



The Trauma Mantras: A Memoir in Prose Poems

Adrie Kusserow

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Adrie Kusserow's *The Trauma Mantras* is a transformational poetic memoir, weaving the personal experiences of refugees and orphans with themes of life, death, the grimness of social media, capitalism, and Western historical guilt.

Within the book, the constant clashing and intermingling of Western and Eastern ideas leaves gut punches of pain, loss, and the search for dharma in a world that isn't always kind. Moving from North and East Africa to South Asia and North America, the book includes accounts of the Lost Boys and Girls of Yei, revered dangerous monks, and family friends who cure themselves without modern Western medicine.

Each entry contains new surprises: questioning intentions, the unwavering guilt of privilege, cultural wars, and a battle of the mind and body. There is a refugee looking for genuine human connection with a polite flight attendant, a white American nursing her child in a Sudanese refugee camp, men kickbox-training miles away from war, and a girl using Google as her favorite drug. Everywhere, the imagery pulls attention in and invites engagement; it is gentle, insightful, and at times disturbing, even horrific. Lines are filled with descriptions of nature, as with the sounds of cicadas and the feeling of bright paint. There are also descriptions of how the English language is "noun heavy," creating further separations between the mind and body—and between humanity and nature within Western culture. Different dialects, sayings from Kusserow's mother, and the sounds of war flesh the book out further.

The Trauma Mantras is an insightful lyrical memoir, featuring stories within stories and critiquing Western historical guilt as human beings try to live with different truths at the same time.

LEANNE GALVAN (January / February 2024)

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