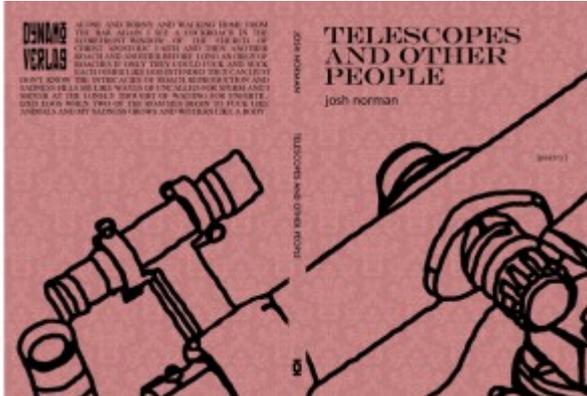


# These Assholes from DC: A Review of Telescopes and Other People by Joshua Norman

written by Andrew Squitiro | April 27, 2016



*Telescopes and Other People* by Joshua Norman  
Dynamo Verlag, 2016  
118 pages – [Dynamo](#) / [Amazon](#)

Josh Norman is the type of guy to only expect anal sex if it's from his wife and it's on his birthday. He's a humble, funny man. That's what makes *Telescopes and Other People* such a surprise, breakout piece of literature. The poems—if you can call them that—are simple. I'd be surprised if Norman had ever read a book on the art of the line break, or ever said the word *lineation* in real life. But the poems work. They're humble, which is a requirement of something this funny.

Like all really good jokes, Norman's poems are equipped with a delayed fuse. When you hear it you laugh, but later, when you're walking home from the bar or someone's house, you're like, *Damn, is this what life is like?* Some of the lines in *Telescopes* make you lose hope in humankind, or, at the very least, reimagine it as something not quite deserving of the term *evolved*. They don't question the existence of consciousness, but the importance.

For example, in one of Norman's poems, the speaker buys his mother a telescope for Christmas. And what would she—like any mother—do with said telescope? According to Norman, she'd look at "Venus. The stars," sure. But why not also, "The Muslim neighbors / fucking." Wouldn't you?

Moreover, what is the phenomenology of Muslim neighbors fucking? Does it matter that they're Muslims? Does it matter that they're neighbors? Yes to both, because this is America, and that's the sort of thing Americans use their telescopes for. Not just the stars, but exotic, maybe deviant, maybe sacred, intercourse. These are the phenomena Norman is concerned with.

And beside the lovemaking of their foreign neighbors, what else are Americans

concerned with? Think of Norman's speaker, pissing in a field, and "for the first time in such a long time," he's happy. "Really fucking happy." And not only happy with "where I was," but also, "with the size / of my penis." If you don't think penis size is something with the same amount of importance to some people as God or the Magna Carta, you're deluded. That's why Norman's poetry is so striking, it's painful, it's funny, and it's totally unfiltered and true.

For instance, here's one poem in its entirety:

#### BABY HEART

You have a baby-heart.  
I have one too.  
It hurts. Make it  
                    better.

I wish I could quote the whole book in this review, it's that good. But again, like all really funny jokes, it's better if you're there. Read them aloud to your friends or your dog. Don't take it too seriously. Don't think about until later, holding your dick in the shower and trying so hard to not think of your mom, that-holy shit-those poems might be smarter than you think.