

Nan Cohen

*Unfinished City*

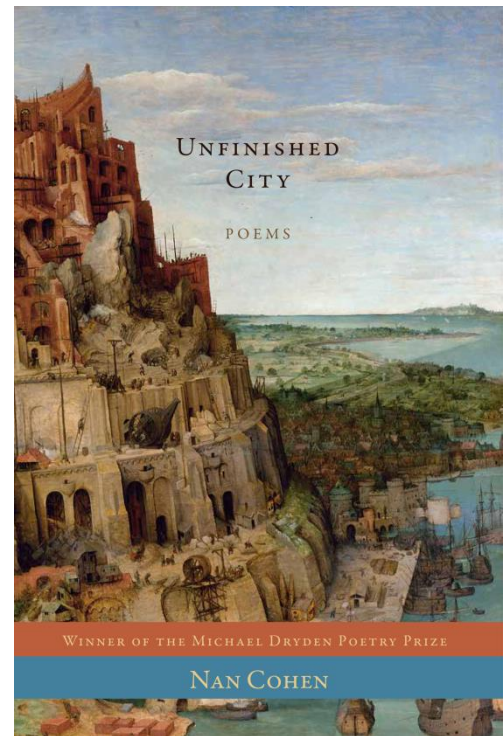
Winner of the Michael Dryden Poetry Prize

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### **Finalist, Koret Award for an Emerging Writer on Jewish Themes**

In her second collection of poems, Nan Cohen (*Rope Bridge*) plumbs the mythic dimensions of ordinary life through a reimagining of the people and places of the Hebrew Bible. By turns tender, reflective, and playful, the poems of *Unfinished City* discover both new gravity and a shimmering mobility in the commonplaces of human experience.

### ***Advance Praise for Unfinished City:***

Rarely does one encounter a book whose moral symmetry finds such eloquence and form in lines spare enough to encompass our deepest questions, yet taut enough to sustain us through grief, through the terrors of doubt and oblivion. By undertaking one of our greatest and abiding symbols, the Tower of Babel, Nan Cohen confidently asserts we speak our histories and lives in the bright language of poetry and in the dazzling prophecies of our songs.

–Major Jackson

*Unfinished City* is a collection of sensual, thoughtful poems illustrating the tender mercies that animate our human lives. Bookish in the best possible way, Cohen interrogates the Good Book as she probes the compassion and grace inherent in creations and creators. She returns to the story of Eve's creation, refashioning it in each chapter as she reminds us our survival requires careful eyes, patience, a willingness to repeat, to wait, to engage with the unfairness and asymmetries of Time's Arrow in all its forms.

–Judith Baumel

## Abraham and Isaac: II

I have lived in tents and often, at midday,  
have I parted the tent-clothes and gone inside  
with the light of day so blinding my eyes  
that my wife spoke to me out of darkness,  
saying, 'Take this dish, and eat.

I have walked among the flocks on starless nights  
with the blackness so filling my eyes  
I put forth my hand,  
as if night were a tent,  
as if some shape might glimmer in my sight  
before the cloths of night fell across it.

Eyes full of light or dark,  
night or day, I cannot tell.  
I grope forward to lift the cloth  
of this moment, and the next.



Nan Cohen is also the author of *Rope Bridge* (Cherry Grove Collections, 2005). A past Wallace Stegner Fellow and Jones Lecturer at Stanford University, she has taught at USC, Antioch University Los Angeles, and UCLA, among others, and currently chairs the English Department at an independent school in Los Angeles. She has received a Rona Jaffe Writer's Award, the Stanley P. Young Fellowship from the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, and a Literature Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. She is Poetry Director of the Napa Valley Writers' Conference.

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