

Jessie Scrimager Galloway

author of *not my daughter*



Press Contact

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Biography



photo credit: Reina Vazquez

Jessie Scrimager Galloway is a poet, educator, development & grant consultant for nonprofits focusing on social change and cultural equity, and producer of the reading series Write On Poets in Columbus. As founding Director of the Elder Writing Project, a community-based outreach program of the Litquake Foundation, Jessie brought creative writing to senior communities across the Bay Area for its first five years. She has been a carpenter, vegetarian food cart cook, video ethnographer for healthcare operations change, and a caterer. She grew up in Indiana where she was adopted into a family with Southern Baptist roots, she is an adopted, queer poet with mommy issues. Jessie is committed to nurturing the development of programs for multi-marginalized communities, serving as the founding Development Director for *Foglifter*, a San Francisco-based literary magazine and press created by and for LGBTQ+ writers & readers. She is a graduate of Pacific University's MFA program in Portland (where she lived for a decade) and author of the chapbook *Liminal: A Life of Cleavage* (Lost Horse Press). She loves her wife's fried chicken and enjoys riveting conversations with her best editor: Snacks, a wily, polydactyl, orange cat. *not my daughter* (Etched Press, 2024) is her first full-length collection.

Press Release

The Living Room
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The Living Room SF & Etched Press are proud to announce the publication of:



not my daughter, a collection of poems by Jessie Scrimager Galloway

not my daughter (Etched Press, 2024) is a mesmerizing collection of 44 poems that are part confessional, part documentary, part analytical lyric exploration of the adoption system, part Southern Baptist parentage and queer identity narrative, part psychedelic sensual love story of the self and others, part meditation on grief within a complicated relationship, part, part, part. As you will find throughout, "this is my body, / broken for you," it contains multitudes.

Praise for *not my daughter*

“With crisp lyricism and narration, *not my daughter* slices dogma and illuminates the power of resiliency. This book is a must-have for living in this world and claiming your sexuality, *your* name, your life no matter what. Jessie’s poems redefine daughterhood and embrace what we humans long for, always, love.”

–Thea Matthews, author of *Unearth the Flowers*

“This debut collection presents a brilliant examination of three languages: heritage, erasure, and wonder. Here, you’ll see a poet in the crossfire of the human experience. This work cuts with precision crafting a map that resonates with raw authenticity. Jessie weaves a narrative that is both haunting and deeply moving. This book is a must-read.”

–Antony Fangary, author of *Haram*

“The queer-adopted-kid-poet-who-teaches-creative-writing in me swoons over the brilliant craft and the precise play with language. I’ll return to this collection again and again. I want to use every poem as an example of “this is how you truth.” These poems give us somewhere to belong and make us feel less alone.”

–Su Flatt, Columbus-based writer & educator

“Jessie’s lines of poetry are glass castles; ready to shatter over you again and again. She elicits a yearning, that is delicate and eternal, from tender moments that can make—or break—a life: a ripped saccharine packet lying prostrate on a table, a fork scraping the rim of a plate, the pluck of fishnet threads marking a thigh.”

–Andrea Passwater, Oakland-based writer

Jessie Scrimager Galloway is an adopted, queer poet with mommy issues. She is a graduate of Pacific University’s MFA program and author of the chapbook *Liminal: A Life of Cleavage*, Lost Horse Press. She loves her wife’s fried chicken and enjoys riveting conversations with her best editor: Snacks, a wily, polydactyl, orange cat. *not my daughter* (Etched Press, 2024) is her first full-length collection.

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Sample Poems

Closed Adoption

My real mom is a fragmented paragraph
on a quarter-page
biographical information sheet
from a pink adoption folder
pinned on the bulletin board above my bed

with push pins, marked threads,
I hung myself
between sparse words
for forty years,
desperate for lineage,
I marked similarities,
believed with unwavering hope
that blood would see me whole.

My biology, the hole holding
it too big to stay the pin,
paper corner slit, my story
lopsided like a lobe giving
to a heavy earring.

Heirlooms

Mother,
I prayed,
played in
rough lace,
covert abrasions,
tomboy trees
climbing, straddling limbs,
the rugged pink, the breaking
perversity of lust,
I am your
Daughter.
Holding breath
for baptism,
holding the familiar
weight of bosoms,
like apples,
I salt the sweet bite of fruit,
Mother.

Bells ringing from all the churches
mornings of my childhood,
silty basements, I kept my eyes
on tan tiles, lace bobby socks, patent leather heels.
Dragged mine to mark across cracks,
lines and lines—
impatient matching disciples to
deeds, I preferred
Sunday school games like
Mother, may I
take one step forward?

*Lisa Renee, git over here right now.
We don't do that in this family.*

There is pleasure left in lunar imprints, the linger of
bruises on a bicep.

These Baptists shake trees
blocks at a time, bend limbs to snap,

it is me—remember, I am your
daughter.

Switches lashed against me
bent over a banquet table.

Go wash your hands.

Christmas was rapt by
the rattle of plates, the salt
of streaming tears.

*Thank you Lord [and Leviticus] for blessing us with
this meal.*

Pass the salt.
Take obscene bites.
Ask for another piece of ham.

*Take, eat:
this is my body,
broken for you.*

Great-grandmother's china,
pattern worn
by fork scraping, scouring.
I would not
have chosen this red.
I would not
have taken their name
except in vain.
I would not have begged, *please don't*,
she would not have spit

*you are
not my
daughter
you are
not my...*

But, I am,
even without you

still searching for
sated communion--
the milk-drunk gurgle of
a breastfed mouth.

Sweet'n Low

Cracker Barrel, Gas City, IN 2003

I met Mother halfway between
our cities, waiting with a pink gift bag,
a wooden angel holding a butterfly—
a gift for Mother's Day. We sat awkward.
Disagreed on what movie I saw first,
she swore Cinderella,

I took you, we sat in front.

Two pink packets, sides torn, tossed,
granulated saccharin—

*No, it was Bambi. I went with Dad, downtown, I was 5.
Remember, he gave me my nickname in softball— Thumper.
I stepped on a baby rabbit warming up to pitch.*

a white rapid into
the translucent brown, I'm thinking of baby deer,

I was lost with you.

the ice tea spoon swirl, clink, swirl, clink,

*Cousin Vickie reads and writes,
faster—swink swink swink,*

*she would have been a better mom,
should have adopted you.*

Sweet'N Low tornado slurry.
The fake sugar falls to the glass floor.

Too Late

The illusion of what she is, what
he is, what I am
recedes. Once there's a hospital bed, everything
begins to fall away.

I start to hear echoes

*Hold your shoulders back,
Did you wash your hands,
and then,
It's time to prepare for me not to be here.*

The call came late.
*Your mother passed away
two hours ago.*

I searched crawl spaces in my mind,
anything that signaled her passing.

A throng of gentle wings
like waves lapping,
a nausea, the rising of
a hundred swallows out of ash
gripping me at the back of my neck.

Secrets slated for burial
crawling in my throat.
So much remains unsaid.

*Hold your shoulders back.
Wash your hands.*

Mercy

If you ask me in person, I'll say
I'm glad my mother is dead.
But when I dream, I long for her grimace.
I want her mouth
 open tonsil-big shouting—
a window in the fuddle of grief.
But, I want her
to shout through the broken
glass fist-shattered by my 15-year-old
dyke-not-her-daughter severed tendons.
I want her
to shout through her family's
 Baptist *Yor-goin-to-bell* condemnations
To shout through her head-
shaken-side-to-side *NO*.
I want to hear
spittle, slobber flying as fists
I want her pounding glass
with urgency
like the dream is filling with water,
I want her
desperate even if just to save herself.
I really want to know,
can you hear
the sound of a daughter's hands
on her mother's throat?
Can you hear
 the mother say *You are my baby, always will be*
Or do you hear
 her say *No daughter of mine...*
Do you leave it unexamined?
Can you see us now?
 Without pry or pound, I need things from her mouth.
But, no one can hear *I'm sorry*
 before our mouths fill with water
 and become just warble and bubbles.

Shaping Desire

It's not just the "O" of
glossed lips on the mirror.
All glass reflects her.

It's not just electric,
it's neon: red-pink, blue bruises—
an open sign.

She's not just the blinding sun.
She is when you blink
to stare again.

It's not just the feel
of a pop-popping drum,
it's that feel of the uh uhing bass.

It's not just the throb,
it's a tapping—a thimble
on another mother's thumb thrumming.
It's the smell of tin,
it's hollowing—
an open can
tasting knife-sharp,
ratcheting breath,

it's you holding the lid a-dangle
in your trembling fingers,
and knowing my need
is a final tear to let go.

Multimedia

Visual Poems

“Barometer” video poem by Jessie on YouTube:

<https://bit.ly/barometer-video>

Music to Accompany the Book

not my daughter YouTube playlist:

<https://bit.ly/not-my-daughter-music>

Featured Press

“Poet Spotlight: Jessie Scrimager Galloway,” *TC Poetics Lab*

<https://www.tpoeticslab.com/post/poet-spotlight-jessie-scrimager-galloway-she-her-hers>