

**Star Signs: New and Selected Poems**

**By Lynda McKinney Lambert**

     My newest book opens with a quote from a creation story found from Genesis: 1:14, because I kept thinking about the meaning of stars and heavenly bodies in the sky as they were described in this text.

*God said, “Let there be lights across the sky to distinguish day from night, to act as signs for seasons, days, and years.”*

Genesis 1:14
International Standard Version

     This passage caused me to contemplate the place in which I live – the earth.

     The images intrigued me, and I enjoyed thinking about them. Such motifs led me to envision patterns and ideas I encountered in nature and in the history of art works across a variety of periods and civilizations.

Strong images are memorable.  In Star Signs, I capture mysteries of the universe and our natural world through metaphor, nature, mythology, the arts, landscape, and history.

**Why I wrote this book:**

     My poem, “Star Signs,” first appeared in Wordgathering Literary Magazine, Issue #40. There is a print version and an audio version.  Melissa Cotter is the narrator for the poem on the audio.  If you would like to hear the audio, please write to Lynda for the link.

     When I heard Melissa reading my poem, I stopped what I was doing and listened to my poem with new understanding.

This is what I love about hearing another person read one of my works – it gives me enlightenment into what is there, through their interpretation as they read. I write in such a way as to allow a reader to be a co-creator in the poem.  I want to leave a space for the reader to interpret and re-invent the work as they move through the poem. Melissa does this with my poems. She has recorded some of my other poems for Wordgathering, as well. Each time, I am amazed at her readings – so fresh and new to me.

     Eventually, I began to realize that the poem, “Star Signs,” is the entrance to an entire collection of poems that I have been writing about since my earliest days as an undergraduate art major.   This propelled me to research my poems as I looked for material that would support this discovery.  I wrote some new poems for this book and the newest ones were written just 2 weeks before the book was published.

The book is divided into four parts. Each part is introduced by a photograph and a quote from the first poem in that section. Each section is a series of poems that explore a different image or poetic theme.

     My first professionally published poem, “Even in Arcadia,” marks the beginning of my publishing career, and it holds the meaning and impetus to all the poems that I’ve written since the 1980s to the present time. I end the book with this poem because it is the first step on my poetic path, a pilgrimage that we share with each other.

**READERS will relate to my BOOK because:**

     We have a shared love of poetry, nature, and the human journey. We all have a sense of the mysteries that we contemplate as individuals and collectively, as humans.

I once worked in a high-end retail store in California where I was surrounded with the beauty of designer fashions from all over the world. I observed how everyone responds to beauty and splendor.  It is like a romance when we discover beauty in our natural world.

When my readers get a glimpse of the cover of Star Signs: New and Selected Poems they will immediately connect with the beauty and mystery of this world because of the stunning and sensitive photo on the cover. The cover is a detail view of a magnificent photograph by James Wheeler, from Pexels. His photo spoke to me the moment I first saw it – and I know it will speak to my readers, too.

**When I wrote this book, I asked myself 2 questions:**

     What do my books do for others?

     What is my contribution to the world?

**My response:**

     I provide 2 significant contributions that are important to all people everywhere.

     First, I hold memories within me – like an African Griot – I am the storyteller for a time and place. I am a “Keeper of Memories,” and I share them with the world through my writing.

     Second, I observe the beauty that surrounds us on this earth and in the heavenlies.

     I share this exquisite beauty as I encounter it in my poems and non-fiction stories.

*This is the value and the purpose of my book.*

**About the Author:**

     From the earliest times in my life, I have been engaged in the world of nature and dreams.  The passage of time and human memory is something that has mystified me since my earliest recollections as I lay in bed pondering the meaning of the word, “eternal.”  How can a finite creature begin to understand that which is infinite? Like the historians and poets from the centuries before me, I keep trying to define the infinite, ineffable, everlasting elements in our world.

**From the Foreword;**

     In Raymond Luczak's short story "Winter Eyes," a visual artist discovers that she is becoming blind and grows despondent over what her life will become when she will no longer be able to see. It is precisely the kind of downhill narrative that many readers have grown to expect. However, the story of real-life artist Lynda McKinney Lambert, who was diagnosed with ischemic optic neuropathy, pushes back against that narrative. Lambert turned her talent in new directions. The first was to concentrate on tactile forms of art. The second was poetry. The book that you hold in your hands, Star Signs, is the third book of poetry that Lambert has written.

     Fans of Lambert's previous two books and award-winning poems will be glad to know that the poems in this new collection are a continuation of the themes and interests that she followed previously.

     It is not surprising that her poems still exhibit the strong visual focus (detail) that one expects of an artist.

     Occasionally, Lambert also supplements the verbal text with photography. Nevertheless, the poems in Star Signs encompass a wide range of themes, drawing from music, astrology, nature, and travel.

     The opening lines of the book's title poem, "Star Signs," are a perfect foretaste of the spirit that imbues the poems in this volume:

Anyone can find the

Breath of Life when

creative moments

define a new morning.

     The lines also hint at one of Lambert's favorite forms, the abecedarian poem. Whether it is framing this form into a list, as in "Crystal Healer," or deftly massaging the form into a

narrative, as in "Beethoven's Fifth," it is fun to see how she manages to work it out-and what she will do with the letter X.

     Prior to her retirement in 2008, the poet served as Professor of Fine Arts and Humanities at Geneva College, Beaver Falls, PA. This background, and the full sense of humanities and

what it means to be human, come through loud and clear in this volume. Whether it is through nature, art, literature or spiritual paths, the poems Lambert's Star Signs provides demonstrate that life as a person with a disability can be a rewarding and fruitful one.

Michael Northern - *Wordgathering*

**Short Reviews:**

      The crisp quality of the words and vision in Star Signs are made poignant by the author's personal history and victory with physical sight. Her heart comes through her hands and pen. Her words are fresh, yet rooted and ancient. The Natural realms intersecting with the Spiritual realms plus the Human daily-realm creates a deeply pleasing flavor of poetry. Accessible. Thoughtful. Powerful.

*Elizabeth Enright Phillips, owner of Running Creek Co Limited, ardent minimalist, and author*

     Lynda Lambert, a Renaissance woman, demonstrates her ingenuity integrating nature, the arts, and her faith in over eighty poems in Star Signs: New and Selected Poems.  Her poems are rich in personal connections, seasonal reflections, sensory images, and magical metaphors.  In “Graceful Choreography,” she writes “Grasses in the meadow display delicate daisy clusters urgently beckon me to pay attention today.”  Ms. Lambert shares heart-warming and hopeful life lessons.  In her poem, “Star Signs,” she writes, “Anyone can find the Breath of Life when creative moments define a new morning.”  Her poetry is uplifting.

*Suzanne Cottrell, Scarred Resilience*

**…**A keen eye for color, form and composition, Lynda’s special attraction to gems shines throughout, as in the poem Of Smoke and Mirrors, where she finds, “Early morning sky is a silver-gray Tahitian pearl…”  In Sleeping Beauties… “I touch my small earthly gifts nourish my soul with their splendor gather each gem one at a time.”  Throughout this book of poems, these gems of poetic creation shimmer like beads on her fabric art, like bold brush strokes of color on her paintings, and reflect light like the gemstones on her prize-winning piece of mixed-media fiber artwork.  It seems this entire collection is like a multifaceted mural.

Her attentiveness to nature and strong reflections from memory have woven from a collage of remnants, a beautiful tapestry for us.  It offers a wonderful feast for the eyes and the mind.

*Wesley Sims, Taste of Change*

     Star Signs C 2019 opens the reader’s mind to the world with vivid hues, satisfying aromas, and breath-taking word vistas. Lynda Lambert uses her artistic gifts and her relationship with natural elements   to connect the micro and macro. Once you read her work, you won’t forget it.

*Ann Chiappetta, Words of Life*

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**3 poems from Star Signs: New and Selected Poems.**

**“the sky visited me”**

near the nest

the sparrows were covered

by lavender mist

gloomy and dark

this morning

large black crows

the pathway

was dangerous

the sky visited me

yesterday

on high alert

all tabby cats are in the woods

nevertheless.

**“Great Grandmother Sings Little Songs”**

Great grandmother sings little songs

moves beneath wet Hemlock boughs

on the ridge overlooking a rushing creek

her feet slide over damp spring leaves

on the slippery pathway through the woods

she knows every leaf, bark and branch

by name

glances into the curly willow tree

responds to screaming crows

gathered for lunch

she looks at me and whispers

“We may catch some fish this afternoon.”

Tonight, we will

bathe in light of full Strawberry Moon.

*(From Part 2:  Distant Legends and Metaphors)*

**“Sleeping Beauties”**

My jewelry box embraces

yesterday’s vanishing dreams

favorite obsessions—polished and hidden.

Amber, formed deep in the Baltic Sea.

Volcanic rocks, rough black

occasionally spewed from the fire.

Red coral, carved by clever hands

inspired memories of summer roses.

Turquoise slabs extracted from Arizona’s

equivocal, rare, Sleeping Beauty mine.

Treasures from Kingman

have a special room in my heart.

I touch my small earthly gifts

nourish my soul with their splendor

gather each gem, one at a time.

Sleeping Beauties—favorite things!

*(From Part 3: Transmutation of Earthy Elements)*

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Send a check for $12.50 (postage included) to me:

Lynda Lambert

104 River Road

Ellwood City, PA 16117

Please let me know who to address the book to in my signature in the book.

Specify any special greeting or note you want me to write there, too.