



Butcher's Tree, 2012, 104 pages, Feng Sun Chen, 0984475249, 9780984475247, Black Ocean, 2012.

Poetry. In the poems of Feng Chen's darkly spellbinding debut collection, BUTCHER'S TREE, the page evokes and provokes legendary creatures, kills them and puts on their skin—then cures the meat. This startling and unusual book is a medium that channels damned and contaminated creatures such as Grendel, Wukong, and Prometheus. It reconsiders what it means to construct a myth; to mold around a hollow space a materiality of shape that depends on contours without content. Life that has no life. These are love poems whose monstrous repetition demystifies these once powerful beings while at the same time plunging deeper into insensible consciousness, where the human ceases to retain its proper form. "Like a thousand tiny teeth gnawing through language's tender membranes, BUTCHER'S TREE eats through the gloom of the visible world. Nocturnal, feral, and foraging, Chen's is a poetry whose 'purity strips the meat from inside.' Inside these mesmeric vaults, skins fuse and 'the cored body' grows rhizomes, burrowing into everything. The echolocating clicks and pops of Chen's alchemical practice make audible the astounding sound of our own 'hearts...growing teeth.'"—Lara Glenum "BUTCHER'S TREE is animal, foody, and thick with the materials of local and ancient and visionary worlds. My favorite parts feel ripped from the myths and tales and fables I might have known once upon a time, waving like strange numinous laundry on the line of Feng Sun Chen."—Ariana Reines

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