



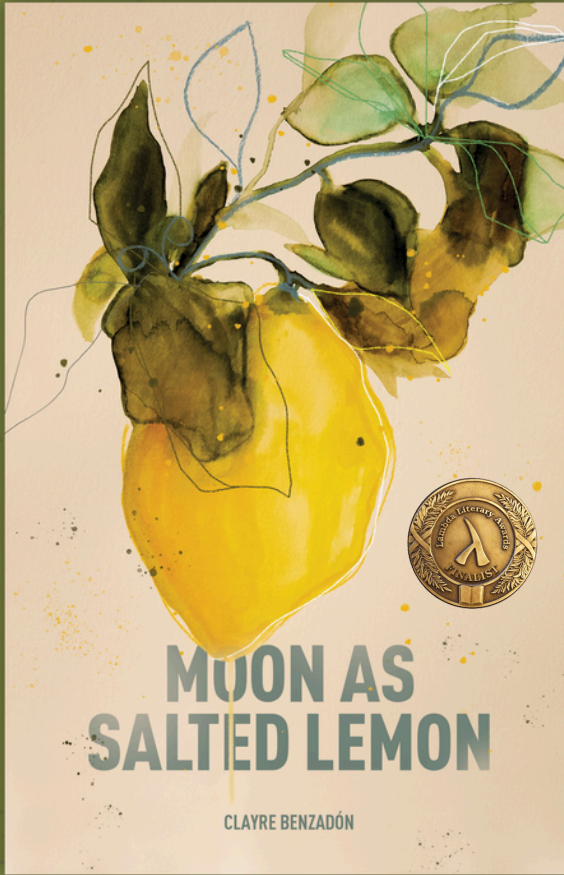
CLAYRE BENZADÓN'S
**MOON
AS
SALTED
LEMON**
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CLAYRE BENZADÓN'S MOON AS SALTED LEMON

is a queering of form and language
which interrogates the intersections of
Sephardic Jewish, American, and
nonbinary identity.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Clayre Benzadón (she / they) is a queer (bi / pan) Sephardic-Ashkenazi poet, educator, and activist. Her chapbook, *Liminal Zenith*, was published by *SurVision Books* in 2019. Her manuscript *Moon as Salted Lemon* was recently named an honorable mention for Miami Book Fair's 2025 Emerging Writer's Fellowship. She has been published in places including *Jet Fuel Review*, *Libre*, and *SWWIM*.



ADVANCED PRAISE

LAMBDA LITERARY FINALIST FOR BISEXUAL POETRY

"This stunning debut collection is a multilingual poetic manifesto that advocates for a fierce scrutiny of the institutions that raise us. These poems remind me that authentic belonging to family, faith, and self is difficult and vital work. Benzadón cracks open words to find new meanings with linguistic agility and a reserve of compassion that leaves me in awe. These poems answer poetry's highest call—to make and remake language—and as readers we are nourished and revitalized by her dedication."

— MIA LEONIN,
AUTHOR OF UNRAVELING THE BED

"Clayre Benzadón's debut poetry collection delivers a time-warping, globetrotting, multilingual adventure in queer, Hispanic, and Jewish American experience. Fearless in its confessions, daring in its formal innovations, and true to its title, *Moon as Salted Lemon* contemplates, both, the tart and the luminous portions of the self. In this, Benzadón's poems are richly nostalgic, introspective, and sensual, but perhaps most impressive of all, they are as keenly relatable as they are original."

— JASWINDER BOLINA,
AUTHOR OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE AND OTHER POEMS

"In her debut collection, *Moon as Salted Lemon*, Clayre Benzadon delights in breaking down binaries—gender, sexuality, pain/pleasure, dream/reality, and language itself (seamlessly braiding English and Spanish). Full of gorgeous wordplay, *Moon as Salted Lemon* explores Benzadon's Sephardic lineage, her feminist rage, recipes, word problems, and abracadabra... She offers us a book full of surprise and wonder."

— DENISE DUHAMEL,
AUTHOR OF SECOND STORY

"In these vulnerable, seeking poems, Clayre Benzadon queers and queries language, the body, desire, and identity to map and rewild the self and the selves—Jewish, Spanish, Floridian, Queer, Daughter, Lover—that converge in this singular speaker. Here, intellect and wordplay are the tools that enable these poems to twine, slippery and playful, toward a more complex, embodied truth. For this reader, *Moon as Salted Lemon* is an opportunity to reconnect with language's subversive powers."

— ELIZABETH BRADFIELD,
AUTHOR OF SOFAR & CASCADIA FIELD GUIDE: ART, ECOLOGY, POETRY

LETTER TO THE READER

DEAR READER,

Thank you for holding this collection in your hands—*Moon as Salted Lemon* was born from the tension between sweetness and sharpness, belonging and exile, rupture and return. I offer these poems as gestures, towards my ancestors, my lovers, my ghosts, and especially toward you. This book is for anyone who's tried to taste memory on their tongue and found it laced with salt. For anyone who's questioned what family or faith could mean, especially when queerness or neurodivergence places you outside the margins.

Moon as Salted Lemon is a transcendental, queer, imaginative, and surreal collection that explores culture, family (including the mapping of Sephardic Jewish family history), and desire. The quest for identity is ever present, as my speaker transports through many different landscapes, whether that be in Miami, Madrid, or untethered beyond location / the page, to share the same space as her family, or to navigate the ends of the earth, to find (pine after) lover(s).

This book parallels obsessions (anxiety, relationships, food), especially with the focus of lemon, not only as the object itself, but as a metaphor that serves as both a sweet and sour palate cleanser. The lemon is a symbolic representation that I choose to closely connect to Judaism. It also functions as an imagistic mark that sets the stage for a budding feminist anthology.

Within this collection, my speaker finds ways to release herself from different facets of control, such as through the patriarchal and strict structure of religion she grew up, or the manifestation of mental illness(es) (including anxiety, bipolar disorder, and an eating disorder).

The constant delving of linguistic experimentation within the poems allow for each theme to transform into more mythological, unconscious, and psychological entities that hold within them more subtle aspects of experimentalism and wordplay. I am specifically interested in translating and including Spanish (as well as Hebrew) into my work. Overall, this book invites readers to taste the different flavors of language, with the sour, symbolizing a source of transformation.

LETTER TO THE READER

My poetic style involves attempting to be as spare and precise with my language as possible, so I attempt to balance between including phrases from research materials and my own poetic rendering. I'm also obsessed with the etymology of certain words.

Perhaps what's so alluring about the lemon is not only its unique visual features, such as its highlighter yellow color, but its range of definitions: "person with a tart disposition", "worthless thing"; the Middle English leman means "sweetheart", or "lover".

Moon as Salted Lemon is a poetic reclamation. My speaker finds her voice, and "restores a remnant / of [her] tongue"; to rendition off of Anzaldúa's "wild tongue", "the salvaje refuses / to leave [her]".

May you carry this, and the lemon's brightness and bite with you, wherever you may choose to transport it.

SINCERELY,
CLAYRE

MOON AS SALTED LEMON

tonight I wedge
the moon
into bottom
of glass

con cada luna llena

watch it erupt
leak teal

cuando llega
el atardecer

I can't squeeze
Julieta Venegas'
"Limon Y Sal" out

of my head
only Clase Azul
finger-

tip swirling
salt around
the rim

of a shotglass

Evening brings out
the bluest part

almost half
of this lemonmilk

body is salted
by silicon

dioxide glass
created by meteoroids

hitting it