

Self-Storage, *Rebecca Hoogs* (*Stephen F. Austin University Press, 2013*)

Rebecca Hoogs' *Self-Storage* unit holds not just Vestal Virgins, a riddle, an autobiography of silence, and an octopus. It also contains an irrepressible sense of fun—suggesting the boundless twists and turns a multiplicitous life can take. From the evidence of this bountiful debut, Hoogs would never be satisfied by mere autobiography alone. Her many selves include Miss Scarlet—"weapon without a playing piece"—in the Billiard Room, and "Shelley's Jaw": "A piece of bone holed up in a jam jar / thinks he's not half the jaw / he used to be."

Self-Storage moves through three sections in seventy-eight pages. The first and third contain shorter, humorous poems. The second is one long poem in thirteen parts, twelve of which start "For example"—as if identity consists mostly of conjured instances, and the self exists to be made an example of.

Throughout the book, Hoogs capitalizes on concision and double-entendre to enlarge her self-referential range. This tension is sometimes wry and sometimes thrilling. So "Daphne in *As The World Turns*" begins: "I lived a pastoral existence: / meadows and mead and suitors swimsuited." Later, in "After After Song," she writes: "At heart / there's half a laugh, / and in the / half-hearted, / even less than that." Likewise, lines like "round bales / bound in white plastic like downed clouds" exhibit the exactness of her vision.

Despite this playful economy of expression, Hoogs can spin a mythic tale. There's wry appreciation for the plights of Ariadne and Persephone, yes, but Hoogs also takes a larger view in poems such as "This Myth," and "Epic Poetry." She reminds us that, while the epic can be reduced to "Love" and "Tragedy," myth is small, recurring, changing. It "is about a girl lounging naked—/ just another day in the glade—waiting / for her fifteen minutes of transformation." It lives inside us always, taunting or threatening or imploring us with metamorphoses, whether we wish for them or not:

Just this once, let's be
of mythological proportions,
the best words in the best order,
fumbling for the other's buttons.

This is, in a nutshell, what Hoogs is up to in *Self-Storage*. Like the "old woman echoing the lovely once," she updates abiding truths with the best words for our time. At the same time, she probes the vulnerabilities and foibles that complicate, and compound, identity. "We say *in sum* to summon some kind / of meaning," she writes. In *Self-Storage*, she summons it, and it comes. —Carrie Kahler

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