



Awe

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If the book of Revelations had been scribbled in the diary of a precocious fourteen-year-old girl, the prophecies might look something like *Awe*. Dorothea Lasky is a daring truth-teller, naming names and boldly pushing the boundaries of confession. The secrets she tells are truths we recognize in ourselves: “Be scared of yourself / The real self / Is very scary.”

Dorothea Lasky was born in St. Louis in 1978. She is the author of several chapbooks and has attended Harvard University and the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Awe Details

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From Reader Review Awe for online ebook

Betsy Wheeler says

the title says it all. this book. this book you have to read.

Cindy says

So often I feel I am trying to read the poetry of peers and loving their presence and noticing what they are doing and I like it well enough but also kind of feel like I am supposed to like those whiskers pre-dyed into jeans and I hate the whiskers pre-dyed into jeans. Dorothea gets right at the bone with these elemental, Blakean contemporary poems. Her mind can withstand the sun, one might think, and bring it's noisy bright shingles into your mind too, or else, the sheer force of her will burn up all the detritus and lies. As someone who is always looking for the subtle assertion of faith and truth, I was glad to be reminded, faith and truth are not subtle.

C.A. says

I LOVE THIS BOOK!
I LOVE IT!

Ana says

These poems are the lucite jewels dropped through a torn pocket in evacuation from a childhood apartment on another continent: bright and effortless and current at first reading, and growing almost unbearably heavy with essential meaning and a nostalgia for the infinite as their echo and color waltz into memory. They're as immediate as snapshots & longed-for as the happy faces of the lost in those snapshots. Snap them up and don't lose them.

Cate says

I can be fairly jealous when I read books by poets my own age whose work is fantastic. Maybe this makes me a bad person. But in Ms. Lasky's case, I was completely won over, and any feelings of "I want to be you" turned into, "I want to hang out with you." She's got humor and is completely guileless. It's wonderful. Plus, I think she's at least 6 months older than me...

Amy says

Gorgeous poems that locate awe in the every day, that present stingingly true observations about love and, particularly, the peculiar power of female friendships, poems saturated with muscular imagery and starring birds, angels, the sun, and the color red. A poetry book so fleshy you could suggest it to die-hard prose readers and expect them to fare well, from an interesting and complicated mind.

Um, is it obvious that I loved it?

Ok, good. Please to read it.

Ellie says

Basically, I want to make out with this book. I won't tell you that I have because that never happened, but I can't say that I haven't thought about it (unless I wanted to lie, then I could say that all I wanted).

I'll write a "real" review later, but here's a quickie: I love the mix of colloquial tone with elevated language, and even throwbacks like "O" and "!" which, Dottie, I usually can't stand. But you get away with it. I don't even think Thomas Lux gets away with it all the time and he's Thomas Lux.

But you're Dorothea Lasky, and you do. Because I said so and so did Wave Books.

There are also these wham-bam-hit-you-in-the-face-because-they-came-out-of-nowhere images. And they're good ones. Really good. And I like that. It makes me want to put a deflated balloon over a child's mouth. Some poems can seem really fun and playful and then come screeching into a really deep and powerful ending (and not in a cheesy way, in a SERIOUSLY AMAZING way). It makes my ribcage dance with glee.

Melissa says

This book is clever, associative, imaginative, surreal. But there's something so informal, so off the cuff about it. I can't say it's not emotive but it's guarded too, and I can see the strengths of this poetry but somehow it's not for me.

Julia says

Dottie's reading at the Writers House on Jan. 17 will soon be on PennSound...it left us all breathless. Check out my short review, forthcoming in Bitch magazine.

LaDonna says

Awe?

No.

Awful.

All the moving parts that make poetry so, well, *moving* have been cut away and stripped out of this work. I know Lasky is considered brilliant in some circles. She beats her readers over the head with her oh-so-

superior intellect, her oh-so-spare and clever phrasing. ("Sweet Death!")

But I'm having none of it. All the soul, all the joy, all the music has been excised, leaving behind only a brittle, stylish shell.

I'm sure those who love this style of poetry will have lists of reasons why they disagree with me, or say I just didn't get it, and they never liked me anyway. But I don't care.

As a lover of words and a reader who often goes to poetry to find the sublime, this overproduced, underwrought collection of words is nothing like actual poetry.

Eric says

Hear Dorothea Lasky read "The Process of Explication" from her book, AWE:

<http://media.sas.upenn.edu/pennsound/...>

Logan says

I really loved this book. It's definitely one of my favorites of 2007. It's a terrific book with a focus on beauty. But not the ordinary way beauty is often written. This book is more like an out-of-control, wild kind of thing. Its themes are big: God, Love, the UNIVERSE. It's a book that lives in imagination. The thing I really liked about this book is that the poetry feels HONEST. Like, it's the kind of poetry I imagine the poet herself is continually surprised by. The kind of poetry that the poet can't believe, herself, that she wrote. That's just speculation, of course, but that's how the poetry feels. And I hope only to read that kind of poetry.

This book's full of punches to the solar plexus, and that seems rare to come by in contemporary poetry.

You should probably find a copy and read it.

Juliet says

Small update added to bottom.

I am a dissenter and a blasphemer.

Just kidding, but I must diverge from the general consensus that seems to have surrounded this book in a buzzing, glowing bubble.

I'm not done with it yet, but so far I am only giving it 2 3/4 stars.

I do appreciate the risk taken by offering a collection that is a significant stylistic departure from a lot of

contemporary poetry these days. However, this style is not my style and doesn't really resonate for me.

It certainly does seem to have resonated for many other readers. I have heard a lot of praise for how refreshing it is. I have heard a lot of laudatory remarks about how honest it is.

I am not sure what makes this book strike people as being more honest than any number of other books. Is it the relatively pared down style, the relatively straightforward usage of language that does not rely heavily upon figures of speech or even very specific imagery, for that matter?

In one poem, the speaker states,

"There is shit on my hands
When I have been playing around with specifics.

Love your lover. You are a lover."

Well, I like specifics--and I don't relate to this poetry's seeming disdain for artifice or complexity. This poetry seems to regard artifice and complexity as liars and unnecessary clutter, but I do not agree. I do not think that weeding out figures of speech or winnowing things down to simple statements is necessarily a more honest approach or that it necessarily comes closer to the truth--or at least certainly not everyone's truth. It is just another approach, just another style.

Perhaps this poetry is trying to get down to the essence of things--but statements like 'Love your lover. You are a lover.' do not strike me as particularly enlightening epiphanies or summations (maybe they're not meant to be; maybe they're meant to be more like small celebrations). Others may disagree and they are welcome to.

I think that there are many different kinds of honesty, truth, verisimilitude, authenticity, and suchlike. This poetry may well be authentic in its own way and by its own standards and by its own logic, but it not THE truth. It is A truth.

I think that 'AWE' is an apt title for this book, because it seems to convey a certain tone of child-like wonder and perhaps that comes across as quite refreshing to some readers. To me, it often comes across as strangely overly earnest and sometimes simplistic which isn't necessarily a bad thing, but...

I especially don't relate to the repeated references to 'soul' and 'spirit' and 'God'. Frankly, I really dislike the words 'soul' and 'spirit'. They don't mean anything to me or even evoke much of anything for me. Of course, every reader is going to bring her own interpretations to poetry and I have no problem with ambiguity or certain kinds of abstraction, but those words strike me as so abstract as to be almost meaningless, unless one is coming from a certain sort of Christian or spiritual background, which I am not. This poetry probably thinks that I am spiritually bankrupt.

The logic of this poetry makes me feel like I am being unaccepting by not being willing to lovingly embrace words like 'soul' and 'spirit'. The logic of this poetry seems to be seeking to purify. It makes me feel like I'm standing in line to receive some holy sacrament, except that I don't believe in God and so I don't know what soul and spirit are supposed to mean to me.

I remember when I was reading 'The Artist's Way', which made repeated reference to God, but also suggested that if one did not believe in God in a religious sense, then she could feel free to substitute the

acronym 'Good Orderly Direction'. Ick.

Maybe I cannot embrace this book because I am conflicted, convoluted, contradictory, and tainted rather than pure and furthermore, I am not seeking to purify. I am not seeking to distill things down to their essences; I would rather cull countless weird artifact after weird artifact and explore irreconcilable facets.

I like layers. I like gradations. This poetry seems to be a little more about black & white dichotomies and I don't like to view things that way.

Things are always filtered through many other things, but filtering things does not always make them more basic and elemental. Sometimes it makes them more complex and difficult to navigate.

There are certain poems I like. So far my favorite has been "Ten Lives in Mental Illness" and hopefully I will encounter some others that work better for me.

Finished it--and I still feel pretty much the same as noted above.

Certainly, there were some pieces I liked and some lines I liked, but overall it was a little too swept up into the breezy spirits of bluebirds and such.

I tend to like specific lines like, 'In your head is the smallest lion that has ever lived'.

I tend to dislike the sweeping proclamations about love and soul and spirit and the great vision of art.

I tend to dislike when poetic speakers seem to be presenting themselves as some sort of visionary.

I like to visualize and be provoked and respond to what's been evoked--but I don't so much like to ponder one person's grand and overzealous notions about the state of things.

Carrie says

What everyone else said!

Matt Walker says

Still reading. But it's really, really, really good, and you should really, really, really buy it.
