



## Measures

**B. L. Bruce**

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*The poems of Measures embrace lyrical tendencies as they move through the seasons of a troubled relationship.*

Both absence and presence haunt the pages of b. l. bruce's poetry collection, *Measures*.

A one time lover and longed for friend adventures to the water, leaving their companion alone on the shore. Wrinkles appear as if grooved overnight, and the world is awash in the colors of the sky, a leaf, and the headland. Nature, the desire to be a mother, and yearning for love thread through the book, which is rich with longing.

The silence between the disappeared friend and the woman he left yawns, then collapses, then gapes again. This dynamic dominates many of the collection's poems, which circle each other, even in memories. An early poem suggests that the departed friend committed suicide; other poems intimate his mania and depression. He and his companion move through nature in an attempt to soothe themselves.

Haiku-like poems appear with frequency, underscoring the ephemeral, cyclical nature of life and its inevitable loss. The left woman longs for a child and for a partner who wants to have one with her; her longing for something outside of herself draws her gaze to nature, too.

Poems' short lines are staccato and constant in their sense of wonder:

*In that slow undress of spring,  
the honeybees go  
humming and powdering  
themselves elsewhere.*

They embrace lyrical tendencies as they move through the seasons, paying particular attention to colors and scents. Often, the poems contain the sense that the woods, the water, and the woman's passion for nature itself are a blind against the turmoil of the relationship at the book's center. Silence is weaponized in this relationship, as a place to descend to, one that is used to exile the other. Only in joy does the couple escape, though it seems they can never achieve this together.

Most entries are short. Their scant lines, and imagery devoted to nature and change, become too familiar. The collection flattens as its poems make similar moves. Still, the book's dozens of small, wrought images stand out, and the book is perhaps best met on its own terms:

*Each of us our own poetry,  
a language of wounds, and of dawn,  
and the color blue.*

As its poems tread through forests, over mountains, and along the water, showcasing "chalk-white poplars," "sweet

alpine snowmelt,” and the “glimmering / reflection of moonlight on water, / highway of light,” *Measures* captivates.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (February 27, 2021)

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