

“Tree,” that “Sometimes you make up history, lacking facts, / eye-witness. / History is, after all, the version you walk with now” may find themselves disappointed.

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THERE ARE NO SOLID GOLD DANCERS ANYMORE

Adrienne Weiss
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**REVIEWED BY TIFFANY
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Adrienne Weiss does not simply write poetry; she builds poems. The density of her pieces immediately impacts the reader as s/he wades through Weiss’s skillful use of colourful language and copious references to popular culture. The overwhelming sense of abundance that is crammed into Weiss’s fairly slim collection sets the stage for her exploration of capital/consumer culture; as such *There are No Solid Gold Dancers Anymore* presents itself as a microcosm for the very social climate that Weiss critiques, thus transforming the reader into a microcosm for the capitalistic consumer, making him/her keenly aware of the media and product bombardment s/he is subjected to during daily life. Weiss’s collection, however, does not simply make a manic consumer out of its reader. Rather, the very density of her pieces forces a response opposite to passive media baths we endure ev-

ery day. The longer lines and generally lengthy pieces encourage, if not force, a slower reading pace and greater alertness. Each reference to popular culture (e.g. songs, movies, plays, celebrities etc.) draws on the reader’s own knowledge of and/or exposure to the referenced material, thus creating a deeper connection between reader and the text than necessarily prevalent in everyday media encounters. Furthermore, the abundance of references, overwhelming as they may be, and the reader’s potential ability to make personal references to many, increase the collection’s ability to highlight the degree of media we consume every day.

But to what effect? Weiss’s stylistic approach to her subject aptly foundations her varied but interconnected themes as they relate to consumer society’s values and ideals and the media’s role in establishing and promoting such ideals, as well as an idealistic vision of continual, social progression. More importantly, Weiss further focuses her reader’s attention around her major theme by addressing smaller issues that consumeristic social climate creates. “Once Upon a Time” and the collection of poems in the section entitled *Production 1960*, demonstrate how fairytales and the film industry impose unrealistic and limiting ideals of beauty and self. Even more focused, Weiss pays special attention to the effects of the media’s power to control gender perceptions; in “The Way You Look on Love”, the speaker struggles “to shun the books, / spent terminologies and years of obsessive scrutiny” that consumed Princess Diana’s life and painted her as a fickle young adventurer.

Weiss’s poems reveal how we often become what we consume, holding the same idealized standards and expectations that our consumer-based culture feeds us. The more we passively consume the ideas that our media and product based culture readily offers,

the more they consume our selfhood and ideals. What is left, as “Heads or Tails” highlights, is only a wrapper of ourselves. Just as “Leftover Doritos and Twizzlers wrappers / archive” the trip and act as “archival debris of our time together,” so does the history of our consumption and the “trash” we leave behind—whether a figurative economical and socio-political climate or a more literal and material, environmental pollution—become an archive of our capitalist culture and ourselves. Consumer culture encourages sameness and uniformity, it literally consumes us, leaving a trace of society and humanity rather than solid gold dancers of striking differences and individuality. As Weiss’s speaker sarcastically notes, “technology will save us all, make us all the goddamn same.”

Additional to Weiss’s attentive, relevant, and effective critique of the culture we live in, *There Are No Solid Gold Dancers Anymore* showcases the work of a finely tuned poem. Weiss holds a firm grip over the language she deploys and her attention to detail ensures the strength of her grip; her capacity to convincingly embody not just one but many voices is a subtle but powerful skill. As a result, Weiss smashes any lingering ideas about a “female voice” or “female themes” in poetry. Furthermore, she brings life and relevance into a genre often left by the wayside and reminds us of poetry’s capacity to inspire and encourage fresh perspectives on the social norms we live with.

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