

Shakespearean witch inspires 1st novel winner

For more than six years, Sycorax, the witch and mother of Caliban in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, has haunted Lise Brody, the 2012 winner of the James Jones First Novel Fellowship.

"It began with a short monologue that was part of a performance piece titled *Dances About Witches*," Brody said. "After that, she sat with me for many years. I didn't know how to write a novel, but I knew I wanted a long relationship with the character. Ms Brody's quest eventually grew into her novel-in-progress, *For One Thing She Did*.

There were more than 580 entrants to the contest this year.

Brody's novel explores the life of a powerful, maligned woman. Imagining the story of Sycorax's life before she is marooned on the play's magical island became the starting point for Brody's creative process.

"At first, all I knew was that she needed to smell like olives. I began researching and that led me to Andalusia. At first, I wanted to put her in Islamic Spain. Then, as I did more research, she kept pushing up later in history." The Sycorax of Brody's novel is a child of the Spanish conversos, Jews who converted during the Spanish inquisition.

By her own description, Brody has led a "circuitous" life. Her dual loves of literature and dance eventually found focus in performance art where both words and movement come together. She is the founder and artistic director of Round

the Corner Movers, a dance-based performance group. Ms. Brody is also a translator, and has translated literature by Liudmila Petrushevskaya, Elena Makarova, Pavel Bazhov, Denis Osokin, and others. Her translations have been published in *Chenia*, *Manoa*, *Nimrod*, and various anthologies, including *Lives in Transit: A Collection of Recent Russian Women's Writing*, edited by Helena Goscilo.

For the past six years she has held a series of part-time positions. The week before she got the call that she had won the \$10,000 fellowship prize, she also learned she had landed a full-time job teaching English.

"Getting the fellowship was really life changing. I feel so lucky, so blessed, so energized," she said. "The first thing I did was start reading *From Here to Eternity*."

Brody plans to use a portion of her prize money to travel to Spain for research next summer. In addition to translating, she has also been on the faculty in the Interdisciplinary Arts program at Goddard College and the dance and theater programs at Rhode Island College. Brody and her 13-year-old daughter, Josie, who is also a writer, live in north central Massachusetts.



Lise Brody (Photo cropped by Josie Brody)

2012 James Jones First Novel Fellowship winner, runners-up

This year's James Jones First Novel Fellowship attracted 585 entries, approximately the same numbers it has in the past five years. The award is intended to honor the same spirit of unblinking honesty, determination, and insight into modern culture exemplified by James Jones. Jones himself was the recipient of aid from many supporters as a young writer and his family, friends, and admirers have established this award of \$10,000 to continue the tradition in his name. This year's finalists are:

Winner (\$10,000), Lise Brody, Athol, MA, for *For One Thing She Did*.

First Runner-Up (\$750), Andrea Levin, NYC, NY, for *Last Days of the Transitional Objects Institute*.

Runner-up (\$750), Viet Nguyen, Los Angeles, CA, for *The Sympathizer*.

Honorable Mention, Victoria Kelley, Virginia Beach, VA, for *Where People Go When They Disappear*.

The final judges this year were Tina Russ, 2009 Fellowship winner and James Jones Society Advisory Board; Laurie Loewenstein Moyer, James Jones Society Advisory Board; and Kaylie Jones, daughter of James Jones and novelist.