

## Wilderness House Literary Review 6/1

### **Mississippi Poems**

Linda Larson

ISCS Press

ISBN 9827115-2-1

\$12.00 2011

*review by Irene Koronas, poetry editor  
Wilderness House Literary Review*

“...She had loved him, in high school,  
he with the great, consoling hands.  
She had loved him and his hands,  
before she understood that to him  
she was the land.  
And the tornado came for her  
and at the last it seemed  
to her that he was kind.  
But the storm was too great  
and it, too, took her  
without asking.”

This book is what it means to be a writer, poet, ‘Mississippi Poems,’ selects the best verse, they are self contained, each poem depicts the character, the place, or the situation with clear eyed realism, even if it is a lie. Picasso said, all art is a lie. Larson’s poems speak directly and ask to be believed, to hear the metaphors’ bloom, to participate in the maturity of a seasoned poet:

“She planted Tango geraniums  
in the bed flanking the driveway  
she had always wished was grander.  
Still it circled the house, the house  
she wished had pillars...”

The poems are crafted with the precise eye of someone who knows it takes more than talent to render images, verse, or tense. Larson give us her experiences crossing the years, the pages, we follow her casual gait, which enables the reader to slow down our readiness to plunge forward at all costs; the words gather into a bouquet, “which is what lovers do”. Not all the poems suggest bloom, some look at the underbelly of loss and what it means to live with the buds that never open:

“I didn’t buy a used car from him.  
Still he offered to take me out to lunch.  
The first thing I noticed was his bright pink rubber hand.  
It was especially jarring as it didn’t fit with the rest of him.  
Neat as a pin. Flaming red hair cut short. Bright blue eyes,  
congenial nature. Suit and tie. Lunch led to drinks.  
Makers Mark, Glenliver. Bacardi 151-top shelf all the way.

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We ended up on my screened-in back porch,  
limp as laundry. He wooed me with woe, wooed me till  
I was woozy with his tales of being a battlefield medic,  
a maestro of morphine, a bringer of comfort  
for the snowballs, those triaged in Viet Nam  
medivaced last, who didn't have a chance in hell.  
It wasn't the screaming he told me, it was the whispers,  
the scribbled, penciled promises, that went with the numbers  
on the dog tags he had to scramble to keep track of:

If it is a girl, please name her Marie  
After Mother, I know you two don't get along...

When I get home I'll make it up to you.  
We'll get married, I promise you. A big wedding  
Just like you want...

Please tell her I didn't mean to hit her.  
I'd rather die than ever hurt her...  
..."

From beginning to end these creative works hold my attention and  
turn me back to the starting page. I recommend this book, strongly. Linda  
Larson is one of our finest poets.