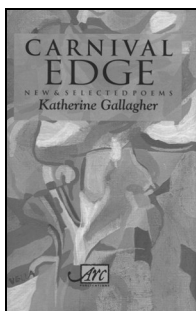


Carnival Edge: New & Selected Poems, Katherine Gallagher, Arc Publications, 2010.
Pbk £11.99, ISBN 978-1906570-42-2. Hbk £14.99, ISBN 978-1906570-43-9



“She possesses deep warmth and breadth of communication, her language is both winged and yet grounded in real and recognisable experience”

cover image by Marie Hyde

Katherine Gallagher’s *New & Selected Poems* has been long-anticipated, but the wait has been worthwhile; Arc Publications are to be commended on this impressive volume of over 160 pages.

Gallagher inhabits her poems with ease and confidence. Like her magpie in her poem *Homecoming*, “sitting within its song”, she sits within her poems. This direct and resonant phrase is characteristic of this poet’s strongly individual voice. She possesses deep warmth and breadth of communication, her language is both winged and yet grounded in real and recognizable experience. Here are poems of familial insight, drawing on the rich resource of memory.

This poet’s life journey has led her from her birthplace in Australia to many other lands, and a recurring motif in this book is the threshold of travel – leave-taking and return, a constant relinquishing and re-discovery of roots and uprooting, of the heart’s allegiances.

Memory, loss and grieving play their part in making this a major book. In the elegiac poem, *My Mother’s Garden* she exemplifies loss and yet connection, by talking “to my mother through the soles of my feet”.

Colour and physical reality shimmer through the poems, and the poet travels “where weather’s a way of life” (*Wimmera Windscreen*). Yet her use of colour imagery is constant in its self-discipline and poise, is never self-indulgent.

I have only one slight reservation, which is that the very early poems of the opening section do not show this poet at her true worth, and perhaps could have been omitted from this collection. From the second section, *Passengers To The City*, all is vintage Gallagher.

This poet has followed her own path with unflinching energy; her poems communicate the exhilaration of language as it encompasses joy and loss, memory, history, war, landscape and event. In my note on the jacket of this book I say that Katherine Gallagher is ‘a global traveller’ and that ‘this informs all of her work’. This statement is a key to the riches this poet offers.

Penelope Shuttle