Best of 2020-2021: Favorite Presses, Magazines, Publishers, Journals

written by Entropy | December 11, 2021

Continuing with 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 presses, publishers, magazines, literary journals, and other literary / publishing projects that were doing phenomenal work in 2020-2021. This doesn’t mean necessarily those that were founded or started this year, just those that our readers & editors thought were doing particularly exciting & cool things and deserve a little bit of extra attention.

(For last year’s list, click here.)

In no particular order…

1. Sublunary Editions

In Ancient Greek astronomy, the sublunary sphere—literally, below the moon—was the expanse below the fixed stars and planets, the realm of worldly, imperfect, and fleeting things. Sublunary Editions publishes contemporaneous literature, as opposed to contemporary. That is, we believe in the vitality of works new and old.

Sublunary Editions started as a small-scale, DIY project by Joshua Rothes in early 2019. For the first several months, the press’s sole output as a regular envelope of new writing mailed (the old fashioned way) to subscribers. Since then, the press has expanded
to publish 10-12 brief books every year, along with a quarterly magazine, *Firmament*, and our archival series, *Empyrean*.

Why brief forms of literature? Well, why not? Because they are perhaps most often overlooked, or most likely to be seen as insubstantial, mere curiosities. We, then, like to pay special attention to them, and repeat, with a wink, what César Aira has often said, that “The longer a book is, the less literature it has.”

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2. **Obsidian: Literature & Arts in the African Diaspora**

Celebrating over forty-five years of continuous publication, *Obsidian* supports—through publication and critical inquiry—the contemporary poetry, fiction, drama/performance, visual and media art of Africans globally. A premier platform dedicated to African and African Diaspora Literatures, *Obsidian* is published biannually in print, and year round online.


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3. **Nightboat Books**

Nightboat Books, a nonprofit organization, seeks to develop audiences for writers whose work resists convention and transcends boundaries, by publishing books rich with poignancy, intelligence and risk.

The name Nightboat signifies travel, passage, and possibility—of mind and body, and of language. The night boat maneuvers in darkness at the mercy of changing currents and weather, always immersed in forces beyond itself. By our way of thinking, this image speaks directly to the creative process. Particularly in the generative stages, the writer is a navigator, a listener, a seeker of truths original to one’s individual course and vision.
4. **Tarpaulin Sky**

proves indie presses deserve your attention ([BuzzFeed News](https://www.buzzfeed.com/michaelporter/tarpaulin-sky-proves-indie-presses-deserve-your-attention)); exquisite imagination... ([Publishers Weekly “Best Books”](https://www.publishersweekly.com/); warped from one world to another ([The Nation](https://www.thenation.com/)); beautifully startling and fucked and funny and tender and sad and putrid and glitter-covered all at once. ([VICE](https://www.vice.com/)); simultaneously metaphysical and visceral ... scary, sexual, and intellectually disarming ([Huffington Post](https://www.huffpost.com/)); only becomes more surreal ([NPR Books](https://www.npr.org/)); hallucinatory ... trance-inducing ([Publishers Weekly “Best Summer Reads”](https://www.publishersweekly.com/)); wholly new ([Iowa Review](https://www.iowareview.org/)); language dissolves into stream-of-consanguinity post-surrealism and then resolves into a plot again ([Harriet](https://www.harrietmag.com/)); horrifying and humbling in their imaginative precision ([The Rumpus](https://www.therumpus.net/)); a world of wounded voices ([Hyperallergic](https://hyperallergic.com/)); riotous, rapturous, and radical ([LA Review of Books](https://lareviewofbooks.org/)); unapologetic work, so bitch and bad-ass ([VIDA](https://www.vida.org/)); Visceral Surrealism ([Fanzine](https://www.fanzine.com/)); as savagely anti-idealist as Burroughs or Guyotat or Ballard ([Entropy](https://www.entropymag.com/)); both devastating and uncomfortably enjoyable ([American Book Review](https://www.americanbookreview.org/)); creating a zone where elegance and grace can gambol with the just-plain-fucked-up ([HTML Giant](https://www.htmlgiant.com/))…

5. **Burrow Press**

Burrow Press is the literary publisher of Stetson University’s MFA of the Americas program, focusing on collaboration, translation, and literature in the expanded field.

We publish award-winning poetry and prose in print (3-4 times a year) and online (weekly) in *Burrow Press Review*. We do not accept queries for print books, but we do accept submissions to our online journal via Submittable.

Since 2010, BP has provided over 1,400 opportunities for writers to publish and share their work. We encourage adventurous readers to become Subscribers so we may continue our work for years to come. Scroll down to learn more.

6. **OOMPH! Press**

OOMPH! is an international literary press publishing contemporary poetry and short prose in translation. Editors Daniel Beauregard and Alex Gregor founded the press in Buenos Aires in 2014 with one
aim in mind — to find new literature written in countries around the world and facilitate its translation into English. The editorial team currently works in Argentina and Italy to realize this goal as part of a larger mission to encourage cross-cultural and -linguistic exchange.

7. **North Atlantic Books**

North Atlantic Books (NAB) is an independent nonprofit publisher committed to a bold exploration of the relationships between mind, body, spirit, culture, and nature. Founded in Vermont in 1974 and operating in Berkeley since 1977, NAB has been at the forefront of publishing a diverse range of original books in bodywork and somatics, ecology and sustainability, health and healing, indigenous cultures and anthropology, psychology and personal growth, social justice and engaged activism, and spirituality and liminality. NAB’s Blue Snake Books imprint is one of the largest sources of internal and historical martial-arts books in the world.

North Atlantic Books is an educational nonprofit based in the unceded Ohlone land Huichin (aka Berkeley, CA), that collaborates with partners to develop cross-cultural perspectives; nurture holistic views of art, science, the humanities, and healing; and seed personal and global transformation by publishing work on the relationship of body, spirit, and nature.

8. **The Asian American Writers’ Workshop: The Margins**

The story goes that the Asian American Writers’ Workshop (AAWW) first took shape in 1991 in a Greek diner in New York City’s East Village. AAWW’s co-founders Curtis Chin, Christina Chiu, Marie Myung-Ok Lee, and Bino A. Realuyo began meeting with other Asian American writers, all of whom were in search of a supportive community in the New York City literary world for writers of color. Together, they established AAWW as a not-for-profit organization in 1992 and published the first issue of *The Asian Pacific American Journal*, AAWW’s first print publication. In the 2000s the AAWW moved twice, first to a space in Koreatown and then to Chelsea, our current home where we maintain offices, a reading room, and a public events space for the community. AAWW held three iterations of our Page Turner Festival, expanded our programming to include seniors, and re-ignited our fellowship program through The Margins and Open City Fellowships. We also moved our publishing initiatives online, where we have published our Whiting Literary Prize-winning
magazine *The Margins* since 2012. In 2018, AAWW returned to its print publishing roots with the co-publication of a new anthology of Asian American literature, *Go Home!*, with the Feminist Press.

Today, AAWW provides a unique sanctuary space for Asian American writers. We continue to host live events in our space, offer fellowships for emerging writers, hold workshops for youth and seniors, and publish *The Margins*, our digital magazine.

9. **Strange Horizons**

Strange Horizons is a weekly magazine of and about speculative fiction. We publish fiction, poetry, reviews, essays, interviews, roundtable discussions, and art.

Our definition of speculative fiction includes science fiction, fantasy, horror, slipstream, and all other flavors of fantastika. Work published in Strange Horizons has been shortlisted for or won Hugo, Nebula, Rhysling, Theodore Sturgeon, James Tiptree Jr., and World Fantasy Awards.

Speculative fiction has a vibrant and radical tradition of stories that can make us think, can critique society, and can show us how it could be otherwise, for better or worse. We aim to be part of that tradition, and to update it: in the twenty-first century, speculative fiction must be a global, inclusive literature. We want to showcase work that challenges us and delights us, by new and established writers from diverse backgrounds and with diverse concerns.

10. **Vol. 1 Brooklyn**

Founded in 2009, Volume 1 Brooklyn engages and connects the literary-minded from Brooklyn and beyond. Vol. 1 Brooklyn features short and long form content on our website and produces a number of free cultural events to bridge the gaps between various forms of culture and art. Vol. 1 Brooklyn seeks to motivate our community to explore and experience new writers, artists, musicians, and other people and projects we consider vital.
11. **Wave Books**

Wave Books is an independent poetry press based in Seattle, Washington, dedicated to publishing exceptional contemporary poetry, poetry in translation, and writing by poets. The press was founded in 2005, merging with established publisher Verse Press. By publishing strong, innovative work in finely crafted editions, we hope to continue to challenge the values and practices of readers and add to the collective sense of what’s possible in contemporary poetry.

12. **Wendy’s Subway**

Wendy’s Subway is a reading room, writing space, and independent publisher in Bushwick, Brooklyn. We support emerging artists and writers in making experimental, urgent work and create alternative modes for learning and thinking in community. Wendy’s Subway is dedicated to encouraging creative, critical, and discursive engagement with arts and literature. We prioritize collaboration and horizontal decision-making in our work towards being a responsive and sustainable organization.

13. **Hobart After Dark**

We had an idea for a journal that, like most things Hobart-related, started as something of a joke… until it became a real thing. We had such a love for those early, minimalist web journals (elimae, McSweeney’s, eyeshot, Surgery of Modern Warfare…) and so thought we would nod back toward them. If submissions are open, we’ve probably had a couple drinks. We’re Hobart After Dark.

14. **The Creative Independent**

The Creative Independent (TCI) is a growing resource of emotional and practical guidance for creative people, published ad-free by Kickstarter, a public-benefit corporation. We produce interviews, wisdom, and guides that illuminate the trials and tribulations of living a creative life, as told by working artists—including writers, musicians, designers, visual artists, and others. Our goal
Barzakh is a multi-genre journal with an internationalist stance seeking work that transcends genre. “Barzakh” is a word/concept that names the connecting link, the “between” of something, such as different spheres of existence. As a temporal concept it can be, and historically was, considered an interval of time. For the great Arab mystic & poet Ibn Arabi, Barzakh is a kind of purgatory—the temporary and yet historical place which makes up this world where we live, love and labor, aware that what we need most to find our way through is what the poet John Keats called “negative capability,” i.e., the ability “of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.” The Arabic word has the literal meaning of “barrier,” “veil,” and “curtain.”

Triple Canopy is a magazine based in New York. Since 2007, Triple Canopy has advanced a model for publication that encompasses digital works of art and literature, public conversations, exhibitions, and books. This model hinges on the development of publishing systems that incorporate networked forms of production and circulation. Working closely with artists, writers, technologists, and designers, Triple Canopy produces projects that demand considered reading and viewing. Triple Canopy resists the atomization of culture and, through sustained inquiry and creative research, strives to enrich the public sphere.

Luna Luna is an online diary, literary journal, and community dedicated to making space for the light, shadow, and the liminal spaces in between. Like the moon’s two sides (Luna, by the way, is moon in Italian and Spanish), we embrace duality.

We publish poetry and essays (on any theme) on the “light” portion of our sight – for we believe literature and personal narrative is
illuminating.

We publish rituals, spells, and explorations of our shadow side on the “shadow” portion of our site. We believe that what we reveal and what is hidden are of equal value and worth. Part literary journal, part grimoire, we are a safe space for women, queer people, non-binary folks, Black people and people of color. Luna Luna is made for and by poets, creators, witches, dreamers and rebels.

18. **Split Lip Magazine**

We’re a literary journal that’s totally bonkers-in-love with voice-driven writing, pop culture, and the kind of honesty that gets you right in the kidneys.

We love stories and poetry and art because they’re our insides turned out for everyone to see: the darkness and the confetti in equal measure.

19. **Catapult**

... Most of all, we publish stories that land us squarely, concretely, in someone else’s shoes. The very best stories carry us, witlessly, helplessly, on a wave of empathic suspense into territory that might seem exotic, or demented, relative to our personal point of view, but return us refreshed, bewildered, and changed. Not by means of factual knowledge, but by interior sensation. We experience what it might be like to be someone else, and now we care. That, to us, is the ultimate collaboration.

Now we’re nearly there.

We are resolutely non-boundary people. We embrace old media and new. We publish angels and deviants, hermits and mad hatters, narcissists and mousy types—anyone brave enough to take an unflinching look within. Beyond books we provide classes, teachers, mentors, confidantes, divine inspiration, and quite possibly self-actualization (why not). We’re angling for the big narrative reveal and don’t favor any particular form: Just make it real, make it dangerous, and make it YOU.

We don’t celebrate stories because they’re easy. We celebrate stories because that’s the best way we know to celebrate life.
20. **Pleiades**

*Pleiades: Literature in Context* is a literary biannual featuring poetry, fiction, essays, and reviews by authors from around the world. Past contributors include winners of the Nobel, Ruth Lilly, Pulitzer, Bollingen, Prix de la Liberté, and Neustadt Prizes, recipients of Guggenheim, Whiting, National Book Critics Circle and National Book Awards, and many writers seeing their work in print for the first time.

*The Pleiades Book Review (PBR)* is a literary supplement to the magazine that features both essay reviews and shorter reviews of books released primarily by independent publishers.

Each year, *Pleiades* distributes the featured book in the Unsung Masters Series, published by Pleiades Press. Each volume focuses on an important writer whose work has been unjustly neglected and features both a generous sample of creative work and numerous essays. Unsung Masters Series volumes are distributed free to subscribers with the June issue of *Pleiades* and are also available through Small Press Distribution.

21. **Noemi Press**

Founded in 2002, Noemi Press is a 501(c)(3) literary arts organization based in Blacksburg, Virginia, dedicated to publishing and promoting the work of emerging and established authors and artists.

Noemi Press relies on the support of those who believe in the future of literature. Please consider [becoming a subscriber](#) or making a tax-deductible donation today.

22. **Big Other**

“John Madera and Big Other are my go-to places to go for when I want to know what is most true and pure in the ways of the literary world. I can’t say I know of anyone else in the world quite like John, or quite like Big Other, and it’s this kind of singularity that I am always on the hunt for, and am pleased always by what I find in John and the things he has curated at Big Other. Where else
in the world can a single sentence be praised. Where else to go to do such crucial listening.”
—Peter Markus, author *Bob, or Man on Boat*, as well as five other books of fiction

23. **Ecotone**

*Ecotone* is published in what is now called Wilmington, North Carolina, which is located on the traditional and ancestral territory of the Waccamaw, Catawba, and Cape Fear People, among others whose names we may not know. For thousands of years, this land served as a site of community and exchange between Indigenous peoples, until settler-colonists seized it from them. Legacies of violence, oppression, dehumanization, dispossession, and settlement have intersected here, erasing names, traditions, cultures, languages, and ways of knowing. As a magazine dedicated to reimagining place, *Ecotone* is committed to acknowledging and trying to better understand the full history of the place where we work, write, edit, and learn.

24. **Apogee Journal**

Apogee is a journal of literature and art that encourages the thoughtful exploration of identity and its intersections, including but not limited to: race, gender, sexuality, class, and ability. We pay tribute to the Black feminist Combahee River Collective in our recognition that “the major systems of oppression are interlocking,” and to that end, work to combat the domination of white, cis-heteronormative, patriarchal voices in our literary landscape.

We feature fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and visual art. Our purpose is threefold: (1) to publish fresh work that interrogates the aesthetic and political status quo, (2) to provide a platform for underrepresented voices, prioritizing artists and writers of color (3) to model more radical conversations and practices regarding equity and publishing.

The word “apogee” denotes the point in an object’s orbit that is farthest from the center. Our approach to both art and political activism operates with the same motivation to center underrepresented artistic voices from the political margins. We want to affect change on multiple levels: to transform ideas, to extend possibilities for writers’ positions in art and literature,
and to impact policy.

Our staff is composed of writers, teachers, activists, organizers, and nonprofit workers. We identify predominantly as people of color, LGBTQ, women, and/or femmes. We recognize that the personal and the political are inseparable. We seek to move beyond representation for its own sake. The marginality of our identities and our commitment to social justice deeply inform our work within and beyond the journal.

25. **Orion Magazine**

The first issue of the *Orion Nature Quarterly* was published in June 1982, and in its editorial George Russell, the publication’s first Editor-in-Chief, boldly stated *Orion’s* values:

“It is *Orion’s* fundamental conviction that humans are morally responsible for the world in which we live, and that the individual comes to sense this responsibility as he or she develops a personal bond with nature.”

In the intervening years, *Orion* has become a focal point in an extraordinarily rich period of nature writing, and it has remained true to that core conviction, though the magazine has evolved into a bimonthly and the range of its interests has broadened to include not only environmental but cultural concerns.

Today, *Orion* has an operating budget of more than $1.5 million and a full-time staff of ten, plus interns and several part-time staff. With no advertising, about 30% of *Orion’s* operating budget comes from subscriptions and sales and about 70% from donations from foundations and individuals.

*Orion* magazine invites readers into a community of caring for the planet. Through writing and art that explore the connection between nature and culture, *Orion* inspires new thinking about how humanity might live on Earth justly, sustainably, and joyously.

26. **Kweli**

Kweli’s mission is to nurture emerging writers of color and create opportunities for their voices to be recognized and valued. By creating a community of Black, Indigenous and POC artists and programming based on artistic excellence and rigor, Kweli empowers writers to share stories that engage and impact our
communities. Our vision is for a world where the narratives being told reflect the truth of our histories and the possibilities for our future.

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27. **The Funambulist**

THE FUNAMBULIST IS A PLATFORM THAT ENGAGES WITH THE POLITICS OF SPACE AND BODIES.

Our hope is to provide a useful platform where activist/academic/practitioner voices can meet and build solidarities across geographical scales. Through articles, interviews, artworks, and design projects, we are assembling an ongoing archive for anticolonial, antiracist, queer, and feminist struggles.

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28. **Game Over Books**

Founded in 2017, Game Over Books is a small Boston-based press run by nerdy artists. Our mission? Print unique books from diverse voices that push creative writing forward into the Next Level. From acceptance to publication, we give continual guidance to emerging writers as they continue to gain experience points, grow their craft, and navigate the world of publishing.

We want to show people that a 40-page poetry collection about Gerard Way as a queer and trans icon has just as much value, and has just as much quality, as New York Times bestsellers, if not more. Our press prides itself on being transparent about all aspects of our publishing process and providing authors a much needed entry point into the publishing industry.

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29. **Futurepoem: futurefeed**

futurefeed, an extension of Futurepoem, is a new online space where writers, artists + thinkers are invited to experiment + explore ideas that are important to them over an extended period of time.

Bloggers-in-Residence are invited to publish poems, essays, manifestos, letters, critical essays, videos, video essays, experiments, plays, work-in-progress, audio, dreams, comics, short
stories, images, interviews, digressions, or lists. At this time, we are not accepting submissions.

30. **Veliz Books**

Veliz Books is an independent literary press dedicated to discovering, publishing and promoting work from emerging and established authors. We offer a vehicle where contemporary literature can travel. We are invested in fostering a community of readers and writers passionate about words and language, regardless of where they live.

We seek quality and original literature from authors writing in English, Spanish, Portuguese, or Galician. Veliz Books is also committed to publishing translations into English because we believe in cultivating artistic and literary connections that transcend geographical, cultural, and political borders.

Our books are beautifully crafted to establish a holistic connection between the words and the object. Each book is designed with care to honor the literary work.

31. **Copper Canyon Press**

Poetry is vital to language and living.

Copper Canyon Press publishes extraordinary poetry from around the world to engage the imaginations and intellects of readers.

Since 1972, the Press has published poetry exclusively and has established an international reputation for its commitment to authors, editorial acumen, and dedication to the poetry audience.

Copper Canyon Press publishes new collections of poetry by both revered and emerging American poets, translations of classical and contemporary work from many of the world’s cultures, re-issues of out-of-print poetry classics, anthologies, and prose books about poetry.

32. **BOMB Magazine**
BOMB Magazine has been publishing conversations between artists of all disciplines since 1981. BOMB’s founders—New York City artists and writers—decided to publish dialogues that reflected the way practitioners spoke about their work among themselves. Today, BOMB is a nonprofit, multi-platform publishing house that creates, disseminates, and preserves artist-generated content from interviews to artists’ essays to new literature. BOMB includes a quarterly print magazine, a daily online publication, and a digital archive of its previously published content from 1981 onward.

33. Sick Magazine

SICK is an independent, thoughtful magazine by chronically ill & disabled people, founded & edited by Olivia Spring and designed by Kaiya Waerea. Founded in Norwich, UK in 2019, SICK is currently based out of Maine, USA and London, UK.

SICK is committed to elevating the voices of sick & disabled people by publishing essays, features, poetry, visual art, interviews, and more. Our aim is to increase representation of sick & disabled people in publishing and the arts, and to challenge the harmful stereotypes and misconceptions surrounding disability. We work in and with our slowness, pausing and resting when we need to. We believe, listen to, and support each other. We reject productivity as means of value, and celebrate our sick & disabled bodies.

34. Mizna

Mizna is a critical platform for contemporary literature, film, art, and cultural production centering the work of Arab and Southwest Asian and North African artists. For more than twenty years, we have been creating a decolonized cultural space to reflect the expansiveness of our community and to foster exchange, examine ideas, and engage audiences in meaningful art.

Mizna seeks to be a local, national, and international leader in providing excellent artistic platforms for emerging and established SWANA artists, connecting their work to engaged and thoughtful audiences.

Through Mizna, audiences have the opportunity to engage in the work of Arab and Muslim artists on its own terms. And our community has a critical opportunity to see some facet of their own experience reflected on the page or the screen.
35. Feminist Press

The Feminist Press publishes books that ignite movements and social transformation. Celebrating our legacy, we lift up insurgent and marginalized voices from around the world to build a more just future.

FP seeks to champion intersectional and nuanced works that spark much-needed dialogue and move the feminist conversation forward. Current editorial initiatives include the Louise Meriwether First Book Prize, created to highlight debut work by women and nonbinary writers of color, and Amethyst Editions, a queer imprint founded by Michelle Tea.

We are seeking political and cultural activist nonfiction that furthers our understanding of intersectional feminism. We gravitate toward voice- and vision-driven stories as well as genre-defying texts. Other topics of interest include feminist dystopia, environmental justice, and immigration stories. We do not publish poetry, dramatic works, doctoral dissertations, or literary criticism.

36. Milkweed Editions

Just as the common milkweed plant is the site of metamorphosis for monarch butterflies, Milkweed Editions seeks to be a site of metamorphosis in the literary ecosystem. We take risks on debut and experimental writers, we invest significant time and care in the editorial process, and we enable dynamic engagement between authors and readers. We operate as a nonprofit to pursue these ends without overbearing financial pressure. And yet, though profits aren’t our primary focus, helping our authors succeed certainly is. Just so, since our founding in 1980, we’ve published over 350 books of literary fiction, nonfiction, and poetry and now have over four million copies in circulation. We believe that literature has the potential to change the way we see the world, and that bringing new voices to essential conversations is the clearest path to ensuring a vibrant, diverse, and empowered future.

37. underblong
Underblong is a journal of the not-quite-so, of unfinished thoughts, of unresolved anger, of unforgotten macaroni art. Underblong is the coatroom of your secret’s secrets, a boiling pot of kit-kats becoming your favorite soup. Send us a poem that cuts through the crap. Send us your dinner chicken. Poems made by a soul.

38. **Split This Rock**

Split This Rock cultivates, teaches, and celebrates poetry that bears witness to injustice and provokes social change. It calls poets to a greater role in public life and fosters a national network of socially engaged poets. Building the audience for poetry of provocation and witness from our home in the nation’s capital, we celebrate poetic diversity and the transformative power of the imagination.

Split This Rock explores and celebrates the many ways that poetry can act as an agent for change: reaching across differences, considering personal and social responsibility, asserting the centrality of the right to free speech, bearing witness to the diversity and complexity of human experience through language, imagining a better world.

39. **Paperbag Journal**

*Paperbag* is an online literary arts journal, produced annually. Paperbag is interested in presenting larger bodies of poetry, visual art, sound, collaboration, and experiment from established and emerging writers and artists throughout the world.

40. **Full Stop**

Founded in January of 2011, Full Stop focuses on debuts, works in translation, and books published by small presses. We believe that books exist in a supercollider, that their meaning and significance arise from high-energy collisions with the people and cultures that read, write, and share them. In an often insular and oscillating field, we seek to highlight the unknown, the precarious, and the as-yet unrealized.