

# Dinnerview: Joanna C. Valente

written by Danielle Susi | February 28, 2018



Joanna C. Valente is a human who lives in Brooklyn, New York, and is the author of *Sirs & Madams* (Aldrich Press, 2014), *The Gods Are Dead* (Deadly Chaps Press, 2015), *Marys of the Sea* (The Operating System, 2017), *Xenos* (Agape Editions, 2016) and the editor of *A Shadow Map: An Anthology by Survivors of Sexual Assault* (CCM, 2017). Joanna received a MFA in writing at Sarah Lawrence College, and is also the founder of Yes, Poetry, a managing editor for Luna Luna Magazine and CCM, as well as an instructor at Brooklyn Poets. Some of their writing has appeared, or is forthcoming, in Brooklyn Magazine, Prelude, Apogee, Spork, The Feminist Wire, BUST, and elsewhere.

Here, they talk about a love of brunch, a separation of foods, and a final pho.

## **On their all-time favorite meal:**

This is so hard, because I have so many favorite meals. I really love pastichio, which is a Greek casserole dish. Since my family is Greek, they make it for every major family function, so I've been eating it ever since I could remember. My aunt is famous for making it perfectly, so it has become one of those family traditions. But, there's also an amazing authentic Greek restaurant in Queens that I go to with my family for a lot of birthdays and celebrations. It's become a food of love.

## **On what the light looks like during their favorite meal of the day:**

I love brunch. Weekend brunch is probably one of the most decadent things I let myself partake in, because it's just so lovely. I love the yellowish clear light that slants through the clouds in the morning through the trees and buildings. Brooklyn also has amazing brunch spots with really creative cocktails, so it always feels like a treat. It's a social thing, too, of course, but everything feels so much brighter and happier and crisp and

clear. Mornings in general, even on weekdays when I'm just eating a bowl of cereal, are refreshing. The new start is infectious, even if I had a bad day before.

For artists of any kind, we need renewal, a fresh start. To believe we can even when we feel we can't.

**On snacking while writing:**

I don't, actually. Eating, and having meal of any kind, is a ritual for me. I love being mindful when I eat, taking everything in and savoring the smells and tastes. So, I can't really concentrate on that when I'm writing – and when I'm writing, even if in public, I want my complete attention to be focused on one or the other.

**On their go-to late-night snack:**

Here's a few classics, eaten separately: grapes, pickles, chocolate, black licorice, persimmons, liverwurst, hard-boiled eggs with habanero sauce. I know, I'm weird.

**On their food quirks:**

I usually have to eat everything separately. If I have a burger with fries, for instances, I have to eat the fries completely separately. It's something having to do with me needing to understand what everything tastes like separately.

**On their final meal request:**

I'd ask for pho. Because I could just pho all day long. It's also just so comforting and satisfying. I'd be eating it with my sister (who is also a writer), at my favorite pho place in Manhattan. Just talking. Simple.