ROBERTA REES

Roberta Rees, her quiet lyricism masking a fierce determination to follow the story through, first appeared to me in a poetry workshop I gave in Calgary one week in the spring of '91. It was a remarkable workshop, all accomplished writers, struggling with issues of genrecrossing, autobiographical disclosure, appropriation of others' experience — concerns that ran deep, deeper than, though mixed in with, usual issues of musicality and formal break-through. Roberta was reserved but insistent on her vision as we collectively probed the issues her pages of poetry raised. Those pages, not so very transformed, surface near the end of her powerful first book, Eyes like Pigeons, released last year from Brick Books. Poetry obsessed with narrative, this text obsessive in its form, insistently tells, re-tells an intricately interwoven skein of several women's lifestories. This is the obsessiveness of pain, a litany of experiences that cross generations and cultures, not simply beautiful, but poignant evidence of the ways we are interconnected, woven into each other's life-lines and stories. Roberta is unflinching in her narrative focus and it is this concentration, this determination at the heart of her melodic imagery, that makes her a writer whose company one wants to keep.

— Daphne Marlatt