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PRESS RELEASE

## *ALISOUN SINGS*

CAROLINE BERGVALL

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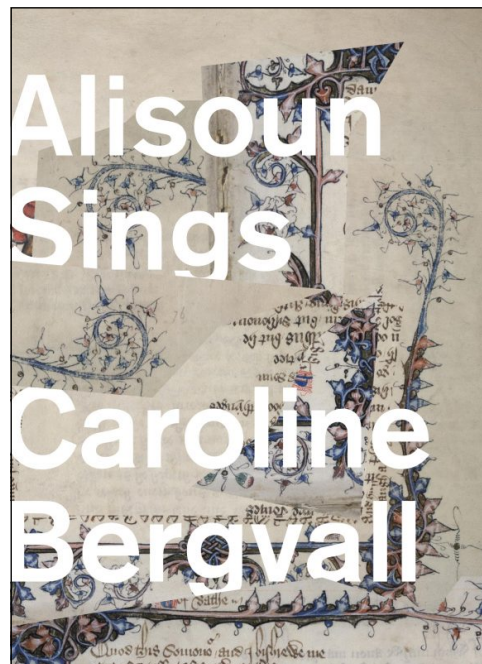
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5.25 x 7.25 in | 152 pages | Poetry

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“Thank heaven for Caroline Bergvall, an artist and poet pushing the boundaries of language in a blogged-up and twittering digital world” – *The Guardian*

*Alisoun Sings* is a fast-paced book-length monologue by award-winning poet Caroline Bergvall. This is the third volume of her trilogy written in a lively mash-up of languages, in many voices, old and new. Her visionary work develops through explorations of material traces, literary documents, historical languages, and hidden or forgotten knowledge. *Alisoun Sings* gives new life to the most iconic female figure of medieval literature, Dame Alisoun, Wife of Bath, returning from the 14th century and Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* to advise again on the conditioning of women and men, and share on marriage, erotic pleasure, fashion, and the state of the world. Her conversation companions range from Emma Goldman, Audre Lorde, Missy Elliott, Hildegard von Bingen, to Pussy Riot, Vivienne Westwood, Arundhati Roy, and many others.

In this final volume of her trilogy of books developed from medieval and contemporary sources, Bergvall continues to push her writing towards (what she calls) “transhistoric English”. Bergvall reprises Alisoun’s forceful common sense into a new vision leading the way across narratives of gender and addressing, with caustic humor and wisdom, the brutality of social conventions. The new energy Bergvall gives to female and multi-gendered travellers across the age in this layered text navigates modes of love and protest in landscapes impacted by environmental catastrophes and systemic violence. It provides her with an opportunity to meditate on the imagination of love as a resistant political force and as a way to rebuild communal forms of living.

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### **Advance Praise for *Alisoun Sings***

Caroline Bergvall brings exceptional linguistic range and sensitivity, active engagement, dynamic experimentation and intellectual passion to her poetic and artistic creations.

—**Marina Warner**, *writer, author of Monuments and Maidens, Forms of Enchantment: Writings on Art and Artists*

[OVER]

It made me laugh out loud in some sections, nod wisely in others, want to chorus a ‘yes!’ here, and a ‘go- girl’ there. I love its generosity, and its collectivity, its command and range of tone and style, its stylishness, and its many voices. A woman from the fourteenth century and a poet from the twenty-first join forces to tell it how it is. Chaucer better watch out.

—**Clare Lees**, *Director of the Institute of English Studies, London, Editor of The Cambridge History of Early Medieval Literature*

As a reader the work is transportive, I enter a new and unfamiliar space as I read this, it feels almost archaeological in nature. There are worm holes here, carved out through space and language, stories and places, centuries collapse, gaps in time dissipate, the medieval and the modern merge.

—**Rachel Lichtenstein**, *writer and curator, Rodinsky’s Room, On Brick Lane*

Ecofeminist writer and performer Caroline Bergvall follows her earlier brilliant Meddle English by dialoguing with, not quite melding into, Chaucer's vernacular muse, the Wife of Bath. An inspired, tragi-hilarious mixing and meddling of modern and medieval Englishes, a rallying cry for bio- and-linguistic diversity, a ferocious unleashing of sexual and bodily power.

—**David Wallace**, *medievalist, Europeanist, author of Chaucer: A Very Short Introduction*

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**Caroline Bergvall** is a writer of French-Norwegian origins based in London. She works across art-forms, media and languages; outputs alternate between books, collaborative performances and language installations. Award winning poet and performer, her publications include *Drift* (recipient of the Cholmondeley Award for Poetry 2017), *Meddle English: New and Selected Texts* (recently translated into the French: *L’Anglais Mêlé*), and the DVD *Ghost Pieces: five language-based installations* (2010). She is the first recipient of the art literary prize Prix Littéraire Bernard Heidsieck-Centre Pompidou, Paris (2017). Recent works and commissions include: Documenta 14 (Kassel), John Hansard Gallery (Southampton), Dublin International Literature Festival, The Whitstable Biennale (UK), Palais de Tokyo (Paris), ICA (Portland), The Jewish Museum (Munich), Fundacio Tapiès (Barcelona), Festival de la Batie (Geneva), The Serpentine Gallery (London), MOMA (NY), Tate Modern (London). Her ongoing work Ragadawn is an outdoor sunrise performance for spoken voice, songs for soprano by British composer Gavin Bryars and a dawn chorus of voices in multiple minoritarian languages. She was the director of the interdisciplinary program Performance Writing at Dartington College of Arts (1995–2000), co-Chair of the MFA in Writing, Bard College (2005–2007), Whitechapel Gallery Writer-in-Residence (2014), Collaborative Fellow, University of Chicago (w/ Jen Scappettone & Judd Morrissey, 2016), recent guest faculty at Naropa University, and the Judith E. Wilson Fellow in Poetry and Drama at the University of Cambridge (2012–2013). Bergvall is currently a Visiting Professor in Medieval Studies at King’s College London.