
POETRY | SPRING 2017

Ode to Melatonin

By Jen Karetnick

Though “in that sleep of death what dreams may come,”
it is far better than no dreams at all,
lying awake in a house pungent from
shadows, minutes jerking by like cogwheels,

the wrist of a patient with Parkinson’s,
the sick machinery of the day caught
on replay in my mind. Without your help,
I compose minor chords sung by the fans;
fraught with viral insults, my skin sweats;
I am defenseless against my worst self.

Time-released capsule that delivers sleep,
hypnagogic gatekeeper of Alpha,
Theta and Delta, watcher over deep
ocean swimmers, fallers from cliffs, coma

drivers who have lost control of their cars—
may you always anticipate with cat’s
paw timing the stunned onset of darkness.
Swallow me nightly, incubus lover,
allow me to wear nothing but hats
to school, take naked that test I won’t ever pass.

Jen Karetnick is the author of seven poetry collections, including *American Sentencing* (Winter Goose Publishing, 2016)—which was a long-list finalist for the Julie Suk Award from Jacar Press—and *The Treasures That Prevail* (Whitepoint Press, 2016), which is a 2017 finalist for the Poetry Society of Virginia Book Award. She received an MFA in poetry from University of California, Irvine and an MFA in fiction from University of Miami. Her work has appeared in *The Atlantic.com*, *The Evansville Review*, *Foreword Reviews*, *Guernica*, *The McNeese Review*, *Negative Capability*, *One*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Prime Number Review*, *Spillway*, *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Waxwing* and *Verse Daily*. She is co-director for the reading series, *SWWIM* (Supporting Women Writers in Miami). The quoted line in the poem is from the “To Be or Not To Be” soliloquy in William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*.

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