

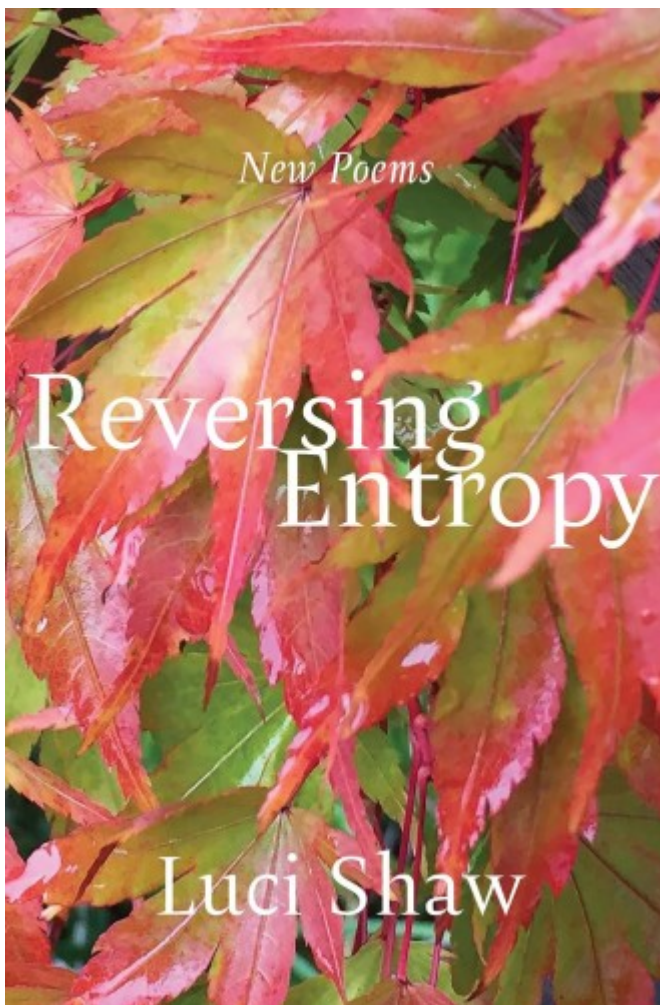
A magical world of daily bread

In Luci Shaw's new collection of poems, ordinary objects trespass their boundaries.

by [Diane Glancy](#) in the [April 2024](#) issue

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In Review



Reversing Entropy

New Poems

By Luci Shaw

Iron Pen

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Reversing Entropy does so by constant motion and by linkages within that motion. Even in the orderly heavens, the poet catches a wandering star through the skylight in her room. The birds fly. The clouds move. Rain falls. There is movement from one element into another—*synesthesia*, it is called in “Lilies of the Valley,” where the flowers’ fragrance becomes music.

Luci Shaw’s new collection is a magical world of daily bread where ordinary objects trespass their boundaries. Sheets on a backyard clothesline become wings, catching the development of metaphor or the afterimage of a further image, the clothesline as a branch with wide white leaves. There are the movements of the seasons: a blunt twig-end becomes bud, becomes blossom, becomes berries, becomes twig again. There is movement of moss across a rock. Lichens jump to images of bicycles moving. In “Driving Through the Season,” Shaw passes an ancient barn “leaking daylight.” Always the observer, and always the arranger of those observations.

Shaw is a seer of likeness between things not alike. The rock wall rises like a giant’s shoulder. Even in the stillness of a car, her pencil moves to take notes, to make similitudes—or the unexpected unlikenesses—as when “stabs / of sunlight” pierce us with an understanding of the gravitas of our world, or the too-bright sun through a windshield catches an open eye not prepared for its sudden intrusion.

Shaw makes connections for a world that seems on its way to disconnecting. She reminds us of the maintenance and repair our living requires. She evokes the creative energy, the drawing together of distances, that we need to ameliorate the gaps.

There are strong images of the movement of water in *Reversing Entropy*. If there is a time of waiting, it is only to board the ferry—only to be moving again. In fact, Shaw writes two poems, “Waiting for the Ferry 1” and “Waiting for the Ferry 2,” while waiting. For Shaw, stasis is the opportunity for outlets into further motion. And in the midst of all the motion comes “a lesson in patient faith. And waiting /waiting. Did I mention waiting? A week. / Two weeks. Three, until . . .” as a reward, the amaryllis bulb blooms in her kitchen window: “Out of the pitiful earth, a star is born.”

There is the migration of whales in “Whale,” and there are migrations of faith woven throughout the book. Shaw shows that we who believe have been given a world in

which God uses patterns of sameness in unlikenesses. The Bible moves from history and genealogy to psalm and song and prophecy to the stories of Jesus and doctrine written by Paul; yet, all say that we are discordant people in a discordant world, and it is God's cry that we are gathered together in his striving for us to become his workmanship, his poem, his holy beings gathered to his bosom.

In all this magnificence, there is the seeming ordinary movement of knitting needles. "The Nooksack's green / rush of water never goes quiet," Shaw writes as she knits beside the river and compares the water to the strand of green yarn that rises to her needles. "Buttonholes will march up / the front," she tells us, as even the utilitarian need for closure in a sweater's front has the distinction of its own migration. And from there, Shaw moves into further likeness-making in the next stanza, as she describes her own words coming "Row upon row, word after word."

We are in a "circling universe" in *Reversing Entropy*, and we find ourselves in the reversal of entropy as life moves onward and onward into a life that we are told in God's word lives forever. The writer of these verses is a weaver of melodies who has heard the Maker's still small voice.