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Poetry

**The Homelessness of Self**
Susan Terris
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Susan Terris' sixth book of poetry, *The Homelessness of Self*, takes readers deep within the mental landscape of rootlessness. Her lyrical poems obsessively capture being unmoored, in that the poet never touches down long enough for readers to feel comfortable in a single place or even a moment. Instead, Terris sweeps through the spaces of the mind collecting and connecting everything of importance, and packing a wild bag of departure.

Throughout this collection, Terris delights readers with stunning images at every turn, most of which focus on nature. In the poem "Dry Heiligenschien," she writes: "the dream field with vapor trails pinned / against the sky." And later in the same poem, she gives us: "cantered bareback / through blistered furrows." Again, using nature within her images in "Forbidden Fire," she describes girls that are "thin as April sap." Terris's inventions make readers stop, reread, and enjoy again.

Additionally, the poet's eye is accompanied by an exceptional ear, offering language that, through sound, comes alive on the page. In "Tasseling," we hear "the grumble of a summer storm." And Terris takes this sound quality even further with inventive terms and playful language. In "No Stork," she describes the speaker as "whippy as cattails in the marsh." She describes separation as "tinder / as well as tender, fueled as well as fooled" in the poem "Session/Obsession." And in the same poem, she writes that a man and woman are ill-suited to one another, following it with the explanation: "she wore one, he didn't." The leaps between the literal and figurative keep readers happily guessing about what will happen on the next line.

The author also succeeds in making razor-sharp observations about life that stop time and take the wind out of her—and our—journeying sails. In “Statis, He Says Is Not the Object,” she writes “A promise, like a pomegranate, / Bleeds when it is cut.” And in “Marriage License,” she cuts to the quick in her statement that “In a marriage, home maintenance is the daily mass.” There is everything gutsy in both her vision and her tongue.

Susan Terris’s poems startle and sing as they range natural and emotional landscapes large and small. Fans of lyrical poetry will be most taken by this collection, although all readers will be impressed with her arresting images, language, and insight.

*Jennifer Fandel*