



Lily Poetry Review Books

## ***Frances of the Wider Field*** **Laura Van Prooyen**

### **Praise for *Frances of the Wider Field***

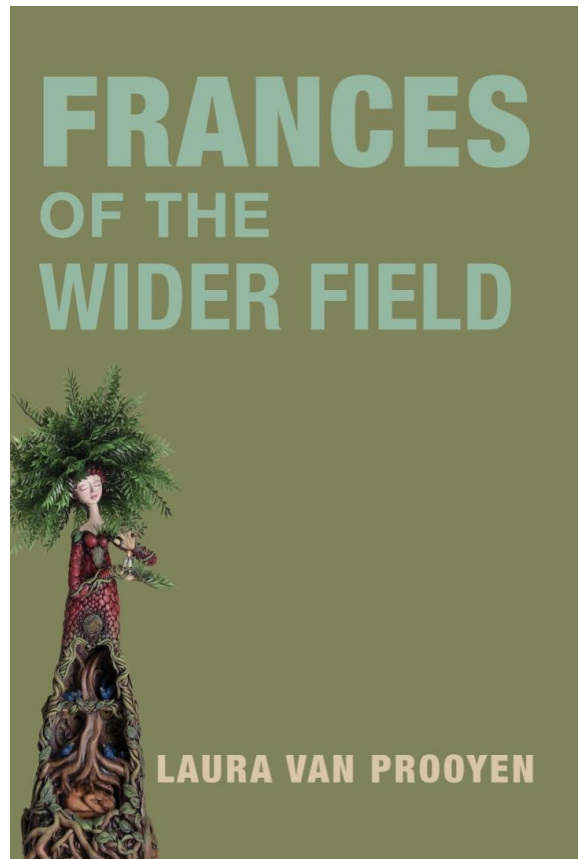
*Frances of the Wider Field* is about mothers, daughters, time, mortality—the loss of memory and meaning. Van Prooyen’s poems have clarity and ferocity, a wild imaginative grace that captures the joy and strangeness of our most intimate and familiar experiences. Frances appears part god, part curious child, part the small solitary voice inside. Van Prooyen asks, “Is a sigh a word? Is a body a word? / Is a tongue the beginning?” She tells us “Memory cannot undo the future. Frances, if I said, / *tonight I thank the seven sisters*, it’s really / the blue dust of God between them. Or you.” This beautiful book cracks us wide open and leaves us charged and changed. — [Sheila Black](#), co-editor of *Beauty is a Verb* and author of *Iron, Ardent*

One concern of Laura Van Prooyen’s marvelous, many-layered *Frances of the Wider Field* is the painful loss of memory, but just as urgent rises the physical action of re-remembering, gathering the corporeal body back to wholeness via meditative inquiry and attentive detail: “Miss you is a street full of pecans that roll under/ my feet.” And later, “against the fog / the bright orange of a neighbors tree / tells me where I am not.” The world we travel when visiting these pages is richly populated with peacocks and sisters, the gods of childhood and the dogs of a new town. Frances too serves a location of both memory and geography, both wider field and fellow traveler, demonstrating the myriad ways we both are and aren’t where we come from, as when “what defines me is constancy / of place, and my urge against it.” These are vivid, original, unflinching, and ultimately transformative poems. — [Jenny Browne](#), Texas Poet Laureate and author of *Dear Stranger*

### **About the Author**

Laura Van Prooyen is author of two earlier collections of poems, *Our House Was on Fire* and *Inkblot and Altar*. She is also co-author with Gretchen Bernabei of *Text Structures from Poetry*, a book of writing lessons for educators. A graduate of the Warren Wilson MFA Program for Writers, Van Prooyen serves as Managing Editor of *The Cortland Review* and lives in San Antonio, TX. [www.lauravanprooyen.com](http://www.lauravanprooyen.com)

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### Location: Frances

When I say Frances, I mean the maple trunk  
bulging through chain-link. I mean the pit bull  
with spiked collar who lives on the other side.

I say Frances and I sound like a leaking bike tire.  
Frances: my purple Schwinn, my flowered banana-seat.  
My legs pumping through the subdivision

that springs from the field. Frances  
rides on the air. You might say, *I don't understand*,  
and I'd say, *This is not my voice*. It's something

in the leaves that keeps speaking. Something that saw me  
as a child, rubbed a coin on the sole of my foot, charmed.  
When I say Frances, I mean a woman. I mean

a place. The dead cling to the land. The living cling  
to a story that, like currency, changes hands.

### Split

Mother, I wish I could twin myself and tuck you in  
to your blanket cocoon. You say the cold eats at your bones,

and I know, because last time I heard crumbling marrow  
roll through you like rain. Mother, there are feathers

stuck in my throat. I wish for a twin with telepathic lips  
against your good ear. Let her relay that yesterday

a swarm of cedar waxwings picked clean your daughter's  
ligustrum of fruit. The daughter who moved to warmer climes,

because you said—remember?—everything would be okay.  
Let this slightly more beautiful child help you find the perfect tilt,

suspend your legs, undo gravity's pressure. I made sure  
she knows your fleece throw should fold under your feet,

that your worn pillow is to cradle your head,  
and it's your left ear to which she should bend when she says:

*your far-away daughter sends love from her new, green yard.*  
Her voice chimes like mine, but may sound sweeter as it swirls

into your inner ear. Mother, don't let her vibrations fool you  
if through thin cochlear fluid you hear:

*I am the girl who loves you best.* My twin is prone to lie,  
even as she leans, her silken hair glancing your eyes. The laws

are different here. From twelve hundred miles away, I duplicate.  
I splinter. I fly. Mother, I float to your ceiling, drift over

your body. Your body my heart once beat in,  
where as a dark cluster of cells I began furiously to split.