

*Tripping with the Top Down* by Ellaraine Lockie  
Review by April Pameticky

I imagine that Ellaraine Lockie makes the best road trip companion, intrepid in her adventurous spirit, confronting each setback or journeying hiccup with humor and sincerity. That willingness to look, always with her *poetic-eye* open, has led to a collection of poems that both delights the senses and invites the reader to laugh and cringe right along with Lockie.

*Tripping With  
the Top Down*



Ellaraine Lockie

*Tripping with the Top Down*, Ellaraine Lockie's recent chapbook from Foothills Publishing, pulls together a little over 30 poems that document her travels through the modern American West with a frankness and courage sometimes missing in contemporary poetry. There's both inherent joy and grief in this small collection.

"Anywhere Hotel" reminisces on the horrors we've all experienced in hotels and hostels. There are, at times, violations of the "virginity code... where we pretend / no other occupants have prefaced" the room. The details are both familiar and cringe-worthy, and yet, in their frankness, we aren't turned away from travel, but instead also "pull on sweats before sliding between sheets" because the adventure is bigger than just the hotel room. Lockie argues, through each poem, that poetry isn't the spiritual moment of communing with the spirit--although there are certainly divine moments here--but rather poetry is embedded in every seemingly insignificant moment, that there is beauty in human excess and mundanity.

Her exploration into human foibles is both humorous and light. These are not political poems to weigh us down with convention. Instead, Lockie invites us to travel with her, to laugh and love with her in those connected moments. In "Motherhood in Hollywood," the reader stands in line at Starbucks as well, watching in a kind of horrified fascination, as a "purple double decker stroller pushed by a pair / of double-Ds, baby-pink fishlips and Daisy Dukes." And when this strange caricature of a person reveals what *she* defines as motherhood, we all smile and inwardly groan. We knew that there really were people like this poem revealed, but it's as if we are seeing her for the first-time, in the flesh, in front of our own eyes. The power of Lockie's attention to detail is that we have a faithful rendering of a moment both silly and collective.

Lockie's poetic range is astounding, and even in this small collection, while themes of humor are revealed throughout, mourning and sentiment are revealed in "*Apasionda.*" Whether metaphorical or real, the poem reveals "a love affair" steeped in passion and detail with a frank appeal that doesn't trivialize or sentimentalize that emotion. The lines also reveal a gratitude that "Passion persists beyond my stay."

That willingness to push through the instant stereotype to the intractable human spirit below lends Lockie's an emotional breadth that is rich and diverse.

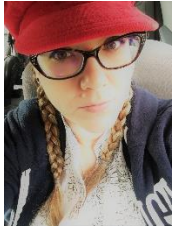
**Edge of Night**

Black with blue swollen veins  
He sits in stained denim  
On the train station bench  
Elbows on spread-eagled knees  
Sparrow hands on head hung low  
A plastic produce bag for a hat  
Pulled over his ears  
Preserving the rising heat  
The fragile lobes from frostbite  
As winter eats its way in the San Francisco Bay  
With butcher knife teeth

For purchase, or to see another sample of Lockie's work, visit [Foot Hills Publishing](#)

For more about Ellaraine Lockie's Paper Making and Pollage work, see: [The Gourmet Paper Maker](#)

An excellent interview with Ellaraine Lockie is available via *Blotterature*.



*April Pameticky received her MFA from WSU in 2006 and became swirled up in the Wichita vortex. Along with Chandra E. A. Dickson, she will host the 2017 Poetry Rendezvous October 27-29. For more information, visit [here](#).*