

Permissions

investigating curation and cohesion
in a full-length poetry collection

finding my approach

I started this project with 11 notebooks, over 2 years' worth of work. After reading through all of them, I typed up nearly 300 pages. I thought I would then weed out the weaker pieces, leaving only my best poems to form a collection. Instead, I kept hitting a dead end. I couldn't objectively determine the "quality" of the poems without first setting my intentions.

guiding questions

What deeper commonality exists between these different themes? What greater goals am I working toward in my writing? What do I want to give the reader? What defines my perspective?

These questions allowed me to choose poems that reflected my greater intentions and goals, instead of reading for the elusive "best" pieces. I was left with around 50 pieces to compose my collection.

unifying themes

While reading through my body of work, I noticed a few particular themes I often returned to: gender and sexuality, love and relationships, spirituality, and the purpose of art-making.

Over time, I began to see these different themes as avenues through which I explored a deeper concern with worth and deserving. From here, I started to place the poems along an emotional and thematic evolution.

other methods

Timelines (chronological or non-linear), repeating images or interrelated themes can all lend a sense of cohesion to a collection, and can be present on their own or alongside sections. When they are used, section breaks can indicate turning points in tone or subject. They may also follow narrative beats or mark new formal directions, so they can prepare the reader for more variation between sections.

sections

Throughout the poems in this collection, the speaker searches for different sources of external validation, and the sections of the book reflect this. Section I explores sexuality and love, Section II seeks guidance from other writers, and Section III moves toward an understanding of worth as intrinsic, not earned.

I tried to avoid explicit chronology in favor of placing the poems along an emotional evolution. Even still, similar themes have ended up close to one other as the speaker grapples with and re-interprets them throughout the process.

the beach

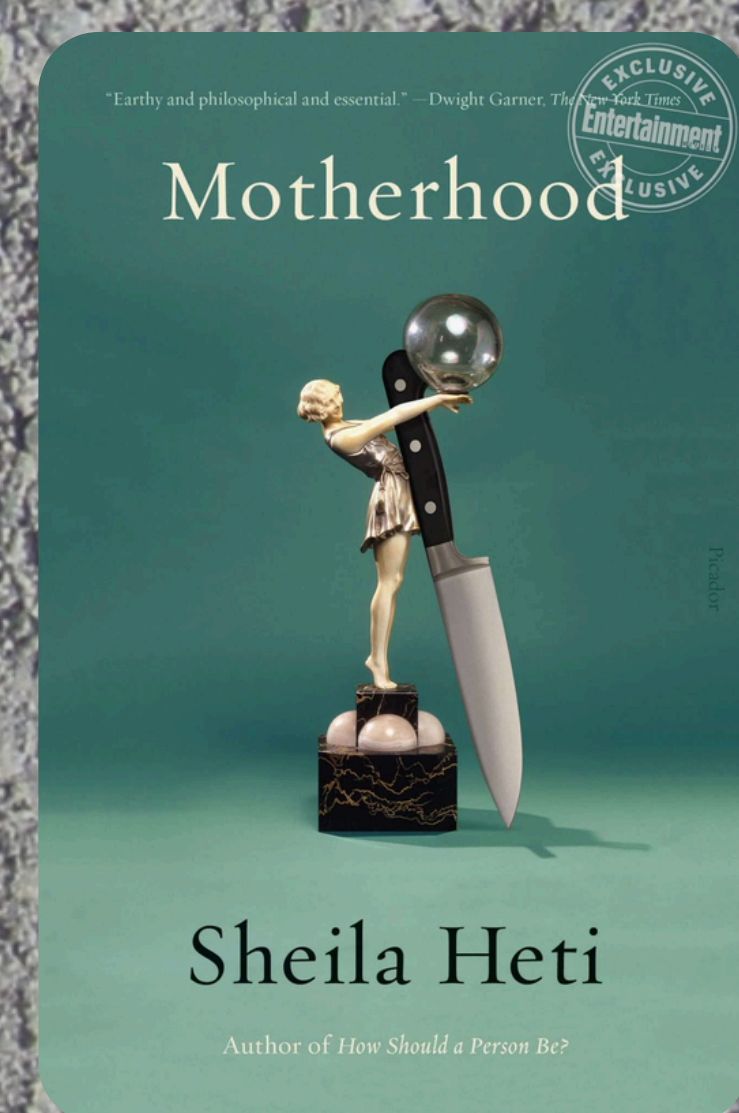
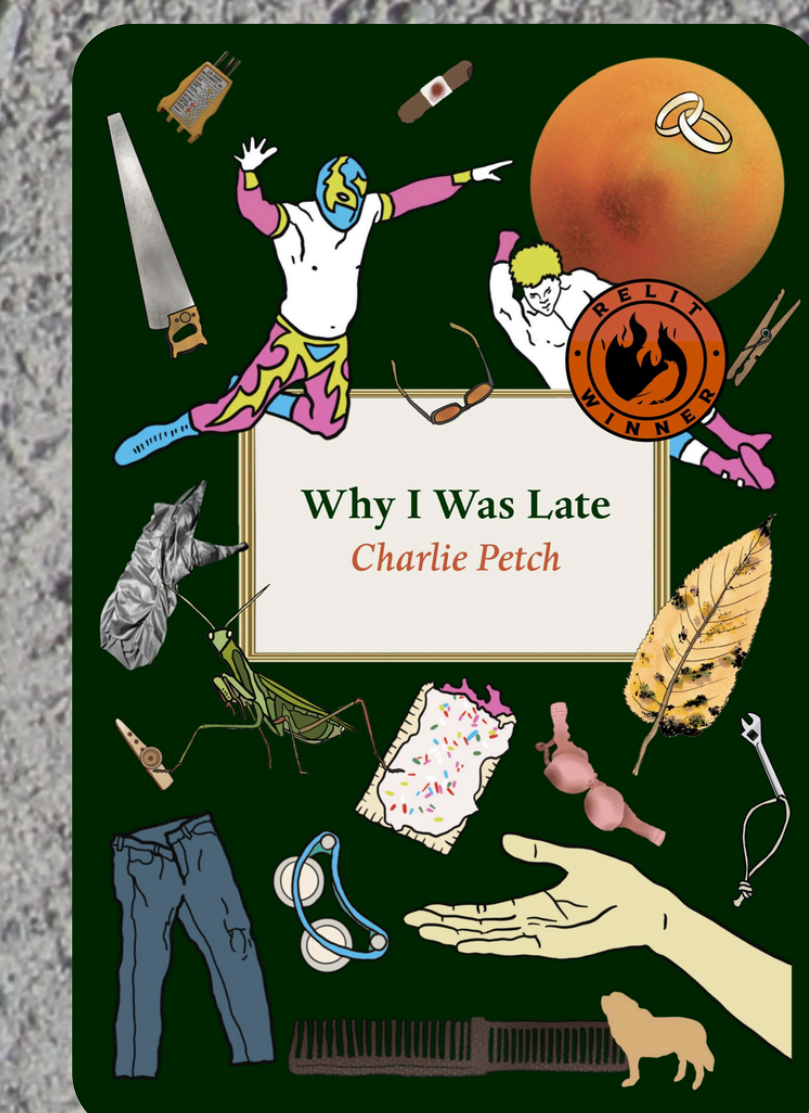
I asked my foremothers
what it means to be a virgin
& they said
I am too heavy for it
and have been since thirteen
since I ate my first mcdouble
and snapped my hymen
on the back of a shetland pony

I asked my foremothers
if it was okay not to wear a bra
in my new red dress
they told me my tits sagged

I stripped naked to bathe
on the beach of my foremothers
littered with golden sea glass
sizzling in the ancestral sun

I laid my purple hips bare
with stretch marks on the beach
of my foremothers & baked
under the brilliant sky

inspirations



next steps

This project focused on the connections between poems and the cohesion of the manuscript as a whole. Moving forward, I hope to spend more time with each individual piece and begin close editing, as many pieces in the collection have not yet received that attention.



Eva Haas
Faculty of Fine Arts
Department of Writing
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For this project, I was drawn to collections that investigated the coming-of-age process, especially through a queer and genderqueer lens. Sheila Heti's work inspired me because of its process-focused method of creation, and her willingness to show the "seams" behind the writing, something I hope to do with my own work as well.

Kim, Na. Paperback cover design. *Motherhood* by Sheila Heti. 1101 Paperbacks, 2019.
Tsujimura, Emiko. Cover illustration. *Why I Was Late* by Charlie Petch. Brick Books, 2021.
Wilson, Catherine. Typography and cover design. *For Your Safety Please Hold On*. Skywood Editions, 2015.
UVic logo: <https://www.uvic.ca/brand/brand-guidelines/logos/index.php>