



Tip to Rump

Katherine Starke

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If you'd asked me a week ago, / I'd have said no, I wouldn't love someone who'd had a sex change. /

But that was a week ago, and today I'm feeling gutsy.

Most of the poems in this first collection are gutsy. They are sexual and sexy, irreverent, even a little disobedient in their formal displays, stretching and trying out all sorts of possibilities: long lines, short lines, prose blocks, and graphic poems all appear within these pages.

The author is twenty-four and already receiving some serious attention for her poems, including the Mid-List Press First Series Award for Poetry. She has the rawness and unselfconsciousness that comes from being new on the scene—a little cocky, but not jaded.

She has questions and she asks them: “Your words. / What do you do with your words? / Are you hoarse from swallowing, / swallowing them / or do they billow and tense like chutes? / Do you spit or swallow your words?”

This poet seems never to swallow her words. She shouts, tongues, whispers, growls, and beautifully speaks her words. While her poems seem a bit uneven in some places, as though she could have spent more time editing, the upshot of this roughness is that they have a lot of life in them. Starke's tendency toward being less polished is simpatico and in any case, it is her own thing, not mimicry.

Her images are uninhibited and often colorful; the world and places she writes about are marginal, behind-the-scenes, even seedy. Many of the metaphors are graphically sexual, the dream bordering on violent.

The shrimp defrost on the counter, I've folded the napkins into little boats, and I go over and over-how to get the cuffs on her, how to slap her, how to cook the shrimp, which wine glasses to use.

This is a vibrant, worthy, first book of poems.

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