

Washington Independent Review of Books

June 2014 Exemplars: Poetry Reviews by Grace Cavalieri

Eye to Eye by **Maria Terrone**. Bordighera Press. 115 pages.

Whether philosophically, politically, or personally, Terrone reveals our vulnerabilities with intellectual fire and a hope for the future. That's a lot to accomplish in poetry, along with the right way to present a poem. Terrone tells compelling stories, whether re-creating an elder relative's embroidering; or recalling her own young life in a "plaid jumper" "watching a violent rain." A poet's choice of themes, topics, and preferences are always a portrait of the poet so we feel we know Maria Terrone and her connection to society with all its possible endings. Her poem titled **E. R.** bombards us with reality as it opens,

The prisoners from Rikers arrive shackled, /seems like five cops to one.// Their caretakers in blue shoot/ the breeze with one another/and their charges –sports mostly,/the usual stuff, and read the *Post*,/check smart phones, poke their mouths/ with fries from crackling waxed bags...

A patient with a bruised brow/dreams aloud in Chinese.//... The Denzel Washington–look alike/shakes his shackle, demands/a "nurse administrator" ...// The night reels./More patients are wheeled in./This negative space is more crowded/than eight hours ago, but now only machines speak.//Some enshroud their heads/with rough muslin sheets, motionless and silent/despite what brought them here.

It seems relevant that, clearly, at the center of each poem is a woman speaking. Women want to succeed first of all by answering the questions within themselves. The woman wonders, the poet answers, and these internal human propulsions make the poem. Maria Terrone, like other good poets, keeps us from the danger of ruining language— and it seems as if she writes not motivated by personal gain, but because she cannot contain her mind-thoughts without expressing. Therefore we have a repurposing of language which is at once clear, thoughtful, and beautiful.

Myopia

Not a diminishing

the body's way of forcing me

to look closer.

If I lie eye to eye

with these blades of grass,

I may see what they hide:

insect, feather, pebble,

maybe the cameo

that came unpinned

as I walked here decades ago:

that once noble face

framed by wild green hair.