Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Conversation with Poet-Publisher-Artist Juliet Cook

Mish (Eileen) Murphy · Thursday, August 26th, 2021

I first got to know Juliet Cook because we were both members of the same online poetry group. I learned that besides being a prolific, widely-published poet, Juliet runs Blood Pudding Press, which publishes unique, hand-crafted poetry chapbooks and Thirteen Myna Birds, *a zine that publishes cutting-edge contemporary poetry. This is the second time I've interviewed Juliet for* Cultural Daily *by means of email exchanges—because I find her work—and her—utterly fascinating.*

Mish: *I know you like the color purple, especially purple flowers. What is your favorite purple thing? Anyway, why purple?*

Juliet: I'm not sure why purple although I know I've loved that color for years. Overall, I don't like primary colors, other than black. White is my least favorite color, but I also tend to dislike yellow, orange, green, and blue, unless they're combined or juxtaposed or contradicted with other colors. In addition to different variations of purple, I like marooned red, and different hues of grey, bronze, and silver.

I'm not a fan of red roses or standard traditions.

Instead of light and happy, I'm more drawn to dark, unusual, and strange.

Mish: *You are publisher of Blood Pudding Press—how and why did you become a publisher in the first place? For most, it's an unprofitable, thankless job…what made you want to do it? What has being a publisher taught you?*

Juliet: I started my Blood Pudding Press back in 2006 and initially published one of my own chapbooks, *The Laura Poems*, with poems based on Laura Palmer from *Twin Peaks*. I had already been submitting poetry and having it published before then, but that chapbook manuscript came out so fast and I felt so strongly about it at the time that I didn't want to spend a few years submitting it before it found a home. I wanted it to exist right away. So I started my own small press, published a few of my own chapbooks, then shifted my press's focus to publishing chapbooks by others.

A big part of the reason I wanted to publish others is because I think it's mostly poets who publish other poets. I wanted to be small-scale and DIY about it because I had loved zines for years and wanted the zines I created and/or published to be artsy poetry chapbooks. Another reason I wanted to remain small scale and DIY about it is because I'm not drawn to corporate. Another reason I

wanted to keep it small is because I have a slow process and I didn't want publishing to become my primary creative focus. My main creative focus will always be my own reading and writing.

Being a publisher has allowed me to encounter the creative work of some poets I really like that I might not have encountered otherwise so that is a definite plus side. It has allowed me to feel like I'm giving back (a tiny but meaningful amount) to the poetry community.

Poetry is definitely not a money-making gig and as far as the chapbooks I publish, I'm mostly just hoping to break even and to make a few other poets feel excited and appreciated.

Mish: *I know you've done a lot of collaborative poetry with j/j hastain. And since I last interviewed you, you've branched out and created collaborative poetry with other poets besides them. What makes it work for you?*

Juliet: j/j hastain and I's collaborative writing was not the first collaboration I'd ever tried, but definitely the most effective/affective for the most creatively longest lasting time frame. Our collaboration ended up resulting in a published full-length poetry book (*A Red Witch, Every Which Way*, Hysterical Books, 2016) and in the years since that publication, we continued to collaborate and reached the point of assembling ANOTHER full-length manuscript that I'm currently submitting. It's entitled *Moving Through a Chipped Decanter* and so far has been rejected by one press and is currently only submitted to one other press so I should really try to submit it more soon!

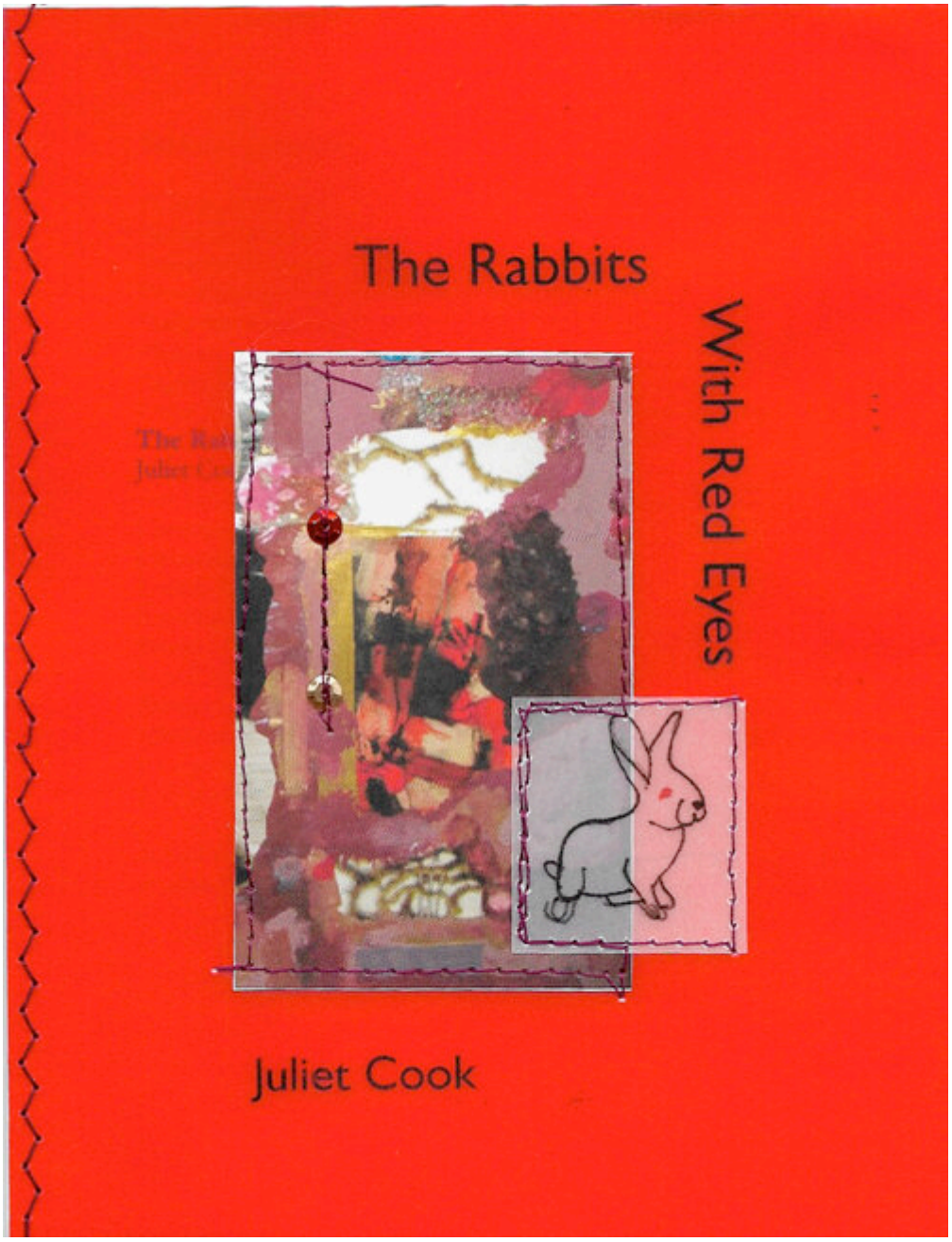
I'll admit it can be hard for me to focus on reading, writing, submitting, and publishing in the same general time frame and usually the first two take precedence for me. It takes a lot of time and energy for me to compile a manuscript and I don't want to put all that time and energy in and then not attempt to get it published.

But sometimes submitting is tricky for me because I don't do it fast (I don't do anything fast) plus I currently have an old chapbook manuscript that I'm submitting and a newer chapbook manuscript that I'm submitting, in addition to the collaborative full-length—plus a pandemic-based chapbook manuscript that I have set aside—and I could also assemble another chapbook manuscript, but I should probably wait until I get one of the existing ones accepted?

Back to my collaboration with j/j, I think a big part of the reason it's lasted for so many years is because despite the two of us having somewhat different poetic styles, we both tend to be focused on aspects of abstract, visceral, visual aphasia-derived language, body-based imagery and gore, thus our styles tend to fuse well together.

Collaboration can be a wonderful experience, but one downside for me is when I have a sudden, unexpected urge to revise or cut out a few lines. If it's my own individual poem, then I can just do what I have a sudden poetic urge to do, with no explanation necessary. But if it's a collaborative poem, then I have to take time to explain my sudden creative urge to my collaborator.

Currently I'm writing some collaborative poems with my boyfriend, Darryl—and what initially inspired that process was because I got annoyed by his use of the word "nasty" to describe sheep spit, so instead of staying annoyed, I started a poem with his line, and that got us into writing some nasty fair(y) tale(tail) poems.



THE RABBITS WITH RED EYES by Juliet Cook

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