

**On the Other Side of Goodbye**  
By g emil reutter

Published by Alien Buddha Press, 2025,  
ISBN 13-979-8300959593

by Michael Todd Steffen

We've learned to appreciate hybrid writing for itself, for the wide palette and integration that makes today's poetry uniquely liberal and balanced, striking and robust. But it's good also sometimes to recognize definitions in a progression, as g emil reutter dispatches them to us in the three parts of his new book *On the Other Side of Goodbye*, from POEMS to FLASH to STORIES. One's different sense of genre joins the conversation.

The reutter poem is often suburban/pastoral observation of atmosphere, weather, times of day, neighborhood wilderness, flora with its names, and elements of contrast that reflect the liminal location between nature and humanity. An Adam-and-Eve-esque conjugality haunts the garden-kempt woodland sylphs of songbirds and squirrels. In the poems, the poet's "other" or addressee can assume an airy, echo-like or mirroring presence,

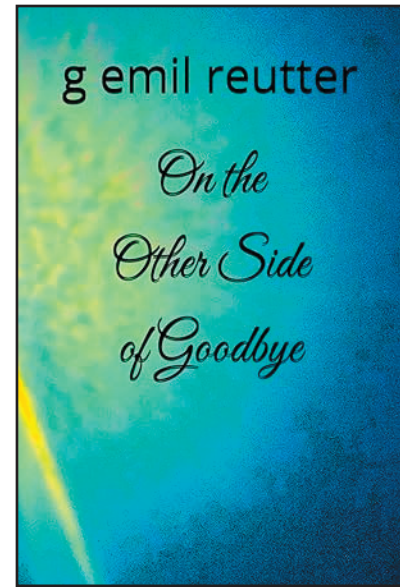
*She floats in a torrent  
of words, sips coffee  
tattoos the words onto  
a piece of marble...(page 15)*

Ink, writing: tattooing the dead (a piece of marble). His lexical curiosity is highlighted in the poem "Adularescence," bringing us with that novelty orthoclase and albite. With the wonder more than an actual question to be answered: What is writing?

While at yet another boundary, technology marks the notably greyed, more menacing big foot print of the industrial landscape, in its jarring testimony that our progress has not brought about betterment, or as the title of one poem states, "Not over the Rainbow":

*Dorothy not here  
loud crunching of carrots, rabbit not  
here. Jersey across water, interstate ribbons  
through. Town of refinery tanks. Amazon rises  
from steel dust, under bridges over roads... (page 17)*

reutter's muse is more complicit with the envoys of nature, as with the Cardinal who sings to her in the flash piece "Performance." He, the outlier, the poet. His vision and liberties push definitions for the medium. The reutter piece of flash is suspended atmospheric writing, like the poem



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with an eye for suburban wildlife and fauna.

The STORIES in the collection offer, in reutter's concept of genre, the human world, of a narrative of clear progression concealing a secret to be revealed, a surprise birthday party, the odd bric-a-brac collected by a weekend browser of flea markets, and the very personal item that his rummaging turns up. Grammatically striking and definitive between genres, the STORIES in prose accommodate their nouns with articles ("the", "a", "an") which are habitually omitted in the poems, perhaps for the sake of compression, imparting a brisk catch-as-you-can manner to the poetry.

On the Other Side of Goodbye has been praised for bringing us "exquisite chronicles of journeys through local landscapes, down main streets, and on occasion, to destinations a train trip away." Gloria Mindock has noted the book's display of deft and detailed "descriptions...so immersive, it feels as if you're inside his writing. He captures real life and its characters with remarkable skill."

g emil reutter is the generous and eclectic partner editor of the admirable North of Oxford webzine and press. He is the author of eight books of hybrid and story collections, eight books of poems and four poetry chapbooks.

His greeting to us On the Other Side of Goodbye is full of across-the-fence neighborly observations and I wouldn't so much say "small" as right-sized talk with that best of conversationalists, an alert and responsive sensibility. It's a good companionable read for days at a time for every season.