

## BOOK REVIEWS (and etc)

**THE WALL AND BEYOND** by Joanna Kurowska, eLectio Publishing, Little Elm, TX. 2013. ISBN 978-1482371178. 63pp. \$9.99

If being inspired and made to think is part of the happiness that some say is the purpose of poetry, Joanna Kurowska's latest poetry collection *The Wall and Beyond* meets that purpose and then some. Her poems entice you with their simplicity and ease in reading and then stand you on your head.

Kurowska writes about freedom and various "walls" including political, social, and religious. Several of her "train poems" depict a type of wall, especially "in a train" where passengers are *wrapped up/in wall-like silence*. In the poem "Poland 1991" a special surprise: after the "garments of slavery" fall, "an American quarter carefully saved for many years," is found. A quiet joyful sense of freedom rises—beyond any wall.

And there are more delightful freedoms with intriguing wall metaphors that make you think about your life and where you are. There's "The Wall's Corner," "The Wall's Prayer," "The Wall Games." There are the implied walls of "the earth's monastic cell," and the unstated walls of the grave in "Mother" where "Mother lies down in the grave together with her child. . . ." Yet in that same poem *She is the first to conquer death; her love/lives on both sides of the umbilical cord. . . .* At the end of the poem *Blindfolded, she goes into eternity./If there is no eternity, she creates it.* Beautiful and spiritual, Kurowska's words inspire and elevate thinking beyond our expectations.

The last poem in this collection, "Today when the wind blows," is a sort of prayer that gently reminds us that although prayer—"I bow my head and say nothing"—and wind can be silent, they can inspire. The poems in Joanna Kurowska's *The Wall and Beyond* move like prayer and the wind. I highly recommend this book as very much worth reading.

*Reviewed by Joanne Stokkink*