

SERIES EDITORS' PREFACE

Like We Still Speak gives both physical and metaphysical form to grief. The physical form comes from the poet's need to control and negotiate loss, but not necessarily because she is in denial or distant from acceptance. Rather, in Danielle Badra's hands, form becomes the body with which she upholds her life against the fear of disintegration and forgetfulness. In the process, she finds herself ecstatically smashed with the pleasure of survival, a palpable thrill that affords her the force to forge and sing her remembrance, her elisions, her eucharist. Even the title of the book transfers the untranscribed into the translated. How much of our speech is still? What begins as an elegy for her sister expands into an elegy that includes her father. What begins as a careful construction of effigy becomes a pliable imagination of commemoration—accuracy gives way to fracture; perfection is scattered into fragments; preservation gives way to multiple voices and echoes.

The more Badra toils with form (compositionally, structurally, linguistically), the more the metaphysical emanates from the page. This is a deeply spiritual book, all the more so because of its clarity and humility. Yet, we cannot walk away from the addictive command that so many of these poems ask us to follow: to read them along plural paths whose order changes while their immeasurable spirit remains unbound. Each poem is a singular vessel—of narratives, embodiments that correspond with memories, memories that recollect passion. The columns in many of the poems here are contrapuntal but are also echoes of the hemistiches of the classical Arabic qassidah, and of the well-preserved ancient ruins of the soul.

Like We Still Speak is structured like a rosary strung together with several different types of recurring beads. Take, for example, the "Station" poems (there are four in all), or the pair of "Counting Down" poems ("Slowly Counting Down from Ten" and "Slowly Counting Down from Ten While Taking Deep Breaths"), or, among our favorites, "Ode to Onion" and "Ode to Honey." With any rosary, however, the beads are more than ornamental, and they also serve a purpose much larger than that of marker or placeholder for this prayer or that breath. They initiate a practice: an experiential practice that leads, ideally, to solace, reflection, or even epiphany. In this way, *Like We Still Speak* is a sanctum. Inside it, we are enthralled by beauty, consoled by light, sustained by making.

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