



Handiwork
Amaranth Borsuk
Winner : 2011 Slope Book Prize
Slope Editions \$14.00
ISBN: 978-0-9777698-7-2

Review by Irene Koronas

"...the way a reader pores over a text she might fall into: learning their names..."

The poet trusts the reader to come to their own understanding, their own images, beyond the implication, the shadows words leave. The words pass from meaning to experience:

"The hand that had its work cut out for it was cut out for its work. Knuckling down on the desk, it curled to a tool not there, scissors that might replace pen with loop and lever, flexed: machinely

precision-potential at rest..."

Borsuk uses gematria, "a clue to the author's procedure lies in the mystical Jewish practice of gematria, which assigns numerical value to a letter, word, or phrase":

*"Salt king, for what did you walk,
for war or dreams,
everyone as
nothing to you?
Lake moon milk tooth,
semaphore lockdown."*

We know the poems practice a principle, which we may or may not be familiar to the reader. The poems stand on their own as poems, experimental, lyrical, and language:

*"if a flower confesses its shame in a little book
if fire burns only windows and doors
if fruit turns to stone in your hands
if food turns to dust in your mouth
if the things of this world are more or less beautiful than
you remembered..."*

For me the poems read like an objective abstract painting, revising the form, being partial in its rendering of the objective, these poems do the same as a painting. We fill in the images and play with colors::

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*"Fartherking slew the city
and everything*

*in it – would not spare
even an ear
of wheat – turning earth
cruel with salt."*

The poems are not obscure, they open and close and we participate in the action; in not saying everything, we get to experience our own poems. The reader either enjoys negotiating the implications or the reader relates in ways that make sense to them because of their own exposure to new writing:

*"Tenders of salt, shaken,
rendered empty, still.*

*Harvest's jealousy
guarded privilege: naming
a price
in small hard seeds."*

My criticism is not in the poems but in the reviews or the critique of poems such as these. Yes the poems are intellectual and in thinking about the word intellectual I find it dismissive of the actual poems and dismissive of the content of the poems. For me the word intellectual limits the poems. The poems are as any poem or almost most any poem, that resonates with certain thoughts::

*"Who / make /s/ life / edible
has / the same / / worry / every day,*

*it's out of date.
That /fear of/ getting late
or letting / go,*

*liver / heavy / in / wonder
at / all / that / promise."*

In the experience of Borsuk's poems, I find the tint, the fallen words, the replications, the handiwork. I recommend this book.