences. Frances appears part god, part curious child, part the small solitary voice inside. Van Prooyen asks “Is a sigh a word? Is a body a word? / Is a tongue the beginning?” She tells us “Memory cannot undo the future. Frances, if I said, /tonight I thank the seven sisters, it’s really / the blue dust of God between them. Or you.”

75. *Catalogue d’oiseaux* by Aaron Tucker (Book*hug, 2021)

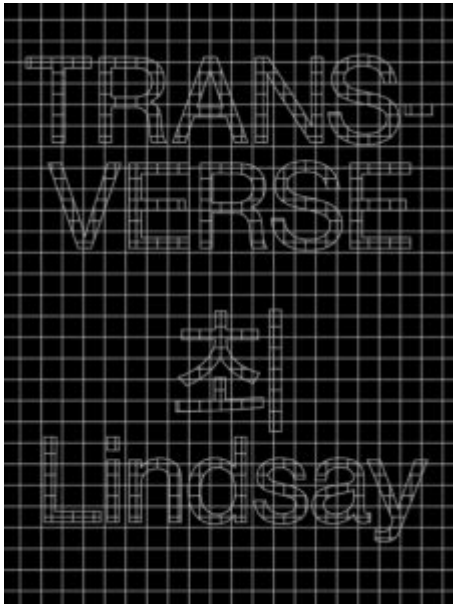


[Amazon](#) / [Book*hug](#)

Catalogue d’oiseaux recounts a year in the life of a couple separated by distance, carefully documenting time spent together and apart. When reunited, they embark on travels across the globe—from Toronto to Berlin, Porto to the Yukon. This expansive poem moves sensually through small, intimate spaces and the larger world alike. Traced through art, architecture, and the cultural

life of various cities, this stunning celebration of love lives between geographies and chronologies as a kaleidoscopic gathering of the many fractals that make up a couple's life.

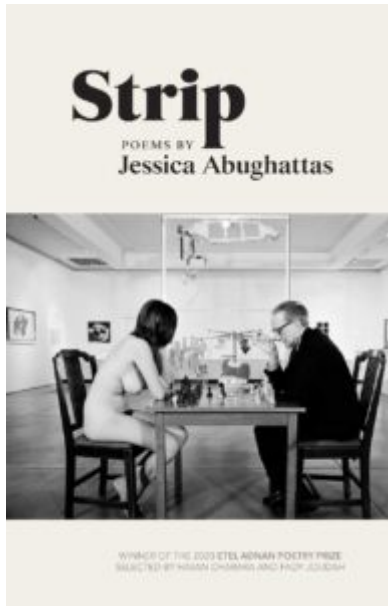
76. *Transverse* by Lindsay Choi (Futurepoem, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Futurepoem](#)

TRANSVERSE weaves between languages and forms, cultivating the questions and lacunae that emerge in their encounter. In the three parts that make up the book, music, mathematics, philosophical logic, and lyric convention come in and out of relation to press upon questions of form and meaning-making, and attend to the moments when coherence appears to take place or dissolve. Following sonic and visual echos, practices and plays upon citation, *TRANSVERSE* traces and distorts logics of allegory, repetition, and representation, moving towards an inquiry into the nature of our encounter with and recognition of the world.

77. *Strip* by Jessica Abughattas (University of Arkansas Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Winner of the 2020 Etel Adnan Poetry Prize, Jessica Abughattas's *Strip* is a captivating debut about desire and dispossession and that tireless poetic metaphor—the body. Audacious and clear-eyed, plainspoken and brassy, Abughattas's poems are songs that break free from confinement as they span the globe from Hollywood to Palestine.

78. *Reparations Now!* by Ashley M. Jones (Hub City, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Reparations Now! asks for what's owed. In formal and non-traditional poems, award-winning poet Ashley M. Jones calls for long-overdue reparations to the Black descendants of enslaved people in the United States of America. In this, her third collection, Jones deftly takes on the worst of today—state-sanctioned violence, pandemic-induced crises, and white silence—all while uplifting Black joy. These poems explore trauma past and present, cultural and personal: the lynching of young, pregnant Mary Turner in 1918; the current white nationalist political movement; a case of infidelity. These

poems, too, are a celebration of Black life and art: a beloved grandmother in rural Alabama, the music of James Brown and Al Green, and the soil where okra, pole beans, and collards thrive thanks to her father's hands

79. *Futurepanic* by Amish Trivedi (co•im•press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Sweeping and subversive and anxious and heartfelt, *FUTUREPANIC* by Amish Trivedi is a Four Quartets for the Millennial set. Infused with the nervous energies of the past half decade, when living with macro-tragedy and dread have become more ingrained in day-to-day functioning than ever, Trivedi's third book of poetry employs a deliberate and plaintive lyric mode across five unfolding sections to wrestle with how much of the psyche one can let untether before the self faces annihilation. The poet confronts the gathering terrors that creep forth from simultaneously pondering vast, heady concepts like time and futurity in conjunction with more localized, proximate concerns like whether one will face the looming specter of a mass shooting the next time one goes to a box store, concert, movie theater, grocery store, school, or other public space. In *FUTUREPANIC*, Trivedi questions whether the collective grief and guilt of our shared transgressions and fears are all-consuming or if we can use humanity's boundless potential for creativity to rouse an alternative we've never known enough of to embrace fully—a moment's peace.

80. *A Symmetry* by Ari Banias (W.W. Norton, 2021)

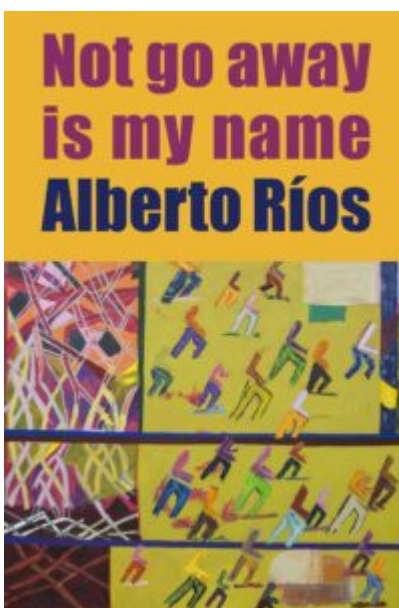


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Unsettling the myth of an ordered reality through uncanny repetitions and elliptical inquiry, *A Symmetry* considers the inscriptions of nationhood, language, and ancestral memory. A window washer wields an impossibly long mop in the mirrored pane of a Greek government building; strangers mesmerize us while they fold sheets into perfect corners. “Artists who design border wall prototypes are artists / who say they ‘leave politics out of it.’”

In meditative wanderings and compressed, enigmatic lyrics, Ari Banias probes the sometimes-touching, often-violent mundane to draw out the intimate, social proportions of our material world.

81. *Not Go Away Is My Name* by Alberto Ríos (Copper Canyon Press, 2020)

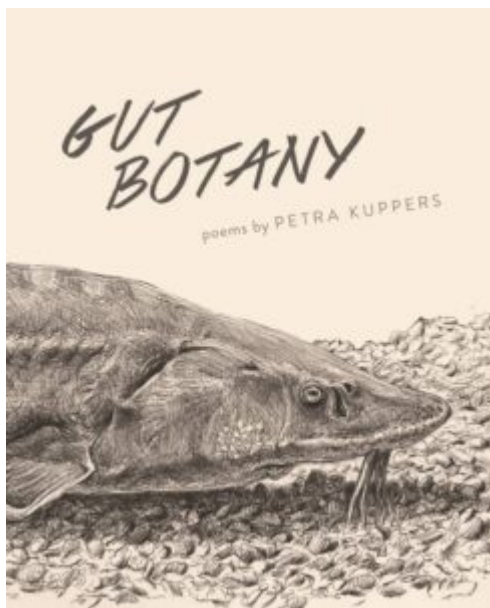


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Resistance and persistence collide in Alberto Ríos’s sixteenth book, *Not Go Away Is My Name*, a book about past and present, changing and unchanging,

letting go and holding on. The borderline between Mexico and the U.S. looms large, and Ríos sheds light on and challenges our sensory experiences of everyday objects. At the same time, family memories and stories of the Sonoran desert weave throughout as Ríos travels in duality: between places, between times, and between lives. In searching for and treasuring what ought to be remembered, Ríos creates an ode to family life, love and community, and realizes “All I can do is not go away. / Not go away is my name.”

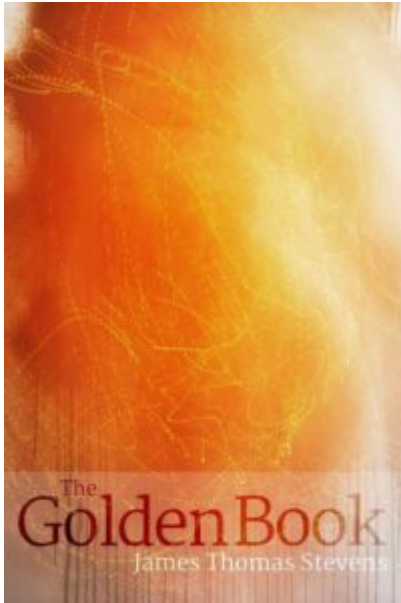
82. *Gut Botany* by Petra Kuppers (Wayne State University Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

“*Gut Botany* charts my body / language living on indigenous land as a white settler and traveler,” Petra Kuppers writes in the notes of her new poetry collection. Using a perfect cocktail of surrealist and situationist techniques, Kuppers submits to the work and to the land, moving through ancient fish, wounded bodies, and the space around her. The book invites the reader to navigate their own body through the peaks and pitfalls of pain, survival, sensual joy, and healing.

83. *The Golden Book* by James Thomas Stevens (SplitLevel Texts, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [SPD](#)

“James Thomas Stevens’s exquisite collection of poetry THE GOLDEN BOOK generates its capacious lyric from its ‘form(s) of encounter’ and how these encounters build intimate lyric addresses with fertile syntax and deep innovation; resourcing a grammar until its signification astounds. Stevens’s poems have a keen, sensorial candor, full of a private and conscientious recall: ‘Single memories or sensory stimuli are sometimes set off, as entire histories.’ And then there’s its sentence level where the poems truly are ‘In like lions, out like lambs.’” – Prageeta Sharma

84. *Some of the Times* by Gina Myers (Barrelhouse Books, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Those who are familiar with Gina Myers’s previous work will be pleased to see *SOME OF THE TIMES* build from the same base of social consciousness while also pushing in new directions. Myers captures what it feels like to live in this

era of late capitalism in a way that few other poets do. This is a book for those who suffer and endure and laugh about the suffering later.

85. *Some Girls Walk into the Country They Are From* by Sawako Nakayasu (Wave Books, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Wave Books](#)

In Sawako Nakayasu’s first poetry collection in seven years, an unsettling diaspora of “girls” is deployed as poetic form, as reclamation of diminutive pseudo-slur, and as characters that take up residence between the thick border zones of language, culture, and shifting identity. Written in response to Nakayasu’s 2017 return to the US, this maximalist collection invites us to reexamine our own complicity in reinforcing literary convention. The book radicalizes notions of “translation” as both process and product, running a kind of linguistic interference that is intimate, feminist, and playfully jagged.

86. *Blood on the Fog* by Tongo Eisen-Martin (City Lights Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

A rhapsodic follow-up to Tongo Eisen-Martin's *Heaven is All Goodbyes*, this collection further explores themes of love and loss, family and faith, refracted through the lens of Black experience. These poems honor intellectual tradition and ancestral knowledge while blazing an entirely new path, recording and replaying the poet's sensory travels through America, from its packed metropolises to desolate anytowns. Radical, outraged, knowing, wry, and deeply humane, these are poems of survival that soar with a vision of collective liberation.

87. *Ghost in a Black Girl's Throat* by Khalisa Rae (Red Hen Press, 2021)

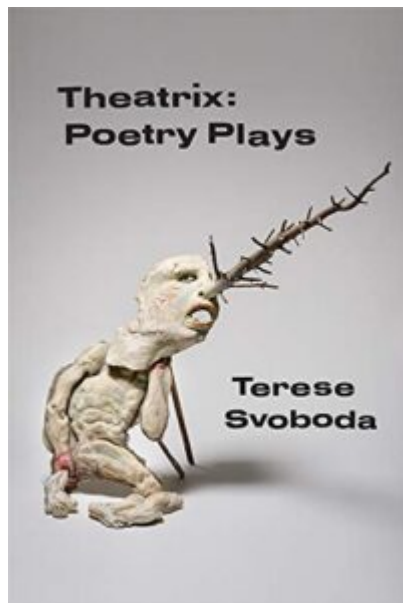


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Ghost in a Black Girl's Throat is a heart-wrenching reconciliation and confrontation of the living, breathing ghosts that awaken Black women each day. This debut poetry collection summons multiple hauntings—ghosts of matriarchs that came before, those that were slain, and those that continue

to speak to us, but also those horrors women of color strive to put to rest. *Ghost in a Black Girl's Throat* examines the haunting feeling of facing past demons while grappling with sexism, racism, and bigotry. They are all present: ancestral ghosts, societal ghosts, and spiritual, internal hauntings. This book calls out for women to speak their truth in hopes of settling the ghosts or at least being at peace with them.

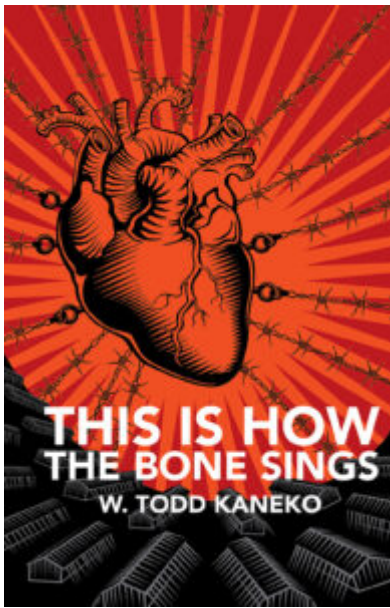
88. *Theatrix: Poetry Plays* by Terese Svoboda (Anhinga Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Let's hear it for play! We've already got COVID and malfeasance in politics and police brutality. In Terese Svoboda's eighth book of poetry, *Theatrix: Poetry Plays*, Shakespeare, Beckett, Hair, absurdist theater, the usher (the Fall of the House of) and theater made behind bedsheets ghost through this book to explode our notion of subject and the fourth wall. Though the book also includes a Title IX report, the torture of a South Sudanese governor, Chernobyl, the murder of a NYC prostitute, and god-knows-what those schipperkes were doing for the French resistance—everywhere the poetic line claims its place as a stage for the world. Even the title puns on "tricks" as "poetry plays" at the genre of drama, and the suffix "trix" does the job of turning the masculine POV into the feminine (e.g. aviator, aviatrix). Elements of dramatic writing like interruptions or asides found inside brackets and character names cast in majuscule punctuate, but do not dominate the book as the poetry slides in and through drama. Linked by an absurdist tone that combines the surreal, the political, and broad slapstick, often in one fell swoop, the poems in *Theatrix: Poetry Plays* don't want to be "put on," they want to play in the reader's head, the mind being the greatest stage of all.

89. *This Is How the Bone Sings* by W. Todd Kaneko (Black Lawrence Press, 2020)

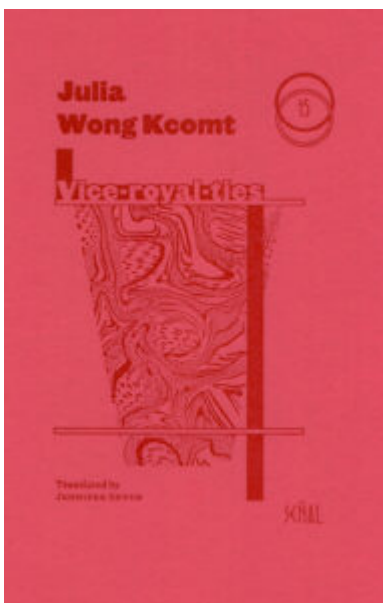


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [SPD](#)

THIS IS HOW THE BONE SINGS by W. Todd Kaneko carries the pulse of ancient lament through the boneyards of war and unspeakable trauma. This lyric collection of profound beauty and grief reminds us to share our tales of generational trauma and topography-shaping our individual and collective memories-in place of forgotten histories.

– Karen An-hwei Lee

90. *Vice-royal-ties* by Julia Wong Kcomt, Translated by Jennifer Shyue (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2021)

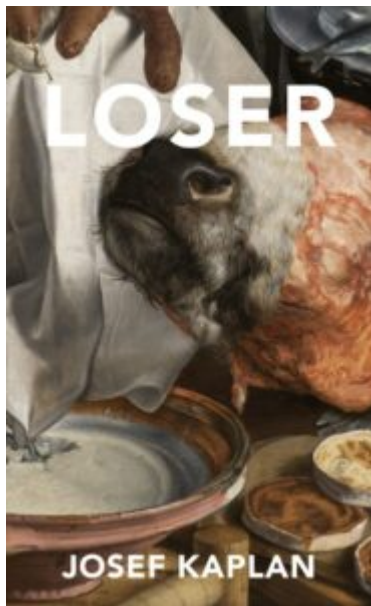


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [SPD](#)

The title of *BI-REY-NATO*, Julia Wong Kcomt's sixth poetry collection, is a

homonym for “virreinato” or “viceroyalty,” but can also be broken down into its component words: “bi” (bi/two), “rey” (king), and “nato” (born). Likewise, the poems in this chapbook play with binaries: in power, love, language, country, identity. The salt in the air of seaside Lima, the setting of the first section, condenses into the salt that trails through the second section, set mostly in Argentina.

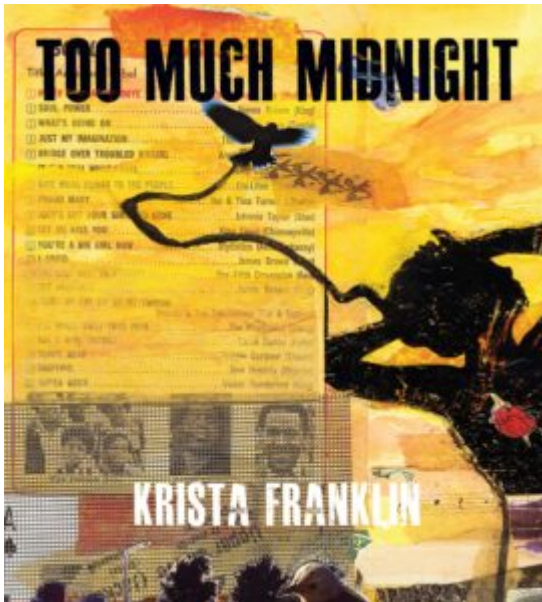
91. *Loser* by Josef Kaplan (Make Now, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Across the two cascading; Karamazovian poems that comprise *LOSER*; Josef Kaplan fans the spark of revolution in the face of doom; that catastrophic thing we’ve learned to accept as the present. Kaplan offers a sinuous depiction of moral perception as it aims to imagine—through a ribald performance of defeat; and a coiling; frothing-at-the-mouth apologia—political mobilization and alliance. With unassuming tenderness; these poems remake the world; ‘where / defeat / makes / possible / the shape / of whatever;’ by turning nostalgia into dust; and resentment into something far stranger and richer—something like a promise. —Shiv Kotecha

92. *Too Much Midnight* by Krista Franklin (Haymarket Books, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Krista Franklin draws on Pan African histories, Black Surrealism, Afrofuturism, pop culture, art history, and the historical and present-day micro-to-macro violence inflicted upon Black people and other people of color, working to forge imaginative spaces for radical possibilities and visions of liberation.

Featuring 30 poems, 30 artworks, an author statement and an interview, *Too Much Midnight* chronicles the intersections between art and life, art and writing, the historical and the speculative, cultural and personal identity, the magical and the mundane.

93. *Pregrets* by Anselm Berrigan (Black Square Editions, 2021)

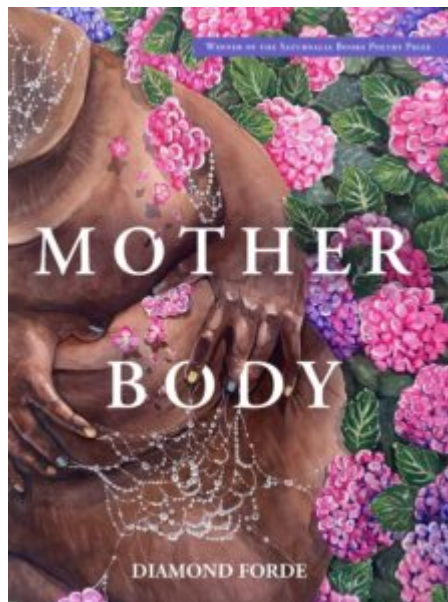


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [SPD](#)

“In the world of Anselm Berrigan sketchiness is next to godliness and repeated heavy-lifting becomes a pleasure. *PREGRETS* has the feel of wandering

a giant armory filled with enigmatic objects and pointed memories. Dust motes in daylight betray a thin path forward so the 'tongue' of the book seems in constant peril, addictively so. 'Red copter rises slicing a scraper into outer cubicle dreams...' Possessed of a haunted style that moves beyond surface. Fathomless." –Cedar Sigo

94. *Mother Body* by Diamond Forde (Saturnalia Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Mother Body is an intersectional exploration of the trauma and agency held within a body defined by its potential to mother. As *Mother Body* unfolds, it tasks its reader to understand the expected and unexpected manifestations of motherhood, through menstruation and womb work, but also generational, societal, and literary mothering. With a variety of forms and modes, these poems unpack the experiences of a fat, black woman's body while also manifesting joy, resistance, and celebration.

95. *Negotiations* by Destiny O. Birdsong (Tin House, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

What makes a self? In her remarkable debut collection of poems, Destiny O. Birdsong writes fearlessly towards this question. Laced with ratchetry, yet hungering for its own respectability, *Negotiations* is about what it means to live in this America, about Cardi B and top-tier journal publications, about autoimmune disease and the speaker's intense hunger for her own body—a surprise of self-love in the aftermath of both assault and diagnosis. It's a series of love letters to black women, who are often singled out for abuse and assault, silencing and tokenism, fetishization and cultural appropriation in ways that throw the rock, then hide the hand. It is a book about tenderness and an indictment of people and systems that attempt to narrow black women's lives, their power. But it is also an examination of complicity—both a narrative and a black box warning for a particular kind of self-healing that requires recognizing culpability when and where it exists.

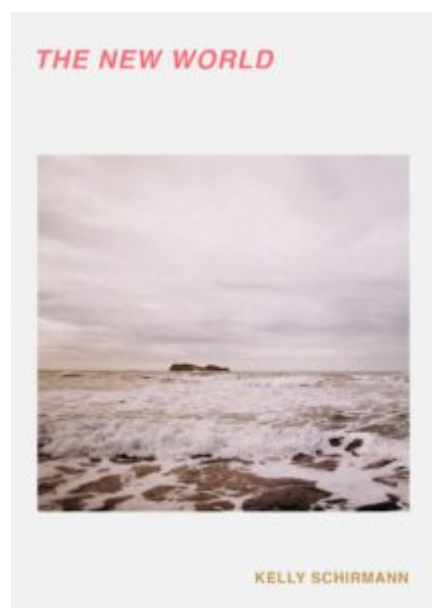
96. *about:blank* by Tracy Fuad (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In *about:blank*, Tracy Fuad builds a poetics of contemporary dissociation. Funny, plaintive, and cutting, this formally inventive debut probes alienation in place and in language through the author's consideration of her own relationship to Iraqi Kurdistan. *about:blank*—the title of which is the universal URL for a blank web page—complicates questions of longing and belonging. Interrogating the language of internet chatrooms, Yelp reviews, and the Kurdish dictionary, the poems here leap surprisingly between subjects to find new meaning.

97. *The New World* by Kelly Schirmann (Black Ocean, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

A hybrid collection of poetry and prose, *The New World* follows the attempts, failures, and re-attempts at understanding and articulating an era of immense social upheaval, political corruption, and environmental consequence. In five distinct sections, the book refracts, explores and investigates these global themes through the realm of the personal and private. Old journals and notes are revisited as a way of understanding the self and its various revisions and mistakes. *The New World* tells the story of escapism and arrival, growth and decay, and despair and optimism as they occur, often simultaneously, within the mind of our narrator. The book asks, “How do you write poems in a country like this?”, inviting every reader to take stock of themselves, and to reassess the ways “One human world / [empties] completely / into the bigger one.”

98. *Like We Still Speak* by Danielle Badra (University of Arkansas Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Conversation and memory are at the heart of Danielle Badra's *Like We Still Speak*, winner of the 2021 Etel Adnan Poetry Prize. In her elegiac and formally inventive debut, Badra carries on talking with the sister and father she has lost, often setting her words alongside theirs and others' in polyphonic poems that can be read in multiple directions. Badra invites the reader to engage in this communal space where she investigates inheritance, witnessing, intimacy, and survival. "This is a deeply spiritual book, all the more so because of its clarity and humility. Yet, we cannot walk away from the addictive command that so many of these poems ask us to follow: to read them along plural paths whose order changes while their immeasurable spirit remains unbound. Each poem is a singular vessel-of narratives, embodiments that correspond with memories, memories that recollect passion. Like We Still Speak is a sanctum. Inside it, we are enthralled by beauty, consoled by light, sustained by making." – Fady Joudah and Hayan Charara

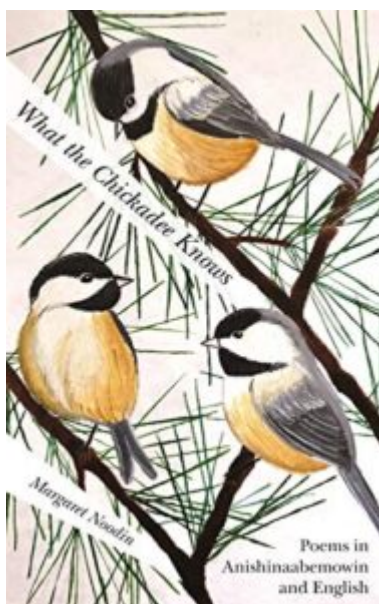
99. *Original Kink* by Jubi Arriola-Headley (Sibling Rivalry Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In *original kink*, Jubi Arriola-Headley explores kink as mythscape of promised pleasure, lush and lustral, kink as Godzilla's desire for softness and the speaker gone "starburst," kink as "the sun-soaked / surface of impossible kick" and "something loose enough / to dance in." At once soliloquy, praise song, and injunction, *original kink* divines the brutal offices and beauteous comforts of syntax, street corners, and superheroes as sites for Black and queer (un)becomings. Accompanied by Eve, Isaac Newton, and a cotillion of daddies, Arriola-Headley writes into pleasure's beyond, questioning "What it must be / to presume *life* / to presume *tomorrow*." These poems "glutton at spring's source, / ever lovedrunk on / the insistent gush of you," and create a dazzling, multiple "We." These poems enjoin the reader—and themselves—to "Be better / than bitter. Be roiling in joy. Be."

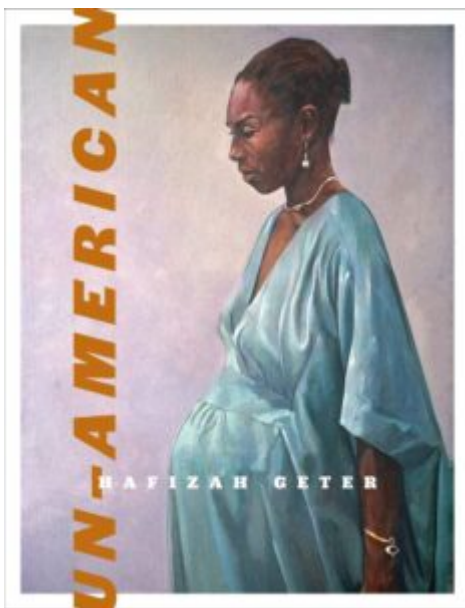
100. *What the Chickadee Knows* by Margaret Noodin (Wayne State University Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Margaret Noodin explains in the preface of her new poetry collection, *What the Chickadee Knows* (Gijigijigaaneshiinh Gikendaan), “Whether we hear *giji-giji-gaane-shii-shii* or *chick-a-dee-dee-dee* depends on how we have been taught to listen. Our world is shaped by the sounds around us and the filter we use to turn thoughts into words. The lines and images here were conceived first in Anishinaabemowin and then in English. They are an attempt to hear and describe the world according to an Anishinaabe paradigm.” The book is concerned with nature, history, tradition, and relationships, and these poems illuminate the vital place of the author’s tribe both in the past and within the contemporary world.

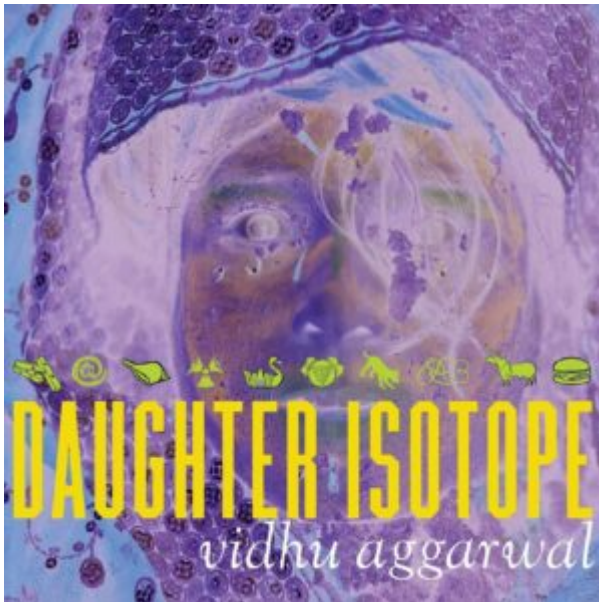
101. *Un-American* by Hafizah Geter (Wesleyan University Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Dancing between lyric and narrative, Hafizah Geter’s debut collection moves readers through the fraught internal and external landscapes—linguistic, cultural, racial, familial—of those whose lives are shaped and transformed by immigration. The daughter of a Nigerian Muslim woman and a former Southern Baptist black man, Geter charts the history of a black family of mixed citizenships through poems imbued by migration, racism, queerness, loss, and the heartbreak of trying to feel at home in a country that does not recognize you. Through her mother’s death and her father’s illnesses, Geter weaves the natural world into the discourse of grief, human interactions, and socio-political discord. This collection thrums with authenticity and heart.

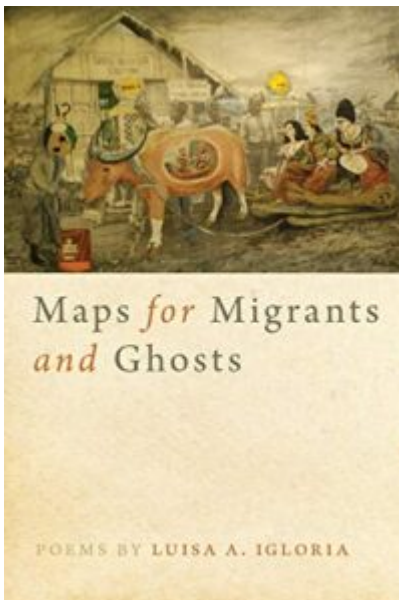
102. *Daughter Isotope* by Vidhu Aggarwal (The Operating System, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Daughter Isotope is a book of “hybrid” poems that speaks to multiple iterations of “daughter” tropes across generations, national borders, and timescales. Central to the question of the *Daughter Isotope* is: What is a collective archive? within a global, disparate, migrant cultural space. *DI* is organized in a series of four “clouds,” calling up the vague, penetrable borders of our digital lives, both searching and searchable.

103. *Maps for Migrants and Ghosts* by Luisa A. Igloria (Southern Illinois University Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In this poetry collection, Igloria brings together personal and family histories, ruminates on the waxing and waning of family fortunes, and reminds us how immigration necessitates and compels transformations. Simultaneously at home and displaced in two different worlds, the speaker lives in the past and the present, and the return to her origins is fraught with disappointment, familiarity, and alienation.

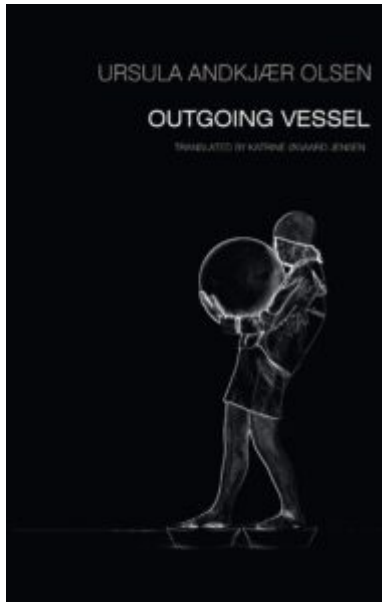
104. *Punks* by John Keene (The Song Cave, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [SPD](#)

A landmark collection of poetry by acclaimed fiction writer, translator, and MacArthur Fellow John Keene, *PUNKS: NEW & SELECTED POEMS* is a generous treasury in seven sections that spans decades and includes previously unpublished and brand new work. With depth and breadth, *PUNKS* weaves together historic narratives of loss, lust, and love. The many voices that emerge in these poems—from historic Black personalities, both familial and famous, to the poet’s friends and lovers in gay bars and bedrooms—form a cast of characters capable of addressing desire, oppression, AIDS, and grief through sorrowful songs that “we sing as hard as we live.” At home in countless poetic forms, *PUNKS* reconfirms John Keene as one of the most important voices in contemporary poetry.

105. *Outgoing Vessel* by Ursula Andkjær Olsen, Translated by Katrine Øgaard Jensen (Action Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [SPD](#)

“this is a shape I cannot remain in.” With its mutant orbs of grief and technoscientific phenomena, Ursula Andkjær Olsen’s *OUTGOING VESSEL* is the electrifying sequel to Katrine Øgaard Jensen’s award-winning translation of *THIRD MILLENNIUM HEART*. The book-length mirror poem titled *Udgående fartøj* (*OUTGOING VESSEL*) received the Danish Critics Prize for Literature in 2015. Now, for the first time in English, a radically new and resilient voice emerges—an *OUTGOING VESSEL*—from an all-consuming darkness: “INSIDE ME THERE IS A NONDEGRADABLE ORB / MY OWN PLANET.”

106. *Sky-Quake: Tremor of Heaven* by Vicente Huidobro, Translated by Ignacio Infante, Michael Leong (co•im•press, 2020)

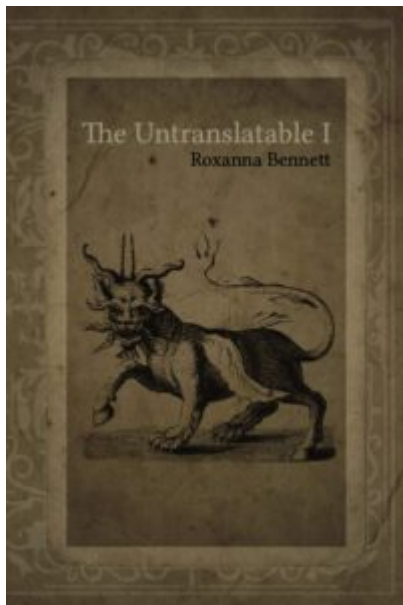


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

“Mystical, cosmic, exuberant, boisterous, otherworldly, operatic, epic, outlandish. These are just some of the adjectives that apply to this multilingual masterwork of one of the most important poets of the twentieth century. The Gods and wars and ghosts inside Huidobro’s language explode off

the page, creating an affective experience that is vertiginous, that makes the body and mind quake along with the sky, the word, the image. Huidobro is a singular writer, a legend of the global avant-garde. This sumptuous new translation is a tremendous service to contemporary poetry and to literary history.” –Daniel Borzutzky

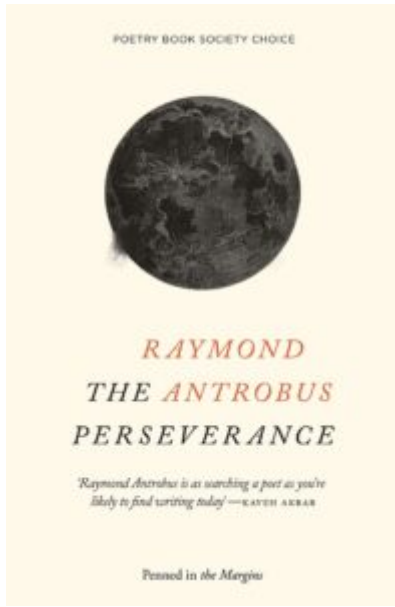
107. *The Untranslatable I* by Roxanna Bennett (Gordon Hill Press, 2021)



[Gordon Hill Press](#)

In *unmeaningable*, her previous Trillium Poetry Awards winning book with Gordon Hill Press, Roxanna Bennett renovated the North American disability poetics canon via her queer fusion of invisible and visible disability identities. *The Untranslatable I* builds on Roxanna’s acute sense of form and crippling of myth by establishing a more reflective, heartbreaking voice that asks, “Was I chosen? Is this a gift or a curse?” and provides answers not as prescribed path or cure, but as beautiful song.

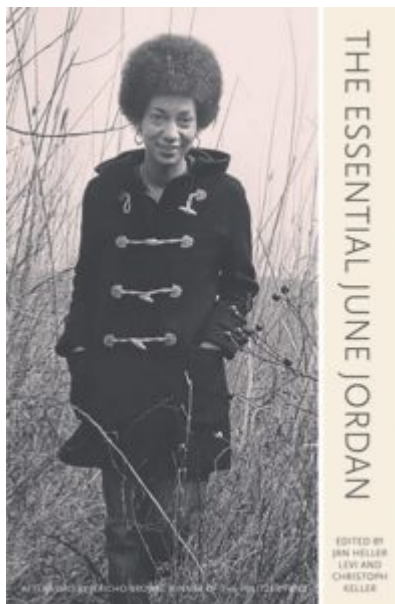
108. *The Perseverance* by Raymond Antrobus (Tin House Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

An extraordinary debut from a young British-Jamaican poet, *The Perseverance* is a book of loss, language and praise. One of the most crucial new voices to emerge from Britain, Raymond Antrobus explores the d/Deaf experience, the death of his father and the failure to communicate. Ranging across history, time zones and continents, *The Perseverance* operates in the in between of dual heritages, of form and expression emerging to show us what it means to exist, and to flourish.

109. *The Essential June Jordan* by June Jordan, Edited by Jan Heller Levi, Christoph Keller (Copper Canyon Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

The Essential June Jordan honors the enduring legacy of a poet fiercely dedicated to building a better world. In this definitive volume, introduced by Pulitzer Prize winner Jericho Brown, June Jordan's generous body of poetry is distilled and curated to represent the very best of her works. Written over the span of several decades—from *Some Changes* in 1971 to *Last Poems* in

2001–Jordan’s poems are at once of their era and tragically current, with subject matter including racist police brutality, violence against women, and the opportunity for global solidarity amongst people who are marginalized or outside of the norm. In these poems of great immediacy and radical kindness, humor and embodied candor, readers will (re)discover a voice that has inspired generations of contemporary poets to write their truths. June Jordan is a powerful voice of the time-honored movement for justice, a poet for the ages. Introduced by Jericho Brown, winner of the 2020 Pulitzer prize in poetry.

110. *Sometimes I Never Suffered* by Shane McCrae (FSG, 2020)

SOMETIMES I NEVER SUFFERED



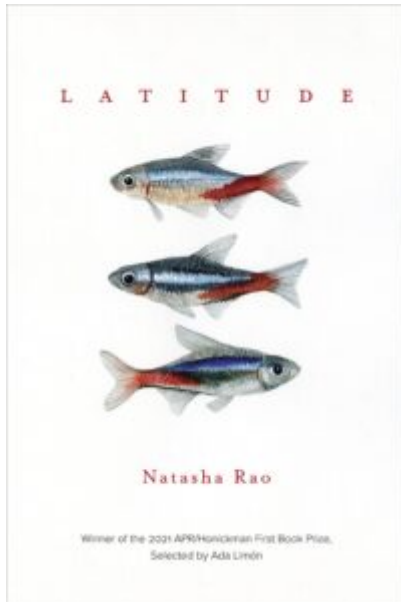
POEMS SHANE MCCRAE

[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In *Sometimes I Never Suffered*, his seventh collection of poems, Shane McCrae remains “a shrewd composer of American stories” (Dan Chiasson, *The New Yorker*). Here, an angel, hastily thrown together by his fellow residents of Heaven, plummets to Earth in his first moments of consciousness. Jim Limber, the adopted mixed-race son of Jefferson Davis, wanders through the afterlife, reckoning with the nuances of America’s racial history, as well as his own.

Sometimes I Never Suffered is a search for purpose and atonement, freedom and forgiveness, imagining eternity not as an escape from the past or present, but as a reverberating record and as the culmination of time’s manifold potential to mend.

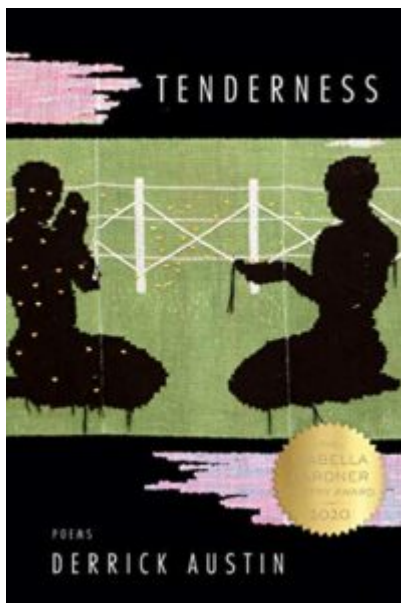
111. *Latitude* by Natasha Rao (Copper Canyon Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Natasha Rao's debut collection *Latitude* abounds with sensory delights, rich in colors, flavors, and sounds. These poems explore the complexities of family, cultural identity, and coming of age. By turns vulnerable and bold, *Latitude* indulges in desire: "In my next life let me be a tomato/lusting and unafraid," Rao writes, "...knowing I'll end up in an eager mouth."

112. *Tenderness* by Derrick Austin (BOA Editions, 2021)

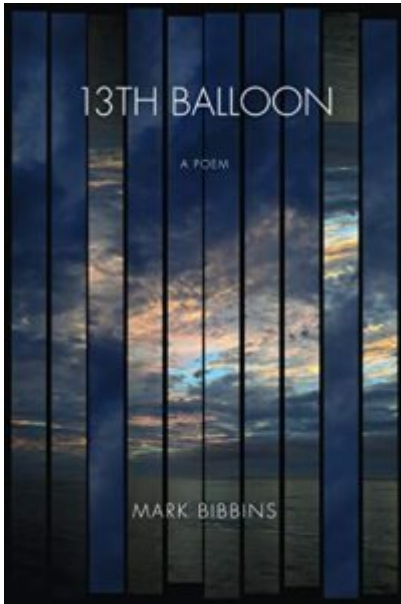


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

With lush language, the meditative poems in the Isabella Gardner Award-winning *Tenderness* examine the fraught nature of intimacy in a nation poisoned by anti-Blackness and homophobia. From the bedroom to the dance floor, from the natural world to The Frick, from the Midwest to Florida to Mexico City, the poems range across interior and exterior landscapes. They look to movies, fine art, childhood memory, history, and mental health with melancholy, anger, and playfulness.

Even amidst sorrow and pain, *Tenderness* uplifts communal spaces as sites of resistance and healing, wonders at the restorative powers of art and erotic love, and celebrates the capaciousness of friendship.

113. *13th Balloon* by Mark Bibbins (Copper Canyon Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In his fourth collection, *13th Balloon*, Mark Bibbins turns his candid eye to the American AIDS crisis. With quiet consideration and dark wit, Bibbins addresses the majority of his poems to Mark Crast, his friend and lover who died from AIDS at the early age of 25. Every broken line and startling linguistic turn grapples with the genre of elegy: what does it mean to experience personal loss, Bibbins seems to ask, amidst a greater societal tragedy? The answer is blurred—amongst unforeseen disease, intolerance, and the intimate consequences of mismanaged power. Perhaps the most unanswerable question arrives when Bibbins writes, “For me elegy/ is like a Ouija planchette/ something I can barely touch/ as I try to make it/ say what I want it to say.” And while we are still searching for the words that might begin an answer, Bibbins helps us understand that there is endless value in continuing—through both joy and grief—to wonder.

114. *Dor* by Alina Stefanescu (Wandering Aengus Press, 2021)



ALINA ȘTEFĂNESCU

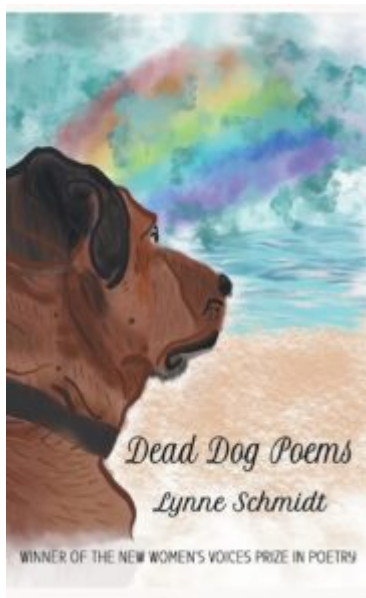


[Amazon](#) / [Wandering Aengus Press](#)

“You must write a self/ out of waiting/ to speak” asserts Alina Ștefănescu’s *Dor* and oh, what a prismatic, many-headed self has been written into existence within these pages. In her stunning second full-length collection, Ștefănescu explores the worlds contained in the Romanian word Dor- a word close to longing but with no exact English equivalent-as it relates to the speaker’s life as a daughter, a mother, a foreign body in a country that harms and holds us conditionally. Simultaneously tender and incisive, witty and full transformations, this book and its many ecosystems of longing and belonging begs to be re-read and promises new wonders each time.

– Jihyun Yun, author of *Some Are Always Hungry*

115. *Dead Dog Poems* by Lynne Schmidt (Finishing Line Press, 2020)

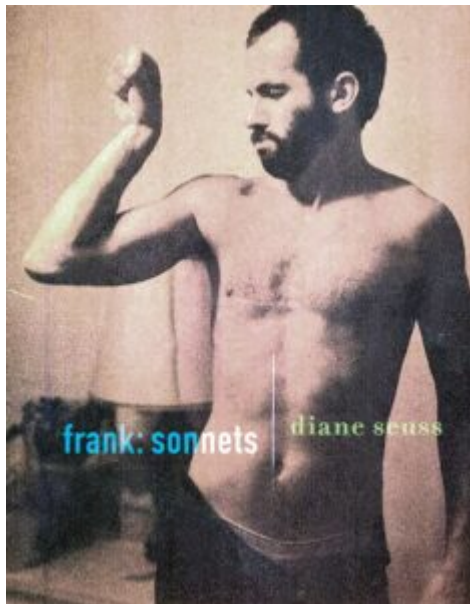


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Dead Dog Poems is a collection about pet love and pet loss. It is the small joys each pet parent goes through, from naptime, to walks around the block, to the horrific moment of being at the emergency vet and hearing that your

beloved companion may have cancer. This collection brings you front and center for a terminal diagnosis, and the aftermath of such a substantial loss. If you have ever loved a pet, this collection is for you. The poem, Baxter, was awarded the Editor's Choice Award from Frost Meadow Review, and was nominated for a 2019 Best of the Net, while Road Maps was nominated for Best of the Net, and Blood Pleas and Library Books was a finalist for the Pacific Northwest Writer's Association (PNWA) Poetry Contest.

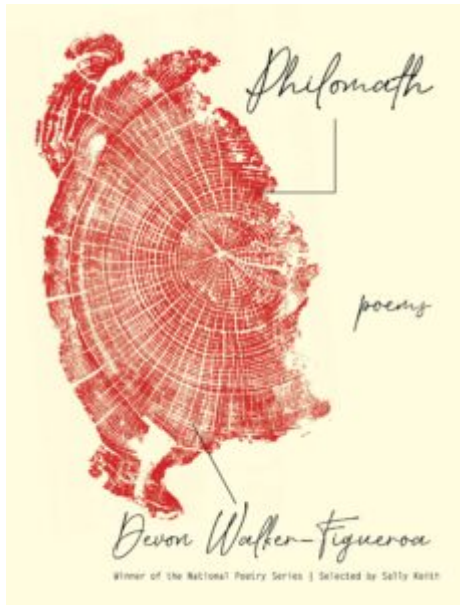
116. *frank: sonnets* by Dianne Seuss (Graywolf Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

“The sonnet, like poverty, teaches you what you can do / without,” Diane Seuss writes in this brilliant, candid work, her most personal collection to date. These poems tell the story of a life at risk of spilling over the edge of the page, from Seuss’s working-class childhood in rural Michigan to the dangerous allures of New York City and back again. With sheer virtuosity, Seuss moves nimbly across thought and time, poetry and punk, AIDS and addiction, Christ and motherhood, showing us what we can do, what we can do without, and what we offer to one another when we have nothing left to spare. Like a series of cels on a filmstrip, *frank: sonnets* captures the magnitude of a life lived honestly, a restless search for some kind of “beauty or relief.” Seuss is at the height of her powers, devastatingly astute, austere, and—in a word—frank.

117. *Philomath* by Devon Walker-Figueroa (Milkweed Editions, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

With Devon Walker-Figueroa as our Virgil, we begin in the collection's eponymous town of Philomath, Oregon. We drift through the general store, into the Nazarene Church, past people plucking at the brambles of a place that won't let them go. We move beyond the town into fields and farmland—and further still, along highways, into a cursed Californian town, a museum in Florence. We wander with a kind of animal logic, like a beast with “a mind to get loose / from a valley following / towards foul,” through the tense, overlapping space between movement and stillness.

118. *Cutlish* by Rajiv Mohabir (Four Way Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In *Cutlish*, a title referencing the rural recasting of the cutlass or machete, Rajiv Mohabir creates a form migrated from Caribbean chutney music in order to verse the precarity of a queer Indo-Caribbean speaker in the newest context of the United States. By joining the disparate threads of his fading, often derided, multilingual Guyanese Creole and Guyanese Bhojpuri

linguistic inheritances, Mohabir mingles the ghosts that haunt from the cane fields his ancestors worked with the canonical colonial education of his elders, creating a new syncretic American poetry – pushing through the “post” of postcolonial, the “poet” in the poetic.

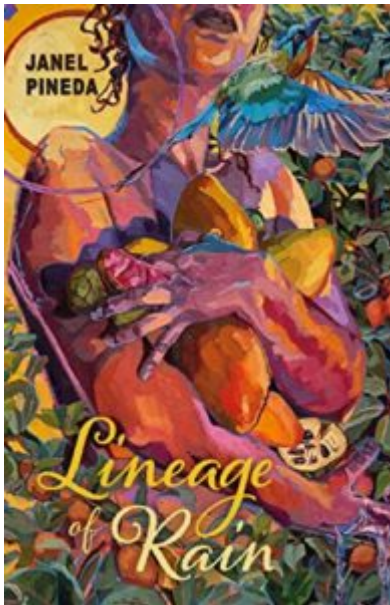
119. *At Sea* by Aïcha Martine Thiam (Clash Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

AT SEA is a collection that – at times introspective and confessional, at times perceptively aimed outward, toward a vertiginous world – sails the pathway between trauma and healing. Readers are taken aboard into a microcosm where wonder meets waterlogged torment and self-harm; where grief, euphoria and longing coexist; where womanhood is as joyful and dizzying an experience as it is searing; where peeling the layers of cultural identity is like plunging into the most opaque and briny deep. While the act of remembering has solitary, melancholy tinges, Aïcha Martine Thiam’s pen never wavers, nor does it stray far from the impulse to bear witness, to do justice, and to connect with kindred souls.

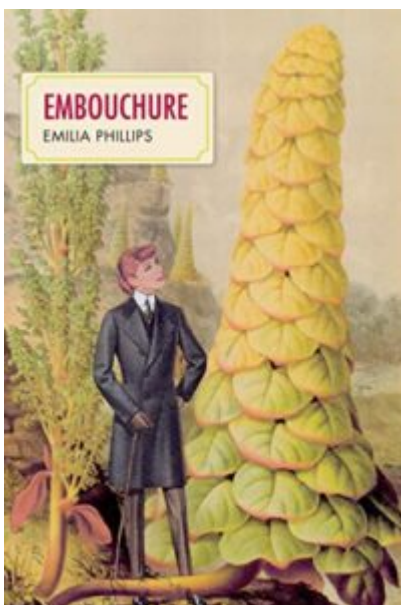
120. *Lineage of Rain* by Janel Pineda (Haymarket Books, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In this spellbinding debut, Los Angeles–born poet Janel Pineda sings of communal love and the diaspora and dreams for a liberated future. *Lineage of Rain* traces histories of Salvadoran migration and the US-sponsored civil war to reimagine trauma as a site for transformation and healing. With a scholar’s caliber, Pineda archives family memory, crafting a collection that centers intergenerational narratives through poems filled with a yearning to crystallize a new world—one unmarked by patriarchal violence. At their heart, many of these poems are an homage to women: love letters to mothers, sisters, and daughters.

121. *Embouchure* by Emilia Phillips (The University of Akron Press, 2021)

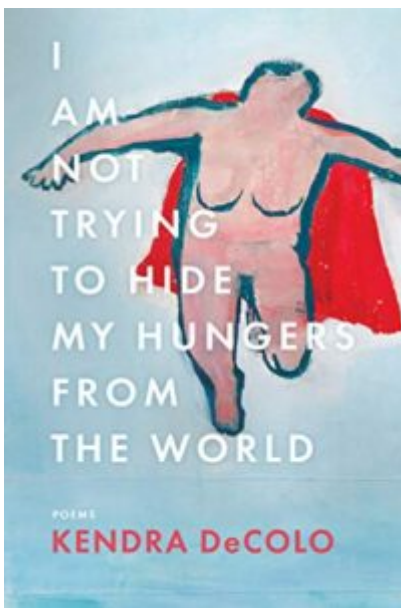


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

An embouchure is the way in which a wind musician applies their mouth to an instrument’s mouthpiece, and *Embouchure*, Emilia Phillips’s fourth poetry collection, sets its mouth, ready to play. Trumpeting a picaresque coming out

story, the poems are at turns self-deprecatory and revelatory, exploring sexual fluidity and non-monosexuality. From the speaker's adolescent crushes to her closeted 20s to her eventual acceptance of queerness, her disarming joy—even at her own mistakes—is cut with challenges to toxic masculinity and reckonings with anticipatory anxiety. The tomboy the speaker once was is transfigured into “a presexual soft butch / Medusa” with a “beautiful, beautiful / body that didn't know yet // how to contain itself.” Elsewhere, the speaker evades a Dickinsonian personification of Death, who seems more like an inescapable ex-boyfriend than a welcome bridegroom. Phillips's mock-confessionalism is as brassy as it is vulnerable.

122. *I Am Not Trying to Hide My Hungers from the World* by Kendra DeColo (BOA Editions, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Kendra DeColo reaffirms the action of mothering as heroic, brutal, and hardcore. These poems interrogate patriarchal narratives about childbirth, postpartum healing, and motherhood through the lens of pop culture and the political zeitgeist. With references ranging from Courtney Love to Lana Del Rey to Richard Burton to Nicolas Cage, *I Am Not Trying to Hide My Hungers from the World* revitalizes the way we look at mothering: pushing its boundaries and reclaiming one's spirit of defiance, abundance, and irreverent joy.

123. *We Are Owed* by Ariana Brown (Grieveland, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

We Are Owed. is the debut poetry collection of Ariana Brown, exploring Black relationality in Mexican and Mexican American spaces. Through poems about the author's childhood in Texas and a trip to Mexico as an adult, Brown interrogates the accepted origin stories of Mexican identity. *We Are Owed* asks the reader to develop a Black consciousness by rejecting U.S., Chicano, and Mexican nationalism and confronting anti-Black erasure and empire-building. As Brown searches for other Black kin in the same spaces through which she moves, her experiences of Blackness are placed in conversation with the histories of formerly enslaved Africans in Texas and Mexico. Esteban Dorantes, Gaspar Yanga, and the author's Black family members and friends populate the book as a protective and guiding force, building the "we" evoked in the title and linking Brown to all other African-descended peoples living in what Saidiya Hartman calls "the afterlife of slavery."

124. *fist of wind* by Nefertiti Asanti (Foglifter Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

fist of wind is a lyrical testimony that centers the Black body as a site of healing and transformation. This collection of poetry explores the lived experience of menstruation marked by pain and the liminal existence of Black folk as magical and mortal. *fist of wind* draws from magical realism to ask: If pain is information, what does individual and collective Black pain tell us about our world and about ourselves? How do we embody healing in this lifetime and beyond?

125. *Machete* by Tomás Q. Morín (Knopf, 2021)

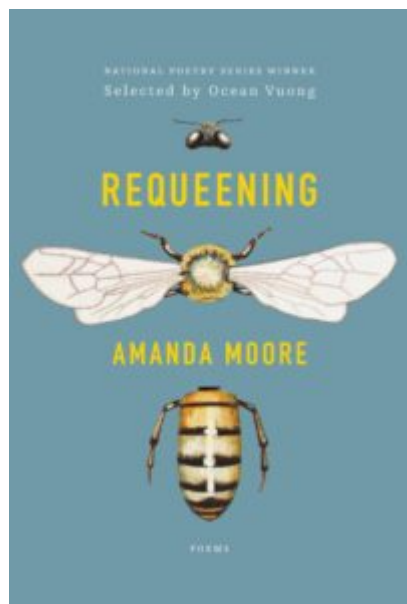


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

“Dios aprieta, pero no ahorca” (“God squeezes, but He doesn’t strangle”)—the epigraph of *Machete*—sets the stage for a powerful poet who summons a variety of ways to endure life when there’s an invisible hand at your throat. Tomás Morín hails from the coastal plains of Texas, and explores a world where identity and place shift like that ever-changing shore.

In these poems, culture crashes like waves and leaves behind Billie Holiday and the CIA, disco balls and Dante, the Bible and Jerry Maguire. They are long, lean, and dazzle in their telling: “Whiteface” is a list of instructions for people stopped by the police; “Duct Tape” lauds our domestic life from the point of view of the tape itself.

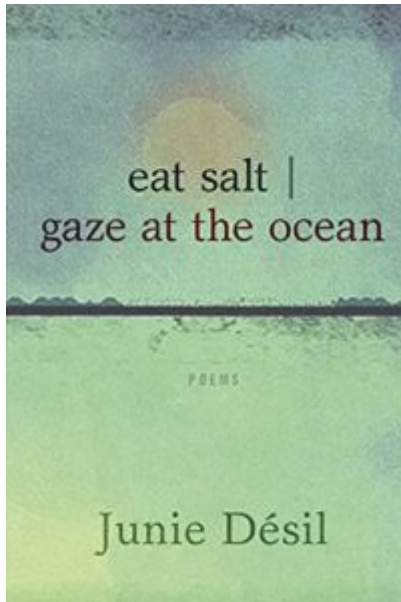
126. *Requeening* by Amanda Moore (Ecco Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Engaging the matriarchal structure of the beehive, Amanda Moore explores the various roles a woman plays in the family, the home, and the world at large. Beyond the productivity and excess, the sweetness and sting, *Requeening* brings together poems of motherhood and daughterhood, an evolving relationship of care and tending, responsibility and joy, dependence and deep love.

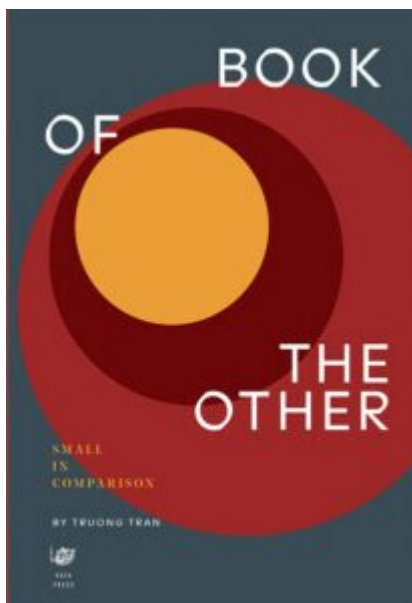
127. *eat salt | gaze at the ocean* by Junie Désil (Talonbooks, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

eat salt | gaze at the ocean explores the themes of Black sovereignty, Haitian sovereignty, and Black lives, using the Haitian (original) zombie as a metaphor for the condition and treatment of Black bodies. Interspersed with information about zombies, Haiti, and policies is the author's personal narrative of growing up Black and Haitian of immigrant parents on stolen land. The collection is divided into two sections: the first half focusses on zombies, while the second focusses on the ocean/water and the violent crossing experienced by enslaved folks. The book's title refers to the "cure" for reversing the process of becoming a zombie.

128. *Book of the Other: small in comparison* by Truong Tran (Kaya Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Kaya Press](#)

Truong Tran's provocative collection of poetry, prose and essays is a stunning rebuttal to the idea of anti-Asian racism as a victimless crime. Written with a compulsion for lucidity that transforms outrage into clarity,

Book of the Other resists the luxury of metaphor to write about the experience of being shut out, shut down and othered as a queer, working-class teacher, immigrant and refugee.

What emerges from Tran's sharp-eyed experiments in language and form is an aching beautiful acknowledgment of the estrangement from self forced upon those seduced by the promise of color-blind acceptance and the rigorous, step by step act of recollection needed to find one's way home to oneself.

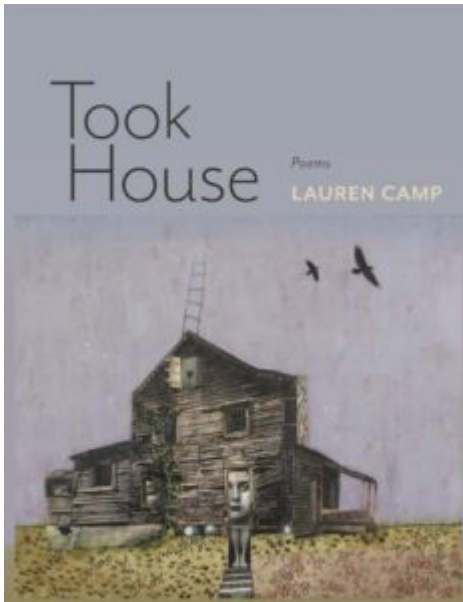
129. *Chokecherry* by Lyd Havens (Game Over Books, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Game Over Books](#)

In *Chokecherry*, Lyd Havens gathers their griefs: the sudden death of their uncle when they were a child, losing both of their grandparents in the span of a year, estrangement from a parent, and unrequited love, among others. What follows is a bouquet of visceral, unflinching poems that simultaneously lament and rejoice. Through memory and all its unreliability, the landscapes of their genealogy, and allusions to grief in history and art, Havens explores the toll mental illness and addiction have taken on their family, while still giving thanks for the love that has helped them not only survive, but live. *Chokecherry* is equal parts mourning and celebration, loss and growth, rage and tenderness.

130. *Took House* by Lauren Camp (Tupelo Press, 2020)

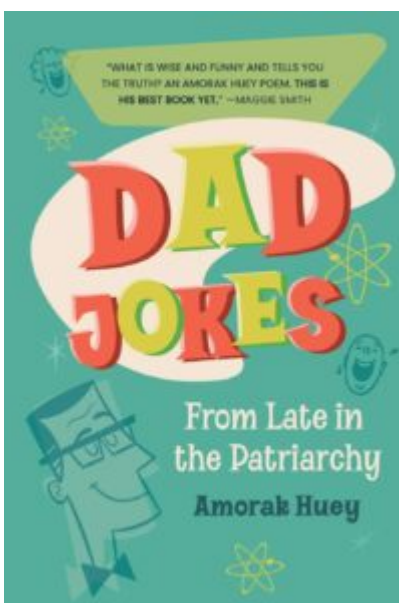


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

These collected poems carry the reader through a landscape scattered with ashy remains and circumstances of oppression, presenting a hidden side of love. Beautifully lyrical, poet Lauren Camp grants the reader access to intimate emotions, writing: “I will speak/of the seams of desire, the practice/and even the ceiling”. These poems ask the reader to reflect on the world with a new, broadened perspective, highlighting the unseen imperfections of pleasure.

Worked on for more than a decade, *Took House* proves its worth time and time again. This time of transformation also appears in the work, as Camp ponders beginnings, ends, and mournings. With lines like “Such endeavor,/all of these seasons”, *Took House* notices the many transitions that make a lifetime, bringing value to each and every one.

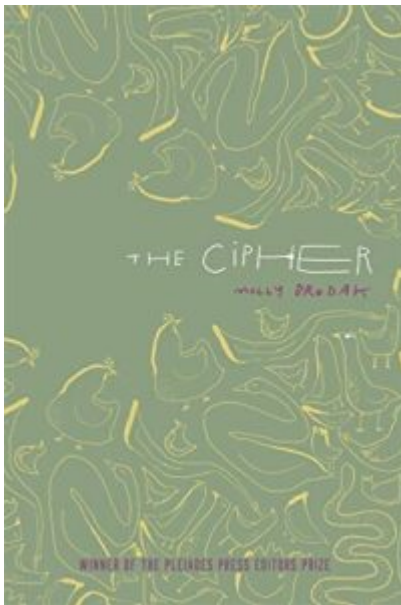
131. *Dad Jokes from Late in the Patriarchy* by Amorak Huey (Sundress Publications, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Dad Jokes from Late in the Patriarchy, the fourth collection from award-winning poet Amorak Huey, is an unflinching, humorous meditation on American masculinity and fatherhood. Drawing on fictional characters, cultural figures, and personal stories, Huey deftly weaves an intergenerational tale about coming of age as a boy in the twentieth century and becoming a father in the twenty-first. In a collection built around the narrative structure of a joke, the poems' speakers reflect on the complex intersections of childhood, war, love, pop culture, and parenting. These speakers seek to define themselves via role models both personal and cultural, as societal and religious myths mingle with larger-than-life icons such as Arnold Schwarzenegger, Ariana Grande, and Davy Crockett. From Southwestern deserts to the flatlands of Indiana to the post-9/11 landscape of New York, *Dad Jokes from Late in the Patriarchy* deconstructs the enduring notion of American patriarchy and explores the delineations between collective and individual memory. Playful and profound, nostalgic but not naïve, these poems trace a masterful journey of personal discovery and fatherly love.

132. *The Cipher* by Molly Brodak (Pleiades Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Molly Brodak's *The Cipher* is a deft and unsparing study of the limits of knowledge and belief, and of what solace can be found within those limits. "We stand on the rim of the void," Brodak writes. "We hold our little lamps of knowing / on the rim, and look in." Drawing vividly from mathematics, Christianity, European history, urban life, and the natural world, these poems reveal a vision of contemporary experience that is at once luminous and centered on an unshakable emptiness. Wise, sharp, and sometimes devastating, *The Cipher* leads us through a world in which little can be trusted, takes its measure, and does not look away.

133. *Take Care* by Eunice Andrada (Giramondo Publishing, 2021)



[Giramondo Publishing](#)

TAKE CARE explores what it means to survive within systems not designed for tenderness. Bound in personal testimony, the poems situate the act of rape within the machinery of imperialism, where human and non-human bodies, lands, and waters are violated to uphold colonial powers. Andrada explores the magnitude of rape culture in the everyday: from justice systems that dehumanise survivors, to exploitative care industries that deny Filipina workers their agency, to nationalist monuments that erase the sexual violence of war.

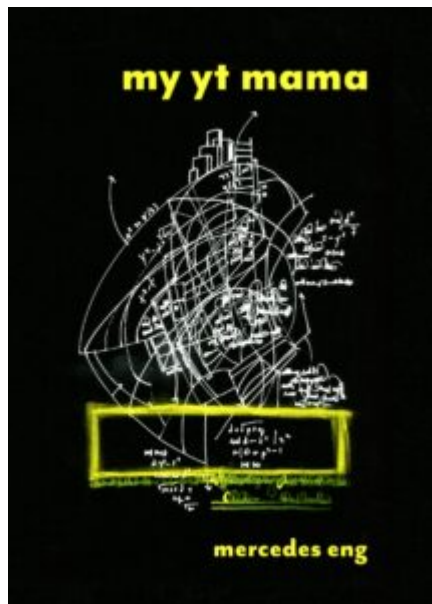
134. *Bonfire Opera* by Danusha Laméris (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Sometimes the most compelling landscapes are the ones where worlds collide: where a desert meets the sea, a civilization, no-man's land. Here in *Bonfire Opera*, grief and Eros grapple in the same domain. A bullet-hole through the heart, a house full of ripe persimmons, a ghost in a garden. Coyotes cry out on the hill, and lovers find themselves kissing, "bee-stung, drunk" in the middle of road. Here, the dust is holy, as is the dark, unknown. These are poems that praise the impossible, wild world, finding beauty in its wake.

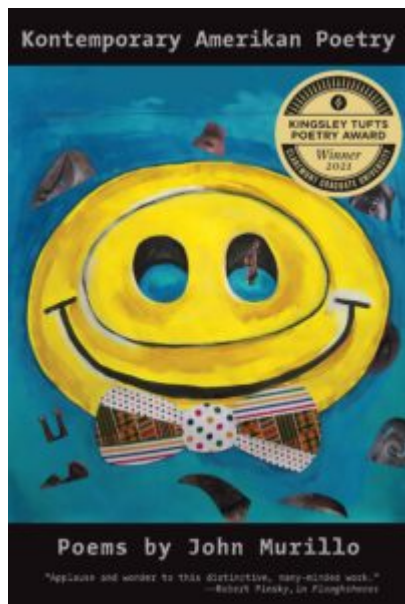
135. *my yt mama* by Mercedes Eng (Talonbooks, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In the follow-up to her BC Book Prize-winning book of poetry, *Prison Industrial Complex Explodes*, Mercedes Eng continues her poetic investigation of racism and colonialism in Canada, weaponizing the language of the nation-state against itself in the service of social justice. *my yt mama* is a collection of poems that considers historic and contemporary colonial violence in the Canadian prairies, a settler geography and state of mind that irrevocably shaped Eng's understanding of race as person of colour born and raised in Treaty 7 Territory in Medicine Hat, Alberta. These poems document an education in white supremacist ideology that began in infancy and occurred everywhere: at home where the author lived with her white mother, 1261 kilometres away from her Chinese migrant father's family; in public institutions such as the school, the library, and the museum that erase Indigenous peoples' histories while producing the myth of the "vanishing Indians;" and in the media and entertainment in which white supremacist beauty standards are constructed and reinforced. Keenly attuned to the language of those in power, Eng exposes the violence of the English language in the colonial project, taking on the words of Canadian politician F. W. Gershaw's history of the city of Medicine Hat as occasioned by Canada's Centennial, to derail the superficially neutral language of yt history that mythologizes nation and city while simultaneously deriding Indigenous ways of being (ontology) and ways of knowing (epistemology) as "legends" or "myths." Like the author herself, *my yt mama* is hybrid: part memoir, part history, part discourse analysis, part love letter to her mother.

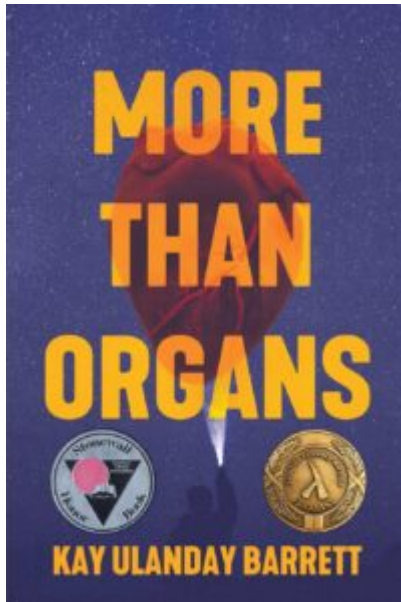
136. *Kontemporary Amerikan Poetry* by John Murillo (Four Way Books, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

John Murillo's second book is a reflective look at the legacy of institutional, accepted violence against Blacks and Latinos and the personal and societal wreckage wrought by long histories of subjugation. A sparrow trapped in a car window evokes a mother battered by a father's fists; a workout at an iron gym recalls a long-ago mentor who pushed the speaker "to become something unbreakable." The presence of these and poetic forbears—Gil Scott-Heron, Yusef Komunyakaa—provide a context for strength in the face of danger and anger. At the heart of the book is a sonnet crown triggered by the shooting deaths of three Brooklyn men that becomes an extended meditation on the history of racial injustice and the notion of payback as a form of justice.

137. *More Than Organs* by Kay Ulanday Barrett (Sibling Rivalry Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

A love letter to Brown, Queer, and Trans futures, Kay Ulanday Barrett's *More Than Organs* questions "whatever wholeness means" for bodies always in transit, for the safeties and dangers they silo. These poems remix people of color as earthbenders, replay "the choreography of loss" after the 2015 Pulse shooting, and till joy from the cosmic sweetness of a family's culinary history. Barrett works "to build / a shelter // of / everyone / [they] meet," from aunties to the legendary Princess Urduja to their favorite air sign. *More Than Organs* tattoos *grief* across the knuckles of its left hand and *love* across the knuckles of its right, leaving the reader physically changed by the intensity of experience, longing, strength, desire, and the need, above all else, to survive.

138. *The Malevolent Volume* by Justin Phillip Reed (Coffee House Press, 2020)

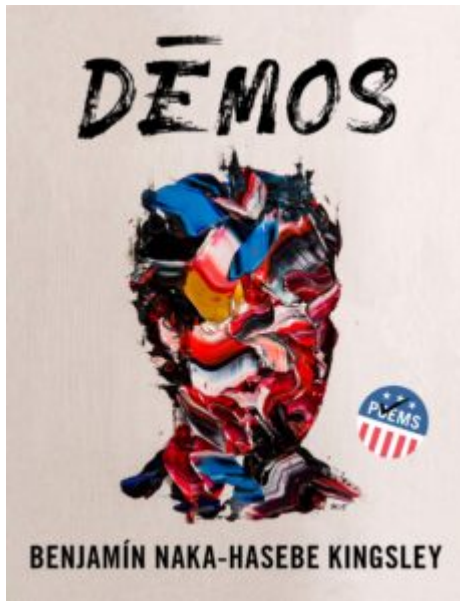


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Subverting celebrated classics of poetry and mythology and examining horrors

from contemporary film and cultural fact, National Book Award winner Justin Phillip Reed engages darkness as an aesthetic to conjure the revenant animus that lurks beneath the exploited civilities of marginalized people. In these poems, Reed finds agency in the other-than-human identities assigned to those assaulted by savageries of the state. In doing so, he summons a retaliatory, counterviolent Black spirit to revolt and to inhabit the revolting.

139. *Dēmos: An American Multitude* by Benjamín Naka-Hasebe Kingsley (Milkweed Editions, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

“‘You tell me how I was born what I am,’” demands Naka-Hasebe Kingsley—of himself, of the reader, of the world. The poems of *Dēmos: An American Multitude* seek answers in the Haudenosaunee story of The Lake and Her children; in the scope of a .243 aimed at a pregnant doe; in the Dōgen poem jotted on a napkin by his obaasan; in a flag burning in a church parking lot. Here, Naka-Hasebe Kingsley places multiracial displacement, bridging disparate experiences with taut, percussive language that will leave readers breathless.

140. *Cleave* by Tiana Nobile (Hub City Press, 2021)

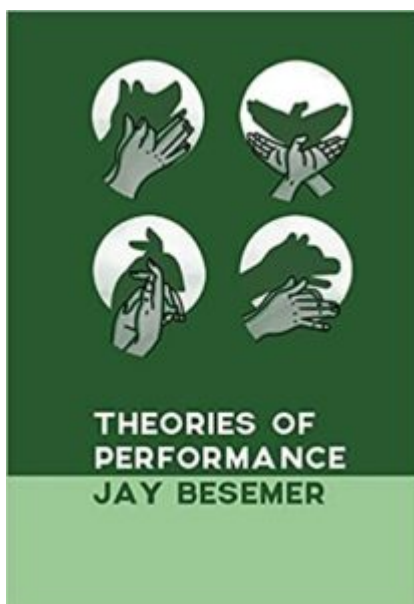


[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

In her debut collection, Tiana Nobile grapples with the history of transnational adoption, both her own from South Korea and the broader, collective experience. In conversation with psychologist Harry Harlow's monkey experiments and utilizing fragments of a highly personal cache of documents from her own adoption, these poems explore dislocation, familial relationships, and the science of love and attachment.

A Rona Jaffe Foundation award winner, Nobile is a glimmering new talent. *Cleave* attempts to unknot the complexities of adoptee childhood, revealing a nature of opposites—"the child cleaved to her mother / the child cleaved from her mother"—while reckoning with the histories that make us.

141. *Theories of Performance* by Jay Besemer (The Lettered Streets Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

THEORIES OF PERFORMANCE emerges from continued engagement with the issues

living in and through a queer, trans, sick/Disabled man's body. Traveling between Chicago to western New York state, caregiving for his terminally ill mother, and grappling with hostility both directly personal and apparently impersonal but political, Jay Besemer presents poems that explode the multiple valences of performance—of gender, of expectation, as a type of art—and the theories around them. These poems are confident, playful, and angry; they know both limitation and unboundedness; and they attend, carefully and lovingly, to the language of one's body.

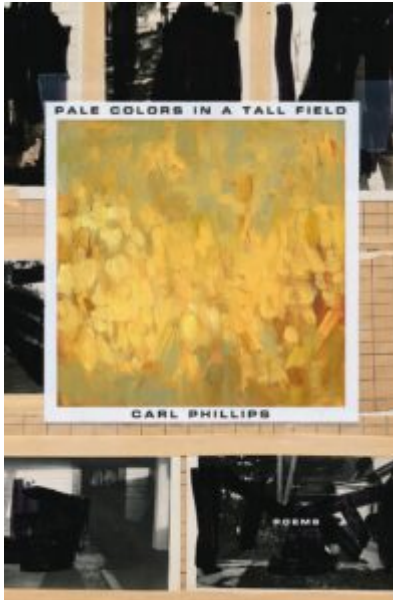
142. *Jump the Clock* by Erica Hunt (Nightboat Books, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Erica Hunt writes at the intersection of poetry and emancipatory politics—racial and gender justice, feminist ethics, and participatory democracy—showing us that altering our reading strategies frames our experiences. Ultimately, she finds that words matter, savoring the small ones: articles, pronouns, collective, plural and singular. This collection brings together out of print works and journals of the same period, to speak across “crumpled” time, the past seen from then to now.

143. *Pale Colors in a Tall Field* by Carl Phillips (FSG, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Carl Phillips's new poetry collection, *Pale Colors in a Tall Field*, is a meditation on the intimacies of thought and body as forms of resistance. The poems are both timeless and timely, asking how we can ever truly know ourselves in the face of our own remembering and inevitable forgetting. Here, the poems metaphorically argue that memory is made up of various colors, with those most prominent moments in a life seeming more vivid, though the paler colors are never truly forgotten. The poems in *Pale Colors in a Tall Field* approach their points of view kaleidoscopically, enacting the self's multiplicity and the difficult shifts required as our lives, in turn, shift. This is one of Phillips's most tender, dynamic, and startling books yet.

144. *Blood Feather* by Karla Kelsey (Tupelo Press, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

With the help of three fictive narrators, an actress, a thinker, and a filmmaker create boundless opportunities for relatability. Caught up in a hurricane of identities, the actress wonders where the performance of

character stops, saying, “rain has/a way of showing costumes for/what they really are”. The thinker, a so-called muse for her architect husband, searches for her self in a lyric embodying the molting process of a bird. This kind of evolution is central to all narratives, inspiring the reader to reflect on their own passages of growth.

145. *Music for the Dead and Resurrected* by Valzhyna Mort (FSG, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Mort traces a route of devastation from the Chernobyl fallout and a school system controlled by ideology to the Soviet labor camps and the massacres of World War II. While musical form serves as a safe house for the poet’s voice, old trees speak to her as the only remaining witnesses, hosts to both radiation and memory.

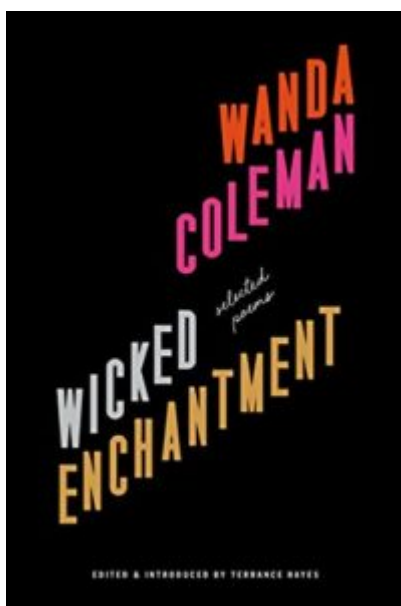
146. *Collected Poems* by Sonia Sanchez (Beacon Press, 2021)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

Gathering highlights from all of Sonia Sanchez’s poetry, this compilation is sure to inspire love and community engagement among her legions of fans. Beginning with her earliest work, including poems from her first volume, *Homecoming* (1969), through to 2019, the poet has collected her favorite work in all forms of verse, from Haiku to excerpts from book-length narratives. Her lifelong dedication to the causes of Black liberation, social equality, and women’s rights is evident throughout, as is her special attention to youth in poems addressed to children and young adults.

147. *Wicked Enchantment: Selected Poems* by Wanda Coleman, Edited by Terrance Hayes (Black Sparrow Press, 2020)



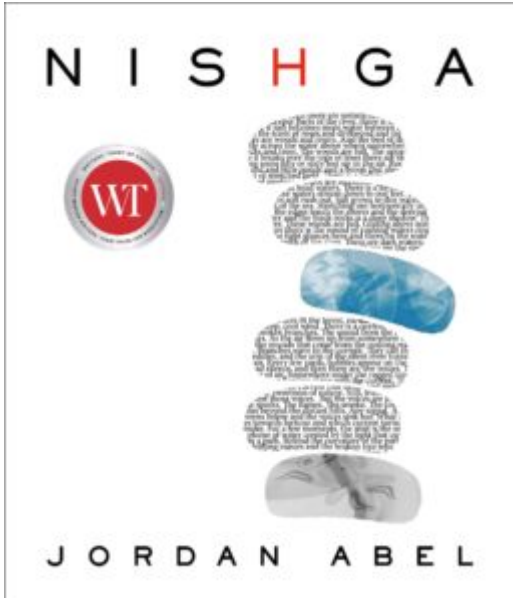
[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

A voice for justice, anti-racism, and equality—here is the greatest and most powerful work of the people’s poet, Wanda Coleman.

Coleman was a beat-up, broke, and Black woman who wrote with anger, humor,

and clarity. *Wicked Enchantment: Selected Poems* is a selection of 130 of her poems, edited and introduced by Terrance Hayes.

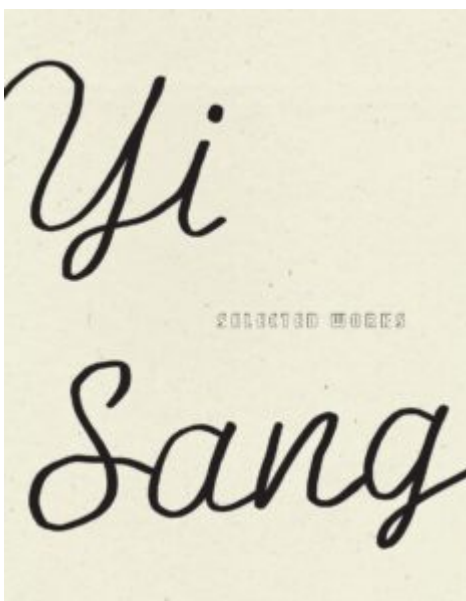
148. *Nishga* by Jordan Abel (McClelland & Stewart, 2021)



[Amazon](#)

From Griffin Poetry Prize winner Jordan Abel comes a groundbreaking, deeply personal, and devastating autobiographical meditation that attempts to address the complicated legacies of Canada's residential school system and contemporary Indigenous existence.

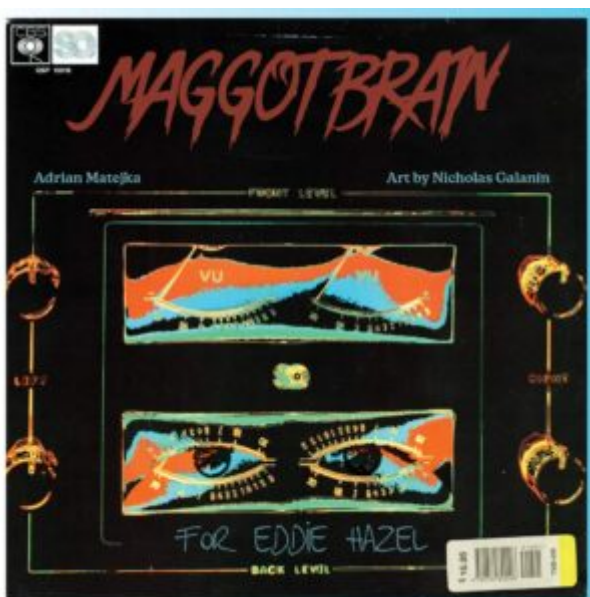
149. *Yi Sang: Selected Works*, Edited by Don Mee Choi, Translated by Jack Jung, Don Mee Choi, Sawako Nakayasu, Joyelle McSweeney (Wave Books, 2020)



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#) / [Wave Books](#)

Formally audacious and remarkably compelling, Yi Sang's works were uniquely situated amid the literary experiments of world literature in the early twentieth century and the political upheaval of 1930s Japanese occupied Korea. While his life ended prematurely at the age of twenty-seven, Yi Sang's work endures as one of the great revolutionary legacies of modern Korean literature. Presenting the work of the influential Korean modernist master, this carefully curated selection assembles poems, essays, and stories that ricochet off convention in a visionary and daring response to personal and national trauma, reminding us that to write from the avant-garde is a form of civil disobedience.

**150. *Standing on the Verge and Maggot Brain* by Adrian Matejka
(Third Man Books, 2021)**



[Amazon](#) / [Bookshop](#)

A collaboration of visual art and poetry inspired by Funkadelic's classic albums *Standing on the Verge of Getting It On* and *Maggot Brain*. Adrian Matejka's (Pulitzer Prize finalist in poetry for *The Big Smoke*) new book *Standing On the Verge & Maggot Brain* is a chorus of poems and visual art that is psychedelic and bright, full of quarter notes disguised as words. The poems bend like a solo bends the big ideas of Funkadelic's glitter and unrepentant funk. The collection also bends the design of books themselves. *Standing On the Verge & Maggot Brain* is more accurately described as a double-chapbook, featuring two front covers and no back cover.