



Nodin Press

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What Trees Know

poems

Emilio DeGrazia

The poems gathered in Emilio DeGrazia's latest collection, *What Trees Know*, take for their subject not only what trees "know" but what they are, how we think about them, and how their quiet presence affects our lives. Such a focus may seem unpromising, but DeGrazia spins a diverse and remarkable array of verses from this common root, trunk, and leaf. Part of the appeal lies in the arboreal "stuff" involved, but no less important are the whimsy, penetration, and verbal dexterity with which DeGrazia plies his craft. In "Aspen Roots," for example, he brings together a common phrase, "connecting the dots," and the well-known fact (not explicitly mentioned in the poem) that aspen groves form vast underground webs of interconnected roots. This thought leads on to a series of fanciful connections, as:

... braided aspen roots / Shudder the surface of a pond / While the traffic in L.A. is touched / By the whiskers of a catfish / Brushing weeds in deepwater murk—

In another piece, the poet, on a quiet morning, offers his appreciation for the hackberry tree outside the house that deflected the worst of a thunderstorm the previous evening. The poem "Acacia Sweet-Sours" is rich in cooking lore, and in "Oak Lovelife" DeGrazia assumes the persona of the oak himself, who chides the poet Virgil for mis-describing his qualities.

DeGrazia's language tends toward formality, which is only fitting considering he's applying the humor and ingenuity we associate with the Metaphysical Poets to some of the themes the Romantics explored two hundred years later. But there is nothing stuffy here. Drawing heavily on personal experience bolstered by Classical sources and the latest New Age science, DeGrazia has created a world of leafy wonders that every reader will enjoy.

Emilio DeGrazia has published numerous works of fiction, creative prose, and poetry. He has also co-edited three anthologies of Minnesota writers for Nodin Press with his wife, Monica. They live in Winona, Minnesota.

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