



The Journal of Poetry & Poetics

Volume 9, 2021 Issue 2

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Department of English, Chapman University
One University Drive, Orange, California 92866
www.chapman.edu/poetry

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THE CENTER FOR POETRY AT CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY



**Wilkinson College of
Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences**
Department of English

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Creative Director: Claudine Jaenichen

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Design Statement

The annual, distinctive print issue of *Tab: The Journal of Poetry & Poetics* engages the reader with poetry as a material object and asks that the reader negotiate between image and text. The design does not assume a traditional role of quietly framing content; instead, design actively shapes the reading experience and continues to experiment and explore the intersections between form and content, object and space, and reader and reading.

Beginning last year, the 2020 print issue was the first issue that was driven by inclusive design and low-vision principles. We commit to producing an engaging and increasingly equitable experience for all abilities. We developed a new website for online issues that also makes available accessible issue archives, including audio recordings of poems. Visit our website at TabJournal.org.

The 2021 print issue was created during a time of quarantine as the world underwent the isolation and anxieties of the Covid-19 pandemic. During this time, we reflected on concepts of time—as a sense of place, as space, as structure, as visual experience of light and dark. Time has an impact on psychology; we can lose time or lose track of time. Time has a history of visual representation and documentation as well. This year's print issue explores visual expressions of time warping, time traveling, and the chronology and the kaleidoscope of time keeping. The images and texts engage in ideas of process over time, such as healing or growth.

While the design for online issues draws from the year's print issue, the issues that follow in March, May, July, September, and November are designed

and formatted for the on-screen reading experience. Decisions about page size, typography, and composition are driven by the online reading experience, rather than to mimic a print version.

To request one or more copies of the print issue, please use the Contact form on the website.

The background of the entire page is a complex, abstract composition. On the right side, a large, vibrant red spiral dominates the visual field, composed of many thin, overlapping lines that create a sense of depth and movement. To the left of this spiral, there are several concentric, greyish-white circular patterns that resemble stylized orbits or architectural details. The overall texture is grainy and layered, with various geometric shapes and lines intersecting to create a rich, multi-dimensional effect.

Melissa Eleftherion

Melissa Eleftherion (she/they) is a writer, a librarian, and a visual artist. She is the author of *field guide to autobiography* and ten chapbooks, including *trauma suture* from above/ground press in 2020. Born and raised in Brooklyn, Melissa lives in Northern California where she manages the Ukiah Library and curates the LOBA Reading Series.

salt of body over body

bacterial suffuse
in being
enshrined i lipid
in myth
ensconced & rapture
a golden dream of threads
hyphae & their fine hairs—a web
of self-reliance as light
as the promise they keep
fungi put their bodies into food
i protect my body from food
i protect my body from harm
after years of doing harm to my body

my blood in minerals & minerals in my blood
fungi body in the body
blood in the salt & salt in the warm
blood minerals break in soil &
soil absorbs mineral fungi
eats the rocks and plants grow
from soil from rocks from minerals

in the blood of trees
salt of body over body
a great chambered organism
a multicellular being a one a breath

We break off pieces of god
this sand dollar this crustacean
this sacrifice this mitochondria
we break off little pieces
alveoli particle dust
gases of healing
we break off & suppurate
we submerge
We circle in the circles

Chaoite

Dark grey mass
Shock-metamorphosed
From meteorite

You abrade
Easily
Scale off memory of impact—

Your shell
Not so hard it crumbles
Not so vulnerable it shatters

Resilience a specimen of the long game
Polymorphous—a learned behavior for trauma
Crystals have such nice faces

In a family of diamonds
Sub-metallic luster

Your allotropic
Double consciousness

White carbon
Thin bones



Kurt Luchs

Kurt Luchs (he/him) won the 2019 *Atlanta Review* International Poetry Contest and has written humor for *The New Yorker* and *The Onion*. His books include a humor collection and a poetry chapbook. His first full-length poetry collection, *Falling in the Direction of Up*, is forthcoming from Sagging Meniscus Press. See more at www.kurtluchs.com.

New Town

How strange to have landed in a town filled with bird shadows,
where bald eagles and turkey vultures are common as sparrows,
nestled among bluffs overlooking the Mississippi
and its endless tributaries. When these offshoots
get big enough and the water moves slowly enough,
the locals call them lakes, but a map
reveals the complicated and confusing truth.
Autumn here has no rivals, except possibly New England.
Is there anything lonelier than a beauty that cannot be shared?
When it pierces the heart like cosmic rays
there is no one and nothing to patch the holes.
For a man who continually longs for home
and who never set out to be a nomad,
I have spent my life wandering with no more purpose
than the dozens of ladybugs deceived into the foyer
of my apartment building by the promise of heat and light.
They too will perish here without meaning, unfulfilled,
but at least they will not die alone. Most of them
prepare for the end by pairing off before they stop moving,
and suddenly in the late fall sunset I am envious of insects.

Burn Marks

As dusk descended we built a bonfire,
the flames blending with the last of the sunset,
the smoke merging with the new night.
We pretended we were natives of some faraway place,
dancing around the fire and chanting nonsense guttural syllables.
One of us, I don't recall which, plucked a burning branch
from the blaze and waved it in the air,
writing on the dark like neon.
Then each of us did it. Then we started playing tag
with the glowing embers at the ends of the sticks
and the game got serious, shirts and blue jeans singed, ruined,
the unmistakable stench of melting hair
and the high-pitched screams of those branded on naked flesh.
Our parents did not intervene, absorbed in their own savage game.
I burned someone and was burnt in turn down my left forearm.
The wound healed quickly. The massive scar lasted decades,
fading slowly and disappearing completely
in the last year or so, I didn't notice exactly when.
Now there is only a spark of memory, the least reliable witness,
to testify to the skin-deep nature of civilization.

The background of the image is an abstract composition. It features a dense, dark wireframe mesh that covers the entire frame. Overlaid on this mesh are broad, expressive brushstrokes in shades of blue and white, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall effect is a complex, layered visual texture.

Charlene Moskal

Charlene Moskal (she/her) is a Teaching Artist with The Alzheimer's Poetry Project in Las Vegas, Nevada. Her work is published in numerous anthologies, magazines, and online, and her second chapbook is *One Bare Foot* from Zeitgeist Press. In her seventh decade, she laughs a lot.

Harbingers

*(after an invasion of crows
in a Houston Walmart parking lot)*

Hundreds maybe thousands
No longer a murder of crows
Now an assassination

Descend
Fly in the face of reason
Feathered harbingers of what's to come

They carry the doomed names in their beaks
Just on the other side of raucous noise
They are searching for the souls

To which they have been assigned
They circle swoop land
Walk with tilted heads

Cawing names that no one understands
This was December
The icy cold had invaded them

Turned blood into pathways of messages
Sent to Divine Carriers of Scythes
And Charon from Hades

Who waited to see if the River Styx
Would thaw by Spring and his ferry overflow
With shadows as he plied the craft into summer.



Kenneth Pobo

Kenneth Pobo (he/him) is the author of twenty-one chapbooks and nine full-length collections. Recent books include *Bend of Quiet*, *Loplop in a Red City*, and *Uneven Steven*. *Opening* is forthcoming from Rectos Y Versos Editions, and *Lavender Fire, Lavender Rose* is forthcoming from Brick/House Books.

Dulcet Tones in Chapel

At 10:00 we hear about
Bolivia's heathen. Cute guys

and a hymnal, bodies
like open houses

inviting me in. Later,
I dance in secret,

begin to nudge
open my closet door

which does, at long last,
let in the light.



Isaac Rankin

Isaac Rankin (he/him) lives in Asheville, North Carolina, and works at Christ School, an all-boys boarding school. His poems have appeared or will soon appear in *Lily Poetry Review*, *Potomac Review*, *White Wall Review*, and other outlets.

Gunshots

Across the highway
 some local boys
are reading the second amendment
 out loud

Or maybe it's just fireworks
 this time of year
Both jolt me out of sleep
 on warm summer nights

The boys un-rack their rifles
 from pickup cabins:
pop-tops hissing
 over campfire crackle

emboldened by onlooking girls
 with nervous smiles
and then
 the violent little *pow!pow!*

pow!pows! pulverizing empties
 Come September

these boys and their dads
 unsheathe 20-gauges

and scan the sky for doves
 over fields nearing harvest
Good hunts like
 corn popping in the clouds:

hot kernels rain down
 on my roof
those Saturday afternoons
 By fall's end

the rifles return
 to thunder across daybreak:
a scoped roar
 stills the earth

for a time
 I lie in bed thinking
That's the one
 That's the sound

of one of those boys
 taking a life

in a clearing

I cannot see

but know to be nearby



John Repp

John Repp (he/him) grew up along the Blackwater Branch of the Maurice River in southern New Jersey. In 2021, Broadstone Books will publish *The Soul of Rock & Roll: Poems Acoustic, Electric & Remixed, 1980-2020*, drawn from twelve earlier collections and previously uncollected work.



He Kept

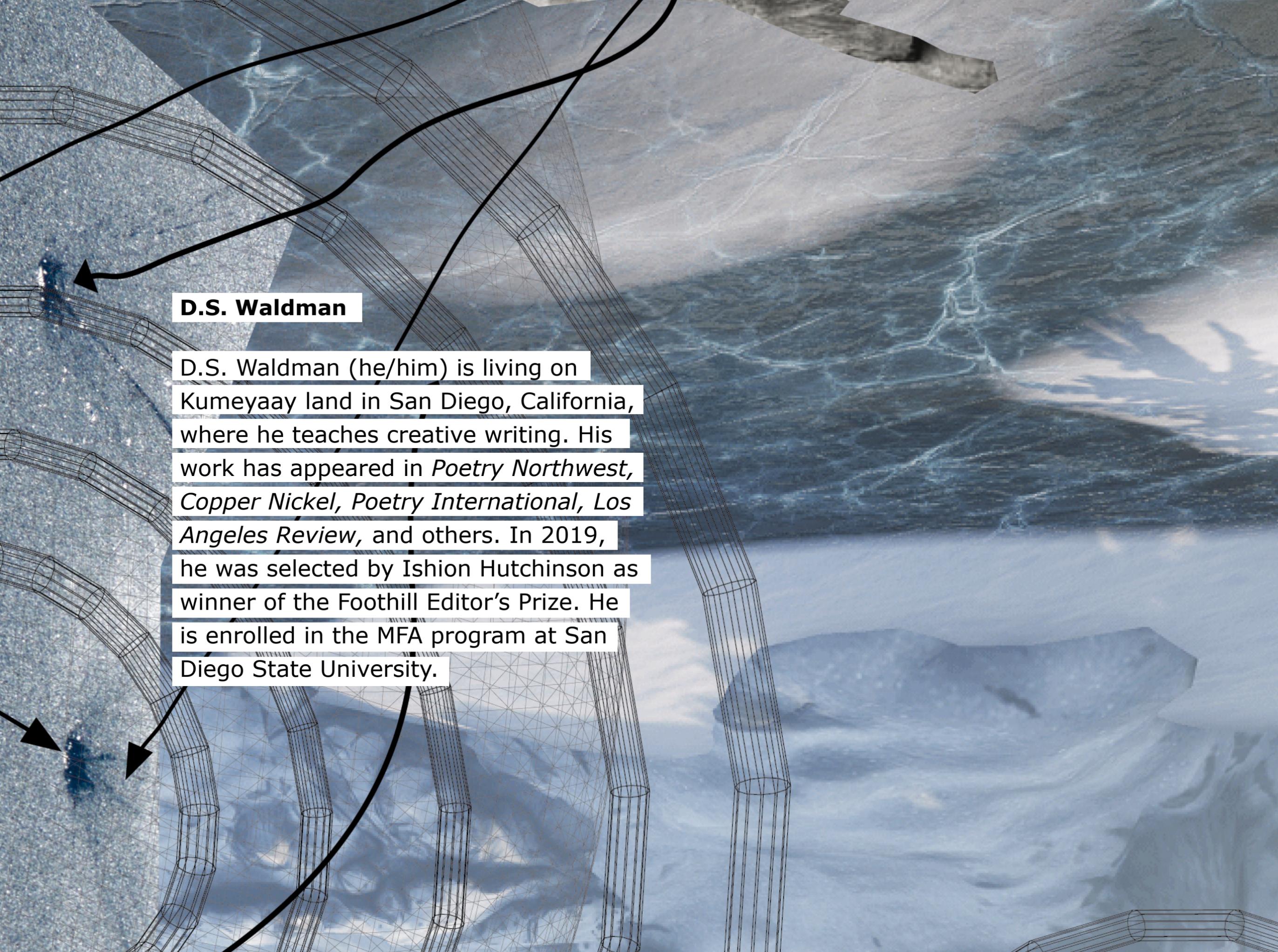
He kept his boots in the icebox, so last
split from sole lickety-split while Harry

hunted a scarlet dragonfly. *I should
have cut my losses, but that's a lot*

to cut said the Stoic, coaxing
her curious eccentric. How can it

feel so good when the one you've come
to hate holds you? Rust-orange blooms

on eight-foot stalks rock in the big wind.
The willow has gone yellow again.



D.S. Waldman

D.S. Waldman (he/him) is living on Kumeyaay land in San Diego, California, where he teaches creative writing. His work has appeared in *Poetry Northwest*, *Copper Nickel*, *Poetry International*, *Los Angeles Review*, and others. In 2019, he was selected by Ishion Hutchinson as winner of the Foothill Editor's Prize. He is enrolled in the MFA program at San Diego State University.

Encanto

I see you mockingbird

 here there
a smudge of white in your
 grey wing flashing from lamppost
to mailbox corrugated
 metal fence off-kilter maybe
in a haste that only
 hunger brings and quiet

herald without a sound

 no *khaw* no *sireep*
this neighborhood
 the machine *whirr* long-
mistaken for wind
 and dogs whittled
down to their
gnashing

I see the sun

in a spray of
broken glass and wonder
if it matters anymore
to say something
what begins always
in the body
how it flares cracks
ghosts into daylight

Autumn Rhythm

Still like a train window
with the day slipping
across it we were splayed

out exhausted in
the amber riff of fallen
leaves foals craning over

the fence curious
we'd been screaming at
nothing but our bodies

shot through air and heaps
of generous decay
the clean fact of our

newness to the world not
knowing that we were happy
in the labor of play

all breath and motor blood
until empty just breath
looking up through the grand

stillnesses of pin oak
limbs undressed arcing
over us and Matty

I wonder now whether
it might be a dream
whether you might be

a dream whether we both
are a dream in which
neither of us moves when

from far-off the wind
washes up over and
around us making chaos

of the leaves the whole world
sharded in motion
I can't remember now
what happens where you go
if the wind ever dies
down if the leaves

ever settle



Kate Hampton

Kate Hampton (she/her) is Deputy Managing Editor for *Jalada Africa* and former Assistant Editor for *Kwani Trust*. She writes fiction, poetry, and nonfiction and does copywriting, marketing, technical editing, and typography and also has edited many books for publishers and individual authors. See more at katecarolehampton@gmail.com.

Book review

Street Gloss by Brent Armendinger
The Operating System, 2019

Street Gloss is a formal experiment in the techniques, dilemmas, and art of translation. In it, Brent Armendinger walks the reader through the streets of Buenos Aires by way of five poems by five Argentine poets. Each of the book's five sections is devoted to one of the poems, opening with the Spanish language original and closing with Armendinger's English language translation. Between these bookends, the reader sees the city and experiences the act of translation through Armendinger's prose poems. Each of Armendinger's poems is a meditation on a word from the original text, as defined by pedestrians on the streets of Buenos Aires and explicated by the poet.

Armendinger invented his own formal constraints for these poems. Whenever he didn't know how to translate a word in a poem, he would walk as many blocks as the line of the poem on which the word appeared: if the poem was on line five, he would walk five blocks. Then, he asked passersby to explain the word, thus adding another act and layer of translation, now in real life and real time with real people—between cultures, language, and often with a mixture of multiple languages, pointing, props, and pantomime. Armendinger often describes his writing as collage. In this book, he pastes together populism, academia, postmodernism, new historicism, experimentalism, ritual, performance art, literary poetry, and translation

into what poet CA Conrad terms a “somatic meta-form.”

The book’s experiment boldly addresses recurrent questions in the field of translation, not with direct answers but through the form of the book itself. Armendinger writes, “It’s a way of dancing, perhaps, the act of translation, this shaking of words between us.” How can the translator be true to the original text when perfect translation is impossible? How should the translator dance with the untranslatable? What is the responsibility of the translator who crosses culture, native language, and privilege—in this case, a White North American in South America? What opportunities accompany shared identities, as many of the poems explore queerness? What is the relationship between the lived world and the page; the poet, the translator, and the people; the poet, the translator, and the reader; the poet, the translator, and the poem?

The brilliant utility of such a complicated—even, at first glance, convoluted—approach to translation is best illustrated by the section on Néstor Perlongher’s poem “Vapores,” or “Steam.” It is by far the longest section, with good reason: Perlongher’s voice resists translation. As Armendinger says in the interview at the end of the book, “Yes, I was doing this very experimental thing, but I also wanted the translations themselves to be as faithful as possible to the original poems, and that of course is not easy, especially with someone like Perlongher, who delights in double- and triple-entendre and incorporates dialect and other languages into his poems.” How better to understand the untranslatable poem than by unspooling it into meta-poems? How better to honor the complexity of the original text than to move slowly and carefully through it? With this poem, Armendinger walks even more

slowly, as a word stops him on almost every line, and we see the poem directing its translator.

Armendinger writes in the poem "Nitidez," "What does it mean to walk between one word and another without stopping?" With *Street Gloss*, Armendinger shows us what it means to stop often and look around, within a poem, in ourselves, and in our communities.

A detailed botanical illustration serves as the background. It features several large, ripe, orange-red tomatoes hanging from a vine in the upper left. To the right, a fern frond with small, dark, rounded fiddleheads is shown. In the lower right, a water lily plant is depicted with its roots, stems, and two open white flowers with yellow centers. In the lower left, there are green, unopened flower buds on a stem.

Liz Harmer

Liz Harmer (she/her) is the author of *The Amateurs*, a finalist for the Amazon Canada First Novel Award. Her fiction, nonfiction, and poetry have appeared in *Best Canadian Short Stories*, *Globe and Mail*, *Image Journal*, *Literary Hub*, *The Walrus*, and elsewhere. In 2019, she was awarded fellowships by both the Bread Loaf and Sewanee writers' conferences and was the runner-up for the Mitchell Prize in Poetry.

Book review

frank: sonnets by Diane Seuss
Graywolf Press, 2019

I took a road trip alone during a pandemic to drink wine with one of my closest friends, the first time I'd seen her in nearly a year. She and I talked about whether a work of art could change your life. Certainly, this had once seemed to be the case, that a book or a film might spur me drop out of school or leave a relationship or lose my religious belief. But, she said, wasn't it true that it became harder to have a real experience of art as one got older? Just as it might be more difficult to fall rapturously in love?

My reading of *frank*, Diane Seuss's memoir-in-sonnets, is all tangled up with these questions: Can I still have a real experience of art? Am I capable of rapture, of love? In "[Listening to 'Summertime']," Seuss writes that "something / presses to be said or read, listened to or forgotten, a tune / that opens your flesh, removes the bones, fillets you till you die."

In "[Things feel partial. My love for things is partial]," the speaker writes of a beloved friend, Mikel, who is dying, who has died. Mikel, "on his last legs /... demanded that I see the beauty of a mass of chrysanthemums. Look, / he demanded. I lied that I could see the beauty there but all I could see was a smear / of yellow flowers." The speaker held back out of fear of feeling too much:

...What would have happened if I'd opened my heart all the way as I was told to if I wanted Jesus to live inside one of its dank chambers? Whitman told me to "Unscrew the locks from the doors! Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!" Let love comestreaming in like when the St. Joe flooded Save A Lot and drove it out of business.

In *Diode*, Seuss has written what she calls "improvisational autobiography" after finding a surprising inspiration in Frank O'Hara, and Seuss's collection as a whole reads like a memoir—you want to read it all the way through—but acts like a sonnet, aphoristically setting up problems which it then turns, and turns, and turns. No memoir can shoulder the dynamism of insight this well. The opening poems pose the questions that the rest of the poems pick at:

how do I explain
this restless search for beauty or relief?

and

The problem
with everything is death. There really is no other problem
if you factor everything down

and

Intimacy unhinged, unpaddocked me. I didn't want it.
Believe me, I didn't want it anymore.

The poems move through childhood's privations and loves, Sunday School Jesus and the images of lambs, through motherhood and loneliness and addiction and grief, reminding the reader over and over of the veil between life and death, which thins, as a nurse tells us, like the cervix. What if we could open up? How do we love when love is so unlasting?

Besides interrogating love and death, these sonnets also ask after their own qualities: "Takes time to get to minimalism, years lived through, eau de / suffering, yes," the speaker writes. While each has fourteen lines and the comfort of internal rhymes—and often a satisfying final, embedded, couplet—the poems are plainspoken, often unpunctuated, and, of course, frank. Considering the plain feeling of the poems, their feeling of looseness and spokenness, it is their formal consistency that keeps them from feeling like prose. The paring down of each piece to its narrow room removes ornamentation and we end up consuming it in gulps, in "bitter mouthfuls."

The sonnets throughout echo Mikel's demand to look and to see beyond the smear of yellow flowers to the beauty of a mass of chrysanthemums; which is truer, the smear or the beauty? "It's rare to really look," Seuss writes in "[There is a certain state of grace that is not loving]." That beauty is truth needs interrogating: what about the "vile contortions of the last gasp, I'd like to educate / myself about the beauty of *that*," Seuss throws back at Keats. The collection has the intimacy of a memoir with few of its performances of self, or so it felt to me. My first encounter with these poems was in the most mediated of circumstances—someone shared one on Instagram. Amid an array of advertising, envies and desires, scripts and filters

and performances, along came a poem to fillet me. Now, I want to give the book away to everyone I know, and then to carry it around with me like a young person would, thrilled by the way some work of art might change everything.



Jason Thornberry

Jason Thornberry (he/him) is pursuing his MFA in Creative Writing at Chapman University. His writing has appeared in newspapers, magazines, and literary journals, including *The Stranger*, *ALAN Review*, *Orange County Weekly*, *URB*, *Response*, *Adirondack Review*, *Central Circuit*, and other e-zines. He has taught literature and writing at Seattle Pacific University.

Book review

101 Jewish Poems for the Third Millennium, edited by Matthew E. Silverman and Naomi Carlson
Ashland Poetry Press, 2020

Jewish-American poet Adrienne Rich once said that words are maps. She said words would carry us through the darkness. In *Diving into the Wreck*, Rich bore witness to the damage done to the developing world surrounding her but stayed to survey the brilliant treasures that might inevitably overcome that damage. Poets and readers of all faiths heed Rich's call even in the face of destruction. Owing to their relationship with history, Jewish poets see these possibilities from a perspective significant in scale, sometimes with dreadful latitude because history knows repetition.

Generations from now, when historians look back at America 2020, they will see disturbing kinetic images of a country grappling with an intolerance supported, validated, and endorsed by the highest office in the land. (We edit this review shortly after the pre-inauguration insurrection of 2021 and the inauguration of the new president.) The new collection *101 Jewish Poems for the Third Millennium* is both a response to this recurring American carnage and a reminder never to disregard America's troubling relationship with white supremacy.

In her poem "They Came," Jill Bialosky describes the desecration of Jewish cemeteries after the 2017 presidential inauguration. Bialosky chronicles a populace reacting to the anxiety of being overwhelmed by change—of being replaced by the

other. Observing an ethnic majority desperate to avoid relinquishing cultural capital, Bialosky recounts radicalized American citizens' actions. These, she says, are people seeking comfort in elegies of division, separation, subjugation, oblivion:

They came
with fear in their eyes
and horror in their throats.
They came with the foreknowledge
of evil dictators spewing caustic
rhetoric, red swastikas on the navy sleeves
of lieutenants, the sound of shrill
whistles, climbing wildflowers creeping up barbed wire,
Jewish stars cut from yellow fabric sewn
over the hearts of tattered coats.
They came to mourn
the Anniversary of the Apocalypse.

This sensation of being othered is nothing new to a Jewish poet. She feels it when she realizes nothing will allow her to belong amongst the dominant culture.

Alice Friman's "Ammunition" describes feeling otherized by the inability to connect with American mythology, particularly "the lady in the harbor / raising a torch to her own platitudes" representing "a new page, / a new start in this America, this / streets-paved-with-gold-America / of pushcarts and factory piecework." Friman

understands that her neighbor, the man whose carefully curated gun collection evokes fear in her, is part of another America. So, Friman chances to ask him:

decked your walls? We had Roosevelt.
Franklin Delano. A grinning photo

of the man who was going to save us.
Trouble was, he couldn't save us. Nothing
could save us. Not even the six million

he let slip through his fingers. ...

Anthology editor Matthew E. Silverman's poem addresses the mass shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in 2018. He describes learning the language of bullets. He says the sight of death showed him what the other America saw when they looked with distaste at the lives—and trials—of Jewish people: "For some, this is a trophy case, / A display of words, stories told and retold / The way our ancestors told and retold epic poems around a fire." But there must be hope. For hope, as Barbara Goldberg says in "Furlough," sustains the world. Goldberg writes: "We grow like onions, our heads / buried in dirt. And we die like onions, face / down in a pot of boiling water. Gravity causes / all to fall down, and love, to hold things up."

Beyond the context with our current historical moment, perhaps *101 Jewish*

Poems for the Third Millennium will serve as another document of ongoing struggle against the propensity for ugliness and evil. My hope is that someday this anthology, so situated in the present in which we're living now, will show that the book's warnings were ultimately regarded and acted upon in the furtherance of equality.