

# THE YELLOW HOUSE

POEMS OF LIFE AND LOVE

ELIZABETH REIMER BARTEL

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in  
Publication

Bartel, Elizabeth Reimer, 1925-, author  
    The yellow house : poems of life and love  
/ by Elizabeth Reimer Bartel.

ISBN 978-0-9876780-9-6 (pbk.)

I. Title.

PS8603.A774Y44

2015

C811'.6

C2014-907241-4

## CONTENTS

### NATURE

AFTER THE RAIN .....	8
BRIDES.....	10
DIVERTIMENTO .....	14
THESE DAYS.....	16
ON THE DEATH OF A BIRD.....	18
FLIGHT 211 .....	20
FLOWERS DON'T CARE.....	22
FREDDIE.....	23
GENESIS.....	25
GOING EAST ON HIGHWAY 10.....	27
GRATITUDE.....	30
I WOULD RATHER HORSES.....	31
STORM .....	32
IN PRAISE OF CLOTHESLINES .....	33
JOY .....	34
LILACS IN THE RAIN.....	35
MASTER DRAFTSMAN .....	36
ON THE RAILROAD TRACKS.....	37
PHANTOM MOON .....	39
SWIMMING.....	40
THIN PLACES.....	42
YOUR DEATH, MY DEATH.....	43

## LIFE

BLUEBIRD.....	46
LIVE FROM CARNEGIE HALL.....	48
CATHOLIC.....	51
I HAVE TO ASK.....	53
LISA AT THE POOL.....	55
DEFEAT.....	57
DOCTOR.....	59
BETTER NOT TO THINK.....	62
MENDING.....	64
IN THE FIFTIES.....	65
FREDA.....	67
HELENA.....	70
IF I WERE RICH.....	72
LAMENT.....	74
OPEN CASKET.....	76
SLIPPERS.....	78
DREAMING OF MEXICO.....	80
SURGICAL SUITE.....	83
THE HOLDEMANS.....	87
TITANIC 2.....	93
WHAT HAS TO GO?.....	100
WORDS AND WORK AT 83.....	101

FAMILY

ANNIVERSARY 1967.....	104
BONNER'S FERRY .....	106
MILES NO LONGER MATTER.....	108
DEATH STALKS.....	109
FOR MY FUNERAL .....	110
GEMINI.....	112
IN THE SPRING .....	114
LINEA, AFTER A YEAR .....	116
MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS .....	118
MY FATHER SHAVING.....	120
NO QUESTION .....	122
ONE DAY IT WILL NOT BE SO .....	124
AFTER THE STROKE.....	125
LAMENT FOR THE COUSINS.....	128
ON THE ESTUARY PATH .....	130
WE STILL REMEMBER .....	132
BREAD.....	134
OF ALL THE THINGS.....	135
PRIVATE GRIEF .....	137
RASPBERRIES.....	138
TANTE ENNIE ON THE PORCH.....	140
THERE IS NO WEIGHT .....	143
YOU DIED TOO SOON .....	144
THINGS MY MOTHER ALWAYS SAID.....	145
WE'RE THE OLD ONES NOW .....	148
THE YELLOW HOUSE .....	151

So much for those days...  
A curl of mist steams upward  
from a field, visible as my breath,  
houses along a road stand waiting  
like old women knitting, breathless  
to tell their tales.

from "Necessities of Life"

by Adrienne Rich

# NATURE

## AFTER THE RAIN

After the rain  
every puddle reflects blue sky.  
Along the lane suburban houses spread out  
their dusty winter aprons of juniper  
Kitchen windows stare into the sun  
An empty clothesline rattles  
as squawking crows flare up  
like black flames  
then settle by a spilling garbage can  
Behind one fence  
a brightly coloured swing  
is chained, unseen  
A small dog snuffles and yaps.

Further down the lane  
beneath a canopy of darkest pine  
I tread on countless years of fallen needles  
springy as a mattress  
to come at last into a sunlit space



and see the old man's garden.

I think of blue-veined calloused hands  
propping up the crooked branches  
of an ancient apple tree  
while moss creeps  
over the tilted paving stones  
and papery stalks of last year's hydrangeas  
stand stiff and tall  
beside his rotting canvas chair  
Rogue blackberries  
overtake the broken shingles  
of a tool shed  
Purple crocus crowds  
the snow-drops  
fighting through last summer's grass.

Wait, Wait  
I want to call  
Come back, come back old man!  
Look here.  
Your magnolia is about to bloom.

## BRIDES

Overnight, skeletal trees  
have decked themselves in the finery  
of a billion trillion blossoms  
against a sky as blue  
as a baby's eyes  
Like brides and brides' maids  
they sway in the morning breeze.

Scattered about, low bushes  
in full bloom act as ring bearers  
and flower girls shedding their petals  
while more sober guests  
the elms and maples  
wait for the dancing to begin.