



Nodin Press

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little eternities

poems

Sharon Chmielarz

“Time Traveler,” the poem with which Sharon Chmielarz opens her new collection, is a congeries of vaguely defined events that come and go, move forward and backward, and are finally fused in an imaginative overlay: *I have seen you / in your jacket / once a robe / on an ancient / frieze in clay*. This simple image sets the tone for subsequent poems, in which the narrator describes events she may or may not have witnessed, muses on history and the ways images present themselves, some as homey as fiddling with an alarm clock. The question “What time is it, anyway?” a line from an early poem, courses through the work, but the reader soon stops asking, drawn in by impressions loosened from personal crisis, images as common as rain falling on the roof or as startling as *Money can be / a gleaming avenue, a night / of snow, a fine dizzying swirl, a cold / white wine’s kind of spin under / the street lamp...*

Humor abounds in poems such as “Size,” which describes the world inhabited by a woman who wears a size 0 dress, and a series of reflections about a Halloween pumpkin containing the line *Humans want their gods to look like them / and lead them through the dark*. Several of the poems explore the character of individual words that have survived from the early history of the English language—bumble, sleek, bilge. Once again past and present meet, converse, get to know each other.

But such generalities can take us only so far in apprising a collection as rich in intelligence and whimsy as this one. It elicits comparisons to both the brilliant wordplay of Marianne Moore and the subtle metaphysics of Wisława Szymborska. Little eternities indeed. That’s a contradiction in terms, though it beautifully conveys how truthful, simple, and penetrating Chmielarz’s poems can be.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY: *Little eternities* is Sharon Chmielarz’s eleventh book of poetry. Kirkus Reviews named her recent volume, *The Widow’s House*, one of the one hundred best books of 2016. *The Other Mozart*, her verse biography of Nannerl Mozart, served as a libretto for an opera. Chmielarz’s favorite subjects include family, landscape, and history. Chmielarz was born and raised in Mobridge, South Dakota. She graduated from the University of Minnesota with degrees in German, French, English, and education. On campus she had a close encounter with poetry and fell in love with it. From then on, she took as many writing courses as she could while continuing her work as a public school teacher.

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