



reflections and reveries

poetry by Gail M. Murray as reviewed by Liz Torlée

In *Reflections and Reveries*, Gail M. Murray takes us on a magical mystery tour, through the lush landscapes of the Mediterranean to the “clang and clutter” of New York, from sunny memories of childhood, through roller coasters of love, to musings on the approach of death.

Murray writes in free verse style, with none of the traditional meter, rhyme, or stanza formatting. Instead, the words flow unfettered by convention, sometimes grouped into three or four lines, but more often filling whatever space they need: *I search out beauty/ crafted with a gentle heart/ Sometimes the poetry chooses me (Inspiration).*

The poems rooted in the love of nature are classically beautiful. They bring out the author's deep respect for the natural world, and engage all our senses: *Here in the clouds, the air clean/ Layers of green bathe my winter weary spirit (Rainforest).* Whether telling us of the orange groves of Grenada, or the “thunderous explosions” of Costa Rica's Arenal volcano, Murray taps into the emotional power of Mother Nature and pulls us close to share her secrets.

Sometimes, the author takes us closer to travel writing or descriptive prose style—hiccups in the otherwise seductive read. The poems *Genoa (Today the highway obstructs our view/ Guidebooks don't tell you that)*, and *Packing* with its practical advice, are examples of this. But, we are soon brought once more under the spell of emotional contemplation. Her writing is deceptively simple, grouping common thoughts and feelings in unusual ways, bringing new depth of feeling, new light on old subjects. *I can't move on till/He moves out /out of my mind/ out of my reveries/ off my phone line (Out There).* In *Twilight in Barbados*, a particular favourite of mine, the author paints a simple but captivating scene, conjuring sight, smell, and sound so clearly into twelve short lines, ending with *guests in their rooms/ shower away salt and suntan lotion/ I sit at peace/as the resort comes to life again.*

Murray covers a broad canvas with this work, including recollections of long-ago family gatherings, men gone to war, tributes to long-deceased authors and feline companions, as well as the challenge of inherited memorabilia that inspire reverence and despair. *What's to become of these treasures? Oh well, at least I've used the good dishes. (It's Time.)*

But it is the poems about love and its loss that resonate most profoundly. Some zero in on the delicious anticipation at the beginning of a new relationship... *the sweetness and excitement of/ yet to be/ beckons (Response)*, and *When he departs/ A part of me goes out the door/ with him (My Split Apart)*. Many are suffused with regret, and reveal a deeply honest vulnerability, a harrowing sense of betrayal: *From the admission of your affair/ you long*

for it, too/ just not with me. (Remember How), *What is he telling me? "...had an encounter ... she can arouse me."* *Traded in like a used car. (Blindsided)*, and *If you meet a year from now/ How will you feel?/ Will you feel at all?(Orchid Petals)*

Particularly poignant is *Living on Hold*, touching on life during the pandemic, and echoing feelings that so many endured during this time: *She lives on hold, growing older by the minute/ running out of time to love again.*

No matter what the theme, lovers of poetry will find themselves happily lost in these one hundred and eleven reveries and reflections, losing track of time as they explore and succumb to the embrace of this highly creative new work.

previously published in *Devour, Art and Lit Canada*
Issue 019 Winter 2024/25



Liz Torlée has had two novels published: *The Way Things Fall* and *In Love With The Night* (Blue Denim Press 2020 and 2022), and is currently at work on the third in the trilogy. Her short story, *Flight*, was published by Chicken House Press in April 2024 in the anthology, *Will There Be A Sunset?* Liz lived and worked in England and Germany before emigrating to Canada. When she is not writing, she and her husband are usually travelling to faraway lands



Gail M. Murray Like Keats, Gail seeks to capture the essence of the moment. Her writing is a response to her natural and emotional environment. Her poems have been published in *Reflections and Reveries*, *Written Tenfold*, *Blank Spaces*, *Wordscape*, *Arborealis*, and *The Banister*. Her creative non-fiction has appeared in *The Globe and Mail*, *Trellis*, *Heartbeats*, *Renaissance*, *Devour*, *The Ontario Gardener*, *NOW Magazine*, *Blank Spaces*, *Stony Bridges*, *Ottawa Review of Books*, *Historical Novels Review*, *Pure Slush* and *Our Canada*.