There is much to be admired in Elizabeth Robinson’s *Apostrophe*. It is driven by strange, even haunting images, and precisely made lines. It runs the gamut from spare to lush, from “I know that I was made by God / so that my head could rotate on its / angle and look up” to “I do as I am told by the falling parade / of black clacking disks / that tumble downward in disarray,” and seems at home all along that spectrum. But, as a reader, I am often left at a distance that calls to mind that axiomatic head/heart division I usually deplore. It is when the book’s emergencies of heart seem obscured or tempered (for our protection? the writer’s?) by intellection, that I feel a little cold, a little lonely.

I can’t escape the feeling that it is my own inadequacies as a reader that leave me, in Keats’ terms, “irritably reaching” in some of these poems. Perhaps, I have just not yet “felt the miracle” that allows Jean Valentine to be “seen” by the work (as she describes on the back cover of the book). But there are, in the end, more moments that draw me in than those which push me out, more moments like “As though / by whispering straw / in the heat of passion // we could spin // and spin” that give me that joyful, sexy anxiety that I come to poetry for.

Poems like “End of the World,” “Wind,” and “Round Tower” make this book well worth the read. And the second read. And the third. And I’m still holding out hope that on the fourth, I will suddenly feel the miracle that will invite me further into all of the poems in this collection, that will help me see a happier marriage of the emotional urgency I feel to be at work here to the obvious and valuable intelligence that has been brought to bear.

—Meagan Evans

---

**Chicken with Plums**

Marjorie Satrapi, *Chicken with Plums*, Translated by Anjali Singh
Publisher: Pantheon Books
2006, 84 pages, $16.95

Iranian-born graphic novelist Marjane Satrapi first made waves with *Persepolis* and *Persepolis2*, autobiographical comics about childhood, wartime, and exile. Her latest work of fiction, *Chicken with Plums*, examines the 1958 death of famed...
Iranian musician Nasser Ali Khan. In the story, the celebrated tar player’s instrument is broken and his search for a replacement proves futile; he decides he will die. Eight days later, he does.

Nasser Ali Khan’s story is broken up into eight subsequent chapters, each delving into the life and memory of the conflicted, narcissistic artist who, trapped by expectation and unrequited love, has become bitter, angry, and poetic. Satrapi’s controlled storytelling is unflinchingly dark, but layers of Sufi myth, Iranian poetry, and political commentary ground the text in an unexpectedly pleasant reality. The artwork is stunning, as usual.

Satrapi is currently at work on an animated movie version of her 2004 memoir-in-comic-strips *Persepolis*. She is writing and directing the film, which is expected to be released by Sony Picture Classics in 2007.

—Jack Kaulfus