healing, and being present.

By way of separating the two collections, *First Day* is a collection of poetry and prose with a sole titled author, Malca Litovitz. *Slow Dancing* is a collection of collaborative writing: the first half of the collection is a duologue between the two titled authors, Malca Litovitz and Elena Wolff, and the second half is a collection of rengas, "a form of collaborative, linked poetry, similar in structure to haiku, with origins in medieval Japan." In the spirit of navigating this new collaboration they agreed to set aside the "formal renga rules" and "write line-by alternating-line, and took turns at going first." There was no discussion of subject matter and there was no condition about "syllabic count or line length. [Their] aim was simply to continue working together creatively" over the course of eight months prior to Malca Litovitz's death.

Slow Dancing begins with a thematically expansive duologue in which Malca Litovitz speaks about the relationship to "her literary life." In it there is a discussion about the themes in her poetry but much more significant is her reflection about the connection between writing poetry and life, living, healing, loving, being present. As a reflection about the significance and importance of the representation of beauty in her poetry, she states, "I want to experience beauty. I don't want to ask why it's beautiful," grounding her relationship to poetry in the experiential and the present.

In this review I will speak more visibly about *Slow Dancing,* largely to bear witness to the spiritually healing quality of this collaborative writing found in this collection. Elena Wolff reflects in the Forward on writing the rengas for the collection: "We experienced the delight of surprise, the excitement of discovery, the comfort of shared thought, and the closeness of slow dancing – preserved in words." *Slow Dancing* makes significant the nearness of poetry to dance, the slow dance, the partnered dance, and the soft rhythmical movements of slow sensuality. The title calls the reader to the physical presence of bodies and flesh in the experience of, the taste of, the intimacy and nakedness of slow dancing; it is life-affirming, as is poetry. Malca Litovitz's work is "prayerful," states Elena Wolff. I read this to suggest not only is her poetry connected to God and the presence of God but that it is full of breath, fully in breath, present in breathing, an echo of Malca Litovitz's connection with meditation and writing poetry as a practice. The proximity of the body, the nearness of the body is both in the act of writing and the word as flesh, "jazz riff in the morning – /silk stockings in your voice mail, /our cries in the garden."

This life-affirming quality of the writing does not overshadow the visibility of illness in the writing: "my bladder, fused to my uterus, ripped a little –." Illness is debilitating and it affects her proximity to writing, to living and to being present, "Illness is a form of paralysis." Illness also invites collaboration and subsequently leads to the collaborative writing of the rengas; illness does not defeat her capacity to write: "Don't let me be mad, let me pick up my paint instead."

There is no competition for the presence of life with that of illness in *First Day* or *Slow Dancing*. These collections are conversations about the complexity of poetry as healing; of poetry as life-affirming; of poetry as vulnerability; of poetry as voice; of poetry as embodied; of poetry as confessional; of poetry as love; of poetry as flesh, slow dancing, affirming, present, living, healing, loving, nakedness.

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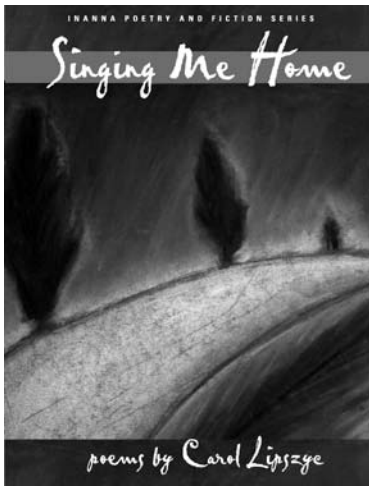

SINGING ME HOME

Carol Lipszyc
Toronto: Inanna Publications, 2010

REVIEWED BY MIRIAM N. KOTZIN

Singing Me Home, Carol Lipszyc's compelling debut collection of poetry, is far more than a simple melody. The poems are filled with arresting images, metaphors, and turns of language, as, for example, in the last lines of the opening poem, "Preserving Childhood," girls with a purple hoola-hoop "press / time down, heart-shaped / and iridescent like leaves / before they scatter / in the lapses of wind." The opening series of poems offer the complexities of growing up as child of survivors of the Holocaust. For example, a stanza describing the baking of Sabbath bread "to see how wide God's honey-laced / blessings can spread" is followed by an answer to that question as the teacher first "locks the classroom door" and then tells the children "how she once lived/ in a bone yard / where ovens baked not bread/ but people, / where chimneys spewed ashes – / and what did we think of that, / boys and girls?"

The second two sections of *Singing Me Home* shift attention to the world of an adult—and these poems,

too, are remarkable. In "Lull" and "Critique" the narrator compares herself to a bird. In "Lull," she is vulnerable, "like a fledgling bird / I can fall in the limber space between us." In "Critique," an encounter with the department head of creative writing, she has become "a yellow parakeet on his shoulder." "Critique" is one of many poems that evidence Lipszyc's sensitivity to sonic elements of a poem. Here internal rhyme and monosyllabic words skewer the creative writing department head: "what he thought I ought to say."

Lipszyc's "Teaching ESL (at a Branch of Shopper's World)" lifts and transforms the experience from a tour of pronunciation and grammar to an expression of hope: "And when we conjugate / past and present, we sense / how our lives move one tense to another, / turning over and back again like a coda / around this undefeated planet."

"Reading Braille" is an example of brilliant, breathtaking, daring use of line length and stanza breaks. The long single mid-line of the poem, following a single word line of the longest stanza—comments on the metaphor and simile in the first two stanzas as "poor intermediaries," and then moves to the metaphor of the title. The last few words of the poem engage the reader in active interpretation through the sort of ambiguity noted by critic William Empson, as they join the struggle to comprehend with sudden clarity. The genius of the metaphor of reading braille finally resides in its essential tactile element, an irony when all that's left of the absent lover are words on a page.

Careful and casual readers will both find pleasure in reading Lipszyc's *Singing Me Home,* which exemplifies well-crafted poems of keen observation and deep feeling.

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WOMEN BETWEEN: CONSTRUCTION OF SELF IN THE WORK OF SHARON BUTALA, AGANETHA DYCK, MARY MEIGS AND MARY PRATT

Verna Reid
Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2008

REVIEWED BY JANICE ANDREAE

Verna Reid has many stories to tell of "women between," especially a generation of Canadian women whose creative working lives extend well into the last-quarter century of their lifespan and into the new millennium. Her readers might expect a text heavily informed by theoretical analysis, for the artists and writers she examines – Mary Pratt, Aganetha Dyck, Mary Meigs, and Sharon Butala – have contributed much to the development of contemporary art and literature in this country. They are practically household names – certainly to academics and students, readers and viewers of Canadian art and literature. Or, her readers might expect a text structured within a tight feminist framework that leaves her reader wanting more about the actual visual and text work produced by each. What Reid delivers, however, is her own story of reading between disciplines and genres, between generations and life stories, of these artists and the work they produce.

Her story might not have been told, or known, before the advent of women's studies courses and programmes in post-secondary education. Indeed, this text suggests the valuable contributions of feminist education and feminist analysis to the activities of "making" and interpretation. Like Reid, the lives of her four subjects operate within the confines of Adrienne Rich's "compulsory heterosexuality" and, as Carolyn Heilbrun suggests, the daily struggle between private domestic constraints and the public sphere of self-determination and agency.

Reid began teaching literature at the Alberta College of Art and Design in 1967, then women's studies at ACAD and the University of Calgary where she received her Ph.D. in 2003 at the age of 75. Her intertextual and interdisciplinary doctoral work was inspired by the autobiographical content of her students' work and the experiences they shared in her classroom but her interpretation and relational analysis were made possible by the critique and content of women's studies courses and the body of feminist-informed knowledge she acquired through her studies. She cites the importance of Mary Kelley's "On Sexual Politics and Art" in *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women's Movement 1970-1985* (1987) edited by Roszika Parker and Griselda Pollock, and Pollock's own *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (1988) and *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories* (1999).

Reading between the disciplines, Reid employs feminist scholarship and feminist theory to rupture existing androcentric, hierarchical canons of literature and the visual arts, and the historical and interpretative practices they advance (See Julia Kristeva, *New French Feminisms*, 1981). Reid's strategies of interpretation echo Susan Stanford Friedman's in her groundbreaking essay "Women's Autobiographical Selves: Theory and Practice," Heilbrun's in *Writing a Woman's Life* (1988) and Nancy Miller's in *Subject to Change: Reading Feminist Writing* (1988). Also evident is the influence of life-writing texts *Essays on Life Writing: From Genre to Critical Practice* (1992) and *Autobiography and Questions of Gender* (1991) edited, respectively, by Canadian academics Marlene Kadar and Shirley Neuman.

Reid's own investigation relies heavily on the concept of unraveling representation(s) of the self expressed