

**Penumbra Online Podcast Interview: Hosted By Andrea Wagner,
Autumn Anderson, Jessica Charest, and Essence Saunders, featuring
Dottie Lo Bue.**

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Andrea: Alright! Hello and welcome to *Penumbra Press's* interview with one of our chapbook authors, Dottie Lo Bue, with her chapbook titled *ON BIRDS / WINGS / ROADS / SILENCE*. Now, Dottie Lo Bue is one of the first chapbook authors that I really fell in love with when getting all our submissions, and I'm very excited to be interviewing her today! The other staff members we have here are Autumn—Autumn you want to say hi?

Autumn: Hello!

An: Jessica.

Jessica: Hi!

An: And Essence.

Essence: Hello!

An: So we were the team that worked the most on Dottie's chapbook in particular, from beginning to end, and we are going to be asking her questions now. So, the first question that I had for Dottie was, um, well the first thing I noticed about Dottie is that not only is she a poet, she is also an artist. If you look, she has a website that I will probably post somewhere or link under or around this video, and a lot of her art seems to reflect her poetry, or at least it seems to be another vein in which she conveys her creativity. So, I wondered, Dottie, does your work as an artist influence the way you write poetry, and if so in what ways? If not, please do elaborate.

Dottie: Thank you, uh, thank you for the introduction! I think definitely I think of my paintings and drawings as a visual sort of poetry, and I was thinking of them as that before I was really writing poetry, so I think just being an artist has really taught me a lot about observation and looking at stuff. So I know to not just look at a thing to describe it but look around a thing to think about it, like if I'm trying to think of an image, or to depict a concept, the negative space around it informs it as well. And that's a big part of art and also poetry, so I think they're really connected.

An: Yeah, that makes total sense. It's just really cool that you can do both, so I love that.

D: Thank you!

An: Jessica, you had the second question.

J: Where did your initial idea for the chapbook theme originate, like was there a particular poem that sparked the whole thing, or did you just have more of a general idea first?

D: Um, I don't think there was one poem in particular, but I was working on these drawings during quarantine and the pandemic, and then I started writing on the drawings, and then I started writing poetry, and I thought I was writing about all these different things, and then I looked at them together and I was like, oh, these are all pretty connected. And I like saw certain themes, like anxiety and the self, and just really decided to lean into that to create a series of poems, so.

J: So cool.

An: Okay, so Essence, go ahead.

E: So, with that in mind, and the way that you talk about how you just kind of thought you were writing different pieces and saw them connect, was there something specifically difficult in making them connect for you, or not because of the way you did it?

D: I think it was difficult to like make it so everyone else felt like it connected maybe? But one of the things that I tried to do, like approaching the chapbook, was to have each of the poems addressed to someone or something. And I felt like that I was able to bring together and put different things next to each other in a way that made sense to me. So there's all these different topics in it, but the themes flow through them and it's like if someone were having a conversation or writing a letter about different things like to me. But yeah, that's what I tried to do to make it make sense together.

E: That's a really cool way you thought about it. And I think it came through really well, while reading it. You can really see how it all flows. It really flows well.

D: Thank you.

E: So, did that make you want to submit it? Like, working through it, is that why you wanted to submit it, or was there something specific that motivated you?

D: So, I was working on it and like I just happened to be working on this series at the same time when I saw the call for the chapbooks, and when I saw it, I was like, oh no I have to do that, don't I? And I tried to talk myself out of it, and usually I'm pretty good at talking myself out of

doing things, but this time I was like nah, it came at the perfect time, and I didn't expect anything to come from it because like I feel pretty new to poetry, but I was like, it feels like the right moment to try, and I'm glad I did, it worked out so, new experience!

E: Honestly, we're glad you did too! And I think "oh no I have to do this" might be one of the best motivators for everyone.

D: Yeah, I was having an ambitious day when I did it, and then when I got the email saying that I was accepted into it, I was like, oh no, what have I done? I was really excited and grateful, but I was also so scared I was like, oh great, I have to face the consequences, and I remember telling my friend, "I messed up. I did something bad," and they're like, "What?" and I'm like, "I have to publish poetry now!" Um, yeah. So happy!

An: I'm so happy you did! It's a relatable feeling. I feel it all the time, but you did it, it's amazing! Autumn, you had the next questions, so go ahead.

Au: Yeah, so, that is great! That's an awesome moment when you feel something and you follow it, you know, I love that. So earlier you were talking about your poetry and art having a synthesis, now, the cover for the chapbook is just so beautiful, and to whoever is watching this, I'm sure the chapbook will be close by whenever this video is posted, so take a look at the cover, but how did you decide on the cover for the chapbook? Was it, did they come together naturally? Or was it something that was separate?

D: So that drawing actually I feel like I had done that, that's one of the charcoal drawings I mentioned earlier, and I titled that one I think "this is about birds that grow larger than houses," and that's a line, I use that line in one of the poems in the chapbook, and feel like it felt natural for it to be the one to do it, and...it has a bird. I like the idea of saying specifically like something is about something because like, is it really? Maybe not, but maybe not literally, but I think it would be nice if it was. So, I was just thinking about those things, and the visual aesthetic to go with it.

Au: Awesome. Yeah, that was really really cool, I just really love how it ties in. It's just really beautiful, and it gives this whole theme, like you said. And talking about themes, when you write, or this could be for your art too, when you do art, do you like to, kind of, come to it with a theme in mind? Or, while you're writing or doing art, does that theme just naturally arise?

D: I think both happens, for sure. Sometimes I'll have a theme in mind and then I'll be doing it and I'm like, oh, this is actually about something else, or maybe I'll lean into this thing, but um, yeah I think it's a push and pull, for sure. Both happen, definitely. There're some themes I'm always thinking about, and typically I'll sort of be thinking about how we relate to ourselves, and

to each other, and to the world, and what that may look like and the difficulties that brings about. Um, anxiety is definitely a frequent theme. But, yeah, so, things are floating around, but it just depends.

Au: That's really cool. Yeah, I like that kind of idea of being with something, but if that leads you somewhere else, then that's where it's leading you. And kind of, yeah, you said you leaned into that. Um, for my next question, kind of talking about the chapbook as a whole, do you have a poem that is your favorite from the chapbook?

D: I'm really bad about favorites for anything, um, so I don't think I have a favorite particularly. I feel like I'm really close to the first poem titled "RUNNER, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?" It just feels close to me, but I wouldn't know to call it a favorite. I feel like "POWER-FED BOY" in it says things I would really like to say, and that always feels good when you think, okay, this poem is saying what I meant for it to. But yeah, I don't know about a favorite, in general.

Au: It's hard. I mean your chapbook is so great it's hard having to choose, but I definitely, um, think when I first read "POWER-FED BOY" I was, I did, it just felt like these were words that a lot of women especially are wanting to say, so, really cool. I think I'm passing the mic back to you, Andrea.

An: I think Jessica! You had, uh, okay.

J: So with that in mind, within the collection, is there a poem that maybe was a little more difficult? Like maybe you struggled to get it the way you wanted it?

D: Um, yeah. I think the one that stands out to me like that is probably the one titled "CIRCUMSTANCE." I wrote that and I hated it, I almost didn't include it, and I had to spend a lot of time away from it, and go back and be like, okay, this is saying some stuff that I feel is important, even if I don't like having to have said it. But yeah, that one was a little difficult content wise, but I think I'm glad I included it.

J: We are too!

D: Thank you.

An: I guess this is related as well then! So, if you could do it all over again, the whole chapbook experience, what would you maybe do differently in the future? Like, now that you've got one out.

D: Um, I feel like I might be a little bit close to it to be able to turn from it right now, but I do definitely want to do a lot more poetry and write a lot more poetry, because it does all feel so fresh to me, so, as a writer, I definitely feel like I'll write a lot more and grow a lot more and be able to pinpoint exactly where I would change things. But yeah, I don't know about specifics. I definitely would like to do more practice.

An: And that makes sense too. You're always learning and growing. You kind of already answered my last question, of like, poetry plans for the future, because you kind of said themes arise both naturally and in your head, so, do, would you do this again? Writing a chapbook, that is. It sounds like poetry for sure is something you're interested in doing. But, would you write a chapbook again?

D: Yeah! Yeah, I'd love to do it again. Working with you guys has been so fantastic, like definitely the highlight of my year, so I really appreciated it. It's just been a great experience, a great learning experience. I don't have any concrete plans yet, but I am writing. I have some more poems that I've finished since we've been working on the chapbook, so I'd love to get another collection going.

An: That's so awesome. Well, it's *Penumbra Press's* first time doing chapbooks too, and I think we'll probably be doing it again. Can't say for certain, but I think it's gone really well too, all things considering, with everything online and what not. But that's really good to hear, that this chapbook kind of like, so before this project, you didn't really do poetry much is what it sounds like. Is that right, or?

D: Um, I kind of started near the beginning of the year, working on it more, and I've written a couple of things, like years and years ago, but I had stopped writing for a long time, and I just felt self-conscious and got too nervous to do it, so I just stopped. And that's definitely one thing I'd go back and change, to just write anyway, like, just do it. If you're nervous, that's okay.

An: That's so true! If you're nervous, it's usually a good thing. I mean, that means you're writing something close to you, right? Er, you're vulnerable and, at least, that's what I tell myself too. I also write poetry, and I also think "This is embarrassing."

D: Yeah!

An: Or "This isn't very good," but that's just what your head tells you, and other people may have a different opinion, and it's hard to get out of your own head to, um, see what others think of it, but um, your chapbook is, um, we all think it's very good! So you should feel proud of yourself! It is, it is really good, especially from someone who is kind of new coming back to poetry. The way you incorporate art and how it's so intertwined is, I think, really special. So, I

guess before you go, if you want to read that first poem you said you're pretty close to, the "RUNNER, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?," this would be a great time.

D: Okay! I'm gonna pull it up to the side so...okay. So, yeah, it's titled "RUNNER, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?" "look up. with double vision, / you only need half the stars to get somewhere. / the junkyard by the river knows my name / and how i deal in periphery and half-raised hands / and just-held breaths and how i thought once / as a child that i was dying, fast. / it was spring or summer and i'd had enough / strawberries to throw up *red, red, red,* / and honestly, i believed it was my heart there / in the grass. / my only thought was *this is it* – that this was death / and at the end, the world was whisper-silent. / i told the junkyard by the river this and it just said / *some love has a soft, soft voice.* / runner, tonight it's very quiet."

An: Thank you so much, Dottie!

D: Thank you, guys!

An: And thank you for watching this, and thank you to the rest of the team and all of *Penumbra*, because, um, you guys all put it together, and it's something to be proud of, so thank you again for meeting. It's been such a pleasure to work with you, and I hope you keep writing poetry, and that maybe we'll see the poetry!

Au: Before you go, do you have, you said you sometimes put your art, you have a website or instagram you want to, um, mention that? We'll probably also put that on the video, but um.

D: Okay, uh my website is just my name, *dottielobue.com*, and then my instagram is @dottielll.