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## Keeping My Name

**Catherine Tufariello**
Texas Tech University Press (April 2004)
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For formalists, this author comes as a gift, a poet fully in charge of her forms, subtle and controlled. She embraces the villanelle, Petrarchan and Shakespearean sonnets, the measured quatrain, rhymed couplets. The book seems a throwback, derived from a classic liberal arts education with its interest in metrics and rhyme and its section of translation, but what excites the reader is watching Tufariello use the limits of these traditions to stretch her creativity.

She has taught literature and writing at Cornell and the University of Miami. Her poems and translations have appeared in anthologies like The New Penguin Book of Love Poetry. This volume, selected by Robert Fink as the thirteenth winner of the Walt MacDonald First Book Competition in Poetry, takes risks.

Though Tufariello writes of Biblical characters, her women come fully to life. Her formal poems move with ease rather than practiced stiffness. They create a tension between form and subject matter, as in “Ghost Children,” a sonnet in which the speaker mourns the children that she and her husband will never have, because of their pending divorce. Friends, seeking to comfort, “remark / how lucky it is we never had a child,” but the narrator says: “Now I mourn the pretty / darlings I carry but cannot have, the ghost / children whose faces are mirrors of all we’ve lost.” The rhyme is subtle, one of sight rather than sound; the lines are loose with their syllables, a subtle indication of crumbling institutions, sonnet and marriage.

The book’s five sections chronicle a life, awakening to potential, falling in love and losing it, recovery and agreeing to love again. The poems in “Go, grieving rhymes” celebrate and mourn love, reflecting the progress of the speaker. They are no mere show of admirable mastery (although they do admirably keep the music of the poems as well as the meanings); they are solace for the speaker, espousing literature as a state of grace.

Beside these classical poems, Tufariello places poems that celebrate the everyday, the longing for a child, the sounds of a playground and a handyman, who after recess, goes up to the roof of the school, where “He gathers up the balls that got away / And spent the day / aimlessly free-red, orange, purple, white- // And punts them, in bright arcs, back into play.”

With each poem, Tufariello strives for the same kind of epiphany that her speaker has when seeing “The Walrus at Coney Island.” She watches the oafish beast heft himself out of the water for a feeding, pitying his “wrecked / resistant body” until she sees him dive and understands: “So this is what he is, has always been: / A gleaming, sleekly muscled submarine, / Lithe as a dancer, roguish as a boy, / Corkscrewing downward with what looks like joy.”

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (April 15, 2004)

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