Bringing you the best and brightest from small presses this month.
Arda Collins’s second book of poems, STAR LAKE, is a deeply personal collection that explores the ways our notions of daily life touch the presence of the eternal. With memory as the backdrop of many poems, including the loss of the poet’s parents and her experience growing up in a family of survivors from the Armenian genocide, Collins often overlays images of landscapes, weather, and domestic interiors with a tone of melancholy.

Notes From the Road • Mike Ingram • Awst Press • 180pp • ISBN: 9781736765937 • Nonfiction

A week before spring semester, a Philadelphia writing professor sets out for L.A. to deliver a friend’s car. His first night on the road, alone in a Super 8 motel, he makes three pro/con lists: one for staying in his job; one for staying in his relationship; and one for staying in Philadelphia. This book-length essay is a log of the author’s life on the road, peppered with reflections on his family, history, and life’s simple pleasures. In these pages, Ingram confronts the disappointments of middle-adulthood set against his Big Desires.

Rock Tao • David Meltzer • Edited by Patrick James Dunagan • Lithic Press • 176pp • ISBN: 9781946583246 • Poetry

ROCK TAO is a rambling cohesive rock-n-roll poetics diary originally written in 1965 as Meltzer listened to KEWB in San Francisco transcribing lyrics of top hit songs. Along the way, he samples scientists, philosophers, psychologists, musicians, starlets... figures who defined what the sixties would come to be and how they would be remembered. ROCK TAO is penetrating in its critical view of the consumer culture taking shape in America.

In Memoriam / In Enquiry • David Weiss • Chax Press • 200pp • ISBN: 9781946104335 • Poetry

David Weiss’s deeply human and astonishing first book, In Memoriam is a wondrous contradiction. Built on grief’s scaffold, his experiment struggles with language being both wholly inadequate and as a possible “means of freedom.” Weiss’s poetic meta-manifesto travels in giant steps from Revelations through language being both wholly inadequate and as a possible “means of freedom.” Weiss’s poetic meta-manifesto travels in giant steps from Revelations through Celin to Saturday Night Live, expanding inward and outward at once, into worlds where moments of ease are shot through with COVID statistics and grief is threaded with hilarity.

POSTDOC - The Foreign and Other Misadventures of a Ne'er-Do-Well Scholar • Kevin McAleer • PalmArtPress • 220pp • ISBN: 9783962580889 • Fiction

Steve McIlhenny is a rotten teacher, habitual drunkard, born contrarian and not least a young white male trying to forge a career in the affirmative-action environment and politically-correct atmosphere of American academe in the 1990s. He drifts from one job to another, one woman to the other, one bottle to the next and travels beyond U.S. borders to Berlin, Paris, Madrid, Egypt and Israel where his trials persist and he continues to clash with the academic establishment.

UNDERTORAH: AN EARTH-BASED KABBALAH OF DREAMS takes readers on a journey through the root systems of the dreamworld. Drawing on a deep knowledge of ancient Jewish dream practice, world wisdom traditions, and contemporary ecotheology, this hybrid work of mystical scholarship combines personal narrative, multi-voiced oral history, and a somatic alternative to more symbolic methods of dream interpretation.

Light on the Walls of Life - a tribute anthology to Lawrence Ferlinghetti • Edited by Bobby Coleman • Jambu Press • 200pp • ISBN: 9781734146011 • Poetry

Light on the Walls of Life is a tribute anthology to Lawrence Ferlinghetti affirming the lasting sacred power of poetry and insurgent art. This tribute volume was authorized by Ferlinghetti shortly before his 100th birthday. He expressed his hope that this book would serve to support the advance of poetry and general artistic literacy. In these pages, many exceptionally talented contributors, including poet laureates, other well-established writers and visual artists.

A moving book where the voice undulates dark and soul-filled along cracked borders, rising boundaries and worn “brown gods” along the routes, grasping at fading shimmers of truth, family, longings and stark existence. Direct and tender, knowing and lilting, shifting and wandering—in all this “rotura” rupture there is warmth, love, suffering and purpose for the long haul ahead. A magnificent, profound and necessary text from the Latinx Renaissance.” - Juan Felipe Herrera, Poet Laureate of the United States, Emeritus

"i take your voice" is one long serial poem of imagined conversations between a daughter and her mother, in a language native to neither of them. It reads like a one-woman play, the daughter enacting both roles of the miscommunication that comes with immigration, trauma, and narcissism. In text coming in from the left and the right side of the page, and sometimes meeting in the middle, ‘i take your voice’ is a communion of the unsaid and untranslatable, blurring the lines of a loaded mother/daughter bond.

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