

# Damaged Goods Press

written by Entropy | May 9, 2017



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## *Interview with Caseyrenée Lopez, Founding Editor*

*How did Damaged Goods Press start?*

I started Damaged Goods because I saw an outpouring of amazing work after working with *Crab Fat Magazine*. I initially started *Crab Fat* specifically for queer writers, but at the time my place in the lit/poetry/writing community was very limited and I felt it was necessary to expand the scope and allow for a wider audience/scope of submissions. After a while, I started to feel like I'd betrayed myself and queer/trans writers, so I wanted to create a space for those voices specifically. I have been publishing chapbooks for almost 2 years now and have not deviated from that course—I continue to seek out and publish the work that I want to see in the world, and by offering this platform I have created something that I truly believe in and love. I was moved to action because I love this work and love getting emerging voices out into the world.

*Tell us a bit about Damaged Goods Press. What are your influences, your aesthetic, your mission?*

It's simple really: I look for queer/trans writers who are making beautiful, powerful work. I love the weird, experimental, avant-garde work that is coming from the margins, and I want to center that work as best as I can. To tack down exactly what I'm after at Damaged Goods is something I haven't done yet. I'm just publishing work that speaks the loudest to me. So far our catalog has a variety of writers, and the one thing that holds it all together is the beauty of the works.

*Can you give us a preview of what's current and/or forthcoming from your catalog, as well as what you're hoping to publish in the future?*

This past December (2016) we published Jesse Rice-Evans' *Soft Switch*, which is a really cool prose poetry collection that centers queer femme identity,

and this February we published Mariama J. Lockington's *The Lucky Daughter* (absolutely incredible!). It's hard to say more because we're a very small press and only publish around 3-4 books a year, but I'm always reading and looking for the next collection of beautiful queer words to add to the Damaged Goods catalog.

*We used to ask, "What about small/independent press publishing is particularly exciting to you right now?" We're still interested in the answer to that, but we're even more interested to know what you think needs to change.*

All the good stuff is coming out of small presses. It's where all the best writers are getting their starts and leaping into the world—so that's super exciting to see so many wonderful voices getting their due—but as with so many others, I'd like to see more feminism and queer representation.

*How do you cope? There's been a lot of conversation lately about charging reading fees, printing costs, rising book costs, who should pay for what, etc. Do you have any opinions on this, and would you be willing to share any insights about the numbers at Damaged Goods Press?*

I want to see the bigger guys open their doors to writers by getting rid of or lowering reading/submission fees. It's really hard to claim you want to publish underrepresented writers and add diversity to your catalog, while charging \$25, \$35, \$45 (!! ) just to read someone's submission. It makes publishing so inaccessible for poor/low-income writers to submit anywhere. Damaged Goods is a very small endeavor, and we pay for almost everything out of pocket. After our first year we decided to make sure that 70% of our book sales go back to the writers, and the remaining 30% partially covers book printing/shipping/ mailing supplies/etc. If you can't publish books or read submissions without charging absurd fees maybe it's time to rethink publishing strategies? Maybe I'm wrong here, but it feels like there should be a higher level of transparency for presses that charge large fees, and saying "the money goes to pay writers and back into the press" doesn't seem like enough: let people know how those \$35-\$45 fees pay for press expenses and how much of those fees actually make it into the pockets of writers. It just feels dirty to make writers pay for submissions when they're the reason presses exist. Everyone who writes for, or runs a small press, knows that money is very limited here, most folks don't get into doing this with dreams of striking it rich, and if money is the biggest concern—well, you know how that goes.

*Can you tell us a little about what the press's name means to you?*

Damaged goods is a phrase I've always used to describe myself, as someone who doesn't fit in with a lot of scenes, as someone who is a survivor of physical and sexual abuse, as someone whose gender identity and sexual orientation doesn't align with a lot of labels. It's never been a bad thing either, just a weird way of coping for me. It seemed to fit the kind of work I want to publish as well because for a lot of us, queer and trans folks, we're often seen as damaged in some way—we go against social norms in one way or another—but really, it's beautiful, and adds so much depth to the literary

world.

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*Recent releases from Damaged Goods Press:*

