

Poets & Writers

2018 Amy Awards

Lindsay Adkins

Kiley Bense

Wendy Chen

Carlie Hoffman

Sylvia Plath is My Grandmother

She writes with a wooden spoon,
 wet from stirring the beef stew,
whacks her kids on their bottoms
 with feathered pens and they laugh,
standing on chairs in the kitchen.

 Her husband writes with a wrench,
slick with car engine oil and afternoons
 spent in the garage, versifies Saturday
to-do lists on thin yellow paper, savors
 the cross outs like oh-oh little darlings.

She schools the altar boys of Holyoke
 in the postmodern art of knowing
nothing, and prays down the road in
 Northampton to the holy Seven Sisters
for less courage. Her prayers are answered.

 When she lived in England there were no bees
unless she whittled them in paper and she
 did not like *boy, berry, bell jar*. Her journals
did not *buzz*. She drank tea in a chicken coop and
 drove the river into her car every wash day.

She births her children by closing her eyes, her
 poems by unfolding her legs. Her lines
arc up at both ends, off of paged skin so they
 smile and talk back to her. A son and daughter
lie snug under covers like two ink smudges.

 So when she sees the oven, she does not
want to crawl inside. Instead she thinks of how
 she used to dry her hair, just outside its heated
open mouth, while her mother washed the dinner
 dishes, and together they'd wring the water out,

 listen for the drop-hiss that shivers
 when coldness reaches for breath.

Lindsay Adkins

Previously published in the Summer/Fall 2018 issue of the Southampton Review.

September

You start counting
stairs, chipped like concrete
teeth. You imagine stockinged feet
searching for ground.

We catalogued what's missing and stacked
it behind a wall of sky.

The silence breaks on your head like
a fist. There is no exit. You trace
the scab knifed
through a rusty truck's door. Maybe
ballasts plunging like ships' masts
through a swell.

The paper was a forecast.
A boy says, pancaking hands,
“did it fall like this?”

You pause at a decade, impossible,
thinking of those brothers together
in a belly cut into steel. Their
mother's hands on the photograph. Two
daubs of color for consolation.
One lifetime of guessing.

Kiley Bense

No use to say

that I was born here
in a small red house
on the Connecticut River.

In the winter, we'd walk
by its strip of Listerine
blue ice,

knowing spring
would turn our prints
to water,

and water
to New England clay.

No. I am not
American.
For you, I am

from no country
but the East,
my body fragrant
as star anise.

Wendy Chen

Pact

It's not my business, but each time I glimpse
a small girl, bleary-eyed, staring down
at her shoes, hair greased
from longing as the train
rattles on over rats and bits of trash
through the dark, I want
to make a girl-pact
that whatever she is
dreaming there, night flashing
at her back, she will go on
in spite of. Though it is not
my business just
a moment ago you stood
four-feet tall on the subway stairs,
the railing between them:
I'll fucking smack you
Fuck you bitch
as you tried to pull
your mother's coat
away from the years of what
comes next. Not
my business, but know
this is not about the story of a
mother and father gone bad, but worse—
it is about a woman and man
alone, so many houses ago,
picking dog hair from the meat
chucked on the living room rug,
thick in the part of the plot
of your inheritance, and as you walk
up the stairs toward the tail-end
of winter, a twist to your pace,
I can only give you this pact:
When you grow taller and repulsed
by your hair pinned back, the tie
around your neck while you carry
hot plates from table to table, your heart
a half-stone tugging you inward, when your
rage for the order of things shocks you
into stillness, move faster
until you reach a room in a city
you recognize least, and you will
know to call this home.

Carlie Hoffman

Previously published in the Chicago Quarterly Review.

Lindsay Adkins is a writer and actress originally from Western Massachusetts. She currently lives on Long Island, where she is pursuing her MFA in Creative Writing & Literature at Stony Brook Southampton and teaching undergraduate courses at the university. Previously, she earned her BA in English from the University of Hartford and a BFA in Music Theatre from the Hartt School. She is the recipient of the Phyllis B. Abrahms Award in Poetry and her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Sugar House Review*, the *Southampton Review*, *Typehouse Literary Magazine*, *Sequestrum*, *Muse/ A Journal*, and others.

Kiley Bense is a second-year student in Columbia University's MFA program. Originally from Pennsylvania, she has lived in New York City since 2013, working as a journalist and editor. Her writing has previously appeared online for the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Rumpus*, *Saveur* and *Narratively*.

Wendy Chen is the author of *Unearthings* (Tavern Books) and editor of *Figure 1* (thefigureone.com), an online poetry journal featuring work from new and underrepresented voices. Her work has appeared in *Crazyhorse*, *Rattle*, *A Public Space*, and elsewhere. Chen is the recipient of the Academy of American Poets Most Promising Young Poet Prize, and fellowships from the Kimmel Harding Nelson Center and the Barbara Deming Memorial Fund. She has been featured in the Culture Trip as one of "10 Young American Poets Changing the Face of Poetry." Follow her on Twitter @wendychenart or visit wendychenart.com.

Carlie Hoffman's poetry has appeared in the *New England Review*, *TriQuarterly*, *Bennington Review*, *Boston Review*, *Narrative Magazine*, *WomenArts Quarterly Journal*, and elsewhere. She is the recipient of a 92nd Street Y/Discovery Poetry Prize and has been listed as one of *Narrative Magazine's* 30 below 30 poets. She is the founder and editor-in-chief of *Small Orange Poetry Journal* and teaches writing at the Fashion Institute of Technology.