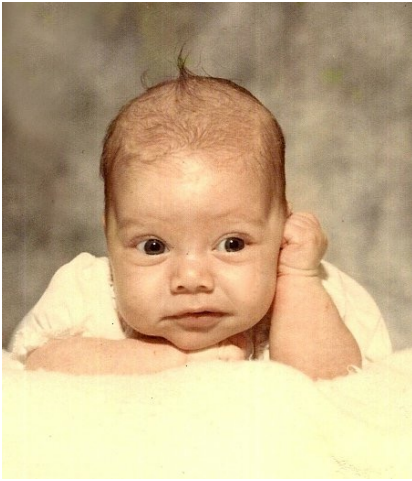


“Danielle’s thesis manuscript...



is a book-length deep dive into familial strife, romantic love, and above all, the artist’s journey. Becoming an artist—why do any of us even try? Danielle asks this core question again and again. And she brilliantly devises just as many answers. Or not answers, but responses. This collection of poetry understands the distinction: an answer is a conclusion; a response is a conversation. Danielle is invested in conversations—as well as what can happen in the lack of meaningful dialogue... between a mother and a daughter, between a father and a brother, between lovers, between lovers of art, between writer and reader.

In these deeply vulnerable and unabashedly musical poems, every observation and insight is tested for its integrity. I’m reminded of the poet Aracelis Girmay who once said that her revision process involves going through each line of a poem and asking herself, “Do I mean this?” Here is a poet who refuses to settle for half-truths, restlessly striving instead toward a full aliveness that shines and shines with the integrity of hard-won, innermost knowledge.

Every conversation I have with Danielle is rooted in truth-telling, in furthering the act and impact of truth-telling. Just the other night, we shared some crucial truths. And I read a poem by Layli Long Soldier, one which includes the crucial line, “In our home in our family we are ourselves, real feelings.” Danielle and Danielle’s poems know: there is no true family, real home, without our full selves and emotions. A refusal to hide, to cover over: this is at once the price and the treasure of living precisely the life that is yours.

I can’t help but think as well of the late, great Jean Valentine, who, when asked in an interview about the writing she gravitates toward most, responded “I just want the poets who will go to the end of their rope.” With this thesis work, Danielle has gone the full way, the full way through, not around. She has reached the end of this program, but only the beginning of her lifework as a poet. Or as Danielle herself puts it at the end of one poem, “Somewhere / in the orchard / a voice ripens.”



- Chen Chen