

explore the ways in which urban/city spaces, performance theory, corporeal body identities, and memory intersect in order to create live social spaces. She is currently a teaching assistant in the department of Fine Arts and Cultural Studies and working on her own mixed media art.

JUDITH BUTLER: FROM NORMS TO POLITICS

Moya Lloyd
Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2007

REVIEWED BY KRISTINE KLEMENT

In this book-length study and summary of the work of Judith Butler, Moya Lloyd sets out three goals: to explicate and evaluate Butler's work, both theoretically and in light of its political potential, and to engage with its feminist reception. She succeeds in these aims with admirable clarity and depth. Lloyd takes us from Butler's early philosophical roots in Hegel, through her theories of gender and sexuality, to her most recent work on ethics and politics post-September 11. Lloyd does a good job of situating all of Butler's theoretical turns within the contexts of feminist theory, philosophy, and politics. She begins by locating Butler's feminist theory as growing out of *différance* or deconstruction feminism as well as the poststructuralist turn in philosophy. Lloyd also situates Butler's early work on gender and sexuality in relationship to the identity politics of the gay and lesbian rights movement and the transformation she helped to solidify into a "queer" politics and theory.

Lloyd moves both chronologically and thematically through Butler's *oeuvre*, drawing her numerous texts together in interesting ways, noting continuities and breaks in her thought. For example, Lloyd's

explication of Butler's rereading of Freud's Oedipus complex draws from both *Gender Trouble* and *The Psychic Life of Power*. In addition, she situates Butler's engagement with psychoanalysis with respect to her interest in the incest taboo and kinship that Lloyd notes was a current in Butler's thought from her first book, *Subjects of Desire*, to its more thorough elaboration in *Antigone's Claim*. In another section, Lloyd elaborates Butler's arguments on hate speech and resignation from *Excitable Speech* together with her work on the signifier "queer" from *Bodies that Matter*.

Lloyd draws both on Butler's books as well as lesser known articles to give a thorough elaboration of the sources and reasoning of Butler's thought. Lloyd takes us through gender performativity and the radical rethinking of the materiality of the sexed body that theory made possible. From there Lloyd elaborates Butler's politics of subversion, and the place of drag and parodic repetition as possibilities for denaturalizing heteronormativity. Lloyd elaborates Butler's debt to both Freud and Foucault in her theory of subjectivation and passionate attachment, the psychical dimension of the theory of performativity. Lloyd takes us through Butler's work on the citationality of language, and her intervention in the U.S. debates over legislating against hate speech. She ends the book with a discussion of Butler's most recent work on ethics, violence, and radical democracy.

Lloyd examines various controversies and debates provoked by Butler's theories. One such debate has been over the agency of the subject and the accusations of both volunteerism and determinism that have been levelled at Butler. Butler's critics have also accused her of idealism and ignoring the materiality of the body. Lloyd responds to these criticisms in defence of Butler, using Butler's own theories to add complexity to the terms of the debate and demonstrate how Butler reworks these terms. To those critics who argue that Butler's

work is too opaque and therefore intended for too narrow an audience, Lloyd argues along with Butler that this difficult language is necessary to engage with difficult ideas and the difficult thinkers whose work she seeks to redeploy.

Lloyd has written a reliable summary and explication of Butler's *oeuvre*. The real strength of this book is that Lloyd manages to clarify Butler's difficult texts and often obscure theoretical writing without giving up any critical depth. A bibliography of Butler's works is included. I would recommend this book to anyone as a thorough introduction to any and all of Butler's theoretical interventions. More experienced readers of Butler may find this book useful as a resource for contextualizing Butler's ideas in relationship to one another, to their foundational texts and political milieu, and to their critical reception.

Kristine Klement has a Master degree in Women's Studies. Currently she is a Ph.D. candidate in the Social and Political Thought Programme at York University. Her dissertation is titled "What Does a Feminist Want? Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Hysteria."

STONE SIGHTINGS

Madeline Sonik
Toronto: Inanna Publications and Education, Inc., 2008

REVIEWED BY RUTH PANOFSKY

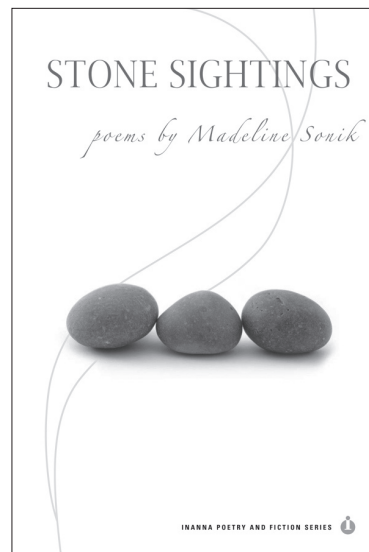
Madeline Sonik's poetry is not for the faint hearted. Sonik's world is dark and dangerous; in fact, she claims darkness as her joy and courts Uriel, the Angel of Death, whose ominous presence looms over her debut collection. The poet is not at peace and her discomfort resonates with readers who feel lacerated by

her searing vision as they admire her meticulous craft. If there is any sign of hope in *Stone Sightings*, it is tentative and fleeting.

Stone, the dominant motif of the collection, is introduced in the first poem, “Stone Age.” Here, a “daughter’s soft face / turning like a page / turning to stone” sets the tone for the volume. Sonik employs hard language and stark images to suggest absence, loss, and pain in poems about the failure of human relationships, physical and psychological trauma, and the lure of death. The familiar figures of husband, daughter, mother, father, aunt, uncle, and grandfather appear in a number of poems but they serve here to catalyze the speaker’s exploration of personal suffering. That heartbreak becomes palpable confirms Sonik’s spell-like ability to cast readers into her poetry.

The collection begins gently and moves gradually, though powerfully, toward despair. Several early poems about family lure the reader into a false sense of comfort. Here a daughter and mother dream of laying their heads in a common lap, “the soft fabric” of a thigh, and ask similar questions of one another. Too soon, however, that same daughter grows apart from her mother and no longer requires parental protection. Newly independent, the daughter feels liberated when her parents leave her at home alone. In contrast, her mother seeks “a way / to make her come back to me / like Persephone / in the Spring.” Mother acknowledges, however, that her “illicit plan”—a return of intimacy and connection—is not possible, that the future is one of separation.

The exploration of family ties deepens with poems about the speaker’s parents, each of whom is locked in a private hell: the obsessive and agoraphobic “merciless” mother who “is afraid to leave her house” and the black pin-striped suited father who “extends to the end / of a six-foot cracker,” his coffin. The speaker recalls a cheerless childhood



when neither parent offered solace or support and she felt unloved and detached from family. That she would experience a personal crisis which “began with my body / dropping out from under me” does not come as a surprise.

Sonik’s rendering of depression and mental illness is especially compelling. “eye (i)” and “eye (ii)” evoke an initial descent into depression—when the speaker “examined my body / noticed the flesh growing thin / the arms and legs smoothing / to bone, merging / to dust”—which distances her from husband and children and introduces the motif of death as an alluring way to end all need for communication. In three further poems, “Angel I,” “Angel II,” “Angel III,” death is personified and continues to have a frightening appeal for the speaker. Uriel, the seductive Angel of Death, has “lovely / eyes,” buys kiwi fruit in the local grocery store, and drinks beer in the pub. The speaker admits to having “fallen in love / with the angel of death” and wonders “How do I get him / to notice me / to want to drive me home / or even take me back to his place?”. Her desire for death, “the pain of wanting / just to lie beneath his wings,” is almost as tender as the pain she seeks to escape.

A broken marriage exacerbates the speaker’s emotional vulnerability and brings her to the brink of suicide. In

several poems that record her sense of loss and complete despair, she recognizes that “absences / leave their mark” as scars on body and mind. In the end, through the decisive, daring act of writing, she finally rejects death. The anodyne of writing—“the light poem / hot and round / dressed in sound / carrying her skirts”—facilitates healing through the acceptance of pain. Brought to a place of “reckless wonder,” the speaker marvels that she is breathing still, “drinking the precious pleasure of / orange life” and full of the music of words. That words themselves, informed by the poetic muse, can so radically alter perspective is testimony to Sonik’s affirming belief in the therapeutic work of writing and her writerly gift.

Ruth Panofsky is Professor of English at Ryerson University where she specializes in Canadian literature and culture. Her most recent publication is At Odds in the World: Essays on Jewish Canadian Women Writers. Her volume of verse, Laike and Nahum: A Poem in Two Voices, received the 2008 Helen and Stan Vine Canadian Jewish Book Award for Poetry.

MY GRANDMOTHER’S HAIR

Ann Elizabeth Carson
Toronto: Edgar Kent Publishers,
2006

REVIEWED BY MAJERO BOUMAN

Brushing: Women’s Generation

Ann Elizabeth Carson’s 2006 book *My Grandmother’s Hair* combs through the knotting of women’s generation. En/Circling the stories that live us, but that can never be given voice, this life-narrative reflects on how trauma, and strength, inhabit