FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

They Sing to Her Bones
Joy Manesiotis
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Undeniably composed with the ear in mind, Manesiotis offers highly aestheticized poems that beg to be felt deeply, as she feels them, in the bone. Traversing themes of love and loss, the Greek homeland of her ancestors, religious ritual and death among the young, her subjects are explored with the precision of a lapidary.

A series of poems about her friend Costa, a dancer and choreographer, successfully balance the pathos of mourning with the fortitude of acceptance: “How strange that you appear, three years dead, whole/ and somehow, free, on the night we began/ dropping bombs on a country in the Middle east.” Here, lament and elegy serve as reconciliation for unexpected tragedy, taking to hand a task that is well suited to a poet determined to preserve experiences in text.

Elsewhere, the emotional content of her poems is less convincing, perhaps because her standards are set for beauty and sound, rather than the gritty or unruly plots of ordinary life. The result is artful language and a sense that the world is being interpreted through an overly sympathetic lens, perhaps as an escape from things that might not always invite obvious poetic association.

Admirably, Manesiotis is devoted to the finest details, laboring to recount obscure specifics as perceived through her sharp shooter’s eyes. Her training in the visual arts, primarily sculpture, is evidenced throughout this debut collection. At her best, movement and form, often of the body, contribute to a dynamic, 3-D quality in many of the poems: “smooth/ forearm, the white marble’s slow curve through the inner/ elbow. The forearm braceleted, a scar circling the young flesh.” This characteristic has the potential to distinguish her among poets in that she bows down at the altars of lyric and image, evoking multifaceted poetry through vision and intellect.

The liberal use of Greek words and references is colorful, though at times thwarting, leaving one to puzzle at pronunciation, flipping back and forth to the explanatory notes at the back of the book. Regardless, the sounds are enticing, and for best effect this volume should be

read aloud beside a crumbling chapel, surrounded by white rocks and the Mediterranean sky.

Holly Wren Spaulding