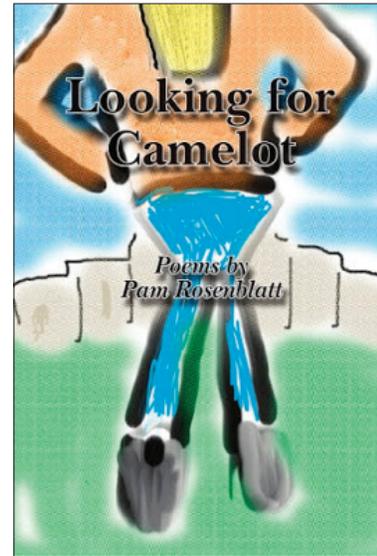


Looking For Camelot
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Wilderness House Press

Review by Michael Steffen

Playfulness, observation and contrast are guiding muses in Pam Rosenblatt's new book of poems, *Looking for Camelot* (ISBN 978-1-67801-029-4) released this year by Wilderness House Press. There could hardly be a time more needful of a spirit which, as Molly Lynn Watt has noted, "hums with delight in her immediate world and her cheerful imagination." This liberality of good intention is made vivid by the inclusion of the author's witty and attentive drawings and a preface piece, "Philosophy of Words," which affirms that language is "the proof that our minds are working efficiently" with encouragement to use our words "positively, not negatively, to help and not to hurt." Seemingly simple, we may well find ourselves listening to how language is used around us in our time, as well as to the news - even beyond the items of our current crisis with the virus - and realize how sorely needed and well taken Rosenblatt's Philosophy of eulogy is. That follows with the 11 limericks the poet has layered into the collection, with both their light-hearted and evocative, not to mention transforming - "There once was a..." - charms.



Yet the author shows depth and consideration. Folded in with these lighter verses are substantial meditations that extend beyond the half-page standard poem - often to a page and a half, showing a turn of mind for oppositions simple as "Cat and Dog", and reversals as complex as "The World is an apple Or is an apple but the world?" in which the poet intriguingly holds an apple (the fruit) in one hand while typing at a laptop (another "Apple" we suppose, with the Internet, the "world") with her other hand.

Whenever our attention is summonsed, especially quietly through the senses, challenging the mind in its capacity to make a sensible order of even our most familiar perceptions, life's moments take on a luminous and memorable character. This is true of the ordinary yet vivid contrast Rosenblatt draws in the two-part poem "Outside-Inside." It is a day under a regional rain outdoors set sharply against the subtle yet poignantly solicitous scent of an uncut pineapple inside the cottage, which "rules all/As it waits on the kitchen's/Marble countertop..."[pages 8-9].

Humdrum as a rainy day may normally leave us, the poet brings the event of the shower outdoors (which is being allowed inside just a little through "the half-closed screened/Glass door") to life with an array of active verbs deepening the portrait of the moment:

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*Rain falls, clings onto
The trees, the shrubs,
The browning grass,*

*Pierces, splatters
The dirt driveway
Makes cloudy puddles...*

An element of time, "the browning grass" - autumn, early winter - will enhance the poet's perception of the "uncut pineapple" on the kitchen countertop along with another exotic yet in our time not so extraordinary occupant of a "bonsai plant," the scent of which is being dominated by the fresh tropical pineapple and its tough yet perishable (time) being, as the fruit

*Lives longer than the wilted rose
In a silver vase on the living room's
Wooden chess table,*

*But is eaten before the plastic daffodils
In the wicker basket on the hallway's
Round three-legged table are tossed out.*

From meditations on early bedtimes, observing a doe leap amid a hunter's season, and walking in the woods, to the more involved themes of our evolutionary link to the simplest creatures ("We are starfish") and "Botticelli's Venus," the author's concentration throughout the book maintains an engaging and enjoyable balance between levity and caution that we all need and can appreciate. With her overriding credo of affirmation -

*Yes, I am here. Yes, you are here...
You sustain a reaction,
You lightly question remarks, and
You powerfully inquire about them.*

Yes, I am intrigued...

Yes, I will always remember you...

Rosenblatt brings a convincing voice of inspiration in a time of so much uncertainty.