FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Poetry

Like Those Who Dream
Brad Davis
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In this, the fourth and final volume of Daviss *Opening King David* series, each poem responds to a phrase from the Psalms. The relationships between the poems and the epigraphs are glancing, tangential, but evocative. These poems, many of them unrhymed sonnets, make one stop for a moment, not necessarily to think, but to take in. “The bee sunning beside me on the bench / is no fool and serves without resistance,” writes Davis, and we pause to consider that bee.

Davis weaves together the divine with the ordinary in a voice that is at once reverent and irreverent. “Bring it on,” he says, “Roll in, sweet chariot. Swing down and rock us / deep with some dark shuffle of transcendence.” This combination of heady topic with common vernacular and setting refreshes and makes us pay attention. What if God moved into a dorm and lived with us? asks Davis. What if Stevie Ray Vaughn were the god of blues music? Where else would you find the word “smarty-pants” used in an attempt to divine Gods existence? All this fun aside, loss and heartbreak make their entrances, along with doubt and Davis’s wish that God might intervene more often, more lovingly. “Wherever You are, assuming You are,” he says to God, “do better than stoop to look. Raise her up.”

Shot through with references to the Greeks, religious history, theology, and served up with a generous set of notes, these spare and agile poems enlarge our sense of the divine in this world. However exalted his topic, Davis never loses touch with a more humble perspective. In one poem, the disenfranchised young take off for trouble: “follow hunger into town / every angel and archangel with them,” because, as Davis writes in his notes: “Perhaps you, too, have experienced religious ritual so dull that you easily imagine all heaven sneaking mischievously out the back.”

The book has its own arc of feeling-after wrestling with issues of loss and disappointment, Davis ends with songs of thankfulness and praise. He concludes that “this child-like hope is a cool thing,” and he speculates that we become dizzy when we hyperventilate because we are inhaling so much good and “so much goodness / flooding our little brains it very nearly / bowls us over, tips us toward our knees.” Let the poems in this book flood your brain, and they will tip you, too, toward thankfulness and joy.

For now I am thankful for how all things
seem to resolve into song and the high call
to bend our wills to set a wronged world right.

Teresa Scollon