

strict instructions not to make friends or draw attention. "Papa disappeared" years previously, but what happened to him is not too much of a revelation. The only visitor is the local gamekeeper, who drops by occasionally for sex with Mama. But everything changes with the arrival of beautiful Eden, who transforms from prospective stray to enthusiastic member of the household.

Despite the viscera, the jellied blood, peeled skins, torsos on hooks and slow-cooked muscle, all lip-lickingly described, *The Lamb* is in essence a dark fairytale about family secrets, the rites of passage of adolescence, and the regrettable tendency to neglect a child in the face of an overwhelming new passion.

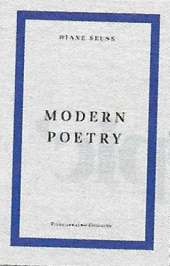
There is a nauseating specificity about what goes on the table: stock pots bubble, gelatinous fingers retain their nail polish, flesh chunks swim in creamy sauces under lids of pastry always described as "buttery". Margot retains fragmented memories of some of the strays: "I remembered pieces of them: shapes, smells, mouths, chins, noses and eyes." There is a ritual to food prep, and a rationalisation of the horror: "Promise me she was happy ... We can't eat them unless they're happy," Margot pleads.

Mama, seen in unflattering closeup through Margot's young eyes, is an ogre with yellowed teeth, yet possessed of an eerie sexual allure the child can only guess at. There are no books, no recreations, nothing but an unappeasable hunger in the house. Margot is so used to blood that her first period is as unremarkable as spilt milk. The gamekeeper is the father of Abbie, one of Margot's classmates, and as their forbidden friendship develops, Margot's deeply buried natural compassion begins to emerge. The realisation that other ways of living exist starts to break the shell of secrecy surrounding their cannibalistic lifestyle.

Though she lacks the baroque, ornamental prose style of, say, Angela Carter - one of the publisher's points of comparison, along with Daisy Johnson and Sophie Mackintosh - Lucy Rose can certainly write. She has a flair for grand Guignol and expert pacing, ratcheting up the tension as ever greater horrors are taken and flesh is sourced increasingly close to home. Margot's relationship with the kindly driver of the school bus, the only adult who takes any interest in her wellbeing, is a welcome respite from the febrile nightmare back at the house. *The Lamb* grips all the way to an unexpected denouement that is as effortless as it is eerie.

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Groundbreaking collections from Diane Seuss; a reckoning with trauma; reflections on Hungary in crisis; and love and loss. By Rebecca Tamás



Modern Poetry and Frank: Sonnets Diane Seuss

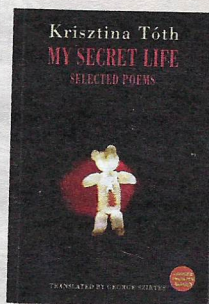
FITZCARRALDO, £12.99 EACH
One of the US's most radical and important poets has finally found a home in the UK. *Modern Poetry* traverses Seuss's uncertain youth and her discovery of literature, where, as a working-class woman, she notes that her poems are "Built on the edge of tradition, they will / rarely be anthologised". Yet despite these pressures, "Out of the spigot / streams a thirsty noncompliance. An antisong." *Frank: Sonnets* tells the racy story of Seuss's life, from a tough childhood in Michigan, through to New York, punk, addiction, motherhood, sex and death. These loose sonnets are a virtuosic journey through the vitality of poetry itself. Seuss's writing bristles with irreverent humour and wily energy, making much else in contemporary poetry seem insipid.

That Broke Into Shining Crystals Richard Scott

FABER, £12.99
Scott's formally inventive second collection reckons with trauma and its aftermath through three luminous,

uneasily beautiful sets of poems. The first uses the lapidary intensity of still-life paintings to explore the speaker's complicated vulnerability, as in *Still Life With Snail, Oyster, Spoon and Shallot Vinegar*: "I'm the oyster. Quivery ashen gill. Cold jelly mess of a boy shucked wide open. Invertebrate. Raw." The second ingeniously repurposes Andrew Marvell's *To His Coy Mistress* to render the lasting imprint of abuse. The final sequence uses the glowing splendour of crystals as a tool to look to a hard-earned future where recovery might be possible, where "There is no abyss just this / immense patience".

My Secret Life: Selected Poems
Krisztina Tóth, translated by George Szirtes
BLOODAXE, £12
Tóth is part of the generation of Hungarian writers who came of age in 1989, as the optimism of post-communism gave way to economic crisis, alienation and political viciousness. Tóth's selected poems, potentially translated by George Szirtes, communicate the regretful, atmosphere



of melancholy that permeates a damaged society: "I'm familiar with the country, I have known / its trains, its weeping, its chlorine-coloured sky". These wide-ranging, droll poems always come back to the knotty discomforts of a changing self existing within a broken world. It is, in the end, painful transformation that fuels the work: "at the edge of the forest, in rotting humus / where somebody once was buried alive, / that's where the poem begins".

Flood Jessica Mookherjee

NINE ARCHES, £11.99
This potent collection delves into loss, sexual awakening, and the power of the natural world, with a particular focus on the visceral experience of family life in all its forms. Of motherhood, Mookherjee writes: "I called you minnow, in those shambles of afterbirth / where I was played in mad shame. / I made rainbows from oil-slicked pools on the hospital / floor." She renders the complicated inheritance of migration through deeply affecting imagery and description. Her poems reach into the past, speaking to those she has lost: "I build them a place to call home, all those dead relations, / many I didn't know / I call out to them in Sanskrit, / in Mongolian, in gibberish. / One aunt I never met, strokes my hair and whispers, *only the living are lonely for the dead.*"