



Eldest Daughter: Poems

Ava Leavell Haymon

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In *Eldest Daughter*, Ava Leavell Haymon displays her mastery of the craft and engages us with the poetic gifts we have come to expect from her. As in previous collections, she combines the sensory and the spiritual in wild verbal fireworks. Concrete descriptions of a woman's life in the mid-twentieth-century American South mix with wider concerns about family lies and truths, and a culture that supports or forbids clear speech.

In a passage from "The Holy Ghost Attends Vacation Bible School," the physical world of children interplays with the divine:

The least likely place the Holy Ghost ever descended was in east Mississippi. Red clay hills and church politics soured on years of inbreeding. Every deacon drove a pickup. At Bible School, the kids played red rover and rolled down the sharp slope behind the Baptist church. He recognized the dizziness at the bottom and the fear of having your name called, but the grass stains, the torn blouses, and sprained wrists -- these were beyond Him.

Haymon's poems encourage us to revel in the natural world and enjoy its delights, as well as to confront the difficult realities that keep us from doing so.

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