

around the feathers  
...the bird has been *shot*. Then  
remove the innards. This makes  
the process much easier for the  
finer feathers are almost like hu-  
man hairs around the skin....”

However, many of the recipes seem  
like filler and are neither lyrical nor  
engaging.

As already mentioned, the best  
sections of the book with the most  
consistently engaging poems are  
“Friends” and “The Moon and Her  
Friends.” Many of the poems in  
“Friends” are playful, like the first  
poem in that section, “Doe,” which  
begins:

I am learning to hide  
the hairs of this language  
by losing [an] other.  
I give you words in all my  
skins—  
moistened, tanned, stained  
stamped  
leather patent or pleather...”

“Elegy for a Stuffed Duck,” which  
begins with a tribute to the parts of a  
feather, is a playful and witty riff on  
birds. It is one of the strongest poems  
in the collection, beginning with:

O Calamus! Let us follow the  
birds  
to paradise in the wild range...  
turn our backs from the earned  
science  
of con artist structures and  
vehicle  
cement  
to the call of faraway climes.

It continues in strong form in the  
fourth stanza:

Oh mallards, O ring necks, O  
wood  
ducks! We survey  
snivel for a closer listen to your  
clarinet sighs, aim to

silence your swank saxophone  
quack...”

Also in the “Friends” section,  
“Nesting with the Sparrow” is an-  
other strong poem. It evokes the  
narrator’s connection to that bird at  
a visceral level:

In the long-ago shadows of  
our past  
I was beneath your ribs, eating  
foliage  
...I was the gorge between  
your legs, waiting for the  
collide of  
water and womb:  
...I long to return to you....  
enter the dark world of your  
Mouth—broken  
beaked, beaten, breathing.

On page 60 is “Whale Revenge”  
with “lapping, shiny smooth skin,  
a rubbery roof—...shouts//hooved  
sounds,/wailing water-wish/from  
whalebones.” It is among the most  
evocative poems in the book.

As a writer long based in Asia, I  
found the first of the two poems set  
there gave in to cliché and predictable  
tropes of China. In the first stanza  
of “Red Colossus after Sylvia Plath”  
there are “Tiger prowls”...”Pig-  
grunts”, and a “Monkey-King,” “All  
of it hushed by great lotus lips and  
a /monk’s moon.” The following  
poem, “Who Dares to Encounter  
the Dragonfly of Binhai,” is more  
original in both its setting and the  
questions it asks: “...you continue to  
seek out/weeping willows for a gentle  
hook into the sway of breeze” the  
narrator observes, then asks, “Have  
you circled yourself enough today?”

In the final section of the book,  
“The Moon and Her Friends”, we  
meet a vulnerable and engaging  
narrator in “Moon Madness” who  
takes “moon-shaped medicine.../  
to make more serotonin for moon-  
white.” More poems like this and

those which play with language and  
association and fewer recipes would  
have made *Flesh* a stronger collection  
of poetry, but there is much to enjoy  
within its pages.

*Kate Rogers’ poetry has been shortlisted  
for the 2018 Vancouver Tagore Society  
Contest and the 2017 Montreal Inter-  
national Poetry Prize. Kate has poetry  
forthcoming in Tamaracks: Canadian  
Poetry for the 21st Century; Algebra  
of Owls, and Catherines, the Great  
(Oolichan). Kate has taught Literature  
in the Language Classroom, EAP,  
and Cultural and Media Studies for  
community colleges and universities in  
Canada and Asia for twenty-eight years.  
She currently teaches creative writing  
to refugee women and domestic helpers  
in Hong Kong for the Poetry Festival  
Foundation, a coalition made up of  
Baptist University, Chinese University,  
and Cha: An Asian Literary Journal.  
Kate Rogers’ latest poetry collection is  
Out of Place (Quattro-Aeolus House,  
Toronto. 2017).*

## A SEASON AMONG PSYCHICS

Elizabeth Greene  
Toronto: Inanna Publications and  
Education, 2018.

## REVIEWED BY KATE ROGERS

In its first sentence, the novel *A Season  
Among Psychics* entices the reader  
with empathy, wit, and anticipation:  
“When I was fifty and thought my life  
was over, I let my best friend, Claire,  
persuade me to attend a psychic fair.”

Elizabeth Greene’s dedication at  
the beginning of the book also drew  
me in: “For the teachers,” it states. If  
any group of professionals deserves  
such recognition, teachers at all levels



She certainly hadn't for me. And I thought... (the) course was pretty pricey. If I kept giving healing sessions away, I'd never get the money back, let alone make any. ...But then I thought of Danile, the blind basket-weaver in Crackpot, who gives his first thirteen baskets away, to the despair of his wife, because 'when you have a gift you give it.' And I certainly hadn't charged my eleven-year-old-neighbour, Evelyn, a slender, serious girl who tended to cling to her mother and didn't laugh much. I wouldn't have charged her even if it hadn't been practice. What I'd learned: repatterning was like teaching. You had someone's inner being in your hands, and you had to be careful of it. You could do a lot of damage.

Through her struggles with scepticism and self-doubt, Judith discovers that her "unorthodox" approach to teaching helps to make her a compassionate and effective healer. She begins to heal herself and heals her son too, even as he struggles with Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. A lot of other things happen to Judith on her road to healing. I hope you will find out for yourself where Judith ends up. I highly recommend *A Season Among Psychics* by Elizabeth Greene. It will be an engrossing winter read!

*Kate Rogers' poetry has been short-listed for the 2018 Vancouver Tagore Society Contest and the 2017 Montreal International Poetry Prize. Kate has poetry forthcoming in Tamaracks: Canadian Poetry for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; Algebra of Owls, and Catherines, the Great (Oolichan). Kate Rogers' latest poetry collection is Out of Place (Quattro-Aeolus House, Toronto. 2017).*

## ILONA MARTONFI

### Holz-kiste (Wooden Crate)

Your mother packed the Bavarian chalk mountains, rubble of the bombed Messerschmitt airport.

Your mother packed the fourth grade teacher.

Your mother packed your sexual abuse.

Your mother packed children's clothes.

Your mother packed a green comb.

She didn't pack your coloured marbles.

She didn't pack your red polka dot ribbons.

Your mother packed the tablecloth she embroidered she brought with her from Budapest.

The pinewood crate that stood upstairs in the corridor of the old airport factory hangar, Halle # 7 leaded-glass windows blasted, a Rumpelkammer upstairs your parents' bedroom: you lit the fire in the iron stove kindling and paper and coal. In a bölcső—a cradle, you rocked your little brother to sleep burlap covered Strohsack—straw mattress, the bedbugs.

Your mother packed your first Catechism book, Beichtkind. She didn't pack your cotton school apron. She packed the crate: shipped it by train to Bremerhaven.

Book of Grimm's Fairytales, porcelain doll with blue glass eyes.

Your mother packed your schoolbag,

your black leather ankle boots handmade by your Magyar great-uncle, Kovács Ferenc.

The crate bare, unpainted wood, covered with big, white block letters. When your parents, three sisters and brother József, and you, finally left Germany for Montréal, Canada, October 1954, you were allowed to bring what would fit into two crates. One for the family belongings. A second crate for father's chocolatier factory machinery and utensils.

He couldn't afford to buy them. So your apa, father, and a friend got together and built the crates. They found a hammer and a saw and nails and some metal stripping. They didn't get the wood from the walls of the factory hangar. Refugee town Neutraubling, after the war, families settling in the rubble of the abandoned Luftwaffe airport, a former sub-camp of Flossenbürg. And this place had brick walls of lime washed stucco. If you wanted a crate, you could just build one, and that's what your apa did. Caritasverband, a charity organization, paid the family's seven boat tickets.

Grandmother Mariska had to stay in Bavaria. "Grandmother will join us," apa promised. "As soon as I can guarantee for her."

*Ilona Martonfi has published three poetry books, Blue Poppy (2009), Black Grass (2012) and The Snow Kimono (2015). Forthcoming are Salt Bride (2019) and The Tempest (2020).*