

BOOK REVIEW:

SING THE SONG, Meredith Alling. Future Tense Books, P.O. Box 42416, Portland, OR 97242, www.futuretensebooks.com, 2016, 122 pages, \$12 paper.

A red-headed party, an ancient, fortune-telling ham, beastwomen pornography—

Meredith Alling's *Sing the Song* twists the absurd and the mundane with a freshness and ache stunning for each story's brevity. In just shy of one hundred and thirty pages, Alling gives you twenty-seven flash fiction stories that are more akin to lightning rods, with Alling shooting sparks into each line. Her narrative style, shown in her closer to "Spaghetti," directs us through the complex and beautiful maze that is *Sing the Song*:

Sit down. Hear the ding of the fork in the bowl. Take a bite. Hear your own chewing.

Hear the prison guard saying, "So much harm is foreseeable" (37)

The command and silence in each line are both comforting and terrifying, a great reflection on the female experience and the mark of a new voice among fiction writers. This is Alling's first published book, but many of her flash pieces are already rooted in the literary community, appearing in such publications as *Tin House*, *Storm Cellar*, *No Tokens*, and elsewhere. While several pieces of this flash collection can be unearthed in previous publications in print or online, it is wisest to read Alling's *Sing the Song* from start to finish, and not simply for sanity's sake; these flash stories can stand alone, but, when read chronologically, act as a novel about isolation and what it is to be human, that awkward, uncomfortable humanity turned on its beastly head in each story with Alling's new and necessary lens, every piece showing the reader, as her narrator in "Go Quiet" believes, *We can dive deep and go quiet* (57). Alling's stories turn sharply with surprising discoveries and delicate nuances of personal harm and change...

END OF SAMPLE

