

I Want Something Other Than Time (Special Edition)

rev. by Adonis Borer

Lewis Freedman

Ugly Duckling Presse

Lewis Freedman is a poet that was born in England, but currently lives in the Tulsa, Oklahoma area. He received his Masters degree in Poetry from the University of Belfast and previously taught poetry at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in Oklahoma. A few of his previous publications include *Am Perhaps Yet* and *Residual Synonyms for the Name of God*. Freedman's poems evoke an avant-garde style confronting the audience's expectations of poetry's visual and auditory form.

I Want Something Other Than Time is a poetry collection in which every page begins with the title of the book. A total of 64 poems are included in this edition, as well as a folded bonus page in a black envelope in the middle of the book exclusive to the Special Edition. Poems explore themes such as self-identity, sociopolitics, and collective identity. The extra page included in this special edition includes another poem and a small typed explanation expanding on the inspiration of the formatting of the poetry collection.

This collection is entirely handwritten in red ink, stanzas and poems often curling in on themselves on the page. Freedman simultaneously utilizes large and complicated words while sprinkling in common notetaking shorthand throughout (i.e. using "b/w" for "between," "&" for "and," "b/c" for "because"). The handwritten nature of the collection creates entirely unique looks for each page; some words are dangerously close to their neighbors, final words are squeezed into the bottom-right corners of pages, some poems take several rereadings due to the way the words curve and push up to meet the top of the page.

Poems in this collection do not have titles, simply starting homogeneously with the title of the book. Each have the common connections of a questioning first-person perspective exploring their situatedness in a local or global existence. Freedman aims to bring the audience into his own personal confusion with his place in a Western society, implicitly referencing America's socioeconomic format of individualistic capitalism. The author explores the act of simultaneously wishing to be individual as well as wishing to dissipate into a collective, as well as making mentions of an activism squashed or hidden in the name of survival. Pronouns like "we" and "I" are used as nouns, describing the collective identity that the poet most often feels tethered to.

"The aim of this / writing / is to show that / I does not disappear. / Even when I disappear
I / does not disappear. / If I should achieve this / will I feel more or less isolated / in the
continuing progression / of a paralysis I can only pathologize? / It's not a mask & / the time
over which it closes, that's not it. / Not some chopped-up tension b/w / solitude &
collectivity, not that. / I disappears into / my own voice below / the confrontation with
anonymity / we might've imagined here."

Nestled in the very center of the hand-bound book is a small black envelope held by the large rubber band holding the book together. Within this envelope is an extra page that has been folded into a paper fortune teller origami shape. When opened, the paper contains a small typed explanation of the way that writers sit when reading or writing that Freedman noticed while teaching a class, and how that influenced his idea to write the book with each poem tilted and curving up. When closed back up and flattened out, a bonus poem is included, written in a spiral shape instead of the usual stanza form. The poem is unique to the Special Edition, though it continues with the same themes as the rest of the book.

Poems in this collection have varying rhythms, oscillating between calm and contemplative and panicked and rushed. Short quotes from other authors and poets can be found occasionally within Freedman's own words, highlighting the meaning of these poems in a grounded context. These quotations are sometimes the only form of grounding for the audience, as the poems often venture into dealing purely with the non-tangible, while Freedman uses an expanded vocabulary. Large and verbose language is used almost exclusively, creating an interesting flow in each poem.

The ending of the collection does not necessarily come to a concrete conclusion; the poet still questions interconnectedness, and the final poem is written more as if Freedman simply ran out of time rather than that he felt confident in an ending thought.

“A conflict in this order with the order / to arrive. It locates a point where my / fixation on the unknowable becomes a / social violence, unpardonable. / It's precisely the point where all I've / learned to do is disengage. / Page already knows we / know this is / the end.”

Despite some of the language that readers may first find unwieldy, Freedman's *I Want Something Other Than Time* offers a thoughtful and contemplative read that invites readers to re-examine their own interpersonal connections as well as connections with their physical existence.