

A NOTE FOR READERS

David Breskin has written his poem in alternating couplets: two lines of narrative about his heroine and then, offset and italicized, two lines of "found" text mined from the Internet. Just as the Internet demands our participation—at the very least to initiate a search, choose a link, respond—*Supermodel* demands engagement. Any idea that we will read this book passively is blown away when we reach its third line, for there we are confronted with a choice—one which we'll face more than 2000 times before the end of the book. The italicized couplet is intrusive yet alluring. Do we skip it? Or, read it and then return two lines later to the narrative thread?

Choose the first option and the italicized text becomes a kind of visual noise; our eyes pick up its scattered words and we have a vague, discomfiting sense that we are *missing* something. In this mode, the found texts offer an ever-shifting, often-squawking background static, a literary reenactment of what buzzes around us every day, which we must fight to block out, or, allow to interrupt our lives—our own narratives—to listen, to read, to view, to learn. On the other hand, if we choose to read each line consecutively, straight down the page in the "old school" approach, our reading experience becomes fractured and faceted; the narrative constantly interrupted with bits of data, long lists, snatches of song lyrics, snippets of rants and ramblings from blogs, news flashes. This is nothing like a traditional reading experience: indeed, one of *Supermodel's* slyest subversions is how it turns this "normal" reading into an experience that feels radical, abnormal, disconcertingly strange if not (sometimes) downright irritating.

Most readers would probably only choose this "normal" reading for a second or third pass through the book, preferring instead to focus initially on either Breskin's story or the found texts. But—with no chapters, no sections, no natural breaks and, literally, one sentence—the choice of how to read the book gets *questioned*, again and again, by its insistent flow. For many readers, this conflict may induce complex, irregular reading habits—reading forward a few lines or pages, going back to pick up what was missed; then forward, then back. Other readers may self-impose a *systematic* approach as a means of dealing with, and controlling, this book's promiscuous freedoms. As our attention wanders, shifts, and wrestles with itself, the supermodel's story continues amid the dense underbrush of information in which it plays hide and seek.

A complicating virtue of *Supermodel* is that the found texts often develop their own narratives, which compete with and/or complement our heroine's story. Then there are those moments when the two tracks—master narrative and found text—dovetail: one couplet picks up where the last one left off, and they seem to be (suddenly?) speaking with one voice, or at least in one conversation. Then the moment passes and crossing tracks again run parallel, or diverge, competing for our attention. Ultimately it is a productive and evocative competition—one which yields not only a ripe commentary on today's world, but also a rich *experience* of it.