



# The Figure of a Man Being Swallowed by a Fish (Phoenix Poets)

*Joshua Weiner*

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## **The Figure of a Man Being Swallowed by a Fish (Phoenix Poets)** Joshua Weiner

At the heart of Joshua Weiner's new book is an extended poem with a bold political dimension and great intellectual ambition. It fuses the poet's point of view with Walt Whitman's to narrate a decentered time-traveling collage about Rock Creek, a tributary of the Potomac that runs through Washington, DC. For Weiner, Rock Creek is the location of myriad kinds of movement, streaming, and joining: personal enterprise and financial capital; national politics, murder, sex, and homelessness; the Civil War and collective history; music, spiritual awakening, personal memory, and pastoral vision. The questions that arise from the opening foundational poem inform the others in the collection, which range widely from the dramatic arrival of an uncanny charismatic totem that titles the volume to intimate reflections on family, illness, and dream visions. The virtues of Weiner's earlier books—discursive intelligence, formal control, an eccentric and intriguing ear, and a wide-ranging curiosity matched to variety of feeling—are all present here. But in *The Figure of a Man Being Swallowed by a Fish*, Weiner has discovered a new poetic idiom, one that is stripped down, rhythmically jagged, and comprehensively philosophical about human limits.

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