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Oxford*Poets*

COSTA BOOK AWARDS
SHORTLIST
2015

> After the sweats, white nights, snow-blank
> … so many passing hours scarcely sensed,
> today I'm breathing – ozone – and I smell
> the warming bark of leafless birches
> budding in the light.
>
> (from 'Patient at Paimio')

The Observances is Kate Miller's first full collection of poetry. As its title suggests, with the intertwining practices of watchfulness and remembrance these poems sustain their course. They follow an urge to locate in language, however tentatively, elements of a world that change or fade. Within her landscapes, the attentive eye and ear preserve the subject, fixing it in time and memory, renewing – through compulsive inspection – faith in the unresolved, even – in what Elizabeth Bishop called 'self-forgetful' attention – at the poet's own expense.

Kate Miller's fine poems are meditations on the art of seeing. Her concentrated scrutiny of the everyday leads her into a richer world of perception. The carefully textured language and delicate narratives follow in the spirit of the Blakean imperative 'to see a world in a grain of sand'.

Sasha Dugdale

Seeing, and rituals of seeing, are Kate Miller's theme in* The Observances. *She writes with elegance, and yet a gentle but unsettling quality of questioning which presses further and further, closer and closer, towards her often fragile subjects (human and creaturely) – and, as the book proceeds, vision itself is found lacking, only immersion and risk will suffice.

Richard Price

COVER IMAGE Christopher Le Brun, *Neither White, nor Warm, nor Cold* (2013); oil on canvas, 210 × 420 cm (detail); reproduced with permission of the artist.

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