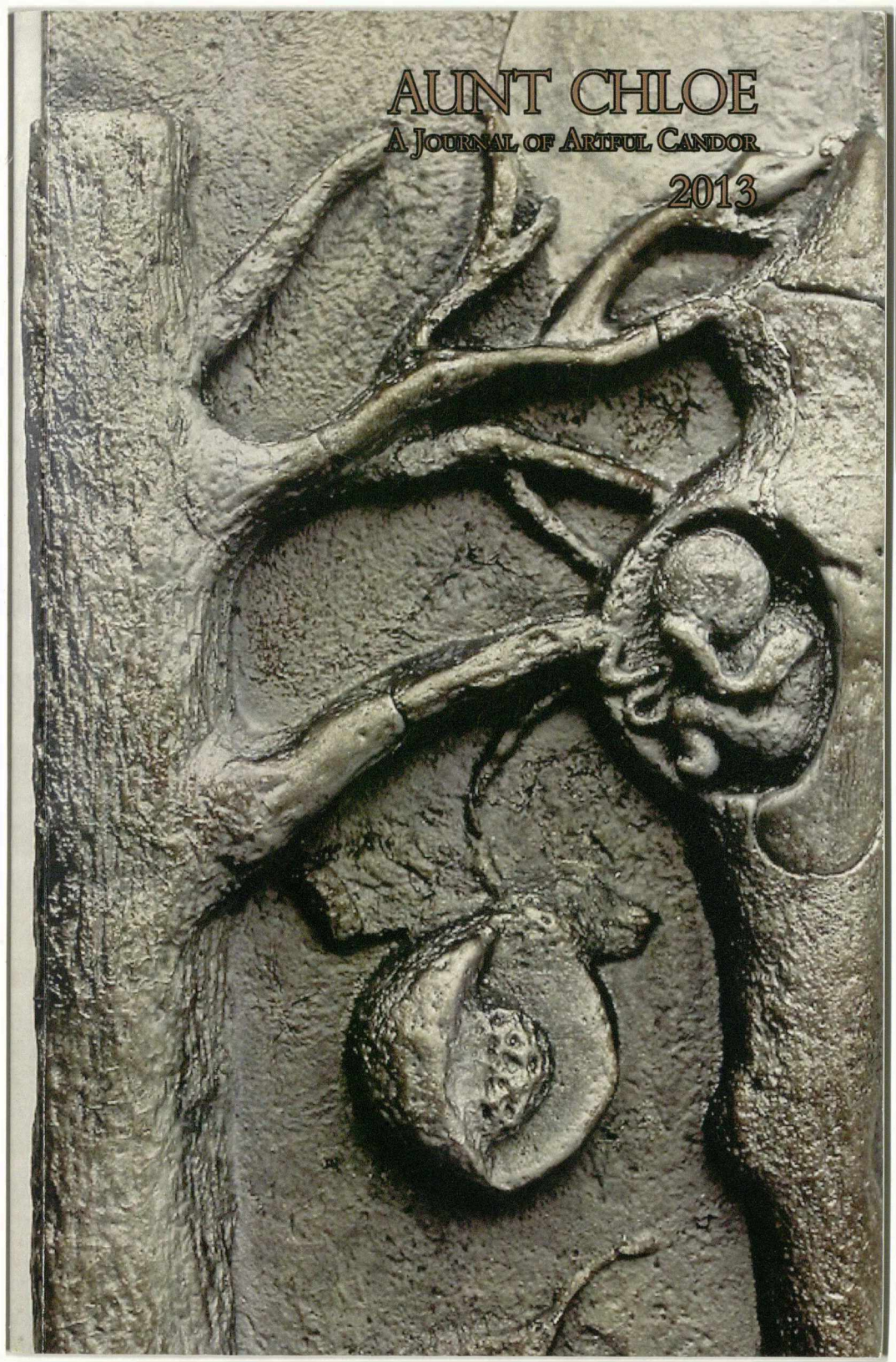


# AUNT CHLOE

A JOURNAL OF ARTFUL CANDOR

2013



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*Aunt Chloe* is a journal for people who have reclaimed the spaces denied them by cultural and historical tyranny. She belongs to any of us who have been pushed out of the spotlight, yet through art, literature and dialogue have re-chosen where we belong.

*Aunt Chloe*  
A JOURNAL OF ARTFUL CANDOR  
2013

CHLOE

--EXCERPT FROM **JOPLIN'S GHOST**: a novel

Tananarive Due

"Well, you're a composer, Scotty—compose. Climb on down out of the clouds and try to get along with us earthbound folks. Leave the clouds to those Wright brothers."

Scott stood suddenly, buttoning his coat. He couldn't stomach another of John's lectures on the necessary union of art and commerce. "I can't wait for Nellie. I have to go."

John pretended he hadn't heard, talking on. "I'll tell you one thing, Scott, and it may be the only good advice I'm capable of giving you anymore: You've got the idea somehow that everyone is supposed to recognize what you are on sight. Well, you need to shake that idea out of your head. A composer who can't work because he's convinced he ought to be revered is a composer who seals his own fate. Swallow your damn disappointments like the rest of us."

John's tongue was as coarse as Louis's, only less profane. Despite a few enthusiastic audiences starved for entertainment, "A Guest of Honor" had never shown itself to be anything but a failure. Why had God given him the inspiration and teased him with promises that were lofty only in their delusion? How had he believed he could use his music to carry his brethren on his back when he couldn't find his own footing? There wasn't enough time in one lifetime to climb to those heights from the low place he had started.

"No one will know me until fifty years after I'm dead," Scott said, half to himself.

John laughed. "You'd still be luckier than most, fella."

\*\*\*\*\*

For all those who have worked  
with their eyes on the horizon.

## *Aunt Chloe* on Work

“Climb on down out of the clouds and try to get along with us earthbound folks. Leave the clouds to those Wright brothers.”

These lines, from *Joplin's Ghost* by Tananarive Due, provide an apt entry to this *Aunt Chloe* issue, with its special section on *Work*. Because *Aunt Chloe* is not so sure how to read this scene—is Scott Joplin's friend advising him to leave the grand dream of greatness to other men, to white men? Or is he saying: stop worrying about being great, being remembered, being an icon—just do the hard work that your art requires! Scott Joplin would later come to be known as the King of Ragtime. He did the work and greatness followed. Does it matter if today's teenager has never heard of the King of Ragtime? Or of Ragtime, even? If *Aunt Chloe* is reading it right, Joplin did his work. It's up to the rest of us to do our work—remembering what greatness demands.

Collected in these pages are some of the many ways we may think about Work—how when it is chosen it is an extension of the self; how when work is imposed it can become an erasure of the self. Work is not the same as labor. In these pages, work is sometimes collective and sometimes solitary. The Detroit women writers included here remember for us what we ought not forgot: how to build women's writing communities—spaces where the imagination is currency. Another writer muses on histories of labor—herself as beneficiary of a history of commodified labor, and elsewhere as a privileged consumer of the labor of others.

Poet and activist Audre Lorde said often, “Each of us must find our work, and do it.” Or as she said, in final words, to the attendees of the historic “I Am Your Sister” conference:

*It has always been life sustaining to me, knowing that the work I do is used.*

# Contents

<i>Joplin's Ghost</i> (excerpt)	6
Tananarive Due	
<i>Aunt Chloe on Work</i>	8
Opal Moore	
<i>Toiling</i>	10
Kyla Marshall	
<i>Grandma's Hands</i>	12
Leonard Moore	
<i>Lessons Were Made</i>	13
April Gibson	
<i>As American As Apple Pie</i>	15
Maya Richard-Craven	
<i>Errand Girls</i>	17
April Gibson	
<i>Sky Watchers</i>	18
John Grey	
<i>Sweetie</i>	19
Taylor Holmes	
<i>How She Sings</i>	20
Leonard Moore	
<i>morning</i>	21
kourtney e	
<i>Bad Box: Karma</i>	22
April Gibson	
<i>at first</i>	24
kourtney e	
<i>What's Crawling in the Garbage</i>	25
John Grey	
<i>Slippers, Glass, Domestication, Something in the Wind</i>	26
April Gibson	



<i>How to destroy your house in twenty minutes</i>	27
Alisha Erin Hillman	
<i>Rebecca Speaks to Henrietta of First and Lasting Impressions</i>	28
Sonya Pouncy	
<i>Pack Your Bags and Come Home to Me</i>	30
Banah Ghadbian	
<i>Special Section: Work</i>	32
<i>"Women in Writing Communities" Excerpt</i>	34
Melba Joyce Boyd	
<i>Waking Up at Home</i>	36
Leslie Reese	
<i>The Bass is Woman</i>	39
Melba Joyce Boyd	
<i>Circle of Fifths</i>	41
Holly Day	
<i>Early Morning, Late June or Lone Woman in a Garden of Eden</i>	43
Alisha Erin Hillman	
<i>Good Black Work</i>	44
Kyla Marshall	
<i>One Connected and Disconnected Fragment from The Animal Farm</i>	46
Doug Draime	
<i>Derivatives</i>	47
Banah Ghadbian	
<i>Don't Call Me Jack</i>	50
Buki Papillion	
<i>Piano Keys</i>	54
Cora Manning	
<i>Images</i>	14, 23, 31, 33, 42, 55
Kyung Hee Im	

## TOILING

Kyla Marshall

Beijing, China

Sorry is the first word they will teach  
you, the first clamor your tongue will learn to tame,  
once you have begun the work  
of gathering my language in your hands and mouth,  
so much of it, like an endless,  
hemless skirt. You will apologize for everything, because sorry,  
they tell you, reminds us of home.

It polishes you with a household sheen, is the one word  
among your gestures, faces and whines that always works,  
is your entire artillery of dramatic ploys and pleas  
as I walk down the aisle of handbags  
and compacts and silk dresses and desperate  
women shouting at me for their lives.

Somewhere, there are the white houses—the castles  
up on hills, the importants who sit  
around drinking jasmine tea, or foreign cans of soda, while

someone keeps them cool with a giant leaf  
someone plays dolls with their children  
someone picks redeemable bottles out of the trash  
someone scrubs the expanse of immaculate marble floor

I am a black American woman who has crossed the world to shop.  
To find a white dress for my graduation from an important school.  
To say, Oh, nooo, when you give me your best price. To walk away,  
slowly, even once you have lowered it—to have only the gravity  
of your anguish, your wilted, pleading face, tug me back.

In America, it is women like me who do this—who toil  
each day for bosses and babies and husbands, who fashion  
lives out of the wreckage we call history, who are famous sufferers.

Maybe this dark skin is strange to you. Maybe it is a terrible scar.  
But I am an American woman, high-up  
in this world, my money, my family's money,  
my education, my things—

I buy your pleated fan. I buy your jade necklace. I buy  
your Buddha, your cherry wood dragon, your Chinese checkers  
set. I buy it all, just for that moment, your eyes  
meeting mine, one woman to another, the mules of the world,  
so firm of heart, so tender of fist.

## GRANDMA'S HANDS

Leonard Moore

Grandma's hands push canned foods  
aside as unsafe for cooking,  
sift corn meal in a big bowl,  
mix warm water and salt:  
yellow dumplings.  
They drop thick batter  
into the cauldron of collards  
on pot-belly stove.  
Hands stop,  
fold in prayer,  
extend welcome to family  
and friends, kneading a tradition.  
She wants kinfolk to grace the table,  
stories to rise and settle  
as if they were hands.

## LESSONS WERE MADE

April Gibson

ponytails. cigarettes. hallway.

she sits outside the door of their one bedroom apartment, her mother inside. a woman celebrated for quaintly decorated small spaces, beautiful smells even through the onion fumes of a hoagie shop below.

momma inside and it is friday, again, payday, again. husband is somebody else again.

smoke floats twelve year old lungs, waiting for an exhale, an end to same things:

same two cops, same two fists, same couch, same wall, same shove of woman meat.

take him away. the calm-down-don't-kill-her round the block ride he leaves, with the check, without a soul, looking for divinity in whiskey and tramps.

CHLOE



Kyung Hee Im

Dokkaebi Tal II (Hobgoblin Mask II), Food wrapper from  
Subway, 6" x 8.5" x 4", 2013.

## AS AMERICAN AS APPLE PIE

Maya Richard-Craven

A woman writes a recipe because that is all she can write, the result of only having a high school education in 1940s Nashville, Arkansas. Crisco, cold water, flour, five apples, cinnamon, and sugar. She dips her young hands into the clear glass bowl, and feels the comfort of the flour. Yes, the kitchen is her refuge- a promised land of creation and new ideas, free of judgment. But this woman wants to write more than a simple apple pie recipe.

As she looks out of her window, she thinks about her past, family, journey. She wants to force ink to tell her story, to be her refuge. She craves the freedom to sit in a large publishing house in the middle of downtown Los Angeles, large pale blue windows, bookshelves so big they crack the ceiling. People who treat her as an equal. She could write novels, poems, short stories every day about leaving Arkansas during the greatest economic crisis in American history to find work in Los Angeles. She could describe tedious days spent picking cotton in Bakersfield. She could tell how the love she found saved her from acknowledging the pain and shame she felt from racial prejudice. She could convey the feelings she experienced working as a domestic in San Marino. She could tell the world about her family of eight people living on nine hundred square feet of property, sharing one bathroom, and ultimately working together to avoid random acts of violence in their neighborhood. Motorcyclists zoom into the public park and shoot at her six children as they run frantically in different directions. But they all make it home. A gang member lifts his fist to throw a powerful punch at her youngest daughter, but her third son swiftly stops the hand that tries to crush his sister's face.

The woman wants to write down these stories. She wants to tell everyone how she fears no evil, even in the face of these horrific odds. But the sexist society in which she lives and her obligations as a wife and mother confine her to her kitchen. The woman does not know that one day her granddaughter will see her recipe, and taste that the Lord has made much more than a simple American apple pie.

CHLOE

The granddaughter learns how to make this recipe and finds that the kitchen is her sanctuary, too, of spices and sugar, cinnamon and soft dough. The granddaughter finds that this recipe is much more than a simple American apple pie. She puts all of her energy into making her grandmother's recipe to share with families staying at the Ronald McDonald house in Pasadena. To bring friends together on Friday nights. To feed loved ones on Thanksgiving. To remind her Father of his Mother's grace on an ordinary day. This pie brings her family together and tells a story of perseverance. The granddaughter could write novels, poems, short stories about her own struggles to fit in, to find her way, to remain hopeful in the face of adversity, but all of these experiences have been committed to memory, neatly tucked away along with the simple ingredients of Crisco, cold water, flour, five apples, cinnamon, and sugar.

She doesn't need to write that recipe down because it is the apple pie recipe descended from her African-American Grandmother. I am the granddaughter and she lives in me.



## ERRAND GIRLS

(after Nikky Finney)

April Gibson

bought what we wanted with discovered change treasures.  
couches. corners. donations from Ms. Roach the crossing guard.  
never had instructions from momma.  
no fish markets. no tomatoes for salads. not flour or cornmeal.  
we are not the daughters of demands.

daddy says:

go get what you need if you can.  
here's nothing. find something.  
feet journeys through busy streets.  
candy stores and field houses.  
snotty noses. gloveless cold walks.  
three sisters and hungry bellies.  
big sister do what momma can't.

she the dusky sun

we the dirty stars

## SKY WATCHERS

John Grey

Stars are like film stuck  
in the projector...  
eventually their fierce light  
will burn a hole in the story.  
No mystery then.  
Just a flame for any incautious eye  
drawn to sky.  
Prefer the clouds.  
Dark dogs from the distant shore,  
puffy and black,  
and prone to growl.  
And lightning sometimes...  
how these big brutes whip themselves.  
Better eyes then  
are those that calculate the weight  
that sits upon the earth.  
It's death to all stargazers.  
Their movie, once of love,  
is now just charred bodies  
dragged out of a burning sky.  
I have rain, not flame,  
to measure my distances.  
Down it comes.  
Here it is.

## SWEETIE

Taylor Holmes

They talked about your taste for figs and older men  
How you smothered your grits with molasses  
You sprinkled uprooted grass blades on your stomach when you were  
a child  
Because you heard ladies were gardens  
And though you never learned about love in classical metre  
You drank Turkish tea and lay with fell princes, you,  
Goosed loitering sad souls into the tobacco fields of mortal morrow  
You sang a song sticky enough to coat the whites of every eye in  
honey  
Clergymen say that spirits away;  
Still the chrysanthemums are inconsolable

## HOW SHE SINGS

(for Sharan Strange)

Leonard Moore

the ropes  
of her  
dreads swing  
with her  
words as  
she reads  
to the  
clocked head  
of the  
black mic

her lips  
heat  
chilled space

she's a  
furious  
flower  
in fall.

**morning;**

kourtney e

outside the birds sing of the green and dew  
as the blue light of breaking dawn illuminates  
my childhood fascinations upon the walls  
chest rising and falling,  
i, watching you, exist.  
(your eyelids bruised purple with sleep,  
sweet and sour breath warm and in the cold morning air  
rotting beautifully)  
i, merely wondering, if there would ever be  
any way to at last  
crawl down your throat  
cover myself with your lungs  
and with my chipped painted nails dug into  
virgin flesh,  
i'd live in your heart  
and be the air you breathe,  
the pain you feel  
that very stuff that runs through your veins.  
everything. nothing

## BOX BAD KARMA

April Gibson

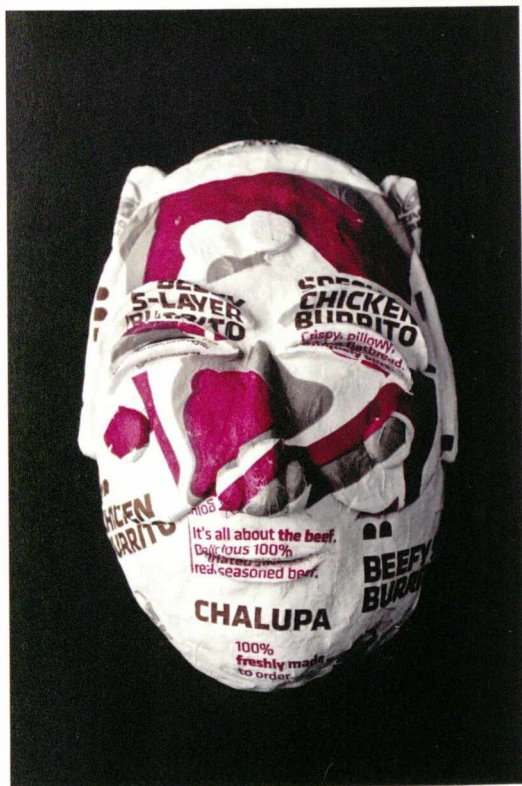
this is a purgatory of dirt  
dirty corners, walls that used to be white  
newborn cries and loud speakers, piss.

i stare at the dirty orange shirt of a Mexican boy  
focus on the greasy spots, avoid faces avoiding  
mine and the eyes of caseworkers with too much manilla.

they ask inappropriate questions about your love life  
as if it can't be love or life because you are here  
in an almost hell with the hated ones.

right answer gets an empty stomach full  
a root canal, you get to keep some of your teeth  
or save your left breast from cancer.

poverty is sin  
this fight, a skin splintering defense  
to wave your fists is to weight your arms  
keep them low. keep them open.



Kyung Hee Im

Bune Tal (Young Woman Mask), Paper clay, Food wrapper  
from Taco Bell,  
6" x 8.5" x 4", 2013.

at first

kourtney e

from the floor that you feared,  
the funny noises you made  
while you refused to dream,  
kept me staring everywhere  
except your face,  
asking the infant question  
of time,  
of how we came to be  
two dark girls  
in a dark room  
on a fall night  
and not the crickets that sang outside  
or the spiders we hated  
for eavesdropping  
on the lives  
that weren't and aren't  
quite ours just yet



## WHAT'S CRAWLING IN THE GARBAGE

John Grey

I'm not myself.  
I'm these tiny crawling white things  
nibbling on days-old lettuce.

Forget the hubris  
that comes with this body.  
I'm just one of many ants  
crawling up the side  
of a Styrofoam cup.

I have loved  
but that's immaterial.  
The roach in me catapults  
from newspaper to raunchy meat.

Want my opinion?  
Sorry.  
You'll have to ask  
the beetles, the bugs.  
And they won't answer.  
Survival's all they know.

I'm not myself.  
I'm what it takes to get by.  
I'm looking at all  
we've thrown out  
this past week.  
This is not it.

## Slippers, Glass, Domestication, Something In The Wind

April Gibson

all good mothers should rise with the sun to cook animal meat or at least a pot of grits. this kitchen is filled with the smell of cracked chicken shells, dirty dishes.

pretend to care in company. eat packaged food on paper plates when they leave.

if sons call you bad find better things. cut a tiny white dot in half lock the dead-bolt. side-effects have been said to make some runaway naked in dreams.

people will speak of checking in and up. you will think of chicken soup. they will think of finding good men, maybe one with steel toe boots and a hammer.

this is supposed to make you long for the fit of an itchy white dress or a last name that will never sound better than your daddy's. this is supposed to be the cure.

throw the orange bottle to the back of a drawer. let the silence of four a.m. comfort one day swimming into the next. fuente smoke dancing your hair. whiskey stinging your bottom throat. lay on the cushions of a small couch with all things you own stuffed between stale bread. swallow away the memories.

## HOW TO DESTROY YOUR HOUSE IN TWENTY MINUTES

Alisha Erin Hillman

The first thing to do is get a husband, not so much for the destruction as that you will need someone to witness your inability to control it at all. Also, he is helpful for the reproductive parts. Next, start with one infant, it doesn't matter which kind. Add some bibs. Some wipes. Some laundry detergent. [None of it will help.] Throw in some aging, as much or as little as you want, crumbs, and more toys than belong in a toy store—many sharp, plenty electronic. Repeat step two, if bold/foolhardy. Then: set the stage. Do the dishes, wipe the highchair, collect baskets of tiny toys with missing parts, collapse into bed. Sleep like the dead, or just like a parent. Wake up to the soothing sound of screaming children, leaking diapers, becoming pounced-upon prey. Rub your eyes open and start the clock. Scramble around with treats like breakfast, clothes, a trip to the library; attempt to get dressed, step on some Legos, walk out of the bathroom—

## REBECCA SPEAKS TO HENRIETTA OF FIRST AND LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Sonya Pouncy

They say you never get over your first love. I don't know if that's true for everyone, but I know I never got over you, your walnut gaze, your eternal smile.

I was sixteen when we met in Mr. Defler's biology. The most noteworthy subject was the way you stood akimbo, your sepia skin against my white pages.

Unvoiced, you still told all the answers, explained with your body the mathematics of cells: their curious adding up and what they can take away.

You were magic with your pink mitochondria and smart suit jacket, resolving questions posed by science and mythology, TelLinde and Ponce de Leon.

More than any teacher or mentor, it was your cultured presence, your manicured hands that led me from alternative school to graduate school.

It was all of you that I wanted. From red toenails to cervical cells. More than a life confined to parenthetical clauses and erudite journals.

I would pursue you in hallways of higher learning, cross rivers and railroad tracks for a mere glimpse of you, the hem of your a-line skirt, a thread of your bright blue actin.

Only to share you with your husband and three boys, your daughter with question marks for eye brows, the whole world, even.

So that with gratitude and study, from disparate  
suppositions to your unifying theory, from Heaven  
to HeLa and back again,

All will know, all will remember  
and love you as I do,  
Henrietta.

Even your purple carcinoma.  
Even your stained DNA.

**pack your bags and come home to me**

Banah Ghadbian

i was born with circles like sunsets under my eyes  
i have carried these bags, this knowing,  
before the womb shaped me to match them  
“you look so tired,”  
“you carry so much sadness”  
they would say  
a childhood teacher once insisted that  
there was an old woman trapped  
behind my nine year old eyes  
and on days like these she comes out  
i had to retake my passport photo when i was twelve  
because they said the bags under my eyes  
made me look too refugee  
they are the borders i carry  
they are the languages i have lost  
and the ones that have colonized me  
they are my sinkholes and my solitude  
my crescents unfolding  
into sweet embrace



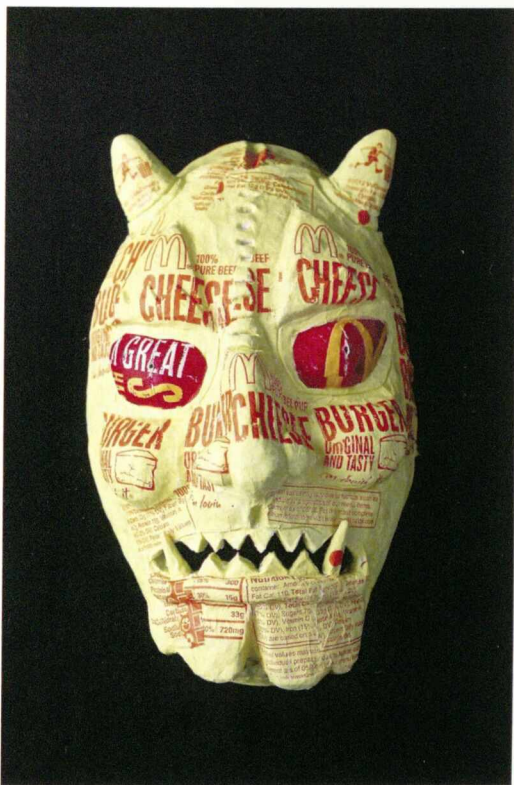
Kyung Hee Im

Gaksi Tal (Bride Mask), Paper clay, Food wrapper from McDonald's, 6" x 8.5" x 4", 2013.

Special Section:

Work





Kyung Hee Im

Dokkaebi 'Tal I (Hobgoblin Mask I), Paper clay, Food wrapper  
from McDonald's,  
6" x 8.5" x 4", 2013.

## Excerpted from **WOMEN WRITING IN COMMUNITIES**

Melba Joyce Boyd

Everything comes hard in Detroit. Work, weather, traffic, taxes and space to create—it's all hard. But, the one thing that comes easy as a consequence of all the hard knocks is community. When I returned to my hometown after completing my B.A. and M.A. in English at Western Michigan University in 1972, I found my first job at Broadside Press. No one was hiring, college graduate or no. I had two degrees in English, and not even the public schools wanted to pay decent wages. I decided to broaden my prospects and knocked on the door at Broadside Press, where Dudley Randall hired me as his editorial assistant. Although the salary was rather modest, that position opened up a world of poetry that was undergirded by a cultural community that valued literature more than egos.

Later I joined a women's writing workshop organized by Mary Helen Washington, a professor of Afro-American literature at the University of Detroit at the time, and who lived exactly two streets from my flat in northwest Detroit. It was the 1970's, and we were in the throes of the Black Arts Movement and political upheaval, but we were living in Detroit, so our cultural nationalism was tempered by class-consciousness. This women's writing community eventually comprised: Jill Witherspoon Boyer (Naomi Long Madgett's daughter), Frenchy Jolene Hodges (a Broadside Press poet), Paulette Childress (Lotus Press poet and short story writer), Toni Eubanks Watts, an aspiring author of children's books, and Betty DeRamus (Detroit Free Press journalist and author).

We met once a month on Saturdays for about a year. There was always a meal, which was prepared and served by the host writer. The food was never catered or picked up at a fast food carry out. In this way, we nurtured each other with love and care that bonded us like sisters. Petty jealousy and competitiveness did not plague this community. I suppose it was related to our personalities, but I think it was also related to timing and the setting—Detroit.

The Detroit playwright, Ron Milner, once stated that the difference between being a writer in this city and being one, say in New York, is that we don't rely on the "establishment" to approve our efforts or expressions, nor do we wait on them to present our plays or publish our poetry. We make things here; not just cars." And in that vein, we developed theatre communities and publishing houses that attracted national literary figures and launched prominent, and impressive literature.

In our writing community we workshopped our individual projects: Mary Helen Washington completed her first anthology, *Black-Eyed Susans*; Jill Boyer completed her first collection of poetry, *Dream Farmer*; Frenchy Hodges, whose first book, *Black Wisdom* appeared in 1971 (Broadside Press) wrote new poems; Paulette completed her first book of poetry, *The Watermelon Dress*, (Lotus Press) and a short story, "Alice," that was included in *Black-Eyed Susans*; and I finished poems that were published in *Obsidian*, *The Black Scholar*, and *First World*, and eventually my first book, *Cat Eyes and Dead Wood*. Mary Helen helped us to place our works in the canonical *Sturdy Black Bridges: Visions of Black Women in Literature*, edited by Roseann P. Bell, Bettye J. Parker, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, while Naomi and Dudley published our poetry in anthologies, broadsides and as chapbooks.

But, in 1982, Detroit entered the throes of an economic recession, and fate dispersed some of us to various geographies for career advancements or opportunities or for better weather. . . .

Presently, I am not in a writing community that meets on a regular basis; but I am *of* a writing community. The Detroit writers represented in this issue of *Aunt Chloe* are a part of that community. Leslie resides in Chicago, but Sonya, who is completing a Masters degree in Creative Writing, lives in my neighborhood here in Detroit. Most of the time I meet with them via phone or the Internet. We support one another on emotional, political and cultural levels. I rarely interface with those writers from my first workshop, but when I do, it feels like yesterday and home cooked meals.

## WAKING UP AT HOME (excerpt)

c. 1973

Leslie Reese

mornings are clean  
not bruised and scratched like late afternoon

Dad

is already at work: he is gainfully employed  
at the Chrysler plant

our mother is a teacher

she

elects to work part-time so she can be home to  
greet us with a raised eyebrow every day after school.

if we return looking like a gang of ragamuffins she

comes out on the sidewalk to look up and down the street for her  
real children

what happened to our hair?

how

have our knee socks come to be twisted

sagging in bunches around our ankles?

[...]

we go to school with our stomachs

full from cereals

sometimes

with raisins, or bananas

when our ages are 12, 10, and five

Mommy

senses our discordant rhythms without rising from bed

“Come here so I can see you” she barks

right when we’re trying to walk out of the door with

our skirts hiked up too high or

we’ve padded our legs with three layers of knee-socks or

the lunches we packed are nothing but sweets or

we’ve draped hair around our heads

like a trio of shake-dancers.

in our household  
we are held accountable for our behavior  
(when asked  
why we did such-and-such-a-thing  
“I don’t know” is not an acceptable answer)  
we have chores and responsibilities  
as well as books, bicycles, and  
elderly relatives who visit  
us from Down South  
looking us up and down, surveying the house, asking  
questions that cut their eyes at us during  
the prayers we say before eating and going to bed  
---as if they are auditors come to investigate  
the degrees to which urban life has corrupted us.

[...]

Our mother: she be the The Queen of Stretching A Dollar  
she sits bent over her sewing machine  
stitching ensembles for us to wear.  
with the money she saves  
she purchases theatre tickets and  
marches us unto museums, ethnic restaurants, and event halls  
so that we can get accustomed to  
having experiences and not just  
things.

for Christmas she’ll work hard  
to make Santa Claus seem wise and holistic,  
bringing us gifts which meet the following criteria:  
something to wear  
something to share

something to read  
something for fun

& something to encourage a current interest:  
a chemistry set (for the one who mixed baby powder with lotion);  
a lab coat and stethoscope  
(for the one always listening to folks' heartbeats);  
and knitting needles with yarn  
(for the one who was practicing on pencils).

Dad and Old Mrs. Moore  
    who lives six houses down  
share gardening tips and plant clippings between them  
sometimes entrusting me to transport brown paper sacks filled  
with moist dirt and roots  
or unwashed vegetables picked fresh from their  
competing gardens.

she  
is old and white  
He  
is young and black  
The both of them hailing from good old  
Alabama

compared to how it would be  
if they both still lived there  
they behave like old chums fending  
for their dignity  
in a world full of Yanks  
who don't understand  
the good parts of being Southern.

**THE BASS IS WOMAN:** for Marion Hayden  
On the Occasion of Being Honored by the Societe of the  
Culturally Concerned  
Melba Joyce Boyd

At a left-  
angled tilt,  
adjacent to  
her throat,  
Marion mind-  
melds with this  
magnificent  
instrument.

Lithe, swift  
fingers  
restringing  
eighth notes  
in cut time  
against  
bare-knuckle  
restraints  
releasing stress  
from neck  
past breasts  
through a  
circuitous  
navel leading  
into a womb  
gifting violet  
riffs like sweet  
rose water  
brimming inside  
uninhibited

thick hips  
that swing  
and sway,  
dancing on  
ripples of  
unreachable  
prayers. Her brown  
curves ground  
earth tones  
at the base  
of rhythm—  
the back-  
bone of song.

The bass  
is woman.



## CIRCLE OF FIFTHS

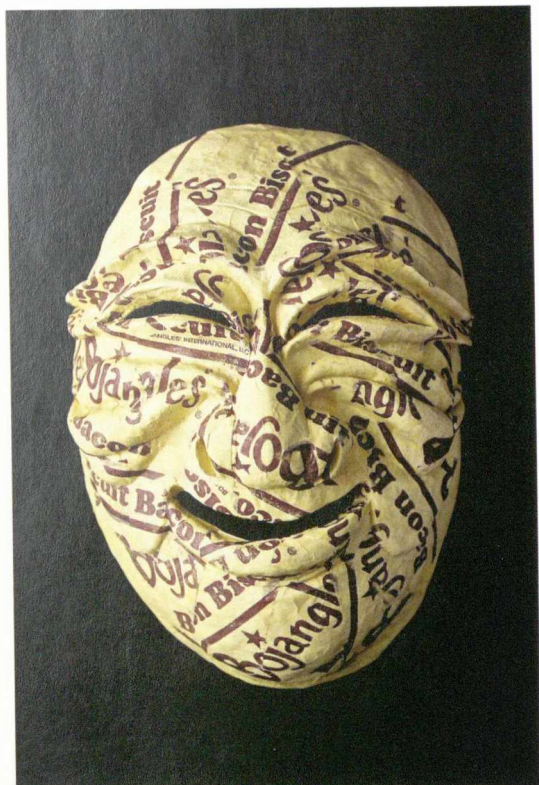
Holly Day

nine thousand years ago, a man in China  
walked across the banks of a river  
blowing a flute. five permanent notes were drilled  
into the flute, five more common notes

than there were representative pictographs in any common script  
or letters in the few existing, chicken-scrawl alphabets. in a  
reed-covered hut nearly five miles away  
a neighbor this man would never meet  
had a flute with the same exact five notes  
drilled into it.

three thousand years later, Egyptians and Syrians  
independently transcribed music as they invented  
their dissimilar written languages, transcribed musical standards  
with the same reverence as religious texts and beer recipes.  
five of the notes of the Syrian scale  
and four from the Egyptian scale  
matched exactly the Chinese Quing Shang scale  
from millennia before.

two thousand years later, a Samoid named Pythagoras  
matched pitches to lengths of string  
broke a circle into triangles and closed the book  
on music theory, saying  
twelve pitches to match the twelve stops on a clock  
were more than enough  
for any instrument. his scale had  
five notes of the Quing Shang, five notes  
from the Syrians, two more unfriendly wolf notes  
for musicians to fight with and try to perfect.



Kyung Hee Im

Yangban Tal (Noble Man Mask), Paper clay, Food wrapper from Bojangle, 6" x 8.5" x 4", 2013.

## EARLY MORNING, LATE JUNE

(or Lone Woman in a Garden of Eden)

Alisha Erin Hillman

After watering the tomato plants, I take off my shoes  
and climb atop a ladybug's back, hitching a ride

to the flower garden. I follow a trail of lemon lollipop  
snapdragons into the vegetation, sliding down foliage,

hopping in tiny puddles. There are slick worm paths  
for hiking, last year's dried, curled leaves to paint

for road signs: GRAY WOODEN FENCE, 37 INCHES  
and LAST WINTER'S SQUIRREL STASH, 9

INCHES LEFT AND DIG. I build a small hut  
of discarded sticks and grass clippings, petal carpeting,

one large Chinese lantern hung for atmosphere. Three  
months from now I will find my way out in autumn chill,

but for now I will live out my summer with the beetles  
and pill bugs in loamy dirt, oblivious to the concern

of my neighbors: my taupe house dark every evening,  
the grass a bereaved Samson waiting for Delilah to return.

## GOOD BLACK WORK

Kyla Marshall

My grandfather worked at the Cole Hersee Electrical Manufacturing Company in Boston for 46 years. He started when he was 19, the year his son was born, and never worked anywhere else. One company. One job. A job you've been at longer than anyone else there. A job where your name should be added on to the company's: Cole, Hersee & Wright. A job where anyone white would be promoted before you. A job of indescribable work: where what you do is difficult to explain outside the building walls. The kind of job you did because you had two children. Good work. Black work.

My grandmother kept a nightshift at Polaroid as an assembly line worker for over 30 years. She shrugs when she talks about it. She was a mother; it was a job. Her own mother, Julia, was born in 1910 and died the summer before I was born. She was a maid. The reaction on my face when I hear these professions: what am I expecting? I'm hoping for some miraculous exception.

There is one. When Julia was at work, my grandmother, Maurice, and her sister, Barbara, stayed with their paternal grandmother, Susie. But everyone called her Sue's Kitchen—she owned a restaurant by that name. To me, she sounds like royalty. I had a great-great-grandmother who owned a restaurant. The sheer fact of it feels lucky.

Sue's Kitchen was born sometime in the 1880s or 1890s, which is scary when you think of it, because there's slavery. There it is, smack dab, an unavoidable point on everyone's timeline, a fact of these women's lives, but not of mine. My president is black. I am well-educated. And since finishing my schooling, I've been only sparsely employed. Is that an accomplishment? It's certainly different from the lives of the women who got me here. My work has been work of the mind: writing, making art. And my black family, in particular my black grandparents, who were teen parents, and unable to further pursue their education, love my writing, or at least the fact that I'm doing it. They let me.

When I won the Hurston-Hughes Creative Writing Prize, an honor I received here at Spelman, my grandmother stood up in church and announced it to the congregation. No one in my family ever tried to sway me in a more responsible, lucrative direction. They ask about my life in New York with genuine interest, not fear. It feels refreshing to have these people, grandparents, my uncle, mother, and others, as my living ancestors.

Then again, Julia Marshall Wynder, my great-grandmother, was not traditional. She was “ahead of her time,” according to my grandmother. She was a maid, but she was also creative, stylish, and sharp-tongued. A wonder of wit—I can tell just from the anecdotes. Who knows what lay dormant in the trim borders of her life? She scrubbed, nursed, cooked, and ironed, for her own children, and the children of many white families. It was not a special job. Most aren’t. But what are we working for? All the hours clocked, why do we do them, if not for something beyond ourselves?

**One Connected And Disconnected Fragment From -  
The Animal Farm**

Doug Draime

Dismayed reassessing the off-centered  
And off-sides shaking the petal  
Dew and cow paddies all over the meadow  
Despite the plowing the brambles the dripping  
Flowers keep busting out through shitty mud (& cud)  
Confounded but vaguely reliable embarrassing the  
Gray sun to big Big yellow hastening  
Thought Police and bob wire fences  
All the while is a very very long while  
And the mourners and the witnesses  
And the ghosts of nobodies  
Rage and justify the impossible and nonexistent  
And everywhere poetry shames itself for acceptance  
Like beautiful muscular horses unable to sprint or even walk  
To their own death down at the University of Glue Factory

(apologies to George Orwell)

## DERIVATIVES

Banah Ghadbian

A poem is an expression with love of some piece of the world  
in which the poet lives.

-Audre Lorde

For us activism is  
Not rickety bandwagons with limited  
space and even more limited mobility,  
Nor anger framed by leaning exclamation  
points in lost scap books

It is when we rest stethoscopes  
on the pulse of revolutions.  
Have you heard the beat of the mute child tell her story?  
She watched her family being murdered  
while hiding in the kitchen cabinet  
She spoke through the rhythm of banging spoons  
We understood every moment:  
Urgent, wide-eyed and alive  
The sounds forming negative imprints  
on our lungs, knocking the wind out of us  
with whispers of  
We were never meant..  
to survive.

have you seen Rima Dali in her red  
raincoat on the Damascene street corner?  
Silent red and white sign, flashing her  
message like a traffic light:

STOP

THE

K

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G

With mimes of street theatre of the oppressed  
performed to the applause of live shelling  
Riveting livestreams spew like the river Barada  
Bombarded with accolades, the air is  
heavy with enough bravado to make a  
child stop breathing.

Can stop before the climax and falling action,  
create our ending as a community?

Weave our own virtual plot threads  
with special input from Gaza and the Congo  
and Burma and Black america

So we know global solidarity  
is more than silk screened Che and Mao

Glamorized revolution flags

And trendy clenched fists?

And more like butterfly wings on a four year old's back.



The bonds of ordinary people are more  
powerful than demi gods and demagogues  
Revolutions reveal that re-evolving is relative  
Pushing radicalism means measuring human complexity,  
its sins, signs, and toxic tangents.  
Real-revolutions curve inward to inspect internal suppression  
Time unfolds on the x axis and love cosigns the underlying Praxis

If the earth was our calculator:  
The amount of living creatures  
dissatisfied with their condition would  
exponentially correlate with the amount  
of breaths exhaled under the surface of its skin  
Divided by the amount of mangoes left to  
rot on the ground by the cry of each  
infant born into destitution

If the goodness of humanity was  
determined by poems written in a day  
If our currency was music  
and progress was determined by a  
median meter of metaphors and we  
traded words like fuel  
Maybe we could derive  
continuums of questions instead of  
concrete conglomerates of answers.  
Maybe then we could start listening

**DON'T CALL ME JACK:** *My Journey Towards Finding a Balance between Writing and Making a Living.*

Buki Papillon

Writing is my life's work. One fine day I might make a writing-related living wage but in the meantime, I came to realize that work should, if it does not exactly feed my soul; at least not suck it dry. The minute I hit upon that conclusion, it became vital for me to find higher ground. To quote Mother Teresa, "Work without love is slavery."

Many writers struggling to make ends meet give a whole new meaning to the word "work." For a while, I wondered if I should just change my name to Jack and admit that I could not seem to find a trade that allowed me peace, and physical and mental space to write.

One of my best hustles - if I may call it that - was a residency at the Vermont Studio Center, where I was awarded a work scholarship. I remember feeling stunned that someone out there really thought my writing was worth giving me lodging and free time within which to indulge. I remember standing there, polishing silver in the Red Mill building, while watching President Barack Obama being sworn in as the first black (and white) President of the United States. A television had been temporarily set up for us all to witness this amazing event. My eyes filled with tears from an awareness that mere decades earlier, he and I could very well have been working at those same locations as servants, or worse, slaves.

Once upon a time, I was a chef for two days. I love to cook, and I am comfortable cooking multiple courses for large numbers of people. An ad on Craigslist for a part-time cooking gig seemed perfect. I applied and soon met the lady - a private chef who prepared meals for one of the frat houses at an Ivy-league college. I stepped into a whole new world where parents of sophomores paid a Paris trained chef the equivalent of the cost of a new car per student, per semester, so they could enjoy three-course dinners every day. Who knew? In my head, college students mostly subsisted on package noodles.

That first day, the lady kept changing her mind about how much she had agreed to pay me. When she halved the original amount, I expressed concern. "Well," she said, "What I pay you has to match your level of experience." I said nothing but kept in mind that both her assistant chefs had recently quit. Later, when the delivery man she employed on a casual basis dropped me off at my train station stop, he warned me that she had a habit of not paying her employees.

The next day, while working alongside her, I heard some sort of scuffle outside the service entry that led to the kitchen. A man was yelling for the chef. She went to see what the problem was. She later returned to the kitchen and told me he was a former employee she'd fired for requesting earnings he was not owed. She said he left when she threatened to call the police. I began to get a bad feeling. That evening, she suggested we share a taxi that would drop her off at her apartment (in an exceptionally expensive downtown neighborhood) and drop me off at my train stop. We got into the taxi and though I can't remember exactly why, she berated and harangued this taxi driver all the way. After he dropped her off, he asked me, "Is that your mother?" I said no, she is my boss. He said "Be careful with that woman, I think she is crazy." I never went back. Not even to ask for my pay for two days work. Just in case she decided to call the police. I needed work, not drama.

My best job ever was two years spent organizing events for international students. That sweet gig came with housing at Stanford University at a time when the dot.com boom made the words "affordable housing" for my post-doc husband and me feel like a mirage of water in the desert. That position saved our financial lives and also finally gave me "permission" to write. I cried when it ended because we were moving to Massachusetts.

Then there was the time before that, when I worked as a travel agent. It involved flying, and not in an airplane, but by the seat of my pants. I learned as I worked. I had to hustle. Once, my inexperience tripped me up. A middle-aged couple came to see me about getting tickets to China. They were in the process of adopting a baby. The first time they came in, we looked at possible flights and their faces fell as the numbers came up in the thousands. They came back a couple of days later, and then the next week and the next. They usurped valuable hours during which I could have seen clients who were ready to book and pay. They waxed at length about the complexity of the adoption process, and I didn't know how to tell them I could not afford to play counselor, that I needed my time at work to be about me making an income, not about them adopting a child. At their fifth or sixth visit, I might have told them that the few remaining semi-affordable flights would no longer be available in a few days and I was not willing to start over. I might have implied that they should come back only when they were ready to make a booking. I remember the look of disgust and disbelief on their faces - how could I be so dispassionate about their plight? I remember feeling bad but relieved. Looking back, I can see with some maturity that their adoption plans - albeit a worthwhile and wonderful thing to do - was a personal matter into which they were co-opting my inexperienced self. I moved on when the interpersonal drama at the agency became too much to bear. I don't do drama, because as much as it does sometimes serve as grist for my writing mill, it also drains my creative energy.

As for the years I spent working at a law firm and in a government legal department, the less said the better. Let's just say, personality-wise, when you are a dolphin, it might be ill-advised to go swimming with the sharks. Sharks do what sharks were born to do. It pays to know which work species you belong to.

I currently work as a licensed massage therapist - a distant planet from my graduate degree in Business Law. Most of the tension and muscle gridlock that people carry when they come to see me is work-related. I can't solve their work problems, but through the power of touch, I can help their bodies find a new level of calm so they can let go of some of the baggage they carried in. They stand up that much straighter when they leave. Back home, I sit up that bit straighter at my desk, knowing my bills will be paid from doing work that is reconciled with my spirit, so that when my muse begins her daily "catch-me-if-you-can" dance, I am ready to ambush her with my net of words.

In the last three years; I started and finished massage school, jointly renovated a 100-year-old house with my husband and completed my first novel. I could have done any number of other jobs that did not involve going back to school and paying for the privilege, but I knew that for me to have peace as a writer, I needed paying work to which I did not dreadfully begrudge my time away from writing.

Life is short and fairy godmothers possibly over-tasked. While toiling away in your corner; your chair turned to face your own peculiar wall, waiting for the magic to happen and set you free to make art, and art only, for happily-ever-after-more, remember to take the time to find out what else works in your life.

## PIANO KEYS

Cora Manning

physically segregated

but united in harmony.

Separate but equal,

each contributes its own voice.

Like an equation,

one plus another makes something greater.

But the result is far from mathematical:

they inhabit the world of the abstract,

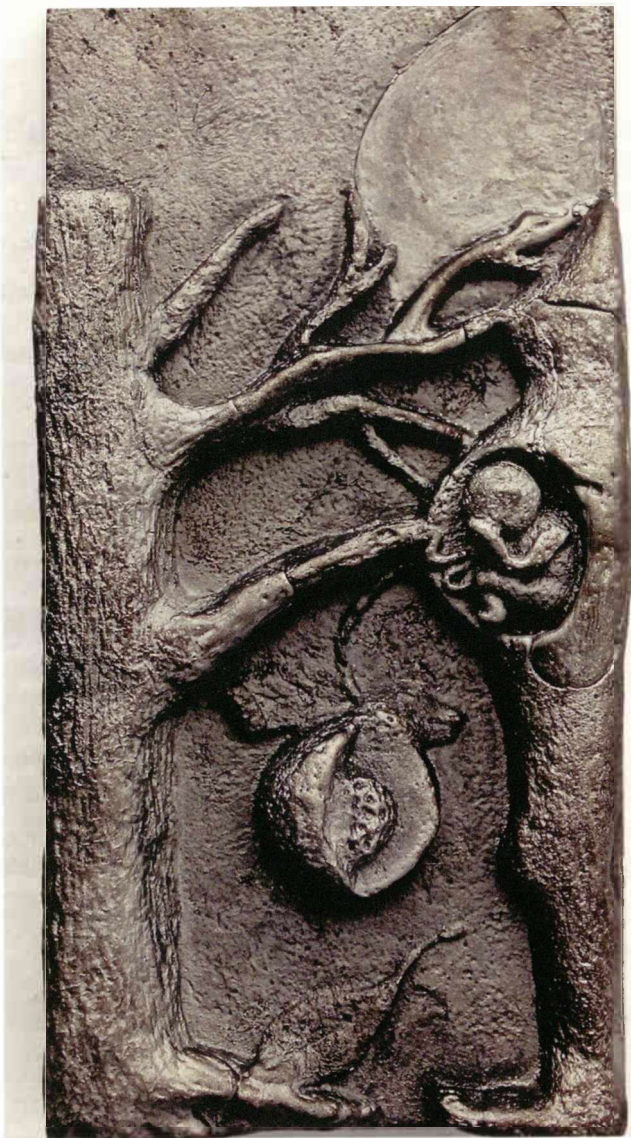
forming much needed art that is

open to interpretation,

a multitude of right answers.

Physically, they are divided.

Emotionally, they are united.



Kyung Hee Im  
Dream Seed, Cast Iron Relief, 4" x 8" x 1", 2012.  
(from the cover)

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Melba Joyce Boyd** is Distinguished Professor and Chair of Africana Studies at Wayne State University. She wrote, produced and directed the documentary film, *The Black Unicorn: Dudley Randall and the Broadside Press* (Cinema Guild, 1995). She is the author of thirteen books, including *Wrestling with the Muse: Dudley Randall and the Broadside Press* (Columbia University Press, 2004) and the editor of *Roses and Revolutions: the Collected Writings of Dudley Randall* (Wayne State University Press, 2009), which received the 2010 Library of Michigan Notable Books Award and was a finalist for a 2010 NAACP Image Award in Literature. She is the author of eight books of poetry, the most recent being *Death Dance of a Butterfly* (2010). Prof. Boyd is the series co-editor of the African American Life Series at Wayne State University Press.

**Holly Day** Holly Day is a housewife and mother of two living in Minneapolis, Minnesota who teaches needlepoint classes in the Minneapolis school district. Her poetry has recently appeared in *Hawai'i Pacific Review*, *The Oxford American*, and *Slipstream*. She is a recent recipient of the Sam Ragan Poetry Prize from Barton College. Her book publications include *Music Composition for Dummies*, *Guitar-All-in-One for Dummies*, and *Music Theory for Dummies*, which has recently been translated into French, Dutch, German Spanish, Russian, and Portuguese

**Tananarive Due** is a journalist and a prolific writer of supernatural suspense, mysteries and histories. She won the 2002 American Book Award for her novel *The Living Blood*. She is the 2012-14 William and Camille Cosby Endowed Professor in the Department of English at Spelman College.

**kourtney e** is a poet, writer, and lover of Game of Thrones, italian food, and Dali. she hails from a corner of northeastern ohio, and has a particular distaste for capital letters. she resides in midtown atlanta, studying english, with a minor in procrastination and aspires to become a wacky, sweater-wearing, tea-slurping literature professor.



**Doug Draime's** latest book is *More Than The Alley*, a full-length selected collection from Interior Noise Press. Also, available are four chapbooks, *Dusk With Carol* (Kendra Steiner Editions), *Rock 'n Roll Jizz* (Propaganda Press), *Los Angeles Terminal: Poems 1971-1980* (Covert Press), and an online chap, *Speed of Light* (Right Hand Pointing). A presence in the 'literary underground' since the late 1960's, he was awarded PEN grants in 1987, 1991, and 1992. In the last few years he's been nominated for several Pushcart Prizes.

**Banah Ghabdian** is an exiled Syrian woman raised in the US south. Declared a terrorist by the Syrian regime for releasing a series of videos calling for freedom and justice, she is an activist on accident. She rallies for refugee rights, environmental justice, anti-imperialism, anti-zionism, transnational feminist issues and the eradication of all oppressions. In her free time she creates and sells jewelry, and writes about nonviolent resistance in the Syrian revolution.

**April Gibson** is a recent MFA graduate. Her work has appeared in or is forthcoming in *Tidal Basin Review*, *Reverie*, and *The New Sound*. She lives in Chicago with her two sons.

**John Grey** is an Australian born poet, works as financial systems analyst. Recently published in *Bryant Poetry Review*, *Tribeca Poetry Review* and the horror anthology, *What Fears Become* with work upcoming in *Potomac Review*, *Hurricane Review* and *Pinyon*.

**Alisha Erin Hillam** is an Indiana native and Purdue graduate, currently drying out in Phoenix, Arizona with her husband and two ankle-biters. She is the recipient of several literary awards from Purdue University and her work has appeared in *Inscape*, *decomp*, *Corium Magazine*, and *Prick of the Spindle*.

**Kyung Hee Im** studies art at the University of West Georgia. She studied Design at Dong Seoul University in Seongnam, South Korea and taught English at Avalon English Academy for four years before moving to the States in 2011.

**Taylor Holmes** is a rising junior at the University of Redlands in Southern California. Her area of study is English Literature, which brings great fascination and frequent disappointment in the absence of the voices of people of color.

**Cora Manning** is a college student and a possessor of seemingly useless knowledge. She enjoys writing, Ben and Jerry's ice cream, and posing illogical hypothetical questions to the people she loves. In her spare time, she remembers song lyrics and writes fiction. Cora currently resides in Atlanta, but will always call Maryland home. She aspires to one day figure out what her dreams are.

**Kyla Marshell** is a poet in New York. Her poems have appeared in a variety of publications, both online and in print, including *Blackbird*, *PMS poemmemoirstory*, *SPOOK Magazine*, *The November 3rd Club* and *Eleven Eleven*. She graduated from Spelman College, where she was the founding editor of *Aunt Chloe*, the second generation of *FOCUS Magazine*. She is a graduate of the MFA program at Sarah Lawrence College, and a Cave Canem Fellow.

**Lenard D. Moore**, a North Carolina native, is Founder and Executive Director of Carolina African American Writers' Collective and Co-founder of Washington Street Writers' Group. Moore's poems, essays and reviews have appeared in over 400 publications. His most recent book is *A Temple Looming* (WordTech Editions, 2008). He teaches at Mount Olive College.

**Buki Papillon** is a writer and licensed massage therapist. During her MFA in Creative Writing at Lesley University, Buki's short fiction was published in the *Del Sol Review*. She has received fellowships to The Key West Literary Seminars, Vermont Studio Center and attended the VONA Voices workshop in Miami. She recently completed her first novel and has also written an interlinked collection of short stories set in Nigeria. Her poetry is forthcoming in *Post Road* magazine. Buki resides in Somerville, Massachusetts, with her husband.

**Sonya Marie Pouncy** is a mechanical engineer. For 20 years, she has worked in the fields of indoor environment control and energy management. Currently, she is pursuing an MA in Creative Writing at Central Michigan University.

**Maya Richard-Craven** is an undergraduate student at Tulane University.

**Leslie Reese** enjoys writing about growing up in Detroit, Michigan. She is the author of two collections of poetry: *Upside Down Tapestry* and *Mosaic History* and *Urban Junkstar*. Leslie completed her BA in English at AAMU and earned a MA in Interdisciplinary Arts from Columbia College Chicago.

**Aunt Chloe's Call for Work Spring 2014—  
Special Section theme: Unspeakable Things Spoken**

*Aunt Chloe: A Journal of Artful Candor* invites poetry, short prose fiction and non-fiction, art images from established and new voices/visual artists. As in every issue, we will include a "Special Section." The 2014 theme borrows from the title of Toni Morrison's well-known essay, challenging artists to confront the unspeakable, with words that harvest our truths in the midst of a market boom in "communication" devices, blogs, entertainment "news," internet "content" and political filibuster. Ours is an era where corporations are people and money is speech, making freedom of speech difficult to decipher as an essential human right. But what of our inner lives? Poet Gwendolyn Brooks wrote "one wants a teller in a time like this" pointing to the human hunger for a voice of authority to promise, despite the chaos, that "love's true and God's actual." But if we know silence as fear and oppression, we also know it as welcome relief from the noise. A vital refuge. A clearing in a bramble. Pause.

## AUNT CHLOE Submission Guidelines

AUNT CHLOE will accept submissions for the PRINT magazine  
until **March 15, 2014**.

AC ONLINE accepts continuous submissions

AUNT CHLOE **ONLY** accepts electronic submissions.

Visit [auntchloe@gmail.com](mailto:auntchloe@gmail.com)

### The following requirements must be met:

- Submit poetry and prose as text file attachments in Microsoft Word .doc format;
- Submit visual art in .jpeg format;
- Include your cover letter in the body of an e-mail providing your name, mailing address, email address, phone number, the titles of each submission, brief biographical information (50 words or fewer), and how you heard about AUNT CHLOE: A JOURNAL OF ARTFUL CANDOR;
- Do not use headers or footers in your documents;
- Do not place submission material in the body of an e-mail.

Previously published work is acceptable when solicited by the editors, and when the contributor has retained rights.

Simultaneous submissions accepted. If your work is accepted elsewhere, please inform us as soon as possible.

Payment for publication is in the form of two copies per contributor. Authors retain all rights to work.

### Submission requirements:

- Poetry: 3-5 poems per submission
- Prose fiction and creative non-fiction: 1,700 word limit
- Book Reviews: 1,200 word limit
- Art: All images must be in .jpeg format