

BROOD

by C.R. Resetarits

Mongrel Empire Press, 2015. 51 pp. \$14.00. ISBN 978-0-9903204-4-9

MEMORY OF BLUE

by Jacqueline Kolosov

Salmon Poetry, 2014. 88 pp. \$22.00. ISBN 978-1-908836-75-5

THE SKY IS SHOOTING BLUE ARROWS

by Glenna Luschei

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Reviewed by Robert Kostuck

“First and foremost, the account should be personal, tracing the inward history of the field experience, perhaps beginning with prior expectations, apprehensions, hopes, and ambitions. It might encompass the chance happenings, the frustrations and rewards, the unsought insights, the stumbled-upon understandings, the never-resolved misunderstandings—whatever characterized the sequence of the human interchange between you as an outsider and those with whom you made your home” (Peggy Golde, *Women in the Field: Anthropological Experiences*, 1970.)

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Art is not created in a void. Past experiences shape our interpretations of an endless stream of present moments; memories cling to us like raindrops or burrs. Memory is the moment immediately following experience, and present moments may also shape memories. What we choose to diffuse, clarify, illuminate, or teach is often prosaic and random. The selection of what we deem worthy of art appears random, but that is the mystery of the creative spirit. Even in the realm of poetry this process eludes reduction to a set formula.

What pleasure to revisit a memory and see experience brought round to clarity; what pleasure to translate that clarity into the (relatively) limited vocabulary of language. And the charge that all art is political resonates here: nature observation, cultural tropes, the individual in society roughly sketched or elegantly refined; the

measurement of our children's growth, the anticipation of death—all have a place.

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In *Brood*, C.R. Resetarits uses alliteration and assonance to create a musical effect. Read aloud, rhythm and melody bring this song-like quality to the forefront. *Brood* extends from the immediate family to friends and geography; flows from tactile to visual to aural. Selective moments resonate with an ache—the memory, here, of epiphanies and sharp understanding. These poems are presented alphabetically which removes any conception of chronology—memories inclined toward a seeming randomness; which although all is connected, is how we usually relive memories—“out of order.”

Family and the immediacy of day-to-day can be difficult to pinpoint. What intimate observation might encapsulate such a relationship? Is objectivity possible? In the title poem, Ms. Resetarits assures us it is; tactile impressions underlie the emotional:

Tossing art from
boy to boy
my twinning sons
of different druthers—
gadfly Peter and
somber Paul. (. . .)
The bubbling arts
of hat and sleeve:
deft slights of hand
and shifting feet
one thumb in pie
on toe in peat. (“Brood” 1-6, 19-24)

Body as geography, body as landscape—when the personal intersects with the geographical, the effect is subtle, taut, and physical. The reader, the listener, wants to latch onto something simultaneously familiar and new. Analogies or metaphors are necessary tools; tools or course, serve the results—they are not results in and of themselves. Good art which appears effortless

always takes the most effort. Here is a lesson in the often difficult task of distilling words from physical sensations. The living landscape, the pulse of the earth, the pleasure of being a part of everything.

The sweep of cottonwoods working slipless beyond the parlor doors skim rivulets of spark in coarse, parched skins. But the mid-grass hills, their petticoat dews, their rusted corsets, their busted seams, wear velveteen so easily, brief gossamer green, a revelry, on thighs and hips, on breasts of flint. (“Flint Hills” 5-9)

Perhaps our bendability is
the pines we all spring from,
perhaps our green is meant
for cut and graft, to sway
in shifts of wind and view. (“Pining” 14-18)

Woven into these definite experiences are (after a fashion) non-experiences—the anticipated, waited-for, and unseen. How can “nothing” be a memory? How can a visceral “not happening” be as intense as a physical experience? There is a general tendency to modify the physical, as the endless streams of information we receive are given their due may overwhelm by simple constancy. Focusing inward is to pursue the elusive; the uniqueness of pure thought and emotion is fragile and fragmentary. In the past this focus was filtered through the mediums of realism; the development of non-objective painting in the late 19th century shifted that focus, eventually becoming part of the other visual and performing arts. Ms Resetarits is at her most honest in these passages.

I’m watching, as always, for the flight
of some sweet, singular bird past
my window seat sky, and I must stay stuck
til I do, as all bust balloons caught by twigs
must stay stuck, left to kite calls and vulture spins
left to high plains taunting skies, this morning
a most curious hue (. . .) (“Looking West” 15-21)