

*Voice Lessons*, by John Tynan (Sagging Meniscus Press, 2015)

reviewed by Isamari Camacho

John Tynan amplifies the mundane with lyricism and reflection in his poetry collection entitled *Voice Lessons*. Published by Sagging Meniscus Press in 2015, this collection challenges commercialism and instead praises the fruitfulness of song and imagination. Tynan, a well-versed accordion player himself, utilizes knowledge that derives from both his experiences as a web developer and from his creative writing studies at the University of Arizona to create a piece that is sonically driven.

*Voice Lessons* foregrounds the element of occasion within poetically prose works to display the evolution of the speaker's appreciation for imagination as the work progresses. "Exchange of Devotion" encapsulates a moment in which the speaker buries their dog and complements the mournful event with lines of figurative language and reverence. The speaker tucks "a heap of moon / under an oval stone," mirroring the image of a dog's side and rear being pet with a cupped hand. The speaker offers "lizards and holes / fragrant with the scent of den" to their fallen companion knowing full well those were items their dog "would have loved." The integration of prose and figurative language reinvent themes of death and sadness and test the limits of lyrical poetry. "Yesterday's Geniuses" veer away from the speaker's recollections of their childhood and instead criticizes the efforts of those that have pursued business or technological studies. The speaker includes images of "windows cast an incandescent / glow" and the composition of a series of "banged-up metal." The images are listed systematically and revolve around man-made material, as if highlighting the lack of emotional impact these man-made materials have in comparison to the relationships the speaker highlights between them and their peers and them and themselves in poems like "Exchange of Devotion."

Overall, Tynan's *Voice Lessons* successfully navigates the border between prose poetry and lyricism in order to display the relevance of song in daily life. The work appears similar to the work of contemporary poet Celeste Gainey, whose collection *The Gaffer* is also composed of a series of poems foregrounding occasion in order to highlight the speaker's growth and understanding of imagination and themselves over a series of years. Readers that prefer poetic works with language and occasions that are easily accessible would enjoy *Voice Lessons*.