

PRESS RELEASE: POETRY

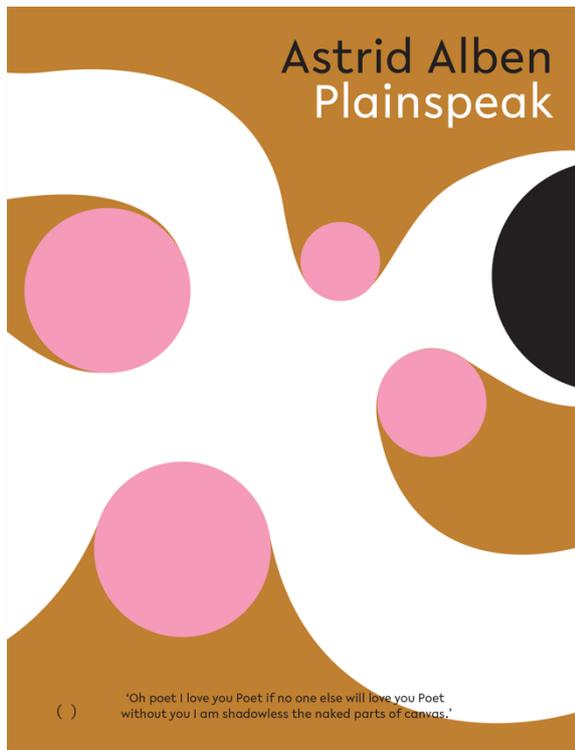
Plainspeak

Astrid Alben

Published: 18 November 2019

Price: £12.00 paperback

'Astrid Alben's poems occupy a text-transcending space that is part dance, part art installation, and part astrophysics. An heir to European experimentalism as much as to John Berryman's Dream Songs, Plainspeak is a multi-vocal poetry: unpredictable, elegant and wholly original.' – **Kathryn Maris**



Plainspeak is the highly anticipated second collection by Astrid Alben, following her acclaimed debut *Ai! Ai! Pianissimo*. In these startling poems, readers will experience Alben's unorthodox alter-ego-thinking-out-louder approach with the same exhilaration as they might engage with art or jazz.

The poems in *Plainspeak* deal with place, ancestral ties, solitude, flight, insomnia and the embattled absurdities of daily life.

Alben plays with formal boundaries, linguistic identity and the lyrical poetic voice, writing with rhythmic vitality and visual imagination. The poems tell multiple narratives whilst retaining the freedom of abstraction; they are supple and precise, each one an installation evoking different aspects of a particular theme.

Plainspeak reinvents play and logic, is poignant, humorous, absurd and anguished: a book for and of the times we live in.

Astrid Alben is a poet, editor and translator. Her debut collection *Ai! Ai! Pianissimo* was published by Arc in 2011, introducing 'a new and original voice in English poetry, serious and uncompromising' (R.V. Bailey). Alben's poems, translations and essays are widely published, including in the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *Best of British Poetry Anthology 2015*. To hear her poems visit astridalben.com, Granta, LASER@CSM or the BBC Radio 4 Four Thought podcast. Alben is co-founder and artistic director of the arts and sciences initiative PARS; curator of site-specific events that are a mixture of theatre, art installation and scientific experiment; and editor of the Findings on... series published by Lars Müller Publications. She is trustee (and acting CEO) of the Poetry Translation Centre.



Praise for *Plainspeak* by Astrid Alben

'The reader gasps at the spliced, fizzing language and dark comedy of Alben's limber couplets. The unstill persona tussles with an intrusive daimon-companion "Poet", moving allusively through the blood and ballet of 100 years of European history while preoccupied with the everyday tasks of living, enjoying, jarring against a life.'

Vahni Capildeo

'Alben's lines move at the speed of a sent text, the speed of light – they plainspeak to our current condition... you finish the book in seeming seconds, then start again... track the voice and The Poet as they try to outmanoeuvre each other in a tight race to the right-hand margin – and beyond...'

Matthew Caley

'But hey! I like these – very neat, and very cool...'

Julian Stannard

'I love these poems: the formal and the imaginative premise are both incredibly original and thought-provoking, and work beautifully in fusion.'

Jane Draycott

'There's a lively intelligence at work and play here, and a delicious appetite for the twists and turns of language. *Ai! Ai! Pianissimo* connected with a lot of readers and the energy and concentration of *Plainspeak* will impress a lot more.'

Philip Gross

About Prototype

Prototype was founded in 2019 by Jess Chandler, co-founder of the independent publishing houses Test Centre and House Sparrow Press.

Established to continue and develop the work begun by Test Centre, Prototype is committed to creating new possibilities in the publishing of fiction and poetry through a flexible, interdisciplinary approach. Through the discovery of high quality work across genres, Prototype strives to increase audiences for experimental writing.

Plainspeak is the first title in Prototype's new poetry list, with titles forthcoming from Emily Critchley, Stephen Watts, Otis Mensah, Sophie Collins and Ahren Warner.

Test Centre's back catalogue includes works by Derek Jarman, Max Porter, Iain Sinclair, Sam Riviere, Sophie Collins, Jack Underwood, Rachael Allen, Stephen Watts, Holly Pester, Wayne Holloway-Smith, Chris Torrance and Jonathan Meades.

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