

FRONT PORCH

Penguins in a Warming World

Anca Vlasopolos, *Penguins in a Warming World*

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Anca Vlasopolos's first collection of poetry, *Penguins in a Warming World*, is an accumulation of contrasting themes, which juxtapose nature and urban landscapes, history and myth, and the public and the private spheres. With the collision of these themes, issues such as motive, guilt, and consequence are brought to the surface of the work in a way that is obvious yet necessary.

Though at first glance the work may seem over-ambitious, Vlasopolos succeeds in seamlessly integrating such a broad spectrum of concepts. What helps to link the poems' content is the sparse use of punctuation throughout the book. The poems' lines seem to act in place of punctuation; longer lines slow a piece down while shorter lines propel another. Neither of these techniques requires the reader to come to a complete stop within a piece. This lack of punctuation creates a sense of urgency and visual fluidity within and between poems, guiding the reader to make his or her own connections without feeling forced, as in "Quake": "why / pursue me / after these bone-sucking / winters / this agony / of willful forgetting / that turned my flesh to bark / why keep / knocking / unrelenting / at this / amnesiac / heart." Furthermore, Vlasopolos's use of the narrative form and concrete images manages to ground both the sporadic punctuation and broad themes so her intricate exploration of violence, beauty, desperation and hope is not lost but is, rather, absorbed. *Penguins in a Warming World* acts as witness to today's apathetic, power-hungry culture and should not go unread.

—Billie Bernard