



I, Divided

Poems

CHELSEA DINGMAN

An underlying cynicism lies at the heart of the questions asked by Chelsea Dingman’s *I, Divided*: What is a life worth? Today. Now. Why is that? Who gives anyone permission to be? And how is that determined?

In poems that use the science behind chaos theory as a lens for examining illness and agency, Dingman explores the divide between determination and accident, whereby the body becomes a site of exploration as well as elegy in cases of disease such as traumatic brain injury, cancer, and addiction. Much like weather patterns, inherited histories of violence and disease are cyclical. They remain at once determined and yet undetermined, becoming ultimately chaotic. The “I” of the title is fractured over several divides, subordinated to illness and to a past that is invariable, though finally morphs as an agent of change.

I, Divided operates as if within a swirling hurricane, beginning and ending amid the same human concerns, tracing a life cycle and its repetition.

CHELSEA DINGMAN is the author of *Thaw*, chosen by Allison Joseph for the National Poetry Series, and *Through a Small Ghost*, selected by Travis Wayne Denton for the Georgia Poetry Prize. She is currently pursuing her PhD at the University of Alberta.

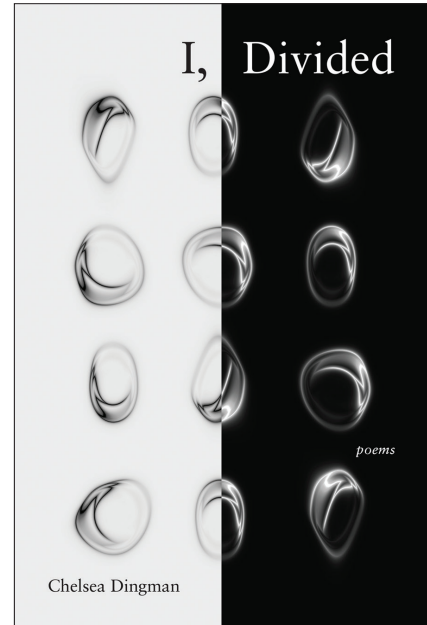
PRAISE FOR *I, DIVIDED*

“Dingman’s poems are experiments in tenderness and vulnerability wrought by the toughened tissues of hard-won scars.”—**John A. Nieves**

“By turns gritty, tender, and philosophical, these poems tackle big questions about the nature of the self alongside the intimacies of family life. It’s harrowing, but there’s grace and holiness here, too.”—**Nancy Reddy**

I am
a complex system swirling in the muck.
I am here to learn how to live without you.
Determinism has come to this: short-term
memory created recursively, a storm system
that repeats itself season after season.
Notice the way night destroys the lights
of whole cities in your mind while we sleep
apart, or together. How we are
conditioned to sleep through anything.

—from “Strange Attractors”



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Poetry



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