



# Ordinary Psalms

**JULIA B. LEVINE**

Struggling to accept her impending blindness, the speaker in Julia B. Levine's fifth collection of poetry, *Ordinary Psalms*, asks everyday life to help her learn how to see beyond appearances into fundamental truths.

As she contemplates the loss of one friend to cancer and another to suicide, along with her own visual impairment, Levine holds the world "close as I needed / to see." Imagistic, lyrical, and at times imploring divine intervention from a god she does not know or trust, these poems curse and praise the extraordinary place we live in and are in danger of losing. Lamenting that "this world is a mortal affliction / with wounds in the beautiful," *Ordinary Psalms* provides a seductive and lyric rumination on radiance, loss, and grief.

**JULIA B. LEVINE** is the author of four previous poetry collections, including *Small Disasters Seen in Sunlight*, winner of the Northern California Book Award for Poetry. She is also a recipient of the Discovery/*The Nation* Award and the Pablo Neruda Prize for Poetry from *Nimrod*. Her work has been widely published in journals such as *Ploughshares*, *Prairie Schooner*, and the *Southern Review*. She lives and works in Davis, California.

## PRAISE FOR *ORDINARY PSALMS*:

"In *Ordinary Psalms*, the speaker in these poems is heightened to her world of sensation even as she is losing her sight. The book never quails here, nor does it dwell. Levine celebrates and meditates upon the simple wealth of her surroundings—the natural environment, flora, wildlife, her home, her loves, her trepidations, and her delights. The performance is so encompassing and easeful that the reader is drawn back into the text again and again to revel in how the words and lines are so carefully placed, like tesserae in an elegant mosaic. These psalms rise in a single voice, but as psalms also do, they manifest a collective yearning to be heard. In this marvelous book, Levine succeeds in singing for us all."

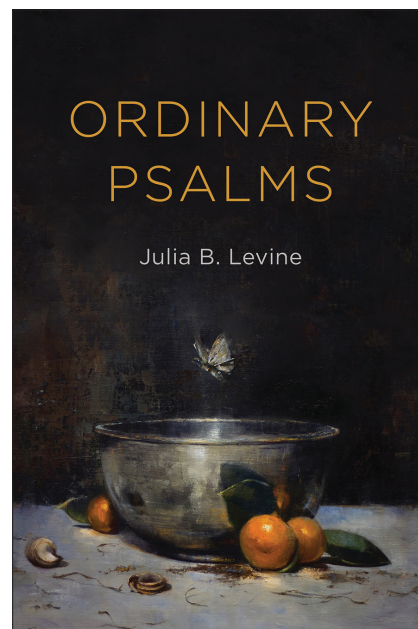
—Frank X. Gaspar, author of *Late Rapturous*

"This is a striking collection in many ways, from its poems of memory and personal loss to its odes to friendship and the natural world. The blindness poems, in particular, are so 'illuminating,' metaphoric, magical and mesmerizing. It's like being underwater or driving fast beside a forest of tessellating trees, a confusion of green and trunks clacking by like railroad tracks. Read on and be both lifted and saddened, read on and be dazzled."

—Dorianne Laux, author of *Only as the Day Is Long*,  
finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Poetry, 2019

"These poems ride on currents of elegiac lamentation as well as currents of radical joy. I admire how awake they remain to the moment, to death and to friendship and love, to the gradual diminishment of physical sight surrounded by gorgeous earthen beauty. I admire their deeply sensual language, their abundant feeling and generous heart."

—Joseph Millar, author of *Kingdom*



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