

IRIS JAMAHL DUNKLE

Girl with a Gun

Malaita, Solomon Islands, 1908

Iris Jamahl Dunkle's poetry manuscript *Human Document* was a semi-finalist for the 2019 Catamaran Poetry Prize. She was the 2017-2018 Poet Laureate of Sonoma County. Her poetry collections include *Interrupted Geographies* (Trio House Press, 2017), *Gold Passage* (Trio House Press, 2013), and *There's a Ghost in this Machine of Air* (WordTech Editions, 2015). Her work has been published in *Tin House*, the *San Francisco Examiner*, *Fence*, *Calyx*, *Catamaran Literary Reader*, *Poet's Market*, *Women's Studies*, and *Chicago Quarterly Review*. Her biography on Charmian London, Jack London's wife, will be published by University of Oklahoma Press in spring 2020. Dunkle teaches at Napa Valley College and is the poetry director of the Napa Valley Writers' Conference.

What we have as document are moments strung together—journals, photographs; time, like the ash let loose to rise from fiery flow of lava into sea, that creates an island, never seen.

Each photograph opens a tiny portal: Charmian, wearing loose pants, a revolver casually belted around her waist, smiling among villagers at the Malaita women's market.

Her face is relaxed. Around her legs thick bandages cover the sores that grow from a disease they don't know yet, yaws. Soon, *Woman's Home Companion* will refuse to print the photograph.

Claiming it obscene. Claiming the girl who smiles into adventure, who wears pants and wields a gun is not womanlike. A woman is too delicate to be at sea in a yacht.

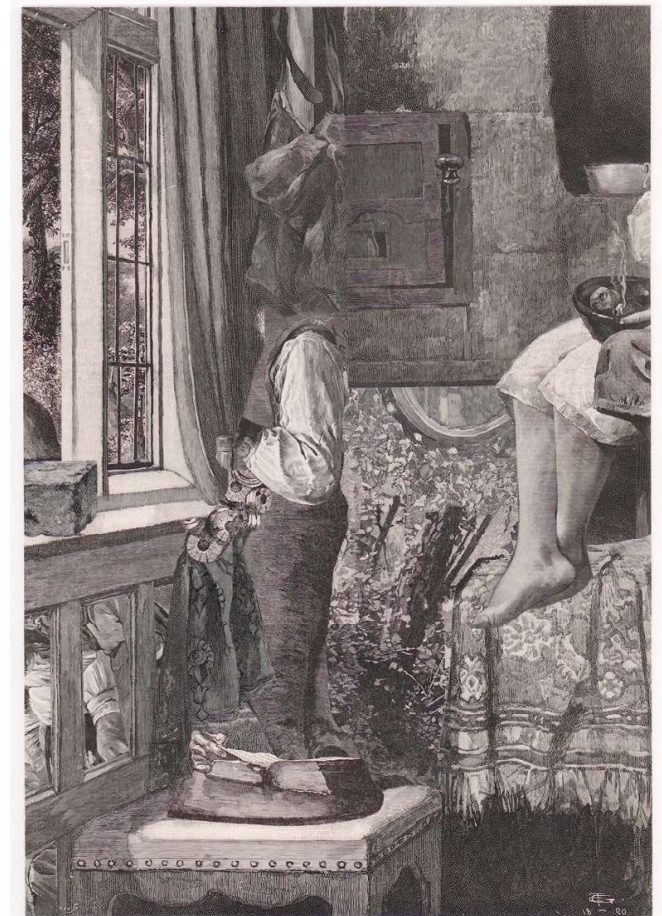
But, already the sea had exhaled them. Their boat had been belly to belly with the machete-scarred ships of the blackbirders. Already, they had seen the plantations where bodies were waged for so many pounds of copra, the sweet meat that's compressed to make oil.

In another photograph, Charmian's back is to us. Her wide pants swirling around her legs in the warm, moist wind, she's the one photographing what's before her:

a wide beach of risk,
a storm pressing down from the green hills beyond.

CATIE O'LEARY

Visual Stories—Window, 2017
Collage with antique engravings, 12 x 18 in



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