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FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ POETRY

In Search of Small Gods

Jim Harrison
Copper Canyon Press (May 2009)
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In Search of Small Gods is filled with what is most loved about Harrison's work….nods to pure attentiveness. When he rises Harrison bows to the cardinal directions and to the vertical in order to place himself on the earth. These poems are paying constant attention to landscapes all kinds of characters including the main character himself. In "Very Small Wars" Harrison writes "It occurred to me that if I were a vehicle I wouldn't be a Maserati but a John Deere or Farmall tractor nothing special." Admittedly thinking of him in the body of a Maserati is laughable…he is after all "little Jimmy down on the farm."

This book stands as an incredible addition to a body of work relentless in its pursuit of staring down the void. Harrison is also at work with thinly disguised social comment: "They're amputating the head of the poor girl / to put on a rich girl who needs to survive." But a good many of the poems are about the importance of the flesh and the enduring nature of the soul. Most memorable is "Advice" a long prose poem about the advice coming from an Ojibwe alcoholic filled with Harrison at his best—eating raw deer heats seventy year old Remington's held together with duct tape pet garter snakes lovely women and the landscape of the Upper Peninsula.

These are lusting and irreverent poems by turns sad and melancholy or just as easily joyous in the celebration of the mind free to roam in the consciousness of the natural world. As expected they penetrate deeply into the soul of one of our finest living poets who is at usually at work trying to find the sweetest way to take his leave. This is a book that needs to be read repeatedly almost as mantra as a way of seeing those small gods in our lives who are there at every turn every curve of a lovely leg every song that erupts from a vigilant heart. It is also a book of songs made by a man who is conscious that he needs to sing himself away. Dying is an art and he knows it.
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