

Search



Paper, saddle-stitch: 20 pages

Publisher: Crisis Chronicles Press (2012)

Language: English

\$5.00

Available at [Crisis Chronicles Press](#)

Review by [April Michelle Bratten](#)

I really enjoyed reading *White Vases* today, the latest chapbook from John Swain. As an editor and an avid reader, Swain's poetry was a wonderful departure from my usual pile of reading material. I decided this afternoon that the reason I have followed his work over the past year or two, isn't simply because the work is great (which it definitely is,) but because Swain writes unlike any other poet out there right now.

As I flipped through *White Vases*, I found myself trying to place my finger on what exactly it is about Swain that makes him so different. After some thought, I believe I have finally found the answer, or at least an answer that satisfied me. This is complex stuff, kids! Swain's work touches on several genres of writing at once. The added bonus is with his brevity he also manages to compose multiple layers of depth. His work is complex, but not so complex that it alienates the reader. If anything, it draws the reader in more. I feel as though, depending on my mood, I could revisit a Swain poem and be led in a totally different direction from the last time I read it.

The work in *White Vases* is intelligent, emotional, and nature motivated, however, I would be remiss to put any labels on Swain's work, especially that of "nature poet." His work is, in fact, very human and relatable:

*And then God becomes our entire thought
just as smoke defies the leaf*

HOME NOMINATIONS ABOUT SUBMIT

ARCHIVES SUPPORT

Search

*Smoke from your mouth
wrote a psalm
as I plea for release
and endless captivity
in this room
where you bare yourself
holy in darkness,
we knotted like thorn
forehead to forehead
over our bent arms.*

I can't wait to read what he comes up with next.

John Swain lives in Louisville, Kentucky. His previous chapbooks include: *Prominences and Sinking of the Cloth* (Flutter Press); *Set Apart Before the World Was Made* (Calliope Nerve Media); *The Feathered Masks and Burnt Palmistry* (Full of Crow); *Handing the Cask* (erbacce press); and *Fragments of Calendars* (Thunder Clap Press). His work has received nominations for the Pushcart Prize, Best of the Net, and Best of the Web.

[HOME](#) [NOMINATIONS](#) [ABOUT](#) [SUBMIT](#)

[ARCHIVES](#) [SUPPORT](#)

Search



© 2008 - 2020 Up the Staircase Quarterly