



Echoes of Tattered Tongues: Memory Unfolded

*John Z. Guzowski. Aquila Polonica, \$21.95 (176p)
ISBN 978-1-60772-021-8*

Guzowski (*Lightning and Ashes*), a Polish-American writer born in a German refugee camp after WWII, recounts the horrible atrocities enacted upon his parents during the war in these **straightforward, gut-wrenching narrative lyric poems**. These snapshots of Nazi German rule illustrate that hardship didn't end with German surrender; the aftershocks radiated through successive generations.

Guzowski's simple language highlights the violence without offering any comment or consolation: "She finds her mother/ a bullet in her throat/ her sister's severed breasts/ in the dust by her feet/ the dead baby/ still in its blanket." The words fail to convey the sense of loss, but the tortured nature of the content is clear; each word means more in the sparse, unadorned language Guzowski employs. In "What My Father Knows About Killing," he writes, "My father knows men and animals/ do not die in the same way." Similar sentiment appears in "What the War Taught Her": "My mother learned that sex is bad,/ Men are worthless, it is always cold/ And there is never enough to eat."

Poems of this nature are not meant to alleviate the pain, but to help keep a record of it; to serve as a reminder that silence is not a crime, but forgetting is. (Mar.)

Reviewed on: 04/04/2016

Release date: 03/01/2016