



## Burn This House

Poetry by  
Kelly Davio

In her debut poetry collection, Kelly Davio invites the reader into a world where sin is virtue and virtue is vice, where the ominous lingers just beneath the surface, and the everyday is imbued with the fantastic. In these intelligent, compassionate, and harrowing poems, Davio gives a modern voice to metaphysical tradition. The poems in this collection dismantle the specter and judgment of a life shaded by Judeo-Christian religious consciousness. Grounded in Davio's radical religious childhood and subsequent break with the church, her writing examines the world from the viewpoint of the spiritual dissenter, questioning the mores and motivations of religion, family, and self. In sections that explore concepts of revelation, sin, and virtue, these poems tilt the world at uncharacteristic angles, revealing the ragged edges at the margins of belief. At times solemn, at times exuberant, *Burn This House* is an intense volume, its darkness lit by the flames of wit, intellect, and curiosity.

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### Biographical note:

**Kelly Davio** is Managing Editor of *The Los Angeles Review*, Associate Editor of *Fifth Wednesday Journal*, and a reviewer for *Women's Review of Books*. She is a Pushcart nominee whose work has been honored in *Best New Poets*, edited by Kim Addonizio, and who has published poems in journals including *Gargoyle*, *The Cincinnati Review*, *Bellingham Review*, *Pank*, and others. She holds an MFA in Poetry from Northwest Institute of Literary Arts, Whidbey Writers' Workshop, and teaches English as a second language in Seattle, Washington.

### Praise for *Burn This House*:

"Here is a clear, fresh voice enhanced by first-rate craftsmanship. Kelly Davio gives us poems full of original surprises."

—David Wagoner



**More Praise for *Burn This House*:**



“Kelly Davio’s *Burn This House* is a vivid, nuanced, beautifully organized, and wit-enriched debut. It is a dark book, but the darkness is illuminated throughout with the cool flames of ironic humor, and the brightest light arrives in the concluding sequence’s conflagration, the flaring out of the poetic house. But this collection is just the beginning—this compassionate and harrowing book promises more brilliance to come. Tongues of flame, anyone?”

—Carolyn Wright, author of *A Change of Maps* and *Mania Klepto: The Book of Eulene*



“Every page in Kelly Davio’s *Burn This House* lives up to the intensity of its title. Davio follows the tradition of Blake’s *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*, exploring signs, revelations, sin, virtue, and judgment in this powerful, slim volume. Her poetry is, in the words of one of her poems, ‘ready to push its edge at the breather’s throat.’”

—Shaindel Beers, author of *A Brief History of Time* and *The Children’s War*, editor of *Contrary Magazine*

**“Burn This House”**

Tell the rescuers they are not wanted.  
Raise a hand to stop the water-bearers.  
Let thin curtains snap glass panes  
in sudden lashes of bright, and weave  
smoke trails through space between your eyes.  
Pull exhaled air back through the lips.  
Hold each ember by your teeth in shelter.  
Allow each column of timber to stray  
from notions of form and size, catching  
flakes of fire on your tongue. Move now:  
circling, strange. Pound feet askew  
in the wreck that roasts below.  
Wave thin arms about your head—  
bend wrists, push hands to lift  
the flames to ripeness. Trace with bones  
your semblance in the ash, and let darkness  
surround, sloughing off the body’s burden.

