



For immediate release: May 18, 2018

For more information, contact: Judith Smith-Meyer

judithsmithmeyer@gmail.com

cell: 805-284-6388

Saint Julian Press of Houston, Texas presents a new collection of poems by Santa Barbara poet Daniel Thomas

Traversing the distance between snowy Minnesota and lush Southern California, “Deep Pockets” is a collection of lyric and narrative poems that evoke the passing years and “the soul’s mystery in the material world.” The poems span more than 20 years of poet Daniel Thomas’s life and encompass children being born, parents growing old, a son going off to war, and the changing nature of love and long marriage.

Minnesota poet Thomas R. Smith has called “Deep Pockets” “a profound meditation on human relationship.” These relationships center primarily on family and the ways in which love challenges us to be our best. In the ambitious long poem at the center of the book, Thomas ponders: “Is marriage / the way we come to know.... our / inability to live in selfless love?”

Tom Simmons, author of “Bring Your Nights with You: New and Selected Poems” writes, “These are among the best commentaries on love I’ve read—and there are a lot of commentaries on love in poetry.”

The approachable poems of “Deep Pockets” will broadly appeal to readers of all backgrounds, but especially those who wish to think deeply about how spiritual awareness infuses the ordinary moments of our daily life. Santa Barbara poet laureate Enid Osborn writes, “Thomas’s poems carry the wisdom and grace of the Old World, exploring matters of faith and conscience in an age where tenets have lost their purchase.”

Daniel Thomas moved from Minneapolis, Minnesota to Santa Barbara in 2015 to take a position in the Advancement Department at Westmont College. He is currently chief development officer at the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County. The outstanding poetry community of Santa Barbara has welcomed him to his new home. Paul J. Willis, English professor at Westmont College and author of “Getting to Gardisky Lake” and six other books of poetry, says of Thomas’s poems, “These are poems to keep and to ponder as we seek—each one of us—our own ways forward into this world.”

Thomas is a graduate of the MFA program at Seattle Pacific University (SPU), a program that explores the intersection of art and faith. Gregory Wolfe, founder of the SPU MFA program and of the highly regarded journal *Image* writes, “Daniel Thomas’s words create shapes that outline the essential form of the things we love: the beauty of nature, the bonds of familial love, the mystery of being alive.”

Published by Saint Julian Press of Houston, “Deep Pockets” is available through fine book distributors and retailers, including Amazon and Barnes and Noble.

About Daniel Thomas

Daniel Thomas is currently chief development officer at the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County and has had a long career in nonprofit management. He has an MFA in poetry from Seattle Pacific University and has studied literature and film at various universities. His graduate degree in film led him to Twin Cities Public Television, where he was the video editor of an Emmy Award-winning national PBS series and producer of local documentaries. He went on to become chief operating officer of the PBS station. In addition to writing poetry, he plays the guitar and writes music. For six years he served as vice-chair of the American Composers Forum. Dan is the father of three grown children. He and his wife, Ellie, moved to Santa Barbara, California in 2015.

Deep Pockets



Daniel Thomas

Reviews of Deep Pockets

Early on in this fine collection, an old dog “plunges her snout deep in the sloppy pocket / of the sensual present.” So it is that the deep pockets of Daniel Thomas are tongued and explored again and again in generous poems of love and of longing, of grief and of guilt. Thomas brings a precision of line and a vulnerability of feeling to convince us, finally, that “heaven / and despair touch like dew and fog.” These are poems to keep and to ponder as we seek—each one of us—our own ways forward into this world.

Paul J. Willis, author of “Getting to Gardisky Lake”

Like the snow that falls through so many of his poems, Daniel Thomas’s words create shapes that outline the essential form of the things we love: the beauty of nature, the bonds of familial love, the mystery of being alive. Incantatory cadences and wordplay harness our attention and leave us vulnerable, open to revelations about the things we once knew and had forgotten. This is a collection to savor and dwell within.

Gregory Wolfe, Editor, Image

In “Deep Pockets,” Daniel Thomas carefully unpacks a heart’s journey of decades. He does not hurry through; his eloquence is spelled by moments of speechlessness, a respect for the untellable. Yet, a story gets told, mysteries intact, concerning shades of love; longing in a marriage that endures; children who “...even in the quietest room / ...listen to him with all their being / and one ear closed.” A beloved son goes to war; parents grow old and slip away; he cuts himself adrift at middle age, to his own surprise, and ventures “from known to unknown.” He travels, carrying with him the classics, invoking gods, fools and wanderers who made the journey before him. Like them, he seeks in the nether realms and questions God.

Thomas’s poems carry the wisdom and grace of the Old World, exploring matters of faith and conscience in an age where tenets have lost their purchase. But the real gold to be mined from this volume lies in the poet’s deep connection to—and unusual tenderness for—his father, whose grand presence and unthinkable absence bind the book together. Take “Deep Pockets” with you, let it be the book you save from fire, read it on your journey.

Enid Osborn, author of “When The Big Wind Comes” and
Poet Laureate of Santa Barbara, California 2017-2019

“Deep Pockets” is a profound meditation on human relationship, organically integrating classical literary influences from Dostoevsky to Dante. “My charts and compass lead me inward,” Daniel Thomas says in one poem; this interior search half-paradoxically leads to what he calls in another poem “the soul’s mystery in the

material world.” As in the book’s ambitious centerpiece, “Three Women,” these elegant, meticulously crafted poems map the cardinal points of a generously rewarding world Thomas invites his readers to share and explore.

Thomas R. Smith, author of “The Foot of the Rainbow” and “The Glory”

If I were to say that the underlying observation in “Deep Pockets” is that nothing is as it seems, you might sigh and turn away. . . another cliché. But wait: what if that were actually true? What if, despite millennia of philosophizing, we don’t have any a priori knowledge of the world, apart from our arrival in it, as Thomas writes in “Birthing George?” What if—though mentally—we can draw abstract deductions from abstract propositions, we can only really live inductively, from phenomena to phenomena?

Frequently set within an Italian landscape, the genius of “Deep Pockets” is the precision with which it views this inductive world, as Thomas moves through love and children and age, effectively turning each in his hand and examining it as if it were a BORGESIAN antique vase in which, if you looked closely enough, you could see every depth of love and loss, though the result might be too overwhelming to translate into another medium.

In his haunting, eight-part sequence, “Three Women,” Thomas considers his relationships with his daughter, his wife, his mother—plus one other being, difficult to identify, in a sense love itself. These are among the best commentaries on love I’ve read—and there are a lot of commentaries on love in poetry—in part because Thomas so precisely renders the scenes from which certain emotions arise, and the futility, at times, of saying anything more about them than what they themselves imply, which might even be contradictory and so a source of grief.

What people do, in Thomas’s book, is—to borrow a title from Marie Howe—“what the living do,” however mundane that may sound: just as it was not mundane for Howe in her remarkable book, it is not mundane for Thomas. The diurnal is a continuous surprise in “Deep Pockets.” We must simply, this wonderful book suggests, be brave enough to accept that.

Thomas Simmons, author of “Now” and
“Bring Your Nights with You: New and Selected Poems, 1975-2015”

About Saint Julian Press

Founded by author and publisher Ron Starbuck, Saint Julian Press is a literary and educational organization that embraces a vision to create a local and worldwide community by engaging in an artistic and diverse dialogue that promotes world peace, cultural conversations, and an interfaith awareness, appreciation and acceptance. In its mission as a new creative imprint Saint Julian Press hopes to identify, encourage, nurture, and share transformative literature and art of both past and living masters. While giving emerging artists, poets, and writers a place they may come home to and share their work; celebrating the enduring mystery within creation that calls us into relationship with one another.

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Deep Pockets by Daniel Thomas * ISBN-13: 978-0-9986404-9-5 * ISBN: 0-9986404-9-2
Saint Julian Press, Inc. * 2053 Cortlandt, Suite 200 * Houston, TX 77008 * Ron Starbuck ~ Publisher-
CEO Phone: 281-734-8721 * Email: ronstarbuck@saintjulianpress.com * Web:
www.saintjulianpress.com