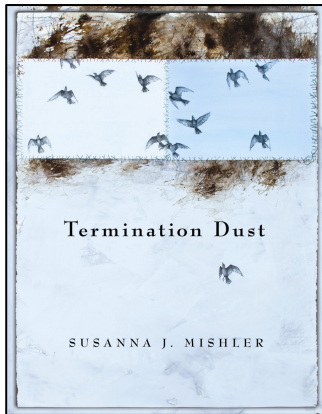




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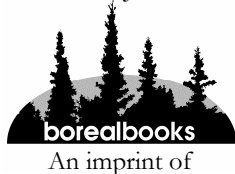


Termination Dust

Poetry by Susanna J. Mishler
ISBN 978-1-59709-970-7
Binding: Tradepaper
Size: 7 x 9; Pages: 104
Price: US \$18.95
Pub Date: May 1, 2014



Susanna J. Mishler



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Susanna J. Mishler “pays meticulous attention to the elements of a ravishing, damaged, stern-but-fragile world; she uncovers real beauty in the linkages. And makes real beauty too” (Linda Gregerson).

Termination Dust, the first high-altitude snowfall, marks the end of summer in Alaska. Rooted in the seasons and sense of place, the poems in this collection employ image-driven lyric and dreamlike narrative to grapple with questions of death and belonging. A strange romance between inner and outer landscapes emerges from what increasingly seem like the prayers of an atheist. A tree becomes “a vascular connection / between kingdoms,” and the human eye “a hole / hungry for small beauties.” Full of vivid animal, human, and ghostly encounters, the poems in *Termination Dust* are a kind of spiritual notebook for the unbeliever, forging their way to an earthbound grace.

Praise for *Termination Dust*

“In the high latitudes where Susanna J. Mishler has trained her eye and temperament, sunlight is precious and absolute. Its winter absence, its summer return, the very increments of solstice and equinox are far more sharply drawn than in our milder, vaguer climates. We feel its northern brilliance in her every line. In one of the poems in this magical volume, ‘A welder’s / hammer strikes on slag and uncovers / a bright new seam,’ which might serve very well as a figure for Mishler’s own poetic achievement. She works with a bold instrument; she pays meticulous attention to the elements of a ravishing, damaged, stern-but-fragile world; she uncovers real beauty in the linkages. And makes real beauty too.”

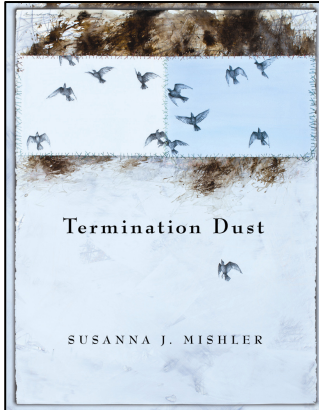
—Linda Gregerson

“It’s easy to forget that gentleness is its own form of brilliance, but this lesson abounds in Susanna J. Mishler’s welcome debut. Well, ‘lesson’ is too rigid a word. In *Termination Dust*, we return to the poetic line as that unit that takes measure of the human heart even as it reaches into the margin’s icy blank. This lyric measure, this ethic of Mishler’s line, doesn’t treat of the human condition as if it is symptomatic of error and in need of cure. It celebrates the mild fever her poetry also causes—a heat that eases thought and opens it so that thought again becomes feeling’s necessary home. Mishler’s poems, each one of them in their fine craft, do this work: her lines capture those moments we have let go astray—somehow like a child who is lost without knowing he is lost—and coaxes them back into meaning. It is subtle work, often humorous, always necessary, this reminder—every line’s bright and gentle hint, that it matters, all of it, life and those living it.”

—Dan Beachy-Quick

Biographical Note

Susanna J. Mishler’s poems have appeared in numerous journals, such as *The Iowa Review*, *Mid-American Review*, and *Kenyon Review Online*. She lives in Anchorage, Alaska.



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More Praise for *Termination Dust*

“Susanna J. Mishler’s *Termination Dust* is a travelogue that maps, in fine lyric poetry, the broad American frontier—from the banded geckos and big skies of the Southwest to the migrating caribou herds and ice fields of Alaska. Mishler writes with an explorer’s intrepid curiosity and a scientist’s mind for measurement and precision. Yet when she notes that the borracho tree ‘makes noises that cannot be explained / by rasping leaves,’ she reveals her truest destination: not understanding but awe. I admire so much this new poet’s range: tactile (‘Night stretches over us like plum skin’), connective, adept, and capable of the great gift, sympathy: ‘Teach me to be indistinguishable / from what I touch.’”

—David Baker

From *Termination Dust*

Boreal

We each became lost here as children. You,
one September. You, the smell of pitch,
the elbowed stalks of grass poking through snow.

Some nights I unfolded the attic stairs
and sat under a light, opening boxes,
then carried them to the kitchen. I studied

our parents’ faces. Once, Mom sat
on the orange kitchen carpet as if
she’d fallen there, by your boxes. “You ought to,”

she said, “fill the wood box,”
looking away. Our baby pictures are so
similar, not even she can guess.

I lifted the ax and searched the wood line
for lynx, for moose, for any nodding branch.
I was convinced you would speak.

Did you ever see the orchids here,
the heavy pink and yellow on thin stalks?
I press my ear to dirt each June, lie flat

to look inside their secret, spotted throats.
Our parents walked together on that trail
behind the shed — a loose, unmarked seam.

Imagine how Dad stood between the trunks that day:
a tin in one hand, the other reaching
to help Mom over fallen trees.