

PINK by Yuko Otomo

Review by Marisol Limón Martínez

“Expelled from the garden, we stand on the boulevard.”

Several years ago, I lost a friend. My last memories of Paris are wandering the streets from the Marais to Montmartre with this friend. We spoke broken languages in between cafés, ice cream, and prolonged stops on empty sidewalks. My friend was a film actress, and on one of the boulevards in the ninth arrondissement, she told me she wrote poetry. Her death was sudden. Her last email to me was a poem. Her last walk was near the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont. She was buried in Père Lachaise Cemetery. I haven't returned to Paris since my friend died. I have had no desire to go back.

In reading *PINK*, the new collection of poems by Yuko Otomo, I see the city anew. I see Paris through a kaleidoscope—in variations of pink, hues of pink, secrets in pink, all saturated in an intimacy of beautiful, ugly, profane, and sacred truths. I also hear a soundtrack of Paris in shifting sounds of a city and its inhabitants through fugue-like repetitions and refrains. An homage to Paris, *PINK* is a reflection and depiction of the mind of an artist, foreigner, traveler, tourist, witness, lover, and human. There is an “I” and there is a “we.”

The title of each poem in *PINK* often references Paris through a specific place: a historic site (“père lachaise,” “notre dame”); geographical site (“le seine”); neighborhood (“montmartre”); or street (“blvd henry iv”). But there are also titles such as “boulevard so & so,” “le(s) poète(s) maudit(s),” “the way we destroy things,” and “returning.”

PINK is filled with poetry written in English and Japanese. French makes appearances and so does the Tower of Babel. Originally written in Japanese, the author has translated her text, weaving her native Japanese throughout the book.

Otomo, a poet and visual artist, has filled *PINK* with poem paintings—lyrical transmissions highlighting the frequencies surrounding love and death. In Otomo's Paris, we hear a sunflower's breath in a door, an aria from below in the street, a toy piano beyond the cemetery; we see and feel light and shadow.

PINK, the first publication of Yuko Otomo's *Paris Trilogy*, radiates love and humanity. It is my (new) gateway to Paris, and I eagerly await more.