

*My Cap of Darkness,*  
Poems by Glover Davis  
Lamar University Literary Press  
Reviewed by  
Roberto Bonazzi

Glover Davis' sixth book further develops his stringent aesthetic (in rhythmic narratives of varied prosody, some with subtle rhyming) of telling a compelling story. Some poems evolve from Greek and Roman mythologies, but many are voices from clarifying dreams or Nature—the calling of colors, flowers, stones—in sumptuous poems that experiment with traditional forms.

The title poem begins the book. The poet's cap is a football helmet, "without the capabilities/Perseus possessed, letting him move/unseen among various enemies." The magic for Perseus is invisibility when wearing the helm of darkness, while Davis' helmet is "paint streaked from collisions with running backs"—and "the whole world went dark" when helmets collided.

The next series concerns Davis' infliction and the death of his first wife. These beautiful poems are immensely sad. "Hyperostosis" explores the condition he endures (in a third person narration): "Bone spurs were forming up and down his spine./He could no longer bend way down to pick/up litter in his yard or lace his shoes/or easily swivel his neck left or right./His vertebrae were casing themselves in bone/as though his skeleton inherited/armor to ward off life's inevitable blows."

"Flight" speaks directly in the first person: "Dead relatives assembling in the air/ above her bed would talk to her andshe/would answer them as though I were

not there." In "My Late Wife's Clothes" Davis ends with very simple, heartbreaking lines: "I want to shut the door and leave this room; do anything but bundle up her clothes." The pots of roses planted by his late wife become her metaphor, "showing forth this mortal beauty's fate."

All 64 poems have lovely moments, but those that are dream-like or extol workers or return us to his writing desk are among the strongest. "The River Walk" (in San Antonio) turns nature into a text. "A bank of lilies may reflect white scrolls/ onto the river's marbled-green which rilled/by breezes rocks them in a wake, unrolls/ their rippling parchments, letting the sun-chilled/runes briefly print vague capitals of light./Such dazzling appearances might mean/nothing despite a fluency of white/dots, dashes foaming on the river's glassine/exterior, angelic texts which none/of us will read or ever comprehend./And if eternity's graved colophon/crushes beneath a foot as leaves descend/one would still search the river bank to find/it trembling on the margins of the wind."

The final poem ("Above It All") offers three balanced parts. The first concerns where the poet's "vantage point" is established: "above/my yellow pads and clouds of sleep. . ." The second ventures into the contradictory actions of Zeus in *The Iliad*. The third part returns to the west coast. "And even now do similar powers sweep/over and around us, invisible/as the

winds driving blue Pacific swells?/Could they determine human destinies,/altering our passages through time and space?/Homer would think so. I don't want to know." No human really knows.

Davis ends this book truthfully, humbly, magnificently: "And though I have observed things from these heights/when the right time comes I'll move into a world/ below where things can be touched, tasted, heard/and try to be as solid as a house,/ strong as a horse, white blazings on the throat—/at least in vivid dream-fueled reveries—/but finally only a mortal, aging man."

Glover Davis is Professor Emeritus of Creative Writing at San Diego State University and now lives in San Antonio with wife Mariana Aitches, also a published poet and retired professor. His significant teachers—Phillip Levine (at Fresno State) and Donald Justice (at the Iowa Writers Workshop)—wrote very differently from him and each other. Yet he learned a total dedication to poetry, which has all to do with his accomplished style and obvious originality.

Davis will read from his new book at the Southwest School of the Arts on Thursday, September 22 at 7 pm.

**Roberto Bonazzi's most recent book, *Awakened by Surprise* (fictions from Lamar University Literary Press) was published this spring. *Outside the Margins* (literary commentaries from Wings Press) appeared last autumn.**