

So What, So That, by Marjorie Welish
Coffee House Press

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In December 2016, Coffee House Press published Marjorie Welish's *So What, So That*, which as a book of poetry disputes the denotation of the word "symphony" through the text's establishment of relationships between the mundane and lyrical. Welish has been recognized for her poetic prowess, with the Judith E. Wilson Visiting Poetry Fellowship of Cambridge University and Senior Fulbright Fellowship being only two of many awards she has been received.

So What, So That interjects seedlings of the speaker's daily life with musicality and weighted observances of the constitutions that dictate the trivial versus extraordinary. The state of limbo projected in the poem "Sayings" resembles the speaker's inability to harness an acceptance of the monotony of their daily life. With an overarching theme of melody dictating the length of each couplet, a balance of monosyllabic and multisyllabic words throughout the poem acts as a juxtaposition of the poem's images. An example of such precise soundwork is found within the first section of "Sayings." The speaker personifies morning and renders it capable of embodying a "shattered glass colorized expletives / Across a spreadsheet." The countering of the monosyllabic word "glass" with multisyllabic words evokes a jarring, disparate rhythm that strangely complements the text's overarching theme of melody. The use of the abstraction "expletives" also manages to instill a harmonious intersection of abstractions and concrete details, and in turn allows the reader to envision the kind of despair the speaker acknowledges when faced with their limitations. Another poem, "Aesthetic Education" inflicts an image of a suspension bridge as a reflection of the speaker's challenge to find equilibrium in a world in which young and old alike find themselves "losing...to...the noisy shade." The piece critiques the status quo of the working class, noting that true "riddle" and tranquility is sought within the "elongated green / stains" of the wilderness. The imbalance of abstraction and concrete detail within this piece effectively acts as a clear parallel to how individuals are plagued by the limitations of societal norms and provides the reader with a tone of unease that puts their motives into question.

Overall, Welish's *So What, So That* manages to blend euphony with social critique as a means of extracting passion and motivation from within the reader. This collection shares occasions of lyricism and triviality that are similar John Tynan's *Voice Lessons*. Readers with an interest in poetry that seeks to challenge social constructs would benefit from reading Welish's *So What, So That*.