

THE FESTIVAL REVIEW

VOLUME 8
SUMMER 2021



poetry • nonfiction • translation • interview

THE FESTIVAL REVIEW

VOLUME 8 | SUMMER 2021



thefestivalreview.com



Editor-in-Chief

Neal Tucker

Managing Editor

John Sherer

Associate Editor

Melissa Halabe Elbaz

Online Editor

Camille Sammeth

Social Media Editor

Tyara Felder

Media Editor

Gabe Mara

Interview Editor

Rachel Finston

Graphic Designer

Glenda Capdeville

TABLE OF CONTENTS

02 **Masthead**

POETRY

06 **Four Poems**

Hailey Spencer

10 **grazing among the lilies.**

Elisheva Fox

12 **Two Poems**

Daisy Bassen

14 **What it means to be here**

Felice Arenas

TRANSLATION

- 16 **Five Poems**
Antonia Pozzi
Translated by Amy Newman

INTERVIEW

- 26 **Interview with Gaby Dunn**
Rachel Finston

NONFICTION

- 42 **When Lilliane Came Home**
Andrew Sarewitz

Four Poems

BY HAILEY SPENCER

The Persecuted Heroine

(ATU 510A, Japanese)

1. A girl is abused by her family.

The demands never cease: a bag full of chestnuts, beautiful kimonos for the theater, a clean house. The girl's bag is riddled with holes. They hope she will die in the woods, worms crawling their way out of her mouth.

2. The girl seeks assistance.

Go to the woods. Go to the house of the old woman in the woods. She will be alone spinning thread, with a light in the window. Go inside.

3. The girl receives an item that will change her fortune.

To escape the place that's hurting you, all you need is:

A kind old woman with gifts,
a way around the monsters who might eat you,
a kimono and candy for the play.

When the oni come, she spreads rice around her mouth, as though she's died and worms already crawl throughout her flesh.

4. The girl marries a lord.

At the feast, the girl dances light on her toes in the theater kimono. She notices two bowls on the table. One is crimson, the other mottled. Before she can decide what color it must be, a child has knocked it over and it shatters.

grazing among the lilies.

BY ELISHEVA FOX

on the front porch
i fold myself prim into the rocking chair,
i cradle a butter gilded fried pie in my hands.

does my husband know
that i think of you while i eat —

that i wonder if your flavor
changes with the seasons,
slipping from peach to dusky apple?

do your sighs smell like cinnamon?

no, he doesn't know.
and:
if he sees that my eyes glitter,
he will blame the exuberant cedars
or
the melting decay of the autumn sunset.



Photo by Laura Adai

Periphery

I feel that old pang
— it's the earth
that under blankets of frost
lifts its black arms —
and I'm afraid
of your muddy steps, dear life,
you walk beside me, you lead me
near old men in long cloaks,
to fast boys
riding dull bicycles,
to women
who wrap themselves in shawls —

And already we sense
at the edge of the bewildered birches
the smoke from the chimney stacks
dying rosy on the marshes.

At sunset burning factories howl
for the dark start of the trains...

But I, mute piece of flesh, I follow you
and I'm afraid —
bit of flesh that the spring
runs through with laughing pains.

21 January 1938

Translator's Note

Because I wanted to increase the breadth of my Italian language study beyond the lessons, I thought I'd try to translate a poem or two in Italian, to see if translation would be a good activity for me. But what poet? I came across a review of *The Faber Book of 20th-Century Italian Poems*, in which the reviewer mentioned the absence of poet Antonia Pozzi. This caught my eye, so I chose a little book of selected poems (*Guardami: sono nuda*). In the title poem she imagines (one presumes) an onlooker observing her nude body. She describes herself sensually, and then laces the work at the end with a darkness and a toughness. She had an individuality in her voice, charged with something that seemed to call to me. With every poem I translated, I felt I was learning about her, as though I had spent the night in her room while she was away. She should be better known, I thought.

At first I didn't really know much about her biography, so I dove in. Finding out about her life and the circumstances of the publication of her work — that none was published during her lifetime, that her father had revised her work to cleanse it of various aspects that were concerning to him, and published these after her death, that she had taken her own life at the age of 26, that she had been a photographer, a prolific writer with a thesis on Flaubert, a young woman who wrote in her letters of the weight of being female — I more and more understood her to be (though my American lens) a combination of Emily Dickinson and Sylvia Plath, a young woman devoted to writing and intensely aware of her position in the universe. There in the work is so much of her longing, and so much of a voice that is surprisingly modern.

In my experience of translating her, I want to keep what I am sure is her voice, and restore her authentic work for an English language audience. Important to me is undoing in the work what her father did, even if he meant his edits lovingly. He was either ashamed or worried about her desires, her sensuality, her issues with her faith.

Interview with Gaby Dunn

BY RACHEL FINSTON

Gaby Dunn is a writer, and has worn many hats in the past, but primarily defines themselves as a screenwriter and novelist. They also have a podcast with their comedy partner, Allison Raskin, as well as their own podcast, *Bad With Money*. Dunn is formerly of Florida, and now makes their home with their partner, musician Mal Blum, and dog, Beans, in Los Angeles.

Dunn has written fiction since childhood, but took a brief detour into journalism, which inspired their graphic novel, *Bury the Lede*. Dunn is known for being very open about their personal life, including their sexuality, relationships, family, and mental health. In the last few months, they have been working through feelings about gender, and have decided to use they/them pronouns. Dunn has also been reckoning with what it is to have a public persona and a history on the internet, and how they have changed during their years in the public eye. They have also been watching a lot of *Star Trek*. Dunn exists at the intersection of several marginalized identities, being Jewish, bisexual and queer, and their work reflects that life experience.

Gaby was kind enough to speak with me about their current projects, how they write, and what's next.

You started out in journalism. How did the move to fiction and comedy writing happen?

My dad likes to say that the *Bad With Money* podcast is still journalism. *[laughs]* Because I think he wants me to be using my degree. I always loved writing, I wanted to be a writer. I used to write fiction when I was a little kid, and wrote a novel when I was in second grade — “novel” being like fifty pages in a notebook. And I was like, “This is it, this is the great American masterpiece, I’ve done it.”

I got into journalism, because I was very into Superman. I loved Lois Lane. I had gotten an internship at my local newspaper in my town, and I was writing for them. Then I went to school for journalism, mostly because “journalist” was a job that I knew I could get, versus like a fiction writer. Journalist-reporter is a job that you can apply for. And I wanted job security, which is hilarious considering where the newspaper industry went.

I was always writing fiction, and then I started teaching myself screenwriting. I was writing this journalism blog that got popular, and I posted on the blog, “Hey, I wrote a pilot script, is anyone interested in reading my fiction?” And a couple people were. One was an executive at Nickelodeon, and one was an agent, and so I sent it to them and the agent repped me, and the executive later hired me on a sketch show.

It was this weird 2011 timeframe where Tumblr was big and there were only a few people on it, and so if you had a popular Tumblr it meant something. It sounds very nostalgic now, like having a Tumblr made you a big deal. Everything I did was for free. I had a day job, and I also did these interviews [for the blog] on the weekends, and at night, and I updated my personal blog and everything. It was a ripe time for personal writing on the inter-

When Lilliane Came Home

BY ANDREW SAREWITZ

Early in my childhood, our family had a visitor. I remember a fragment of that weekend. There was no event or tragedy. Vague and visceral, but it still resonates.

I was four or five years old when Lilliane came and left.



Clockwise from the left: Ellen, Lilliane, Steve, Danny, Buzzy

It was in the early 1960s, springtime, if memory serves, at the family home in which I grew up, in New Jersey. Lilliane and I played “camera” on the grass in front of our white wooden colonial, built in 1910. Black shutters, brick chimneys, stretched between the corner street lamp, quaintly fueled by gas and a flower garden my mother had planted in the sun, by a paintless wooden fence. I believe Lilliane was twelve years younger than my parents, which would give her a birthdate near 1935. This would place her age at about twenty-eight when we pretended to take photos of each other with our invisible Kodak Instamatics.

Born in Paris, her English was conversational, but the universal dialogue of camera shutter and giggles was the real language we spoke.

“Click, click, click!”

Black hair. Pale Skin. Brown eyes. A classic strand of pearls. Contagious smile. Very Parisian. All of this graces my memory from a time before I knew to treasure things, or how. I would not see Lilliane again for thirty years.

Though we think of her as our relative, the family tree doesn’t connect by blood. Lilliane Frangi is my father’s brother-in-law’s mother’s sister’s daughter. Or something. As Romanian Jews, her parents settled in Paris before Lilliane was born. Knowing nothing that came before, I Googled a timeline, which wasn’t very helpful. They may have fled after Romania became an independent Kingdom in 1881, or to escape the bloodshed of the peasant uprising of 1907. More probable, their leaving for Paris, for a better life, was a result of the debilitating mistreatment of Jews in Romania.

This is all speculative. I know very little with certainty about Lilliane, but I feel anchored to her by narrative heartstrings that I don’t entire-

CONTRIBUTORS

**Felice
Arenas**

Taught creative writing at NYU. Work has appeared in *Huffington Post*, *Entropy*, *PoetsArtists*, and *High Shelf Press*.

**Daisy
Bassen**

Poet, novelist, and practicing physician who lives in Rhode Island.

**Elisheva
Fox**

Her work has appeared in *Berru*, Allegory Ridge's poetry anthology, *Aurora*, and elsewhere.

**Amy
Newman**

Author of five poetry collections. Her translations of Antonia Pozzi have appeared in *Poetry*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, and elsewhere.

**Antonia
Pozzi**

(1912–1938) Italian poet. All her poems were published posthumously.

**Andrew
Sarewitz**

Winner of First Prize from Stage to Screen New Playwrights series for *Madame Andr e*.

**Hailey
Spencer**

New book of poetry, *Out of Love in Spring*, is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press (2021).



the
festival
review