

Corpus Socius

Lance Phillips

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To search for meaning here would be to negate the many meanings possible within this volume. Readers are not meant to construct meaning in the typically linear fashion. Instead, notice what repeats, what sounds are created, what sort of mood they set, the way in which words possess multiple meanings that reference each other in multiple contexts. For those searching for traditional poetry, this isn't it. For those searching for the experience of poetry, for a view inside the head of a working poet, this may well be the volume.

The author, a graduate of the University of North Carolina and the Iowa Writers' Workshop, begins by complicating the notion of the body, from body politic to the sexual body to the body of the ant colony and the flock of sparrows. He examines innate body knowledge, if there is such a thing, and suggests a fluidity of the notion of the body. In keeping with the treasured ambiguity of postmodern poetics, his definitions are not finite and exclusive; rather, they attempt a broadening of understanding heightened by word play, thoughtful caesura, and placement on the page. For Phillips, the drama exists in the white space as well as the print. He emphasizes suggestion and possibility.

The volume begins with a poem titled, "Already." "A more common sparrow being heat on the wing // The tongue's little more a sun I don't know how //" This sets the tone of expectation and urgency: already things are happening and the speaker has stumbled onto the unexpected. The poems continue with this rush of motion, using sibilance to intimate continuity, and internal rhyme to suggest a sort of harmony among dissonant ideas.

Ultimately, this collection makes fluid the fragmented parts of the postmodern body, acknowledging at once its place as individual entity and part of the larger whole and the way in which each construction constantly intrudes on the other. It offers, in its own way, a body of poetry that is political for the genre and integral to its growth.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (September / October 2002)

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