

## Chance encounters – Harriet Tarlo

Monday, 05 January 2009

It's a habit of mine to browse bookshops for "unknown" poets, as I call it (i.e. poets, I had not heard of previously). This is how I came across a volume of poetry by Harriet Tarlo, crammed into the back shelf at a Sheffield bookshop. The title didn't give much away "Poems 1993-2003" (published by Shearsman Books), but even just as I flicked through it catching glimpses of lines here and there, I immediately fell for Tarlo's work.

The Internet doesn't give you very much to work with when it comes to researching Tarlo, which makes you treasure her poetry even more. She lives in West Yorkshire, works as a lecturer of Creative Writing at Leeds University, and has previously published academic work on modernist and contemporary poetry.

She has a poetic style that I have always admired and aspired myself: Sparse and concise but rich in imagery. She says it all with such few words that make you ask yourself, "How does she do it?" and won't let you go once you have spent a few hours indulging in this slim volume. Human perception of colours and sounds of nature loom largely in these pieces as these themes resound in her metaphors and similes. Those who have wandered through the Yorkshire mores and dales will be able to relate especially.

Tarlo does not rhyme conventionally, but rather through choice of soft vowels and syllabics. She further challenges and guides the reader through the varying layout of her poems. It's her first ever full-length book of poetry and should be on every poetry lover's bookshelf.