

## **EVENT TITLE: Novels in Stories, Fragments, and Constellations**

**Event Description:** What defines a novel? Publishing can be binary and risk-averse; it also rewards innovation. It's confusing! These panelists' published or forthcoming books play with form in "novel" ways. Each writer will address why a structural in-betweenness was essential to their work and the reception they've received from readers, agents, and editors. Hear reflections on form and craft from writers across speculative and realistic fiction, emerging and established voices, and small and big five presses.

## **EVENT CATEGORY: Fiction Craft & Criticism**

### **Event Organizer & Moderator**

**Helen Georgas** recently completed her debut novel-in-stories, *Inventory*. She has written about art, performance, and culture for *Hyperallergic*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Lady Science*, and other publications. She holds an MFA from Sarah Lawrence College and has been awarded residencies at Writers House, South Porch Artists Residency, the Djerassi Resident Artists Program, The Hambidge Center, and Dorland Mountain Arts.

### **Event Participants**

**Nicole Haroutunian** is the author of the novel-in-stories *Choose This Now* and the story collection *Speed Dreaming*. Her work has appeared most recently in *Story*, *The Georgia Review*, *Electric Literature*, *Mutha*, and *The Rumpus*. She works in museum education & lives in Woodside, Queens in New York City.

**Sequoia Nagamatsu** is the author of the national bestselling novel *How High We Go in the Dark* and the story collection *Where We Go When All We Were Is Gone*. He teaches creative writing at St. Olaf College and in the Rainier Writing Workshop Low-Residency MFA program.

**Yiming Ma** is the author of *These Memories Do Not Belong to Us* (Mariner Books, August 12 2025). Born in Shanghai, he spent a decade in the tech and finance world across New York, Toronto, London, Berlin and South

Africa before writing his debut novel, set in a world where memories are bought and sold.

He attended Stanford for his MBA, where he was an Arjay Miller Scholar, and also holds an MFA from Warren Wilson College, where he was named the Carol Houck Smith Scholar. He's a first generation immigrant and despite all his travels, he's still figuring out where home is.

**Ananda Lima** is the author of *Craft: Stories I Wrote for the Devil* (Tor/Macmillan, 2024), described by *The New York Times* as a remarkable debut, with starred reviews from *Kirkus*, *Publishers Weekly*, and *Library Journal*, and *Motherland* (Black Lawrence Press), winner of the Hudson Prize.

### Opening Remarks

I'm here because I've recently completed my debut novel-in-stories, *Inventory*, about two Greek sisters, Eleanor and Theodora, growing up in their family's restaurant on Lake Huron—playing in the basement stockrooms, washing dishes, taking inventory, training new hires, waitressing—all of which they do with increasing resentment. The stories reflect their misguided and defiant efforts to navigate girlhood and conflicting cultures: Greece and Canada, townies and tourists, restaurant life and everything outside it. As they enter adolescence, they wrestle with gender and working-class politics they barely understand and adopt a recklessness that threatens both themselves and their family's livelihood.

I'm also here because Nicole Haroutunian and I are longtime friends, having met in a writing workshop at Sarah Lawrence College, where we both got our MFAs in Fiction. We've been reading each other's work ever since, and without planning it, we both came to write novels-in-stories.

My book is very intentionally structured. Eight stories, with five of them told from the younger sister's point-of-view. Since she is an unreliable narrator, however, and I wanted the other members of her family to have their say, I

knew very early on that her older sister, dad, and mom would each get their own story. And that we would return to Eleanor's voice to close the book.

The stories go forward and back and then forward again in time. Slowly and then quickly. There are small gaps and then big gaps in between. I include a few flash forwards in some of the early stories so that you can fill in some of those gaps, but a lot happens off the page.

Each of the stories are intentionally very place-based, reflecting elements of the fictional towns that the daughters and parents are from, almost as if these places are characters in their own right. The stories move between countries—Greece and Canada. The first story is set in the family's ancestral Greek village, the second story is set at a local Canadian racetrack, several at the family's restaurant (upstairs, downstairs), another on a frozen lake in winter (an essential Canadian experience), yet another at a cottage party in summer (bush and cottage parties are another essential part of growing up in small town Canada).

Each story was written to stand on its own and also in relation to each other, as a linked collection. It was only in writing and rewriting, over a long period of time, that the stories, together, began to *also* feel like a novel-in-stories. Once I began to see the book that way, I worked harder in revision to connect the stories and think about how they all work together. What details or characters from the beginning might I bring back later in the book? A few of the stories do feel more like chapters, and those are the chapters that are told from the point-of-view of the other members of the family. They are origin stories, of a sort.

When I started my MFA way back in 2007 it was standard that a writer's first book was a story collection, and their second book a novel. This was the case with many writers I loved at the time (Jhumpa Lahiri, Junot Diaz, etc.). It seemed like a strategy, one that I should follow. And it made sense that, since we were workshopping stories in my MFA program, that I would use this time (again, strategically) to work on stories that would form a collection. I had blown up my life and career so I could go back to school

and write, so I really needed to be efficient. It was at that time I also started outlining the novel that would follow my story collection: its characters, its setting, its central arc. I had my whole publishing career mapped out in front of me!

Fast forward and the publishing world is a very different one now. It seems as though agents only want novels. Several agents have commented specifically on my book's structure, that they weren't "head over heels in love" with it.

This specific panel came about because early last year Nicole and I were invited by Shasta Grant and Chloe Miller to host a conversation about novels-in-stories for their excellent literary series, Brown Bag Lit. Since Nicole and I had a lot to say during that short window of time, we thought it would be interesting to continue the conversation with other authors who were working in this hybrid genre.

So we are super excited today to have Nicole Haroutunian, Sequoia Nagamatsu, Yiming Ma, and Ananda Lima together for this conversation about novels-in-stories, fragments, and constellations.

## **Participant Initial Remarks**

### **Nicole Haroutunian:**

I call my book a novel-in-stories. If someone wants to call it a novel or a story collection, both of those feel true—I won't correct anyone. It is quite honestly both but also a distinct hybrid form with its own pleasures. I hang onto the label novel-in-stories for my own work because I love to read this form and I like to make it easy for other people who do too to find the book!

*Choose This Now* came out about a year ago from Noemi Press. The book starts with two best friends, Valerie and Taline, or Val-and-Tal, at a Halloween party in 1999 where an unfinished moment and sudden act of violence have repercussions that are felt across the next nearly twenty years. Halloween or costume parties form the spine of the book, recurring

every few story-chapters, as the two friends grow up, grow apart, and grow together. The book is about friendship, pregnancy, parenthood, art, labor, and these two women learning what it means to make decisions without each other.

Val and Tal alternate story-chapters. Their voices are in the first person. There are also three other chapters in the points-of-view of other women in their orbit, told in the third person. I came to this structure for the book through a lot of revision. My first book, *Speed Dreaming*, was a story collection that became a linked story collection during the editing process. My editor, Ed Park, suggested consolidating the world of the book. He was like, these two people in these two stories act exactly the same—why did you give them different names? And it was because I thought I had to, since they were in different stories. But he taught me that if they were the same person, I could lean into that.

In writing early drafts of *Choose This Now*, I thought I had learned that lesson. Characters appeared in multiple stories. They inhabited the same world and moved in the same circles. Thematically, it was more cohesive. But in my first meeting with my editor, John Darcy, he said, “In your next draft, I think you need to either really separate these stories out from each other or decide that this is a novel. Why don’t you re-read it and then in our next meeting, you can let me know. I’ll be supportive either way.” In our next meeting, I said, “Ok, I think it’s a novel.” And he said, “That’s right!” My press, Noemi, is really small and there was a lot of lead time between signing the contract and the book being published, so I had the luxury of a long revision process. I spent about two years moving parts, people, and places to turn what had been a more disparate collection of linked stories into a novel-in-stories. In its final form, each chapter, or story-chapter as I call them, can stand alone. Some maybe a little better than others. There isn’t necessarily one overarching plot, but taken together, they form a narrative that arcs across about twenty years.

In my experience, agents are not super excited about me pursuing this form. The agent I worked with for a long time wasn’t interested in trying to

sell *Choose This Now*—she told me that I should either get a new agent or submit to small presses. An agent more recently asked me if “novels-in-stories were my thing.” I learned that I should be really honest with agents—if they’re going to be at all helpful to me, they need to actually be on board with what I do. So I told her yes, it’s my thing! In my first meeting with the folks at Noemi, it was as if I was trying to talk them out of publishing my book—I was like, “well it’s not really a short story collection and it’s not really a novel...” and they were like, “right—that’s cool.” There are publishing folks out there that love a novel-in-stories; it is just about finding them.

I am a short story writer at heart—that’s how I think narratively. I don’t have a big expansive imagination—I focus on small moments, quiet changes, close relationships. But I also don’t like to come up with new ideas—I’m sure I’m not the only person here who hates a blank page. Every time I finish something I think, that’s it, I’m never going to have another idea. With a novel-in-stories, I don’t need a brand new idea. I can think—well, when I finished that last story, this character was in the bathroom hiding from her toddler. Three years later, what’s she up to? How has she or hasn’t she evolved? I don’t have to write the transition—those three years can be off-camera, for the reader to fill in. I can pick up the next time I feel like I have something interesting to say. Now that I found this form, I honestly can’t imagine writing in a different way. My next manuscript is even tighter—it is a novel-in-stories but all from the point of view of one character. I feel like I’ve been really taking advantage of the form, finally. The protagonist will give you this whole story and then a few chapters later, she’ll say, “well, I used to say that’s what happened, but now I can admit that I was leaving some things out.”

As a reader, I love when a new story-chapter casts back over what happened before, changing the meaning of what I’ve already read in retrospect. I also love the work of filling in what happens in between story-chapters. It’s thrilling to start a new story and realize that we’ve jumped ahead years and there have been some off-camera changes to discover, or to find out that we’re in a new character’s head and are going to see a

scenario from a new perspective. I'm so grateful to have Helen and Ananda, and now Sequoia and Yiming, and you all, to talk with about the craft of novels-in-stories. I got to write a roundup of novels-in-stories for *Electric Literature* last summer and was told that it was the most read post on their site that week. I hope this room and receptions like that tell the publishing world that readers are ready to expand their thinking about form. Or maybe they don't even need to—maybe it's that readers don't have the biases the publishing world assumes they do.

### **Sequoia Nagamatsu:**

Whenever I'm deep in the weeds of a project and I fall into the trap of feeling like a fraud, I'll revisit my wellspring of affirmations . . . shoeboxes full of personal rejections, kind comments from former professors. Emails and DMs from readers who have said that my words matter. But, on occasion, the pull of the swamp of sadness is too great...in other words, I'm on Goodreads. And I'm not just looking at 5 star reviews, but honing in on those one and two star diatribes. People who I have personally hurt but have never met. People who are, if I'm thinking logically, probably not my audience anyway. In many of these reviews (but also the good ones), I'll come across lines like "I didn't realize these were short stories," "the structure was weird," "I ended up just skipping around b/c I didn't like some of the stories or chapters or whatever they were...the ending totally lost me."

I repeat: I skipped around and the ending totally lost me. My soul detaches from my body whenever I see comments like this regarding my novel, *How High We Go in the Dark*. Most novels—unless you're dealing with a choose your own adventure or some experimental work—are read page after page after page. From page 1 to page 300+. This is important, right? I'm not jumping straight into a final boss battle without some build up. I'm not taking a break from a particular steamy scene and saying "Dang" without even knowing how we got to an abandoned Ikea. Or, in the case of *How High...* missing out on several chapters of hints and easter eggs that lead up to an ancient and extraterrestrial reframing. *How High We Go in the Dark*, a book that follows several generations during and after a strange

plague, was published in 2022 after having sold in 2020 not long after Covid lockdown. It was marketed as a novel and not a novel-in-stories, although the back cover description and most promotional materials suggested a kaleidoscope of narratives—spanning generations and continents and even interstellar space. But if you're not reading between the lines of the cover copy. If you don't know the comparison titles or authors (notably David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*) that might signal a linked narrative, then you can be forgiven for thinking that most any book you pick up on the shelf of the literature section is a "normal novel." That's the expectation in a marketplace where short stories are still hard sells outside of the readerly demographics that draw folks to a place like AWP.

And this is partly also why publishers, and again I can forgive and understand the strategy, for not using the term novel-in-stories on covers. Because if people aren't even reading short stories on their own time, how can we even get them to pick up a linked narrative and give it a try? Novel-in-stories? What the hell is that? Sounds like Orc mischief to me. But like Nicole and Helen, this is the term that I would choose to call my work, that I have used in panels like this one, with readers at bookstores and virtual events. It's especially apt for a book like *How High We Go in the Dark* that spans a great deal of time (either several decades or several thousand years if you're accounting for space travel with long stretches in stasis). We begin with the discovery of an ancient girl trapped in the permafrost of Siberia, see the beginnings of the outbreak, and jump into different lives over the course of the Arctic Plague as people grieve, find community, and reimagine themselves in the aftermath.

The early seeds of *How High We Go in the Dark* began not unlike my first book, *Where We Go When All We Were Is Gone* (I promise my next book has a short title), which was a collection of thematically adjacent stories (and yet I still was intentional with order like a mixed tape). For *How High*, I left Japanese folklore by the wayside in favor of exploring both traditional and innovative funerary practices and ways of grieving. At first, they were just stand-alone stories. But with all this death and loss sitting in my short stories folder on my computer, I began to think about the connections.

Characters that I felt could have more to say. A world that was malformed but waiting to become a container. You see, the plague never existed early on. Many years of writing passed before I created the Arctic Plague as part of the narrative frame for *How High* alongside the world of an abandoned grad school project that made up the narrative stitching. And once I began thinking about all these stories existing on the plane of a particular time and place, the hard work began of revising and deepening what were once isolated narrative islands into an archipelago—something that had a larger narrative purpose. A world that evolved in each story as generations passed. The very first chapter was actually one of the last things I wrote. And there were chapters that needed to be created in order to create linearity and address events mentioned elsewhere. I needed to allow surviving relatives to speak.

Like Nicole, maybe I'm also a short story writer at heart. I love the challenge of building a life in a small space, but I thoroughly enjoyed the process of puzzling together disparate narratives into something greater than each individual part. My mind tends to think about large, speculative concepts but with a focus on heart rather than mechanics. And sometimes that juggling act can be difficult. My next book, *Girl Zero*, began as a short story, which really began as a novel concept before that. I've already had to cut entire major characters and arcs in order to find the story I really need to tell. Expansion was never a problem. Is it a novel-in-stories? Not quite. Or maybe not yet. You see, the way I approach chapters, textual artifacts, weaving point of views is very much the construction of someone who wants to hit the highlights of a life and provide gut-wrenching half-closures even as the novel form demands more exploration. And in some ways earlier drafts of this next book overcorrected in wanting to be "a novel"... filling the world with muchness, with others voices, with all the voices—there was an explosion on a lunar colony, a goo baby, underground villages. I really need to remind myself that not every book needs to involve outer space. It's taken some time, but I think the best place, the most genuine form for me as a novelist resides within short stories (or at least distinctly carved territories) where I can dig into microscopic moments.

Right now, I'll call it story-adjacent. But forgive me if, post launch, I'm calling it a novel.

**Yiming Ma:**

I'll start by saying that it's a privilege to sit on this panel with such esteemed writers, and follow the words of Sequoia, whose novel *How High We Go In the Dark* was an inspiration for me when I first read it in the depths of COVID, while completing my MFA remotely, contemplating rather darkly whether there would be any appetite for my constellation of twelve dramatically discrete narratives written in different styles set before/ during/ after this War between a renamed China and the West. Reading Sequoia's work gave me hope and made me feel less alone.

My debut novel *These Memories Do Not Belong to Us* comes out in August this year, so please forgive me as I'm still learning how to talk about it. It's set in a world where every citizen is fitted with a Mindbank in their head capable of recording and transmitting memories between minds. The technology gives birth to Memory Capitalism, where anyone with means can relive the life experiences of others. Of course, this also unleashes opportunities for manipulation, as memories can be edited, marketed and even corrupted for personal gain.

The constellation structure of the novel is highlighted from the opening: when after the sudden passing of his mother, an unnamed narrator inherits a collection of banned memories from her Mindbank so dangerous that even possessing them places his life in jeopardy. Although throughout the novel, the narrator appears four times to reflect on what his radical decision to release his mother's memories before they are destroyed will mean for his freedom and the beliefs he had previously taken to be gospel—the majority of the novel takes the form of interlinked Memory Epics which traverse generations and styles.

I first came across the term constellation novel while working in publishing, via reading interviews with the Polish writer Olga Tokarczuk when she described her novel *Flights*. Truthfully, this period resembles another

lifetime; I had just completed an MBA from Stanford after spending the previous few years living in London and investing in affordable schools in Africa, and I thought that because of my passion for literature, I might just build a career close to art rather than ever create it myself.

Well before Olga won the Nobel Prize, I had received a copy of *Flights* from Olga's US editor Becky Saletan and the book blew me away, the way a novel could still hold together thematically despite being so different in style and substance. One theme which resonated with me in Olga's work was the way she treated borders: in a *Yale Review* interview, she describes the border as "one of the most amazing ideas humanity has ever devised: to cut yourself off, delimit the zone of your influences, divide into 'us' and 'them.'" This is accentuated of course by the fact Olga is from Central Europe where the borders have changed dramatically over the years depending on political shifts, highlighting how arbitrary and brutal that concept of borders can be. Along the same vein, I resented, and still resent within literature, that seemingly arbitrary boundary between novels and novel-in-stories, as if one were more valuable than the other, justified more in capitalist and commercial values than they should be: I believe instead that readers just desire moving work, moving stories, moving content rather than a traditional novel in particular, that marketing is the true driver behind the success of modern novels more than anything else. After all, how can we believe that the longform novel is inherently more valuable in an era where attention spans of readers are shorter than ever, where short-form video content is more powerful and popular than ever before?

When I went out for submission with my book to agents and then publishers, I chose to believe that readers would be excited by the prospect that my Memory Epics jump between the stages Before the War/ the War/ After the War—using a bit of the mixtape metaphor that Sequoia used—and follow characters ranging from a sumo wrestler to an armless swimmer during the Cultural Revolution to a high school student running a virtual marathon through a desert instead of taking the Chinese equivalent of the SAT. But since Nicole, Helen and Sequoia have all touched on the commercial disadvantage of selling a non-traditional novel, I'll follow their

lead. The disadvantage, the stigma is real because agents and publishers see anything non-traditional as a risk more than an opportunity. And I was keenly aware of that fact while writing my manuscript, understanding that the bar just needed to be that much higher as a result—for my prose and the inherent stories within the novel. Upon reflection, I think that perhaps I was too careful—I went out with my novel to agents at only ~40K words, and we went out on submission at only ~48K words so I know that in itself made certain publishing professionals see it as more of a story collection than a novel. Plus, I was so inspired by authors such as Olga and Sequoia that I rebelled extra hard against including too many explicit links between my stories. I feel fortunate that my agent querying process went extremely quick (three weeks from my first query to my first offer) and that we landed with two incredible editors in Canada and the US at McClelland & Stewart and Mariner Books who really understood what I was trying to do and stayed true to my vision, but there were definitely passes along the way who gave the feedback to my agent that they would be in if the author was amenable to making the narrative more linear. After the editing process, I will admit that the opening narrator appears twice more in the final draft of the novel than he did in the original version and that there are more linkages now between the Memory Epics. Those changes transformed the book to resemble more of a novel, making me sometimes wonder whether I shouldn't have resisted so hard years ago. But hindsight is twenty twenty, and I'm grateful to be here today.

One last thing I'll end with is how interesting I find it that Sequoia and I both included speculative elements in our constellations or novel-in-stories. I sometimes wonder whether that provided a novel-esque thread for readers or publishers to latch onto, in the same way that Olga used place to ground some of her constellation novels, or Tommy Orange centered on Indigenous identity and themes across both his novels, despite the distinct stories in them. It's always been intriguing to me to think about freedom and how certain creative decisions can open up unlikely opportunities on the page. By envisioning a dramatically different world, I think it allowed me to play more with form and style than I think would have been possible had I set out to write a traditional novel. And if such forms, such constellations

have the potential to open up a greater universe on the page, isn't that something truly wonderful, truly remarkable and worth getting behind?

**Ananda Lima:**

I am so happy to be here for many reasons. Like everyone here, I love short stories. I also love all sorts of "in-betweenness": the space for play, for formal invention, the fun destabilizing friction against category boundaries. It is particularly wonderful to be able to talk about this with this brilliant group of co-panelists and in the context of their work. So many things I love as a reader and as a writer are coming together here. Thank you for having me and thank you everyone for being a part of it.

I will start with a brief description of my book, then I will talk a little on how it fits with the themes of this panel. *Craft: Stories I Wrote for the Devil* is a story collection (more on that soon), with stories that engage with the strange, the meta, the speculative and supernatural, but in a way that is very much grounded in the reality of our surreal times. To give an idea of the stories, they include the Devil, a ghost of a person who is not even dead, a vending machine that dispenses tiny Americans as snacks, hell set in Penn Station, and other horrors like the DMV, writing workshops, lost passports, and Fox News. The stories can be read individually on their own, but crucially the book is also made of a meta narrative of the writer of these stories. This writer is a Brazilian woman (about my height, with curly hair just like mine, who came to the US as a young adult just like me, who took fiction workshops and whose name might be (similar to) Ananda). In her 20s, she meets the Devil at a Halloween party and sleeps with him. They keep in touch throughout her life and she writes these stories for him.

You may have noticed from this introduction to the book that I call it a short story collection. But I do this with an internal knowing smile and a wink, because I know that is not quite right, in ways that I find delightful to think about and difficult to summarize. I usually don't elaborate on this unless I am asked (or in contexts like this panel) and it has been delightful to sit back and watch how people take it. Here are are couple of favorite excerpts

from critical reviews (which are often written before the book is out and critics have not had a chance to read interviews):

“I realized: this is not really a collection. Oh no, friends. The pieces reference each other, and “interludes” (for lack of a better term) often build on the sections themselves. Nor would I call this a novel in linked stories; this is something else, [...] *Craft* is, perhaps, a novel in refraction” (Lightspeed)

“pleasingly hard to classify. One could take the easy route and call it a debut collection [...]. But there’s reason to think of it as something like a fix-up, which I’m always game for [...]. The truth is somewhere in the middle; I’ve never encountered anything quite like this book. (Locus)

This is exactly the kind of thing I want for my work, and what I love to encounter as a reader. This fun, playful, intentional uncertainty. This difficulty to reduce it to a paraphrase, an extreme version of Flannery O’Connor’s often repeated quote: “A story isn’t any good unless it successfully resists paraphrase, unless it hangs on and expands in the mind.”

I love it that the formal effects of the “in-betweenness” of the book are not easily reducible to paraphrase. These effects are not simply an uncertainty between novel and short story collection, but how this “in-betweenness” interacts with many other “in betweennesses” in the book. For example, another high level, surface “in-betweenness” is the genre categorization of the book. My publisher called it “horror” (which I absolutely love and also found hilarious because I am a total chicken for horror). Here is a review that puts these two things I mentioned together:

“It’s somewhere between a short story collection, a book of linked short stories (like *Olive Kitteridge* or *The Tsar of Love and Techno*), possibly a memoir, and a novel. I didn’t know fiction could do this. Reviewers don’t really know what to do with it so far, either—which is fun. It’s sometimes called horror, sometimes sci-fi, sometimes literary fiction, sometimes none

of the above OR all of the above. Yep, everything about this book defies categorization.” (New Dork Review of Books)

But for me the magic is how this macro-level “in-betweenness” gets reproduced in the micro-level and everywhere in between in the book, and how the different “in-betweennesses” interact and build on one another to create something that is both destabilizing and cohesive, dreamy and real.

The book is very obviously and unapologetically meta, and it plays with the conventions of auto-fiction. There is a lot of blurring the space between the inner individual stories in the collection and the outer story of the writer, and then between the writer and the outer layer where the author (me, or the figure of me) exists. The meta and the auto fictional aspects of the book mirror that categorical uncertainty between novel and short story collection. And the auto fictional gestures (the thing about making “the writer” in the book seem similar to me, but still calling it fiction) have the same internal knowing smile and wink feel I mentioned before when discussing calling it a short story collection. In turn this blurry boundary between character, writer and author, and between the real world of the fictional world, mirrors other thematic “in-betweenness” between a country of birth and the country you migrate to, between life and death, between political regimes, between narrative and truth.

### **Moderator Questions**

1. How do you define your novel(s)? Linked collection? Novel-in-stories? Why?
2. What does the form mean to you? How is your structure essential to the story?
3. How did you come to its structure and when did it feel as though it was complete?
4. What feedback, criticism, or praise have you received about its structure from readers, agents, and publishers?
5. I read something online recently, a kind of “how to” write a novel-in-stories that said you had to pay particular attention to transitions,

drawing readers from one chapter/story to the next. Honestly, transitions aren't something I'd thought much about before. Have you ever thought about that?

6. Does blank space, what happens off the page in between stories or chapters, become more important in this form?
7. In a small press's recent call for unpublished novels, they stated that their submissions were open to traditional novels as well as "novels-in-stories, novels-in-poems, and other hybrid forms that contain within them the spirit of a novel." What does it mean for a book to have "the spirit of a novel"?

### **Reading List: Novels in Stories, Fragments, and Constellations**

*Choose This Now* Nicole Haroutunian

*Craft: Stories I Wrote for the Devil* Ananda Lima

*These Memories Do Not Belong to Us* Yiming Ma (August 2025)

*How High We Go in the Dark* Sequoia Nagamatsu

*Black Sheep Boy* Martin Pousson

*Fiona and Jane* Jean Chen Ho

*Night of the Living Rez* Morgan Talty

*Ms. Hempel Chronicles* Sarah Shun-Lien Bynum

*Disappearing Earth* Julia Phillips

*New to Liberty* DeMisty Bellinger

*Light Skin Gone to Waste* Toni Ann Johnson

*Love Medicine* Louise Erdrich

*A Visit from the Goon Squad* and *The Candy House* Jennifer Egan

*Olive Kitteridge* and *Olive, Again* Elizabeth Strout

*Flights* Olga Tokarczuk

*10:04* Ben Lerner

*Fictions* Ashley Honeysett