

Wed July 23, 2008

Poetry focuses on biblical story of Job to challenge reader

In *"Not Exactly Job"* (Mongrel Empire Press, \$14), Nathan Brown of Norman has created an extraordinary work of poetry that challenges the reader. The challenges come in the questions created in the book's format. All of Brown's poems in this collection focus on some aspect of the Bible's book of Job.

At times, the narrator uses first-person to communicate with God and Job; other times, he uses third-person to comment on God and Job. Sometimes his comments might be taken as parody; other times, burlesque; still other times, straightforward. The reader's challenge is to try to discern when the narrator is serious and when he's playing.

The book contains 42 poems, several black-and-white photographs and references taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version. The numerical biblical references are placed to the right of the text when a direct reference is made.

The poems generally present a male speaker examining his life and using Job as a figure of contrast. He wants to believe in God but is not quite sure about what to do or expect.

For example, in the poem, "Be at Peace," taken from Job 22-21, he writes:

Submit to God and be at peace with Him.

We'll submit, Eliphaz, but to tell Job to

be at peace? ... just ... "be at peace"?

There in the grip of a God-sanctioned

Cyclone of dead children and boils?

Just ... "be at peace"?

As if it's like going to the bathroom?

For the reader to fully appreciate this work, he or she should be familiar with the story of Job and the challenges the story represents. Brown shows how a modern man can experience difficulty trying to understand God's objective in having Satan "test" Job's faithfulness.

What Brown suggests in the poems is the idea that modern man is not equipped as was Job to meet the many challenges set before him to best his faith; hence, the title.

Brown, a poet, musician, performer and photographer, seems to have combined all his talents and skills in this work. His readers will receive the benefits of his efforts.

— Paul Lehman

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