

Who Gathers the Breeze

David Vigoda

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The story of two women separated by centuries joins with themes of spiritual searching, conquering independence, and finding real love.

David Vigoda delivers a gorgeous and expansive new novel that bridges medieval and contemporary eras. On its surface, *Who Gathers the Breeze* follows two unlikely pairs on pilgrimage, characters whose lives are changed more by the inward, eternal search for truth than they are by the outward journey.

While Vigoda's novel is certain to draw comparisons to other scholarly semi-romances, including A. S. Byatt's *Possession*, there's a grace and an intelligence in his prose that sets *Who Gathers the Breeze* apart. Chapters trade between Margherita's 14th-century trek in the footsteps of St. James and the 21st century pre-economic-crash quest of Wall Street virtuoso Tiffany.

Though held apart by seven centuries, the women prove kindred: both are in search of something more than the droning cushiness of their privileged lives; neither defines their pilgrimage in strict terms of religious adherence; both are married to usurers whose cravenness troubles them; both find mentors, and in their mentors, love. Questions of spirituality and meaning abound.

Nor do challenges remain in the intellectual or moral realm. Margherita is rendered a target by her ostentatious entourage and the absence of her husband. She faces bandits, judgmental religious officials, and lascivious attackers. Young, smitten Tuccio defends her honor and her safety where necessary, and Margherita finds herself worrying less and less about her husband's soul in direct proportion to her growing affection for the young guard. Contemporary Tiffany faces similar challenges, torn between the husband who can't understand why she needs to search and the widowed professor of medieval studies who nurtures her along.

Vigoda's pages flow along with poetic pacing, eschewing internal punctuation in favor of unfettered expression, so that the task of reading itself becomes a form of discernment. Such decisions add depth to an already complex and involving novel. Joining Margherita and Tiffany in their searches becomes its own sort of pilgrimage, with revelations aplenty waiting at the end.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (Summer 2015)

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