

BRID by Lauren Shapiro explores motherhood, the dissolution of a marriage, and grief through the lens of a shrinking pandemic space. Through a structure that alternates narrative prose poem passages with lyric poems utilizing space on the page, the form attempts to both compress and expand, mimicking the psychological space of the narrator as she moves through these difficult times. **BRID** examines how relationships change over time—between children and parents as well as couples, and including the narrator’s own relationship with herself and her body.

Lauren Shapiro’s *Brid* is both an intense examination of family life during the pandemic and an extended ars poetica on the role of the artist and the ability of words to accurately represent things that populate the world around us. Even this collection’s title is a meditation on the ways language reflects error, “The word *bird* a mistaken spelling of the original *brid*. Mistakes channel a world, a worldview. A tear in a web that becomes an ocular hole. A tunnel into new brightness.” In this collection, Shapiro captures a child’s point of view with stunning clarity while also providing readers with a parent’s perspective on isolation, betrayal, and survival. “Even this poem, a distraction / from disaster, knows its limits,” states “Is Money Made from Trees? My Daughter Asks.” *Brid* examines unlikely guideposts such as the changing face of a nearby house seen in different kinds of light, chronicling vulnerabilities yet ultimately residing in a place of newfound wisdom and power.

—Mary Biddinger, author of *Department of Elegy*

“I think I’ve always been / a gate,” Shapiro writes in *Brid*, her beautiful, deeply moving book. Situated during the pandemic’s sanctioned isolation and the resulting forced familial unity, *Brid* is poetry written by a poet whose faith in language is slipping. The blood of the book is the melancholy of life’s routine, the intense awe of listening to children invent words, and the bifurcated grief of seeing the world in crisis while your own life is caving in.

With photographs of the house next door and her children’s sculptures and drawings—things that could not be closer—we somehow feel estranged. “Writing was a necessary first step,” Shapiro writes, leaving it at that. Teasing us with a cliffhanger. When we’re young language is salvation, but what happens next? “The older I get / the fewer words I need,” she writes. Wow. This is a new power. I love how this book scares and soothes me.

—Sommer Browning, author of *Good Actors*



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