

A Literary Magazine for the Maternally Inclined
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LITERARY *Mama*

Essential Reading: April 2008

*In honor of National Poetry Month, we dedicate our April Essentials to our favorite poetry collections.
Spread the word!*



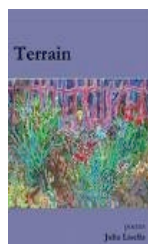
Poetry Editor Sharon Kraus, writes "Barbara Guest's *The Red Gaze* is a painfully delicate book. Her sensibility is helpful to me as a writer working in motherhood because the light touch in her work encompasses the quotidian image and the deeply intimate image. Experience is deeply felt in this book, and treated carefully (not understatement, but high regard). Guest does not write explicitly about motherhood but her work nevertheless helps me (similarly to C.D. Wright's and Jean Valentine's) by choosing the small image and responding fully to it -- something I hope to do as a mother and as a poet."

Maria Scala, Columns Co-Editor, nominates *Stranger Music: Selected Poems and Songs* by Leonard Cohen. She writes, "I've had this book on my shelf for years, and every time I open it up, I find something new to appreciate, or else I marvel again at Cohen's ability to light up the page with his poetry and lyrics. This essential volume includes classic poems such as "For Anne," "You Have the Lovers," "As the Mist Leaves No Scar," "I Left a Woman Waiting," and "Death of a Lady's Man" and iconic songs such as *Famous Blue Raincoat*, *Suzanne*, *Everybody Knows*, *Tower of Song*, *Dance Me to the End of Love*, and *Chelsea Hotel*."

Elrena Evans, Columnist and Marketing and Publicity manager, suggests Karen Hesse's *Witness*, a novel in poems. Elrena writes, "In this children's/YA book, Hesse writes about a town in Vermont in 1924 that is dealing with the arrival of the Ku Klux Klan. The story is told through a chorus of eleven voices, and the result is a richly-textured account that is beautiful to read and not soon forgotten."



Fiction Co-editor Suzanne Kamata, writes "My pick would be *The Poet's Child*. Michael Wiegiers, then managing editor of Copper Canyon Press, put together this collection of poems on parenting and children from books previously published by the press. Includes everything from poems by Pulitzer Prize winners, such as Carolyn Kizer, to Polish poet Anna Swir, to an Inuit song adapted by Stephen Berg."



Melinda Copp, Fiction Copyeditor, writes "My all-time favorite volume of poetry is *Thomas and Beulah* by Rita Dove -- the 1987 Pulitzer Prize winner. The poems are written and organized in a narrative order -- each one builds on the last one to reveal two sides of the story of Thomas and Beulah's life together. The couple -- who are based on her grandparents -- migrated from the rural south to Akron, Ohio in the 1920s, and the poems reveal their quiet struggles and successes in marriage until Thomas's death in the sixties. It's a wonderful way to spend an afternoon!"

Literary Reflections Co-Editor Violeta Garcia-Mendoza, suggests Julia Lisella's *Terrain*. "Each of the poems in this collection is beautiful, thoughtfully-placed, and haunting. It's one of my favorite collections to teach from, and to return to again and again."

Sarah Raleigh Kilts, Literary Reflections Editorial Assistant, writes "I discovered the anthology, *Cries of the Spirit: A Celebration of Women's Spirituality*, edited by Marilyn Sewell, on my mother's bookshelf when I was a teenager. It introduced me to Nikki Giovanni, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Marge Piercy, Joyce Carol Oates, Annie Dillard, Tess Gallagher, Chana Bloch, and many, many other amazing women poets. The book is organized into sections that honor the life phases of women, such as "Owning Self," "Mothering," "Generations," "Death and Lesser Losses," and "Re-Mything." Poems span topics such as menstruation, pregnancy, abortion, sexuality, love, death, and spirituality. When I left for college, my mother let me take the book with me; I have read and re-read it many times since. A source of comfort and connection, this book is perfect for gift-giving."

