

Susanna J Mishler's *Termination Dust* (Boreal Books, 2014) opens with the aggressive image of "[barred] teeth in recognition." This book, comprised of five parts, is a testament to the difficult journey of self-discovery through exposure, ferocity, and survival.

With skin, skulls, and literal and metaphorical sutures, Mishler reveals harsh realities with an air of candor and clarity. Her use of natural imagery and her layered lyrical storytelling creates a poetic landscape that invites the reader to reassess identity, "having a new map/ of ourselves." This work romanticizes the notion that there are somehow blueprints for ourselves and this world.

In these poems, Mishler's speaker contemplates our need for guidance as she recounts being lost children and navigates having a parallel self in a parallel universe. A tribute to memory and fragment, forgiveness, and the body, this work pushes readers to grasp there are multiple perspectives, and that both light and dark, masculine and feminine, are not only conflicting and "cross-wired" but are also working together as integral parts of our perception. In the poem "Northern July," she writes: "We're pretty because we forgot how light / leaves us—rather, we almost forgive/ the darkness that come loping after."

Mishler's speaker attempts to decipher boundaries between worlds and living beings, even asking the Geckos on the ceiling to "Teach me to be indistinguishable/ from what I touch."

Sonically smart and lyrically tight, the greatest success of this work is making things visible, even though "Disguise/ is the best defense against trespass." There is comfort in Mishler's revelations, in their honesty, and in their ability to cross into what feels like deeply personal terrain. Despite all of our masks, struggles, and best defenses, and despite the arresting tone of the opening poem, Mishler ultimately reminds us that as humans, "we are insufferably soft."

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Review by Sarah Marcus (February 2015)