



Like a Sea (Iowa Poetry Prize)

Samuel Amadon

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Drawing equally from Wallace Stevens, Gertrude Stein, John Berryman, and Robert Frost, Samuel Amadon's award-winning *Like a Sea* is a collection of poems where personality is foregrounded and speech is both bizarre and familiar. Central to this weirdly talky work is "Each H," a sequence of eleven monologues and dialogues wherein an unknown number of speakers examine their collective and singular identities while simultaneously distorting them. From a sequence of pared-down sonnets to a more traditional lyric to a procedural collage inspired by J. D. Salinger, Ezra Pound, Robert Lowell, Walter Benjamin, Jane Kenyon, Joris-Karl Huysmans, Primo Levi, Eugenio Montale, and Edwin Arlington Robinson, *Like a Sea* is a book of significant variation and originality.

Amadon's electric collection begins with the line "I could not sound like anyone but me," and through a wide range of forms and styles and voices he tests the true limits of that statement. The image of a half-abandoned Hartford, Connecticut, remains in the background of these poems, casting a tone of brokenness and haplessness. Ultimately Amadon's poems present the confusion and fear of the current moment, of Stevens's "river that flows nowhere, like a sea," equally alongside its joyful ridiculousness and possibility. Rather than create worlds, they point out what a strange world already exists.



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