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Things and Flesh

Linda Gregg
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Gregg's new book is fresh and fearless in that she writes beautiful and unabashedly spiritual poems that are free of the didactic, doctrinal or pretentious. Hers is a spirituality laced with silence and reflection but articulate of a transcendent nature. In the poems, this approach often begins with abstract concepts or concerns such as modesty or imagination and ends with the specific connection to the real, such as harpoons and apple trees. She creates the sense of a communal God, one who exists outside the often inadequate aphorisms of quick-fix religion and well within the territory of the ancient eastern thinkers and the American Transcendentalists. In a poem titled Lovers the Size of God's Hand she writes, "The waves breaking beside her/are as loud as the voice of God,/ and as strong as the stillness/by the well. One calls, here, here./ The other repeating, Yes, here." Here she reveals the kind of connection and communication she creates between her God and the natural world. The tone and rhythm of her poems create a sense of quiet ritual, the carefully controlled word choices reminiscent of heartfelt prayer and the making of rites.

She is not, however, unrealistic or sentimental in her development of these themes. Lines like "Each time I think, it is here/that God lives. Right around here/ in this terrible, ruined place/with streets made desolate by neon …" show how she has linked her sense of the spiritual world to the harsh realities of urban landscapes. Readers will find a rich and varied text, full of surprising turns and a God fully connected to human concerns.
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