

## SALEM POETRY SEMINAR

*Curated by Shari Caplan and Joey Gould*

### *INTRODUCTION*

In June, the Salem Poetry Seminar brings together selected Massachusetts college students with others who share their obsession with words for five days of intense workshopping, drafting, and evening readings at the historic Salem Athenaeum. Students submit a selection of their work and are chosen to dig deep into their practice and to meet literary co-conspirators. The Seminar began in 2000, and has taken place five times since. For many of us SPS alumni, our identity as Poet took form during this residency.

In my year (2010), during our final night of readings when we were all giddy from overactive brains, constant socializing, and our love for each other, we coronated each reader with “the Poetry Crown,” a circlet of clover flowers plucked from the yard and woven together (much like we had been that week) in a ceremony which passed power and beauty to each performer. I hope this selection can be a printed representation of each poet putting on the poetry crown and speaking with an artistry that they could not have achieved without the others in this community. The poems think about education, race, identity, illness, perception, family and romantic relationships, and of course, writing itself. They vary as much in content and style as the poets do in personality and background; this reflects the spirit of the seminar and the spirit of diversity we must celebrate even more vigorously in today’s America.

Working on this project with Joey Gould and J.D. Scrimgeour, two major sources of joy and inspiration, has been deeply fulfilling. Thanks to Joey for always diving headfirst into our creative projects, and to J.D. for being the best Poetry Dad a girl could have. They have imbued this process with humility, grace, intelligence, and fun. I hope as you read through these poems that you can share in the bonds, personal and artistic, created by the Salem Poetry Seminar experience, where poets find their wings and their tribe. And may the poetry crown pass on to you!

*Shari Caplan*