

Kristina Marie Darling

Author Press Kit

Brushes with

If Wolfgang Iser believed that within the gaps of a text lies meaning that the reader must create, then Darling's collection *Brushes With* is the film negative composed of those gaps. Therein lies the creative energy and genius of Darling's work. As we enter the text, we begin to construct a narrative from interstices of information that comes in the form of gemlike footnote poems. These footnotes are deliciously loaded and sensual—whispers from a friend who just can't tell you the whole story. The footnotes provide the type of glimpse we get into any relationship—spotted, occasional, fragmented, flawed. Darling is a prolific writer (a word rarely applied to a poet so young), a writer who has a multitude of material and approaches to her intelligent vision of what poetry can also be. She surprises us and proves time and again to be the real thing. Darling is a writer to watch.

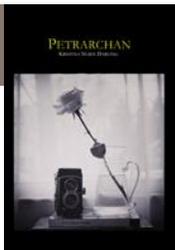


—Andrea Witzke Slot, author of *To find a new beauty*

Petrarchan

Petrarchan is a dazzling whirlwind of broken fragments and a historically rich text, blooming with a garden of metaphors. Darling astounds in her ability to take fragments and transform them into stunning lyricism. You read, and you enter her worlds: it's a sort of hypnosis.

—*Ploughshares Magazine*



Music for another life.

A COLLABORATIVE TEXT BY

Kristina Marie Darling & Max Avi Kaplan

Press Kit

Kristina Marie Darling is the author of twenty collections of poetry and hybrid prose, which include *Von*, *Petrarchan*, and *Failure Lyric*, forthcoming from BlazeVOX Books. Her writing has been described by literary critics as “haunting,” “mesmerizing,” and “complex.” Poet and *Kenyon Review* editor Zach Savich writes that her body of work is a “singularly graceful and stunningly incisive exploration of poetic insight, vision, and transformation.” Donald Revell writes of her *Selected Poems*, “Here is a new tradition, alive in bright air.”

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continued About the Author

Within the past few years, her writing has been honored with a Yaddo residency and a Visiting Artist Fellowship from the American Academy in Rome. She has also held artist-in-residence fellowships at the Ucross Foundation, the Helene Wurlitzer Foundation, the Hambidge Center for the Arts and Sciences, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, the Vermont Studio Center, the Santa Fe Art Institute, and the Ragdale Foundation. Kristina is the recipient of international literary arts fellowships from the Hawthornden Castle Retreat for Writers (Scotland), the B.A.U. Institute (Italy), and C.A.M.A.C. (France), as well as artist grants from the Kittredge Fund and the Elizabeth George Foundation. Her work has also been recognized with the Dan Liberthson Prize from the Academy of American Poets and nominations for the PEN/Diamonstein-Spielvogel Award, the Poetry Society of America's William Carlos Williams Award, and the San Francisco State University Poetry Center Book Award.

Kristina is active as a literary critic, with reviews and essays appearing in such magazines as *The Gettysburg Review*, *The Boston Review*, *The Colorado Review*, *Pleiades: A Journal of New Writing*, and *New Letters*. Her critical projects have been supported by grants from the University of Missouri and the University at

Buffalo, as well as a Riverrun Foundation Research Fellowship to complete archival work at Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Kristina holds degrees in English Literature and American Culture Studies from Washington University, as well as an M.A. in Philosophy from the University of Missouri. She is currently working toward a Ph.D. in Poetics at S.U.N.Y.-Buffalo, where she was awarded a Presidential Fellowship.



Praise

Praise for Night Songs:

"From the very first page, *Night Songs* gives off a calculated humbleness. . . . However, these facets, the non-threatening format and alacrity, are intentional parts of Darling's strategy. They generate a seemingly placid surface, which she expertly ripples with moments of animation and irony until she begins disassembling the poems altogether. This assembly and disassembly of narrative, this diminuendo is one of the formidable accomplishments of *Night Songs*."—*Pleiades: A Journal of New Writing*.

Praise for Compendium:

"This is an interesting experiment by a writer with a genuine gift for beautiful language."—*The Colorado Review*.

"Darling has assembled a purposefully incomplete history filled with desire, mystery, music, and silence."—*The Rumpus*.

Praise for The Body is a Little Gilded Cage:

"In short: Kristina Marie Darling's *The Body is a Little Gilded Cage* is the best book that Darling has written and the best book that Gold Wake Press has produced."—*PANK Magazine*.

"This is a curious, lovely collection of bits and pieces that are so light and clear, like crystal, that the quiet act of reading is all it takes to electrify them."—*The Prose-Poem Project*.

"Darling's collection reads like an exploded novel; only the most elusive, beautiful fragments, the elegant contours, remain. The effect is of a story unearthed, the sands of unnecessary traditional structure and formality brushed away. The bones of H.D.'s story are laid bare, examined, and catalogued, giving us a glimpse into her elusive world."—*Hiram Poetry Review*.

"One of the most enjoyable and well laid

Kristina Marie Darling



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multiple voices to coexist within the same narrative space. For me, the use of typography is useful for differentiating between the various speakers, found texts, and types of rhetoric that inhabit my poems. I do believe that poems should be musical. But I'm skeptical of the belief that poetry is synonymous with a spoken voice. For me, poetry's great appeal is in the potential for dialogue between found texts, and between different types of appropriated language. I've found that typography in my own poetry helps to facilitate this dialogue.

JB: Some of your poems "take liberties with" the letters of H.D., those written to Richard Aldington and to Freud during H.D.'s psychoanalysis. I don't get the sense many people read H.D. these days. Why should they – not just her letters but her poetry?

KMD: I definitely agree that H.D. isn't as widely read as some of her contemporaries. This is a mystery to me, since H.D.'s work reflects many of the aesthetic concerns that define contemporary poetry. I see her as the first truly modern poet. Works like *Sea Garden*, *Helen in Egypt*, and *Trilogy* privilege tangible details over abstraction, yet they allow these concrete images to serve as a point of entry to discussions of love, death, and history. This is definitely something that contemporary poets like Srikanth Reddy, Eric Baus, and Lisa Robertson strive for. H.D.'s work is also wonderful in its matching of form and content. *Tribute to Freud*, for instance, offers a lyric account of H.D.'s sessions with Freud. The work itself is driven by the same associative logic that one would observe in psychoanalysis. With that in mind, I think there's much to be learned from H.D.'s work in terms of craft. Her aesthetic concerns align beautifully with those of contemporary poets, myself included.

JB: I'm interested in your claim that H.D. is the "first truly modernist poet." Aside from her use of concrete imagery to enter larger human and historical discussions, what would make her modernist – and the "first" modernist? (Ezra Pound is tapping his fingers, waiting for your answer . . .)

KMD: It's definitely a controversial claim, but one that I stand behind. I say this in part because many of H.D.'s contemporaries – especially Pound and Eliot – relied heavily on irony as a means to critique tradition. For me, this represents a very destructive approach to other people's work. H.D.'s poetry seems to reflect a more

from *The American Literary Review*

An Interview



Justin Bigos: First, thank you for visiting UNT this January to read your poetry. As I was listening to you read, I had the sense that your poems might be typographically playful. And indeed, when I had your books in my hand, I saw that they are. Are you more attentive to the poem as human voice, or as aesthetic object on the page – or something in between or other?

Kristina Marie Darling: That's a great question. When I first started writing, I saw myself as a lyric poet. I definitely believed that there should be a connection between poetry and an authentic spoken voice. After reading the work of poets like C.D. Wright, Myung Mi Kim, and Kristy Bowen, I became interested in writing poems that allow

constructive relationship with the writers who came before her. The use of montage in her work places literary tradition in tension with contemporary social and artistic concerns. This seems more compatible with the way that most people conceive of Modernist writing. My favorite literary critics – Adalaide Morris, Susan Stanford Friedman, and Rachel Blau DuPlessis – think of Modernism as an increased awareness of literary community, a sense that the artist is contributing to a larger conversation. H.D.'s poetry certainly reflects this sensibility. Rather than dismantling the conversation that preceded her, as Pound and Eliot often do, H.D. tries to give it contemporary relevance.

JB: The forms your poems take are often the corner-of-the-eye stuff of literature: footnotes, appendices, glossaries, miscellany. The poems are very attractive, of course, in what is unsaid, and they invite a reader who is willing to imagine, or at least sense, what might be central versus peripheral. How did you become interested in these kinds of poetic forms?

KMD: After reading Joshua Clover's *The Totality for Kids*, Thalia Field's *Point and Line*, and Jenny Boully's *The Body: An Essay*, I was inspired by the ways these writers undermined readerly expectations. When I saw prose, footnotes, and other appropriated academic forms, I immediately expected a linear narrative. I was delighted when I found something altogether different – the wonderful associative logic that drives poetry. I became interested in creating these unusual relationships between form and content in my own work. With that said, you're absolutely right that footnotes, glossaries, and appendices invite the audience to take a more active role. I like that readers are surprised when texts make these demands, and ask them to participate in the work of the poet.

JB: Have you experimented with any appropriated forms that are non-academic? I remember I once tried to write a poem in the form of a letter from a debt collection agency. It failed miserably, but was fun to try.

KMD: That does sound like fun. For awhile I was working on a series of epistolary poems that borrowed material from my AOL inbox. The text I used was mostly from emails that said harsh things about my writing. For example, one of these messages points out that the things I write often "fail to make the gesture of a poem." Since I don't respond well to unsolicited advice, I had a great time dismantling these

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messages points out that the things I write often "fail to make the gesture of a poem." Since I don't respond well to unsolicited advice, I had a great time dismantling these critiques.

JB: Many of the poems in *The Body is a Little Gilded Cage* and *Compendium* seem to exist in a dreamy fin de siècle western Europe; Vienna is sometimes mentioned. Recurring images include green dresses, opera houses and lush parties, necklaces and jewels, garters, ribbons, taffeta, silk, and flowers. What is your attraction to this time and place? How do you think it resonates, if at all, with America in 2012?

KMD: I think there's something inherently beautiful about the fin de siècle – a time when grandeur, fragility, and loss were intricately connected. With that said, the content of my poetry is often a vehicle for me to say something else, which I hope resonates with contemporary debates about form and genre. Both *Compendium* and *The Body is a Little Gilded Cage* strive to question the categories that we impose upon language. I'm very interested in challenging the limitations that we impose upon texts on the basis of their formal qualities. For example, readers often assume that creative writing and theoretical work are separate endeavors. By pairing conventionally poetic images – green dresses, opera houses, and necklaces – with the forms of academic discourse, I hope to suggest that poets can make theoretical contributions, and vice versa.

JB: Who and what are you reading right now? And what are your current projects?

KMD: At the moment, I'm reading *My Emily Dickinson* by Susan Howe, as well a few books of poems: Lisa Robertson's *R's Boat*, Christopher Kennedy's *Ennui Prophet*, and Eric Baus's *Scared Text*. I'm also working on a verse novella, which contains an array of teacups, Zukofsky's ghost, and silent films.

JB: Very exciting. I hope Louise Brooks makes an appearance in the novella. Thanks again, Kristina.

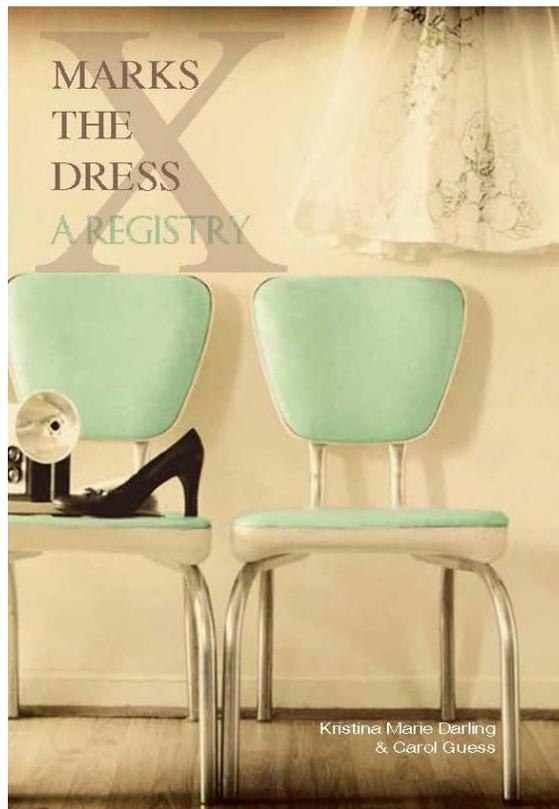
KMD: Thank you for the great questions!

Praise for *X Marks the Dress: A Registry*:

“While marriage may be taking no prisoners in this collection, it’s clear that the union of Darling and Guess was a perfect one. They produced a stunning, vivid, and emotionally visceral feminist rumination. They take tremendous formal risks in the construction of this book, and all those risks carry major, hard earned truths.”—*Pleiades: A Journal of New Writing*.

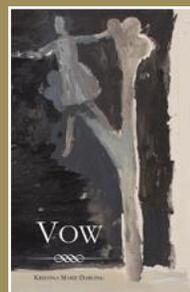
“By turns narrative and lyric, imagistic and minimalistic, *X Marks the Dress* is a collaborative tour de force of great emotional and epistemological weight.”—*Lambda Literary Review*.

“Poetry and prose have a knack, when in the right hands, for animating cultural artifacts, giving them and the people that use them a voice. Using objects as symbols of power, or evil, or as a device for the telling of a story, is as old as time. But Kristina Marie Darling and Carol Guess, in their wonderful collection *X Marks the Dress*, have shown a unique way to use everyday items as a language unto itself.”—*Bookslut*.



Praise for *Vow*:

“Vow is a compelling text, narratively and visually. While it is a retelling of a familiar story, that story is set in a dreamscape somewhere between myth and cinema, poetic language always flashing in the slipstream.”
— *Stirring: A Literary Collection*.



Praise

Praise for Melancholia (An Essay):

“Kristina Marie Darling is becoming one of the foremost practitioners of the little book, of the poetic text as miniature object, as a kind of fragmented memento charged with mystery.”—*Big Other*.

“Darling’s collections—composed of fragments, definitions, and footnotes—embody a fearless use of white space and a devotion to unfinished narratives that reach the reader like secretive whispers only partially heard... I would have never written these poems because I am too unsettled by the cracks in things; I’m always trying to tenderly create a whole landscape in my work, and large amounts of white space give me more fear and anxiety than they do pleasure. In short, I’m not brave enough to take the risks that Darling takes, and this courage is precisely what makes reading her work so dizzying and dazzling.”—*Rattle: Poetry for the 21st Century*.

“Kristina Marie Darling is one of our strongest young writers. Strong in the sense a magician is strong: not a master of stage tricks, but a worker of subtle miracles.”—*Decomp Magazine*.

Praise for The Moon & Other Inventions:

“Darling’s style is perfectly attuned to this project. Her prose is lovely, graceful, and evocative. She gives the reader just enough detail without spilling over into melodrama or too much telling. Darling is making a name for herself with these inventive collections; whenever I see her name on a book, I know it will be something new and different and enjoyable.” —*Bookslut*.

“By completing *The Moon & Other Inventions*, Darling makes the parallels between her poetry and the work and life of Joseph Cornell clear (fascinations of birds, collage, the tactile), while still maintaining an arresting artistic autonomy. But of the two, Darling displays a much clearer sense of self-confidence—a willingness to not only experiment, but to experiment over and over in the public eye, offering more poetry in the last two years than some poets do in a lifetime.” —*The Declaration*.



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