



On the Spectrum of Possible Deaths

Lucia Perillo

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Honored as one of the "100 Notable Books of 2012" by *The New York Times Book Review*"The poems in *On the Spectrum of Possible Deaths* are taut, lucid, lyric, filled with complex emotional reflection while avoiding the usual difficulties of highbrow poetry."—*New York Times Book Review*

"Perillo has long lived with, and written about, her struggle with debilitating multiple sclerosis. Her bracing sixth book of poems, published concurrently with her debut story collection, takes an unflinching, though not unsmiling, look at mortality. Perillo has a penchant for dark humor, for jokes that stick."—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

"Perillo's poetic persona is funny, tough, bold, smart, and righteous. A spellbinding storyteller and a poet who makes the demands of the form seem as natural as a handshake, she pulls readers into the beat and whirl of her slyly devastating descriptions."—*Booklist*

"Whoever told you poetry isn't for everyone hasn't read Lucia Perillo. She writes accessible, often funny poems that border on the profane."—*Time Out New York*

"Lucia Perillo's much lauded writing has been consistently fine—with its deep, fearless intelligence; its dark and delicious wit; its skillful lyricism; and its refreshingly cool but no less embracing humanity." —Open Books: A Poem Emporium

The poetry of Lucia Perillo is fierce, tragicomic, and contrarian, with subjects ranging from coyotes and Scotch broom to local elections and family history. Formally braided, Perillo gathers strands of the mythic and mundane, of media and daily life, as she faces the treachery of illness and draws readers into poems rich in image and story. *When you spend many hours alone in a room you have more than the usual chances to disgust yourself—this is the problem of the body, not that it is mortal but that it is mortifying. When we were young they taught us do not touch it, but who can keep from touching it, from scratching off the juicy scab? Today I bit a thick hangnail and thought of Schneebaum, who walked four days into the jungle and stayed for the kindness of the tribe—who would have thought that cannibals would be so tender?*

Lucia Perillo's *Inseminating the Elephant* (Copper Canyon Press, 2009) was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and received the Bobbitt award from the Library of Congress. She lives in Seattle, Washington.

On the Spectrum of Possible Deaths Details

Date : Published May 29th 2012 by Copper Canyon Press (first published April 10th 2012)

ISBN : 9781556593970

Author : Lucia Perillo

Format : Hardcover 96 pages

Genre : Poetry, Academic, School

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From Reader Review On the Spectrum of Possible Deaths for online ebook

Norm Jenson says

Poetry

Lucia's poems answer the question, why poetry. Thirteen more words required 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13.

Josephine Ensign says

Very sad to hear of Lucia Perillo's recent death after a long struggle with MS. I've read and re-read many of the poems in this collection of her work and have loved them for the past few years. I have yet to read any of her other books but now plan to do so.

Scribd says

Although Lucia Perillo's sixth collection of poems offers little comfort to the optimistic, if you've ever been crippled by choice in a department store or experienced an existential crisis reading the comments section of a website, there is some catharsis to be found in these pages. These poems perfectly capture the pervasive unease of life under late capitalism. In "My Father Kept the TV On," she laments the "...green republic where the pilgrims came to land!" and proclaims, "If I'm going to choose my nostalgia it is a no-brainer/that I'm going to side with books, with the days/before the lithium-ion battery..."

Perillo imagines suburban denizens "swaying to the music of cash registers in the distance" and shares the sensation of manufactured majesty induced by a visit to a home improvement superstore: "You know/you should feel like Walt Whitman, celebrating/everything, but instead you feel like Pope Julius II/commanding Michelangelo to carve forty statues for his tomb."

In these poems, the Earth, however neglected, still manages to be both beautiful and terrifying, "glowing so lit-up'dly" from space where one cannot see the junk that fills our oceans and our homes, where far below we are "Queasy from our spinning but still holding on,/with no idea we are so brightly shining."

Taffnerd says

If you have even a passing interest in poetry, try Lucia Perillo; she is warm and funny and smart and sometimes I have to close the book and my eyes and just breathe for a minute before I go back in and reread.

Peggy says

I've admitted this before...I usually order poetry books to look for single poems to share as prompts. Every once in a while (Pitch by Todd Boss) a collection comes along that I know I will have to read every single poem in order. Since I'd just finished reading Perillo's short stories (Happiness is a Chemical in the Brain) my expectations were high. And completely met. Perillo's way of looking at the world fascinates me. I can always understand at least one theme in each poem, additional strands are wasted on me. In one poem I had to look up the words samara, annealed and phloem. (But I loved it even before I understood it even halfway more). Even as I had the book in my hands I read that it had just received a Washington Book Award for poetry. I held it even tighter (and didn't even return it to the library on time). Blending biology, imagery and humor Perillo transform the natural world, *transformed now into a seed with a wing, like the one I wore on the tip of my nose/back when I was green.* (from Samara).

Denise says

I don't read much poetry, I'll admit, so take this review with a grain of salt.

That being said, I did like it--there were some beautiful turns of phrase, as one would expect; but there weren't as many "gold nuggets of English language" post-its in the book when I finished it as I would have expected there to be.

bananya says

I will re-read this book of poems often; much like Einstein's Dreams, The Captain's Verses or Letters to A Young Poet. I LOVE LOVE LOVE the voice - both sharply funny and achingly poignant. It was meant for me!

Patti K says

This new collection of poetry is stunning. Her last book was a finalist for the Pulitzer! She has a fierce wit and sense of humor. Her ranging interests and keen eye provide exquisite portraits of the natural and ordinary world. Perillo makes oblique references to the fact that she has MS and deals with this devastating illness as best she can. I recommend.

Isobel says

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Rebekah says

"I don't know how many births it takes to get reborn as not the flower but the scent."

For the weirder pieces in here that left me scratching my head, they're all worth soldiering through for lines like these. Unexpected things of beauty that emerge unexpectedly and kind of sucker punch you at the same time.

Philip says

Lucia work is a given favorite for me. However, this new collection really plucked at me in about 17.625 places. You know when you read a poem that speaks to you and you just are in awe and you ask yourself how that poet made that move, or created that shape? When I read this, 5 times in the last 3 weeks, I was in awe and in a place of cohabitation with her poems, but I never needed to ask How. I just kept going back for the resonance, without question.

Amy says

I've been reading Perillo since *Dangerous Life*. Her signature humor, specificity, natural/biological subject matter, and storytelling are all present in this volume just as they were in her earlier books. I am partial to the poems in which her father makes an appearance (*My Father Kept the TV On*, *300D*, *Matins*), but my favorite poem in this collection is *Wild Birds Unlimited* for its humor and instruction. My favorite metaphor? The wonderful morphing in *Maypole*, wherein the birds are church women in hats, girls on a joyride, carnies who erect the Ferris wheel, and Russian sailors. My favorite simile? The explosions from *Stargazer*:

lily number two goes off like a bottle rocket...

/

...there's one pod yet to detonate

rosamund says

Perillo's poetry loses points for me because her style often feels prosaic, and some of the poems feel too loose and too choppy. But overall, I enjoyed this collection a lot: Perillo writes about nature in an imaginative and fresh way: showing how nature exists on the boundaries of our cities, how pollution and natural beauty exist side by side, and the inevitability of decay and death. Her poems are morbid but never maudlin: death and illness are part of our lives, and exist in her poetry within the wilderness.

Steven Tomcavage says

"On the Spectrum of Possible Deaths" is an amazing book of poetry, at once both beautiful and devastating. Perillo focuses her poems on chronic illness, living with death, and her knowledge as a naturalist, but she never completely abandons emotion for science. Her poems have so many levels I'm sure I haven't plumbed the depths. Worthy of reading, re-reading, and re-reading again.

Kalima says

Perillo emerges through her poems as tough, funny, unafraid of confronting darkness. Her passion for language and words comes through clearly, along with her deep knowledge of botany and natural history. She is a poet of the mundane, and very good at it.
