



Lullaby for One Fist

Andrea Werblin

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The fist in the title is an appropriate image for a book of poems about rough edges and marital disillusion, though this fist is womanly-curved and quick. The poet's rage is elegant, but she's not wholly resentful, perhaps because for many poets, a batch of on-target poems can justify a certain amount of suffering.

The first poem in the collection begins with Werblin's characteristic lack of hesitation: "Except for the chickens humming to each other, / making themselves look boneless in the dirt, / I want no memory of this place." These lines are poetic, imagistic, but also a little acerbic. Similarly, a poem about saints declares that "our lives are made plain / and less sacred by the hour." This poet strikes hard and without excuses.

Werblin was an adjunct lecturer of expository writing at Fisher College in Boston, and earned her MFA in creative writing at University of Arizona. Her poems swirl in rich flurries of words. The momentum is appealing, though the endings often come suddenly, as if to blunt a thought or an emotion midstream. For example, a poem titled "Lineaments" begins with an interesting narrative ("where did you go after I cursed you / across a public square in Mexico City?") but winds up elliptical, with incomplete references to things that the reader cannot fully appreciate, except as aesthetic gestures. In other words, they are beginning to make a shapely thing, but seem at times to be lacking cohesiveness since some parts seem underfed or lopped off.

At its best, the weirdness and quiriness of Werblin's poetic universe is very much her own, embracing syntactical oddities and a fiesta of language made for much more than only utilitarian means. "Obedient as ten gold buttons. Rusted horse. / Rose-colored, immaculate, kept to be untouched / as a parent's bedroom. / It's no surprise to see your hands / skim tall stemmed grass / - as though it were something / precious others trampled."

HOLLY WREN SPAULDING (September / October 2001)

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