



Flet

Joyelle McSweeney

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Set in a spaced-out future in which all cities have been evacuated after an "Emergency," FLET is named for its female protagonist, an Administration flunky who begins to suspect that the Emergency may be a tool of sociopolitical oppression. An elegant entry in speculative fiction, Flet finds McSweeney slowing her distinctively hyperactive imagination down to the speed of narrative.

Flet Details

Date : Published November 1st 2007 by Fence Books

ISBN : 9781934200070

Author : Joyelle McSweeney

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Genre : Fiction, Science Fiction, Womens, Poetry, Contemporary



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From Reader Review Flet for online ebook

Marc says

A sharp and very exact little novel. Quite beautiful, quite abstract in places, and with some quite wonderful dry and dark humor underneath it's clinical exterior.

Jason McDowell says

Um...what?

Alex says

I just wasn't in the right mood for this. It was a bit like reading Burroughs without all the sex, drugs, and centipedes. Too much intellect, not enough viscera.

5 Track says

Brilliant :: Phildickian and Pynchonian and Joy(elle)cian dystopian sci-fi psychotropic Dylan-esque speculative phonographic joy.

Beverly says

I read about 1/4 of the book and still had no idea what I was reading.

Talia says

Incredible--poets and fiction writers, non-fiction writers, lovers of books--you all must get your hands on this.

david says

ok, so i want to give it a five but i can't. which means i don't want to, i think.
anyhow, basically the story for some reason kept making me think of robert coover's baseball book, in that i didn't need to predict what would happen, because it was obvious, but in coover's book, which is an unfair comp as McSweeney and Coover are incredibly different, it didn't matter: i wanted to skip ahead to the obvious. Now that Flet didn't compel me in such a way doesn't take away from Flet, as much as it's like,

well, Rakim would have worked the rhyme like this, but BIG did it that way, and I just prefer Rakim's style. Ok, anyhow, so McSweeney is a wizard with words. I love that she has one of the great mysteries of the symbolism of language figured out: that thought in text normally works linearly, which is not similar to the brain at all, even when people like DFW would use their "brain voice" in their prose, it was only hinting at the surface speak. McSweeney, on the other hand, gets to the root of association, whether it be by idea, mnemonics, colors, or whatever: the words string together yet adhere to a structured opus of action/reaction. She really has found a foggy midground between the Poet and Novelist. That it took so long to happen is a shame on Literature. That it has happened should be a grand celebration. Sure, it's only 137 pages. But the word profiteering engages the reader far beyond that, and of course in a positive way. yeah.

just saying, but you might want to read some of her poetry before approaching her prose, just to acclimate oneself, because you haven't read anything else like this unless you are familiar with McSweeney. It's like knowing jazz before coming to A Tribe Called Quest. It's not necessary, but elevates the genius appreciation infinitely.

John Madera says

Joyelle McSweeney's *Flet*, a baroque, cerebral novel, whose dystopic vision collides with those imagined by Octavia Butler, Samuel Delany, William Gibson, Ben Marcus, and George Orwell, imagines a tech-drecked future still reeling from a cataclysmic air attack, which might never have actually happened. Its percolating sentential surface, kin to texts by Will Alexander and Andrew Joron (not to mention Hart Crane and Marianne Moore), might be considered a "cyber-punctum" text, playing off Barthes' formulation of the punctum as an "accident which pricks, bruises," while registering this text's "accident" as being highly-machined, calibrated for critique, for textual/textural pleasure.

Ever-attentive to the sonorities, the materialities of language, to the possibilities of aural and phonemic play, McSweeney seemingly remakes language, offering a great deal of "roughened" language, as Shklovsky would put it, viz., cognitive "noise" which succeeds in slowing down perception, thereby increasing pleasure in the text. The various lexical interpolations and anarchic metaphorizing, the rarefied lexicon of unusual and specialized words, of archaisms and neologisms, found in *Flet*, make for a dense surface, conjuring up worlds within worlds, a wordy-world that serves as one possible answer to the novel's querying how "one thing" could "at once be three: / container, contained and accessorie." As container, *Flet* is plastic, that is, a form that forms and deforms. What it contains: consciousnesses; identities and other obscurities; and dreams, of invisible and visible cities. Its language, whose beauty, obscurity, and intensity abets and disrupts its narrative, suggests that it might also be considered an accessory, though not merely an embellishment but a knowing accomplice to a "crime," that is, necessary transgressions against received language, the so-called real, and other mundanities.

[This review originally appeared here: <https://bigother.com/2013/03/26/on-jo...>]

the gift says

poetry overwhelms plot. beautiful to read. then not...

Chelsey says

Great new fiction, full of absolutely beautiful dystopian poetic prose and imagery that makes one feel a bit insane the way she leaps and bounds from one image to the next, yet this creates the almost effect of watching McSweeney's neurons firing at rates that are out of this world fast. After meeting her, I understand why. She speaks swiftly and with authority that leads you to believe her mind is working even faster than her mouth.

Josh says

Good lord...this is the direction fiction ought to be going. Speculative fiction that draws as much on Philip K. Dick as Ben Marcus. Not only high-concept but precise on the level of language. As artistic as it is culturally relevant.

Nate D says

This is ambitious and exciting and often totally over my head. Flet is a government aide in the post-Emergency country known as The Nation. In order to either avoid contacting toxins and disease or avoid another Emergency or both, cities have been entirely depopulated and removed from the maps, all pre-Emergency ephemera are off limits pending sterilization, and no one seems to ever leave their cars (which are required to meet the personal gas consumption quota) or come into any unnecessary contact with others around them. Instead, most of life seems to have given over to the Filescreen, a kind of free-associative but manipulative television that constructs itself on-the-fly from archival and re-enacted footage.

So this is a sort of dystopian sci-fi with many of suggestions of genre thrill and intrigue of figuring out the ambiguous rules of this world and of how it got this way that might be expected, but it's also often conveyed through dense, difficult stream-of-consciousness that could equally be cognition, dream, and a transcription of a Filescreen feed. As in, the bits of filescreen we get are almost indistinguishable from the parts that seem to be actual thoughts, which I'm sure is an intentional suggestion of how the mass-media rewires its viewers, which seems to be one of the major themes here. But as I said, I'm admittedly out of my depth -- many passages contain recognizable recurring motifs and obvious association patterns, but just as often phrases and fragments that seem totally opaque, an abstract poetry. At which point I can only surrender and let these words spin off on whatever my own associations provide, and to see what happens. Which is to say that this invites active reading, with half your brain constructing its own story as you go, and it's impossible to say what percentage of your associations might have been anticipated by the author, but I also get the sense that this is okay. The beauty of these parts is that they often do evoke *something*.

If the book was told in this Filescreen-of-consciousness alone, I'd lose patience, I'm sure, despite the elegance of language involved. But fortunately, these sections only occur in concentrated bursts punctuating more traditional, if also ambiguous, narrative: the story of Flet's growing awareness that the Emergency may not be what she's been told. Elliptical as it may be, this story holds plenty of interest and resonance and pretty much holds the proceedings together.

Anyway. I'm totally impressed and pretty baffled, but actively thinking, actively considering, and probably will be actively revisiting. And I hope that this manages enough attention somehow as to gather the critical

and scholarly eyes that stand a better chance of cracking its codes than I. It would appear to deserve the effort.
