

Adrie Kusserow's *The Trauma Mantras* speaks directly to us. This is a testament of reckoning, a solid collection of distilled observations, an upturning of physical and psychic realities, as well as heartfelt reflections. This poet's hard work goes to the pay dirt of realism wherever the speaker travels. These poetic prose pieces are well-made actions—not merely generated but lived—with jagged edges. And the reader must be ready to go there, to feel and dream the rhythmic burn of language as rage and beauty converge, and to arrive at a place of needful contemplation. The speaker faces a revealing juncture: "Our hunter-gatherer bodies are still designed to vibrate when close to another's animacy, the frenetic hum and bubbling of the urge to describe a tulip, peach, wild rose, mountain, or fox before the next text comes in." It is this desire to venture into the pulsating clay, even to the other side, that requires a give-and-take, but not by a typical directive or calming image map. *The Trauma Mantras* is exciting, and perhaps this is more so because the speaker raises questions as a tool or weapon. Not for the sake of anecdotes, but for how one might journey to truly feel, to learn, to be(come) part of personal inquiry with eyes on the collective. In this sense, each piece is a deep voyage. We readers engage multiple voices revealing personal histories of hurt and pain, reaching out for vital connections and mature insight—hurting for what we risk being made of. The voices this writer gives us are a treasure because of the intrinsic dialogue of contrasts. Going through dilemma and pain, coming to a curative pause, and then we realize ascension most likely is a long road ahead.

As an anthropologist and a poet, Kusserow is also a serious teacher and activist, someone whose commitment runs deep. Her passion is here in each piece. And she does not let herself off the hook as she delves into numerous

social and political ills troubling humanity. In this sense, hers is a world voice. The reader cannot escape understanding the poetry on every page of *The Trauma Mantras*. It reveals but does not blame. Yet what we witness through imagery becomes evidence—woven in the language. And in this breathing music we hold ourselves accountable. We feel these pieces, even in those moments when we're caught slightly off guard.

*The Trauma Mantras* is a gift across cultures. And it is only natural that vicissitude is casted in our journey. The word groupings throughout the text, for the most part, slow the reader until they grow momentarily engaged in meditation. Yes, Kusserow is an anthropologist and a poet, and we must hear and feel both fused as one—an immersion—tonally. Each focus reveals art. Such brave work exposes any unearned grace note; this poet gives the world a robust spirit of truth-seeking. Her language is straightforward, caring, and gutsy. What more do we dare ask an artist-seer to surrender or give of herself?