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BOOK NEWS

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Rogoff's Fifth Poetry Collection Explores the Intensity and Strangeness of Love

LSU Press to Publish Venera in February 2014

"[Rogoff's] poetry takes a visible art of movement and translates the feelings it evokes and the history it records into delicate words. . . . But Rogoff also has an amazing knack for the humor in humanity, as a slew of death-defying poems demonstrates."—Andrew Burstein, *The Baton Rouge Advocate*

"Quite simply, I love the gravitational, poetic pull of Rogoff's work."—Renée E. D'Aoust, *Notre Dame Review*

Baton Rouge— The poems in Jay Rogoff's *Venera* explore varieties of love, both sacred and profane, by drawing from the natural world, personal intimacy, and the human imagination as evoked in biblical narratives and art. Rogoff reveals how devotion's many guises collide to startle us: a husband consoles his wife after she is awakened by an imaginary child, a man daydreams of his kindergarten crush, Abraham's fear of God perplexes his love for Isaac, and the Virgin Mary, stunned by the angel Gabriel's inhuman beauty, contemplates the decades of purity that stretch ahead.

In *Venera's* title sonnet sequence, inspired by visions of the feminine depicted in the works of Renaissance painter Jan van Eyck, such collisions evolve into collusions. As Rogoff weds elevated language to plain-spokenness and sets the erotic alongside the miraculous, the beloved accumulates many identities—everyone's mother and everyone's daughter, the laboring handmaid and the Queen of heaven, the fertile field and the elusive bride. Rogoff's poems allow us to ponder the contradictory human concoctions of love, detailing how they drive us to venerate the sacred while also submitting to the power of the sensuous.

Jay Rogoff has published four previous books of poems, including *The Art of Gravity* and *The Long Fault*. His poetry and criticism appear in many journals, and he is *The Hopkins Review's* dance critic. He lives in Saratoga Springs, New York, where he teaches at Skidmore College.

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Poetry

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