



## Sorry, Tree

*Eileen Myles*

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“One of the savviest and most restless intellects in contemporary literature—honest, jokey, paranoid, sentimental, mean, lyrical, tough, you name it.”—Dennis Cooper

Eileen Myles has written thousands of poems since she gave her first reading at CBGB in 1974. *BUST* magazine calls her “the rock star of modern poetry” and *The New York Times* says she’s “a cult figure to a generation of post-punk females forming their own literary avant garde.”

Myles’ trademark punk-lesbian sensibility and intimate knowledge of poetic tradition are at work in this eighth collection, where every love poem is political, and every political poem is, ultimately, about love.

### From “Home”:

*I thought if  
I inventoried home it would be broad  
my eyes fling open  
like a doll's  
to the virtual space that suddenly  
resembles the walls  
the most interesting artists are large;  
monsters  
while the people we know are  
masses of flowers  
& when I turn  
on my cellphone I see  
everyone*

**Eileen Myles** has published over a dozen books of poetry, prose, and plays. Formerly the director of the St. Mark’s Poetry Project, as well as a write-in candidate for president in 1992, in 1997 Myles toured with Sister Spit’s Ramblin’ Road Show. Her books include *Snowflake/different streets*, *Inferno*, *The Importance of Being Iceland*, *Skies*, *Maxfield Parrish*, *Not Me*, and *Chelsea Girls* (stories).

## Sorry, Tree Details

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Author : Eileen Myles

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## From Reader Review Sorry, Tree for online ebook

### Jeff Buddle says

Sparse poems. Jarring juxtapositions. I can see how Eileen Myles fits with her contemporaries (Bernstein, Silliman). I enjoyed the final prose poem, "Everyday Barf" immensely even thought I thought it would be silly and overtly colloquial for the sake of being overtly colloquial. Instead, it built a nice sense of loneliness and isolation, that in-the-crowd-but-not-of-the-crowd feeling which is familiar to me.

Yes, the lines are very short. I enjoy a provocative line break (a la Creely). However, in these poems the line breaks seem to establish more of a visual music than a lyrical music. The poems (for the most part) are neat columns of words with some contractions broken onto two lines. I'm not sure whether this is effective. Short lines make for choppy rhythms. The disjunctive nature of Myles images only add to this. I get the feeling we're jumping from thought to thought. Sometimes lucid images and scenes emerge and the line breaks fade into the background, but most times I'm more aware of the structure than the content.

This of course means that the poems will need to be re-read. Poems that aren't immediately comprehensible aren't necessarily failures. That said, my first impression is that Myles is holding back. There's a bit of magic here in the storm of images, a touch of the mystical. Myles trods on the border between the visceral and the spiritual, but keeps the poems chained to the visceral with sexual politics and slang. I get the feeling that if she could free herself from her body for a short time the poems would be better.

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### Marcus says

Eileen Myles is one of my heroes. I have liked every single thing I have ever read. That rarely happens with anything. I don't know what that means but it means something. I love Eileen Myles. And she seems an awesome generous open human being as well. And that's a real plus!

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### mwpm says

[...]

I want to be part of something bigger than myself  
not the university of california but it's a start  
my dad was a gorilla

[...]

- **No Rewriting** (pg. 4)

I really do feel like  
I am in some French  
movie,  
blam putting  
down a general  
cup of tea. The

lights are thus  
and I squiggling  
then returning  
to my work  
quietly squeezed  
through the  
day that's captured  
some way  
separately  
not the squares  
of the cinema  
bu envelopes  
of affection  
[...]

- **For Jordana** (pg. 14)

[...]  
It's a square  
of a place  
when the bed  
chases me  
awake  
and the gleam  
in the sky  
the sweet curl  
of white  
says no. I've got  
to live.

- **Lodovico** (pg. 20)

[...]  
if you enjoyed  
smoking in bars  
study French expressionism  
[...]

- **Unnamed New York** (pg. 31)

[...]  
I write down  
so I wake up  
[...]

- **Home** (pg. 39)

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## **Ian Martin says**

i don't know. it's a decent collection but not everything worked for me. when it's good, it's very good. "Everyday Barf" on its own gets 5 fuckennnnn stars. i want to read that every day forever. "I'm Moved", "Home", "For Jordana" are my other favourites I think. definitely makes me want to read more of her work.

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## **Aya says**

Borrowed this book Sunday morning read it by Monday night. I've been meaning the pick up Eileen Myles for a while and I regret so much now how long it took me. Some poems like For Jordana remind me of Anne Carson "I think writing/is desire/not a form/of it" but with a stronger commitment to poem v. the commitment to.. whatever it is Carson is committed to!

Other poems have a much stronger political (current political) argument than I'm used to reading which I think is really good for me. Poems like "That Country" and "No Rewriting" work on colonialism, terrorism, but also character and growth.

Really if the first poem doesn't knock you over "When I think/about loving/you/I think/about opening/my Bible/and shaking/it." I'm not sure what would!!

(#just so happy)

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## **Karen says**

\* Understanding Oppression: Gay Rights

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## **Jesse says**

In the few books of her poetry I've read, Myles tends to have two modes, both of which are very personal: One is more of a straight explanatory/confessional approach like fractured prose, while the other is a more subconscious rifling through disconnected images and references. I prefer the former to the latter as too often i feel as though I can't follow her abstract thoughts to where they're leading me, and the images remain unfinished or together on the page than in my mind. The explanatory/confessional stuff is often also marked by stream-of-consciousness style but more accessible because it's explained. Her prosier poems are every bit a showcase of her spectacular language and eye for startling images as her more abstract pieces and this book splits them about 50/50, with the abstract pieces earlier on and the grounded ones later in. It might be someone who's crazy for the cut-up approach could be really into this, but only one half of this really did it for me.

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### **Abby says**

I had high hopes for this collection since Myles was described to me as a champion of plain language and direct diction, but I found these poems oddly fussy. While there are certainly moments of lucidity, on the whole her habit of allotting only one or two words per line forces the reader to fight for any sense of rhythm or music. The prose section at the end (pleasingly entitled "Everyday Barf"), where Myles' clunky line breaks were removed from the equation, was the saving grace of the book for me. There I was able to find "the sound of sense" that most of the other poems lacked. Maybe one of her other books would come closer to what I was looking for.

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### **Gina says**

Written to present at a panel on the poetry of everyday, Eileen Myles' "Everyday Barf," opens with the statement: "I don't mind today, but the everyday makes me barf. There's no such thing." And so it goes with Myles' poetry—there is not an interest in the everyday, but an interest in celebrating each individual day, an awareness of being there/here in the present. In her latest collection, Sorry, Tree (which includes the piece "Everyday Barf"), Myles continues in this spirit. In the opening untitled poem, the speaker claims "I'm grasping / the present." The speaker does not try to grasp the present and is not grasping at the present. No, the speaker grasps the present with a firm hand. The poem ends:

the world  
in our  
hands a rattle  
such a  
joke  
we shake it  
shake it  
shake it

You can read the rest of the review I wrote for Octopus Magazine here:  
<http://octopusmagazine.com/Issue09/my...>

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### **Elisabeth says**

lots of non-sequitors

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### **Ilana says**

I'm out of practice reading poetry, but this was a worthwhile reintroduction. The rhythm of these poems is staccato and punchy, hard to smooth out. I really dug into the spaces between the lines. A wry sense of humor punctuated by moments of dead serious, cutting honesty. Like many "Everyday Barf" was a favorite of mine, but there were so many lines to call out in so many pieces. Something I would like to return to, for

sure.

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### **Vicky says**

Sorry, Eileen Myles. I still like you and your essays a lot, but most of the poems in this collection are too sparse, lines made of five words or less. There are four poems titled "Dear Andrea" (which remind me of the baby precious always shines love notes that Gertrude Stein would leave for Alice B. Toklas). These brief poems seem to lead up to the longer, final poem, "To Hell," which is a beat-like poem about being gay and uses the word "gay" eight times. Then there is an essay called "Everyday Barf" at the very end about writing a sestina on a boat (but where is the sestina? why isn't it included? this essay is also in the importance of being iceland, which is where i first read it).

Overall this is an awkward arrangement for a book. I felt uncomfortable with the haphazard rhythm, as if I were eavesdropping on internal monologues, sometimes self-conscious, sometimes reflective. There are a lot of tangents in here, which isn't that great to read on paper, since it's non-sequitar and all over the place, like this excerpt, for example, from a poem called "That Country" :

"I've just  
never known  
what  
to call  
that country.  
If I say  
England  
I don't think

I sound so  
smart. I keep  
tripping up  
on their language which is English  
so shouldn't their  
country be the  
same. Britain seems wrong,  
does anyone go to Britain?"

So, yeah. I like Eileen Myles's voice in prose.

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### **Helen says**

Poems which gradually expand, from one or two word lines, to full blown multiple page prose poetry. Myles' poetry for the most part explores sexuality and feminism in interesting ways. The final piece, Everyday Barf, was my favorite, using people getting sick on the ferry as a metaphor for the ailments of society. The shorter pieces were hit and miss, some worked really well, but others had me flipping the page to see if I'd missed something.

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### **C.A. says**

LOVE THIS BOOK!

"The tomato  
Missed.  
Being intended  
to hit god  
it hit his mother  
I speak for  
her."

SHE REALLY DOES SPEAK FOR HER!

Who are these people NOT giving this a five star rating?  
They must like boring poetry.  
What else could it be?

Well, if you LOVE poetry and LOVE exciting, weird, living poetry.  
This is it, all the way!

CAConrad  
<http://CAConrad.blogspot.com>

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### **Sarah says**

I don't understand why a few people are giving this collection 1-3 stars. When did they require line police? Who cares if the lines in these poems have 5 words or less? Love this book. Due to snowmaggedon, my advanced poetry workshop doesn't get to work with her today, which I was definitely looking forward to. Oh well, I still love how sparse and simple these are.

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