

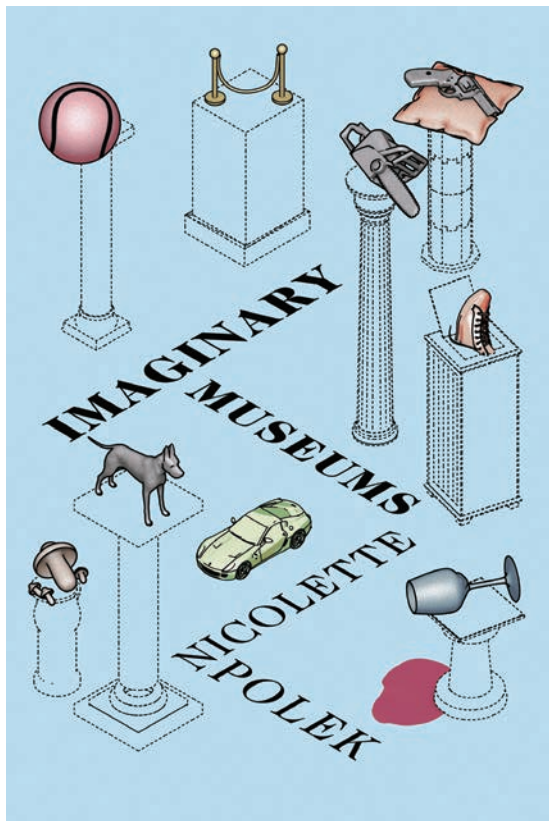
SOFT SKULL PRESS

**NEW TITLES AND
SELECTED BACKLIST**



WINTER 2020

SOFT SKULL



JANUARY · Fiction · \$15.95 · Trade Paperback
Original · Ebook Available · World Rights: Soft Skull
9781593765866 · 96 pages · 5.5" x 8.25"

IMAGINARY MUSEUMS

Stories

NICOLETTE POLEK

Twenty-six surreal miniatures about displacement, mystery, and transformation from an exquisite and original debut voice

In this collection of compact fictions, Nicolette Polek transports us to a gently unsettling realm inhabited by disheveled landlords, a fugitive bride, a seamstress who forgets what people look like, and two rival falconers from neighboring towns. They find themselves in bathhouses, sports bars, grocery stores, and forests in search of exits, pink tennis balls, licorice, and independence. Yet all of her beautifully strange characters are

possessed by a familiar and human longing for connection: to their homes, families, God, and themselves.

From Imaginary Museums

Annie was encouraged to take a painting class after the divorce. Annie painted scenes of herself in empty Arctic landscapes, with long, difficult shadows. These paintings became part of a series she called "Painting Class."

She didn't know why she was still in that small town, where the only people she knew were her ex-husband and his mean, obese mother.

One day, Annie's painting instructor recommended that she visit the Air-Conditioning and Refrigeration Museum in New York City. "The AC unit is an anthropological lens for community," he said in his intense, ancient way. "Before air-conditioning, whole neighborhoods had to sleep together by the river."

Annie pictured falling asleep with the people in her painting class. She saw herself rolling around, bumping softly into their bodies, feeling around in the sand for something she had lost.

"Now we stay inside, shrinking in closed rooms," said the painting instructor. He was looking out the window now, touching it lightly with his hand, like a dog. He had perversely thick hair and a big belt buckle.

"The whole museum feels isolating and distant, like your work," said the instructor.

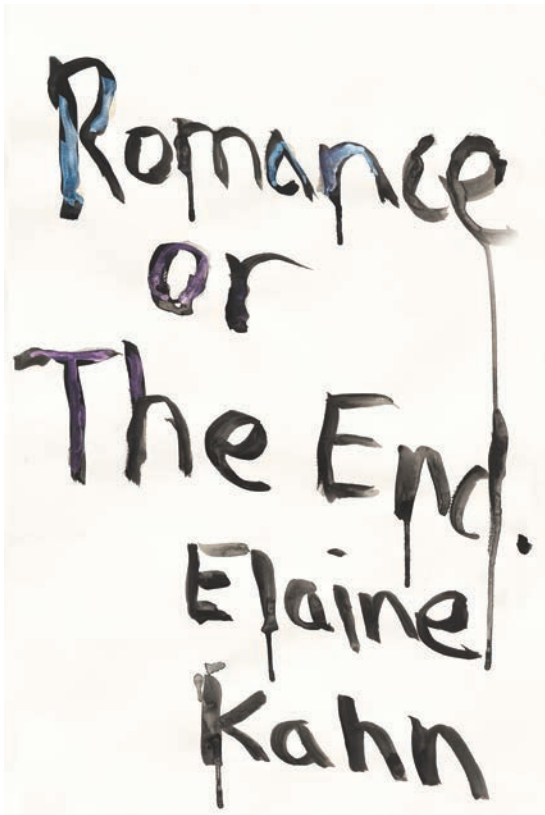


© Jordan Castro

NICOLETTE POLEK is a writer and pianist. She is from Cleveland, Ohio, and is currently working on her first novel.

 [nicolettepolek](#)

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ROMANCE OR THE END

ELAINE KAHN

"Elaine Kahn's poems touch me somewhere deep. I don't know how or why, but I'm willing to go wherever she wants to take me."

—Kim Gordon

Romance or The End takes up the tools of romantic narrative in order to perform the rupture between self and story that occurs at the onset of trauma. Using known and pathologized literary arcs, Elaine Kahn unspools the fundamental instability of truth, love, and language to create an experiential portrait of narrative's power to both disfigure and restore.

FEBRUARY · Poetry · \$16.00 · Trade Paperback
Original · Ebook Available · World Rights: Soft Skull
9781593765842 · 128 pages · 5.5" x 8.25"

Praise for Elaine Kahn

"Kahn's poems are strategic attacks against mythic fictions like selfhood, gender, even the universal acceptance of scientific knowledge. But to characterize Kahn's poetics as invested in 'truth' would fail to highlight its multivalent relation to language as something that both delimits perception and serves as a vehicle of power." —Jeffrey Grunthaner, *Hyperallergic*

"Elaine Kahn shoots from the groin, championing a ferociousness that rages against asperity while playfully seducing the reader to misbehave. Hers is a realm where oceans beat against genitals, and Hannah Wilke warms the earth." —Dodie Bellamy

"Elaine Kahn's poetry blends colloquial tongue-action and rigorous academic formalism better than anyone I've ever read . . . She resolves contradictions inside her work with a clarity that feels far more effortless than it must actually be. And it provides a sort of Dionysian pleasure that should be negated by its clearly Apollonian form roots." —Byron Coley

ROMANCE or THE END

This is a book about love.

And it is a book about lies.

Love can be a lie, but it is also always true.

This is a book about truth.

This is a book about story.

There is no such thing as a true story, and so there are no stories in this book.

Without a story, there is separation.

This is a book about separation.

Everything is a story. Even the truth.

There is nothing truer in this world than the lie of love.

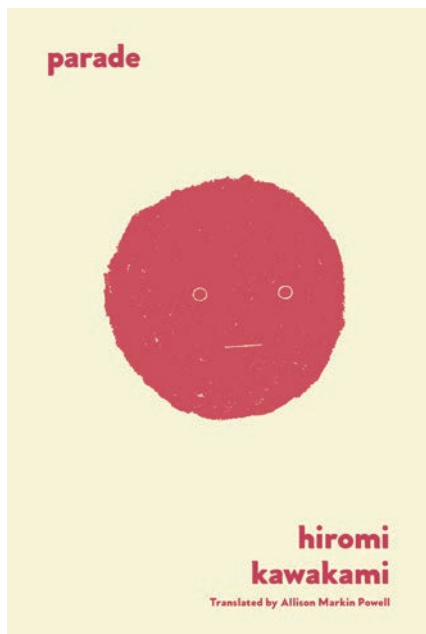


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ELAINE KAHN is the author of *Women in Public*, as well as several chapbooks, including *I Told You I Was Sick: A Romance*, *A Voluptuous Dream During an Eclipse*, and *Customer*. Her writing has appeared in *Frieze*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *jubilat*, *Poetry Foundation*, *Art Papers*, and elsewhere. She received an MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop and teaches at Pomona College and the Poetry Field School. She lives in Los Angeles.

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Hiromi Kawakami
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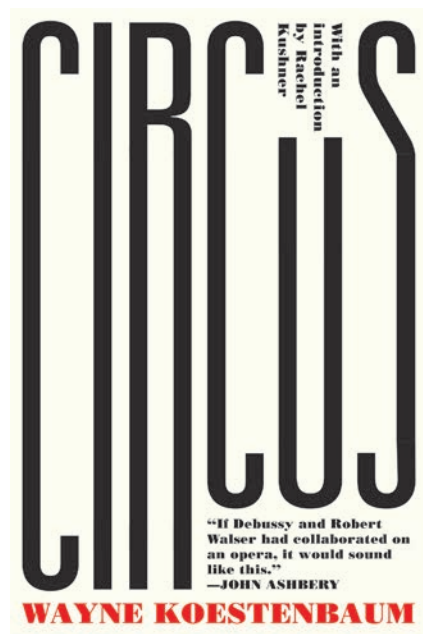
“Ecstatic and painful . . . [Fiona Alison Duncan] is a genius,
 and I’d follow her anywhere.”
 —Chris Kraus, author of *After Kathy Acker*
 and *I Love Dick*



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“If Debussy and Robert Walser had collaborated
 on an opera, it would sound like this.”
 —John Ashbery

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Publishers Group West, a division of IPS
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Catalog design by Natalia Mosquera
Cover based on design by salu.io