May 6 BOOK

REVIEWS / Gellar



Fuhrer

Studies / Erik

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There is something indelible about the impact popular culture has upon each person. Not every impression is the same, and personal tastes may vary. There can

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also be a collective generational memory that shapes our identity. One of the seminal figures of 1900s and early 2000s cinema and pop culture that Erik Fuhrer explores in their latest full-length poetry collection is none other than

Sarah Michelle Gellar. Gellar Studies, released by Spuyten Duyvil (https://www.spuytenduyvil.net/gellar-studies.html), explores the connectionbetween identity and film. In many ways, the included 18 long-form poems can be considered odes to Gellar. Fuhrer's poems are inspired directly by Gellar or one of the many characters she's portrayed. For example, one poem entitled "Cruel and Dangerous" is after Gellar's character Kathryn Murteuil from Cruel Intentions (1999), whereas another called "For Those Whose Horror was Locked Inside" is after Gellar. As much as the collection examines the parasocial relationship between Gellar and narrator of each poem, it admirably doesn't fall into hagiography. Rather, Fuhrer

experience and questions of identity, belonging, and coming to terms with childhood abuse. Readers expecting lighthearted verse about the Gen X actor should look elsewhere. The poems are full of raw emotion, undiluted by sentimentality. And while they often speak painful truths, there is much beauty to be found in the sparse word

uses Gellar and her character personas as a mirror to expose and interpret personal

"So Many Names" contains such a dichotomy: "I have / thought / about / changing / my name / because / my body / does not / scrub / clean. We are / both / stuck / in hallways / of flesh / that remind / us that / we are / not / who we / want / to be." Similarly, "To New Water", features the following sentiment: "You can't expire / if

choice and short lines that populate stanzas.

that effectively add weight to each line.

you are / part of the / universe. You / are forever / crowned." Lines like these ache for acknowledgement and empathy. And while other lines on the surface may seem almost cliché or of want for more concrete imagery—such as

sentiments. The reason why these lines carry such emotion is because on a

"the world / is so much / more beautiful / because you / have been / in it" from "I am Waiting for You"—the emotion rings true for any reader wishing to relate to such

structural level Fuhrer incorporates poetic devices like alliteration and enjambment

Granted, some readers may be offput by some of the structural and compositional choices Fuhrer makes. Clipped lines, containing words of one-to-five syllables at most, that are broken up by the aforementioned enjambment might irk some readers who are more used to formal poetry. However, Fuhrer appears to have a strong reason for these choices. In the brief acknowledgments section that precedes the table of contents, they write that the first drafts of these poems were written on their cell phone while getting coffee at the Blue Bottle. The limited width of a phone screen when composing in a notes app can be limiting in some cases, but also encourage daring choices with line breaks and enjambment. Fuhrer's poems are written in free verse. The line length also allow them to focus on which images or words will make the most impact per line. In addition, the short lines create a steady

Readers who identify as queer will likely reap the most benefits from *Gellar Studies*. Often times throughout the collection, the line between speaker and poet become blurred, allowing ethos and pathos to further move readers. Fuhrer weaves thematic threads of queer identity from the opening poem, entitled "My Body Lies Over the Ocean." The closing lines of the poem made me weep: "We/ can baptize/ ourselves with the new / blood. The blood / we chose. Not / the blood we / we given." As the speaker writes in other poems about being bullied in school or alternately embodying the scream queen inside them, the call for freedom of personal

expression rings true. For we are not the restrictive traditions that came before us, nor the bruised flesh that encases us, but rather the self-identifying phoenix that bursts forth from those ashes. As Fuhrer writes in "The Language of Eyes": "I know /

rhythm, as the words roll down the page; this created rhythm often emulates the brisk pacing of spoken slam poetry as the stanzas build their emotional intensity.

what it means / to remember / the ghost / inside and I / know / what it means / to heal." We may forget how to love our bodies sometimes, but that doesn't mean we should ever stop. Sean Woodard is an English PhD candidate at University of Texas at Arlington. He also serves as Assistant Editor for Global Insight: A Journal of Critical Human Science and Culture (https://www.uta.edu/academics/schoolscolleges/liberal-arts/departments/mcdowell-center/global-insight) and Film Editor

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criticism, and other writing have been featured in Los Angeles Review of Books (https://lareviewofbooks.org/contributor/sean-woodard/), PLNU's Viewpoint $(https://viewpoint.pointloma.edu/author/swoodard/),\ miniMAG$ (https://minimag.space/), Hush Lit: A Journal of Noise (https://www.hushlit.com/seanwoodard), Screenshot Lit (https://www.screenshot lit.com/recent-issues/blooming-bud-by-sean-wood ard),Black Poppy Review (https://blackpoppyreview.blogspot.com/2022/04/licrish-bysean-woodard.html), South Broadway Ghost Society (https://soboghoso.org/2021/07/16/dingle-bay-summer-2012-sean-summer-201woodard/), NonBinary Review, Horrorbuzz (https://horrorbuzz.com/author/seanwoodard/), Cultured Vultures (https://culturedvultures.com/author/seanwoodard/), and Los Angeles Magazine (https://www.lamag.com/author/seanwoodard/), among other publications. Book Reviews (/2017-posts/tag/Book+Reviews)

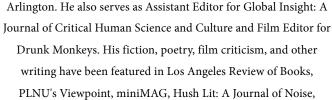
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