

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/2

Women on Poetry: Writing, Revising, Publishing and Teaching
edited by Carol Smallwood, Colleen S. Harris and Cynthia Brackett-Vincent
(foreword by Molly Peacock)
McFarland & Company, 2012, \$45 softcover, index, (6 x 9), 267 pp.,
ISBN 978-0-7864-6392-3

Review by Ann McCauley

Women on Poetry is a unique book that fills a void in the poetry world.

It is an entertaining read that will inspire female poets to move their poetry to the next level. I caution you to keep pen and paper handy to take notes or at the very least use a highlighter and small book marks to indicate the entries you will want to refer back to again and again.

Molly Peacock's Foreword stated these essays note poetry's impact on our lives and the difficulty poets have, especially women poets, of being noticed by a larger world. There is something for every woman who has thought about the art of poetry...to learn, imbibe and react to in this book.

The editors demonstrated an uncanny ingenuity as they gathered this talented diverse group of forty-three female poets to create fifty-nine chapters on the craft of poetry for poets and poetry lovers of all levels. The different personalities of the writers kept the book interesting with their distinctive viewpoints. This volume was compiled with love and encouragement for all women poets no matter whether novice or veteran, for poets who want or need a fresh approach.

Claudia Emerson stated in her *The Writers Chronicle* interview, September 2010, "...many girls want to be writers but become responsible/employable adults. But the real world continues to be, I believe, pretty deeply, persistently racist, sexist, and for a lot of women the only chance of being published would be in a volume with other women writers."

Ellen Bass's Top 14 Teaching Tips in Chapter 15 provides the groundwork for a successful poetry critique group or teaching a class with invaluable guidelines. I liked the final advice she rendered, "...to always maintain a beginner's mind and you will continue to learn from your students."

Many poets think they are ready before they are which helps explains why so many suffer with rejection after rejection. Chapters 38 through 44 detailed the many aspects of this part of the poetry business. And *yes*, poetry is a business.

The anthology is divided into:

Part I: Our Writing Life—A Collective Voice

Part II: We Who Pass it On—Tips on Teaching

Part III: The Next Step—Publishing Our Poetry

Part IV: Just for Us—Essential Wisdom

This book can help women poets gain the attention and respect they've long deserved...and seldom received. Poetry has long been male dominated with the experts claiming women were over emotional.