



# A Bestiary

*Lily Hoang*

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**A Bestiary** Lily Hoang

\* Winner of the 2015 Essay Collection Competition, Selected by Wayne Koestenbaum \*

“Rarely have I come across tenderness, venom, and fire held so intimately, so exquisitely, as in Lily Hoang’s *A Bestiary*. This book would be impressive enough as a collection of finely-forged fragments, but as it weaves itself into an even more impressive whole, my hat came off. Lily Hoang writes like she has nothing to lose and everything at stake.” —Maggie Nelson

“*A Bestiary* is a work of great subtlety, precision, intelligence, daring, and emotive keenness. It seems completely contemporary (by which I mean that it is unlike anything I’ve read and that it makes me want to change my own writerly procedures). With head-long, reckless, improvisatory gestures, Lily Hoang prompts us to rethink what literature today can dare to aspire to. Her intellectually magnanimous book’s position on the threshold between recognizable ‘literature’ and some other vanguard form of performance/utterance made me feel happy and stimulated and dizzy (in a rapturous way) while I was reading it.” —Wayne Koestenbaum

“The most perfect use of fragmentation, myth, language, fairytale, and terrible beauty that I have ever seen in my life. I’m swooning. My faith in what writing can be has been restored.” —Lidia Yuknavitch

Lily Hoang is the author of four books, including *Changing*, recipient of a PEN Open Books Award. She has two novels forthcoming: *Old Cat Lady* and *The Book of Martha* and she co-edited the anthology *The Force of What’s Possible: Writers on Accessibility and the Avant-Garde*. She teaches in the MFA program at New Mexico State University, where she is Associate Department Head. She serves as Prose Editor at *Puerto del Sol* and Non-Fiction Editor at *Drunken Boat*.

## A Bestiary Details

Date : Published April 15th 2016 by Cleveland State University Poetry Center

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Author : Lily Hoang

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## From Reader Review *A Bestiary* for online ebook

### Thomas says

People expect Asian women to submit, to be passive and lifeless and pretty. Lily Hoang skewers that stereotype in her bold essay collection *A Bestiary*. With fierce prose, she writes about her dead sister and her drug addiction, her parents' ailing bodies and how she never fulfilled their image of a perfect Vietnamese daughter, and her abusive relationships with men. Elements of fairy tale and myth unify the themes of race, friendship, and relational grief and joy that pervade these essays. Hoang experiments with genre in *A Bestiary*, using lots of fragmentation and blending together memoir and lyric essay and flash fiction to transcend the status quo of creative nonfiction.

Overall, I would recommend *A Bestiary* to those who want to read a confident, honest collection of writing that defies traditional prose style. Hoang tackles difficult topics of autonomy, need, and feminism with intellect and insight. Portions of her prose took my breath away (the line "... his intelligence attacks my body like a virus filled with desire" literally made me scream in public.) This book will appeal to those who want to read unconventional writing, writing that trades tradition for innovation. I have a lot to learn from Hoang, and I cannot wait to read more of her work.

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### Maggie says

This collection was spot-on in the way it approached the form of a lyric essay - fragmented, scattered, wide-reaching - while at the same time, almost in the background, those fragments began to cohere around points of focus and edge toward narrative. I was drawn in immediately as the text opened up. But as I got about halfway through, something in the tone veered toward academic, almost cliquy (poetry buzzwords, shout-outs to writer friends, etc.). I can understand why a lot of people love this book, it's very well-crafted - just a little too well-crafted for me.

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### Allison says

These essays fragment, loop, transform and eat their own tails (but in a good way, if that is possible). I loved their connections. Fairy Tales, grief, loss, love, addiction.

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### D.A. says

"This essay already feels too honest, but I'll publish it anyway. I am not worth a nickel of shame." Extraordinarily brilliant both in the literary sense and in the personal sense of what "personal essay" can become. This book may as well be called poetry, because it has that kind of staying power, every sentence a risk worth taking.

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### **Elizabeth says**

can i give this book ten stars instead? can i give it ALL THE STARS?

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### **Tarah says**

This was beautiful: I loved what she had to say, but also the style in which she presented it. I'd never seen anybody use fragmentation quite like she did...it felt like I was a big soup pot, watching as ingredients slid in and began to swirl together. Not every section was a my-life-is-changing WOW, but there were enough real gems in here, and enough holistic beauty, that I flagged it to read again soon.

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### **Kevin says**

Lily Hoang tackles death, lust, disappointment, pain, parents, fairy tales, and so much more in this virtuoso performance. Her prose moves freely and without fear through these various section and topics. It's all thrillingly electric and alarmingly naked.

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### **Taube says**

Freaking awesome.

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### **Jen Campbell says**

Perfect for fans of Maggie Nelson. :)

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### **Michelle says**

one of the most extraordinary things I have ever read... a confessional of magic and terrible beauty, lesson on love, friendship, fairytales, self, and the damage we do to ourselves.

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### **Isa says**

Unspeakably tender, honest, raw. If you've ever loved a person with an addiction, you know this story -- if you've ever been abused, you know this story -- and yet Hoang tells it in a way that will creep into your heart's cracks and break the whole thing open all over again.

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**Roxane says**

Well, this is a magnificent book. Personal essays about grief and love and broken people and difficult relationships that are raw and vulnerable but full of steel and intelligence. There is an ongoing meditation on fairy tale and myth, throughout that is also very powerful. This is one of the better essay collections I've ever read.

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**Jan Stinchcomb says**

A completely satisfying hybrid work, combining memoir, fairy tale and myth, all of it stitched together with honesty and courage.

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**Pat Pujolas says**

And then a book like this comes along, shattering your expectations, and restoring your faith in contemporary writing. In a single word, perfect.

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**M. says**

Gobbled this up on the plane ride home from AWP. Lily! So good.

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