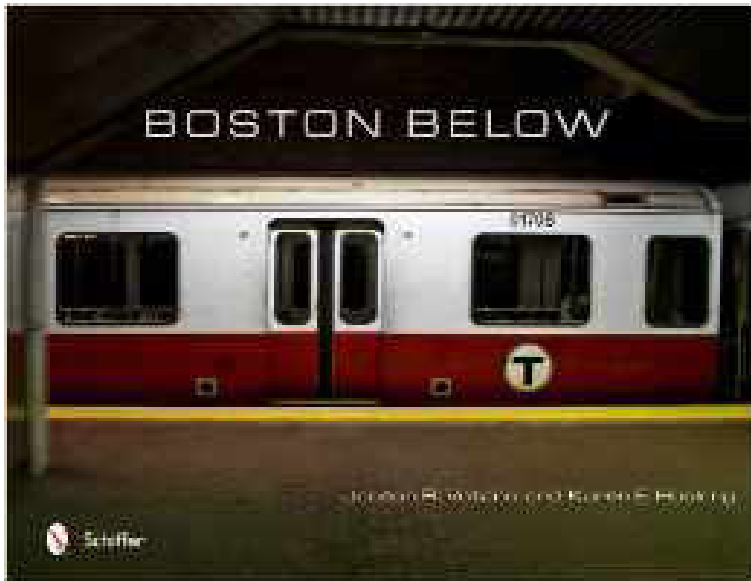


**Riding Together: A Close Look at  
Boston Below**

160 pages, Schiffer Publishing, Ltd. (October 28, 2013)  
ISBN-13: 978-0764345425

*review by Emily Pineau*

It's more than just deserted subways and stairwells in *Boston Below*, a photographic book and journey through the oldest American subway system by Joseph Votano and Karen Hosking. In many of images people are shown to be alone, yet they seem to be immersed in another world. One of the first black and white shots is of a man sitting by



himself on one side of a bench in a subway station. The man's cane is resting beside him, and he is writing something on a newspaper. Even though no one is with this man, loneliness is not depicted in this image. The way the cane is propped next to the man looks like it is connected to the newspaper and pointing towards the empty seats on the bench. This setup indicates that the newspaper is sufficient enough company for him. In addition, similar to the shot of the man on the bench, there is a black and white shot of three people leaning up against their own poles in the subway station, but they are all separate from each other. Even though each of these people is not with someone else, they still have company. This image shows that these three different people all have something in common; they have a place to go.

The image that I thought to be the most powerful is of a little boy and girl looking out the window of the subway. The shot is in black and white and the little girl is blurred. Also, the boy and girl are squished up against each other and only the backs of them are shown. In this image the lighting makes it look as though the children were painted with watercolors. It is this painted look that emphasizes the innocence of the children watching the world go by. The fact that the girl is blurred makes it seem like she is in many places at once. Not only is she with the boy, but she is also with the people she sees out the window, and in all of the next panels of her journey.

Looking at people from an outsider's perspective helps us to see how

## Wilderness House Literary Review 9/1

we are all connected to each other and to our surroundings. This feeling is more accessible with just black and white because it makes everyone seem like they are coming from the same place. Though, the shots that do have color still hold a lot of power, especially since the bright red and oranges reflect the liveliness of the trains themselves. The vibrant surroundings of these subways in some of the images show that not only does the subway bring life to the people, but the people bring life to the subway. Also, Votano's and Hosking's images of hands grasping the poles to stay steady on the train are very symbolic to how we all need something to hold onto and how we are all connected somehow. It is very important to recognize that everyone shares the same journey, but we all just get off at different stops.

Emily Pineau's poetry has appeared in the anthology, *Like One: Poems For Boston*, and in newspapers and literary journals such as the *Somerville News*, *The Endicott Observer*, *The Endicott Review*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, and *Notes from the Gean: Monthly Haiku Journal*. In 2012 her poem, "I would for you" was nominated for a pushcart prize. In 2013 *The Ibbetson Street Press* published her poetry collection, *No Need to Speak*. *The Aureorean* chose *No Need to Speak* as the Editor's Chap/Book Choice to be featured in their October issue in 2013. Pineau was also featured on National Public Radio on a station in New Mexico in 2013.