



**“Falling Off The Bicycle Forever” by Michael Rattee**

Falling Off The Bicycle Forever”

poems by Michael Rattee

Adastra Press

*Review by Tomas O’Leary*

Having read these poems cover to cover several times, just to be sure I was interpreting my own response without bias or alien input, I’m relieved to have arrived at this moment of pronouncement with clear head and easy heart.

The poems are in speech that is plain, but composed by an eloquent-mind. Each plays out in casual narrative, seeming to chance upon its gem of mystery or revelation as it rolls along. The entire book is innocent of punctuation; and while I personally am committed even to the semicolon, I gotta confess that these poems work fine without it.

Since each of these poems is the whole poem, not lending itself to lifted lines for the sake of a statement about it, I offer the following run of first lines only to demonstrate my sense of spontaneous genesis throughout the volume: Somewhere there’s a dog; He imagines a world without excuses; It isn’t the day she wanted; He needed to get away; The man running behind the bus; His passion for the future; Some of us live our lives. . . .

The poems assert themselves without fanfare, but usually towards a dead-on finale that alerts us to remember to remember. Here’s the title poem, on whose note the book closes:

Father was drunk and showing how  
closely he could lead Lady  
his hunting dog he jumped  
off the porch falling to his knees  
the shotgun waving wildly  
with the second shot he winged  
the dog and as she fell  
head over heels he grabbed  
a bicycle and headed headlong  
down the dirt road yelling  
he was a boy again by god  
halfway down the hill gravel  
caught the front wheel wrenching  
it sideways and throwing him  
over the handlebars in midair  
he turned back to us yelling

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and whooping flailing his arms  
falling off the bicycle forever

Everything really quite simply is just about memory. Here's a coda for the hell of it: I'd just started writing this thing when my brother Jerry called from a hospital in Baltimore. He was in a rush, stepped off a curb, his ankle at a quirkish angle, lost his balance, flung himself forward to protect his head, and broke his hip. Damned if it didn't feel like the casual calamity in a poem by Michael Rattee. I'll send my brother this book; I bet we'll both remember having read it.