FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Drinking Girls and Their Dresses
Heather Sellers
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In “The Empress of Ties,” one poem in this collection, two women in Florida begin a misguided venture to create a business making ties, undaunted by the climate: “In our town men wore bathing / suits. No one bought ties.” When the business finally fails after a year, the two women knot all the ties together, settle them around their waists, and ride bicycles away from each other until the ties are taut between them. Then people begin to pay attention to this strange moving finish line. In many ways, this poem acts as the key to this volume, runner-up for the Sawtooth Poetry Prize 2002. For Sellers, the finish line, the utopian place, the perfect act, the love just ahead are all lined up on a vanishing point that keeps pushing into the distance; the poet can only follow.

Sellers also authored Georgia Underwater, a book of short stories that won a Barnes and Noble Discover award, and she has a children’s book forthcoming. Perhaps her experience in these other genres has helped to sharpen her narrative sense and eye for significant detail. She describes living in Orlando as a child:

My hair is wet underneath
from March through November. I save a
drowning boy, being from Orlando. My
brother swims in the Junior Olympics. My mother
swims across the lake when she is angry
at my father. She wears her clothes.
She swims for three hours.

Sellers does not clutter the line with the extraneous. She speaks with the sharp details of childhood, where motivations are as simple as anger and the fact of where she lives.

This search for the perfect place, where one truly belongs, pervades the book as the speaker moves from Florida to the Midwest, even to the space between two people in a bed. For each space, Sellers explores a new way of knowing, of trying to own a foreign space through attention: in the garden on her wedding day, “The snails are making themselves // into plump

shiny awnings over all these awesome back-door deaths," in her bed, "the mattress / pressed my back like a terrible idea, / looming," and in Orlando, "Being away from Orlando / we see we were visiting the place, in its sky blue uniform. It's a hotel / for fruit, a winter tempo with a hurricane for every girl, and, / in every room by noon a little bit of the sea we lived for."

For readers interested in the ways that place creates identity and compulsion, this book should fascinate. Sellers moves easily from venue to venue, creating a mythology for each place, and readers might find little gods in her thoughtful descriptions.

Camille-Yvette Welsch