FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

An Unkindness of Ravens
Meg Kearney
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In this smart new selection for the A. Poulin, Jr. New

Poets series, readers will discover a worldly but tender female persona. Here is a modern Magdalene: complicated, tired, self-aware. Though she's still young enough to fall in love, she's lived longer than most, and is acutely aware of all the selves that make up her complex view of the world. Some of these selves are pure and know more than the speaker, as in "On Second Thought": "I notice for the first / time the girl not eating cake, not smiling in her black and gray though it must have been a yellow or red hat. I can't recall / her name, but wonder what she knew. / How, how did she know?"

But the best poems among an amazing first collection are in "Prodigal Mother," in the voice of the melancholy but lifewise woman who appears in bars, on the street, in rancid bedrooms—searching and longing for a place to Be: "She cannot enter the house. No one has come out to greet her, / to say she is forgiven, to say there will be lamb roasting, dancing."

Though any one of these poems will stand alone, when they are read as a whole, a deeply emotional narrative of lost family surfaces. The poems of the third section, "Adoptive Measures," explore the personae of a mother who gives up her child and the "surrendered" daughter, growing into the invented memory of both the mother and the daughter who longs to fill in the blanks of life and make whole all the empty parts. "I search faces / on the street, at the supermarket, laundromat: I try / not to be rude; I stroke my chin—Do I have your nose? / Would you turn your head?"

Having explored the forgotten child, fallen woman, and lost mother and daughter, Kearney resolves her voice in a quiet love: "You turned as if to ask, What / is the sound of an oyster-shell sunrise? So I turned into pearl, hid myself in your hands." The mother-daughter poems are some of the most haunting of their kind and the Raven section is mythical in the modern sense. Here is a voice to keep close in the night, full of lush darkness and heartening stars.

Anne-Marie Oomen