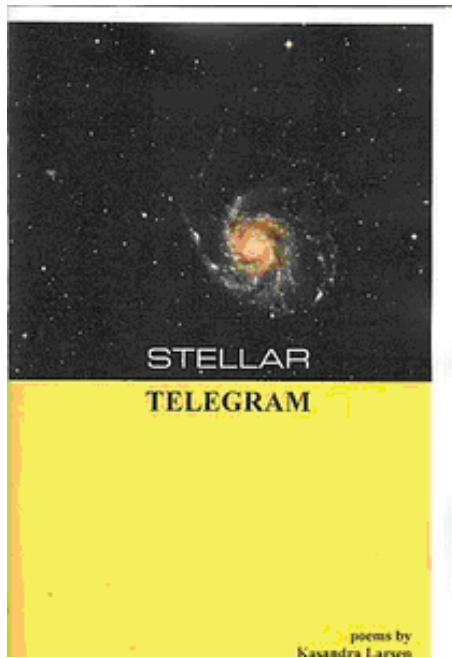


Stellar Telegram poetry by Kasandra Larsen



Stellar Telegram
poetry by Kasandra Larsen
Sheltering Pines Press
<http://www.shelteringpinespress.com>
\$7

Review by Samantha Milowsky

Kasandra Larsen, originally from Massachusetts, currently lives in New Orleans.

Larsen's sensual poems deftly employ classic forms such as the sonnet. There is a musicality and richness of language to her work. Beginning her creative life as a classical pianist, she hears music in poetry.

She pays attention to life around her. The details whirl in "Waiting, Lee Circle" where a Mardi Gras scene includes "vendors on cellphones," "uniformed megaphone warnings," and "insistent fresh hot dog rhythms..."

There are a few poems where Hurricane Katrina is used to reflect on the past and to relate to other's suffering. In "On a Senior Picture Not Seen Since Katrina," the speaker reminisces over an old high-school photo, the unexpected kindness from a pretty cheerleader towards an awkward poet. These poems frequently delve past common surface biases. Such reminiscing comforts the speaker: "Maybe only my imagination took that picture, lifted it above the toxic waves, gave a little cheer when it made it to the Gulf Coast, swirled in a fresh eddy headed out of here."

"A Stand-in For the Body, A Refuge, Identity" reflects on the fragility of home, "the haunted one where dishes flew off the dining table," as well as sympathizing with "Bill" who also experienced loss of home, spending "two years in a FEMA trailer after Hurricane Isabel." Here, the speaker is reaching out beyond her own historical experience with Katrina, reminding us that many people experience tragedy. We are all connected in our mutual vulnerability.

Larsen has an inquisitive side to her poetry. "The Purposes of Sleep Are Only Partly Clear" is resplendent with imagery about insomnia: "Pillows fluffed with insomnia/spread around her hair like a net./Her bright bones lie awake inside," and end humorously with "...of her outburst, whispers/have become the only movement/the moon makes all night, peering in/just to criticize the linens."

Larsen's poems have a rich synthesis between language as a subject for contemplation alongside relationships, family, and religion.

Wilderness House Literary Review 6/1

The opening sonnet "Some Things are Better Left" weaves the ideas of the power a poet could wield, even in what's unspoken, such as the title proves; however, is the poet being constrained by a "churches claim that thoughts are as culpable as deeds?"

There is the rhetorical contemplation of a poet taking their job seriously, considering both what's said and unsaid: "a poet tries to choose, hopes what's unheard/prevents her lips from being liable." The poem moves into the intimate ramifications of what's unspoken between "us" - "This purgatory of unspoken lines/hangs still between us now."

"Stellar Telegram" continues the contemplation "overwhelmed by the richness of language," and the movement into encompassing relationships between a man and woman as "the world's bodies of wounded water/dripped, rippled in unison at the sky."

I recommend Stellar Telegram to poetry lovers and readers wishing to immerse in the sensual language, imagery, and experiences Larsen weaves.