

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Jen Karetnick: "Duck"

Jen Karetnick · Friday, November 5th, 2021

Jen Karetnick, "Duck," 2021 Jack Grapes Poetry Prize Finalist selected by Judge Clare MacQueen

"Duck" is a poetic narrative with its own kind of music, and with memorable language and imagery, the latter of which may not be pretty in at least one case. I also appreciate the well-chosen line breaks (in particular, Line 9) and the outcome of the poem, not to mention how it all sounds when read aloud.

— Clare MacQueen

Duck

Every time she passes the sewer, she hears subzero quacks.
It's a Muscovy, she believes, that went to jump from the gutter
to the curb but whose voice now extends from below sea level,

down in the storm drain with the lost shekels and half-melted
tranqs and blood-clotted tampons. The text of it livid with worry,
she can't enjoy the freeform jazz of her walks, imagining

nuggets of fuzzy, gamboge babies left jabbering
lakeside somewhere in the purlieu, un-sequestered,
as orphans often are for evening foxes. So she dials fire

rescue to lift the grate, which they do, obliging as agave syrup
to offer sweetness, only to find a male bullfrog, squat and jovial
in the scuzz, performing throaty jingles about his season of sex.

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