



Jiferet

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Charles L. DeFanti Reviews *What Matters* by Adele Kenny

What Matters by Adele Kenny

Welcome Rain Publishers (New York, NY)

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Hard Cover with Dust Jacket, 64 Pages

\$15.00 [Click Here to View the Book Trailer](#)

With High Victorian bluster, Thomas Carlyle once demanded: “What, on earth, then, are you afraid of? Wherefore, like a coward, dost thou forever pip and whimper, and go cowering and trembling? What is this that, ever since earliest years, thou hast been fretting and fuming, and lamenting and self-tormenting, on account of?”

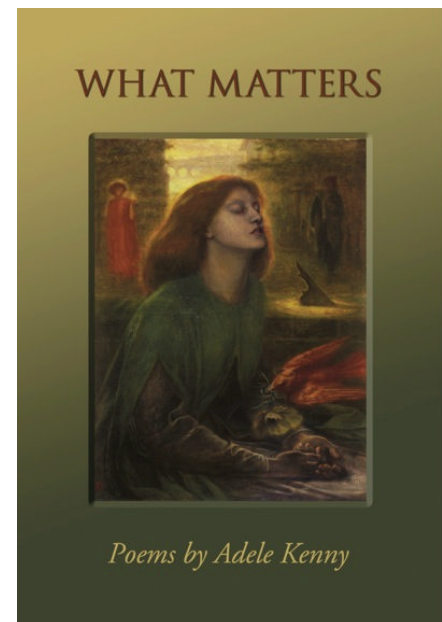
Adele Kenny, having overcome more hardships than a dozen less courageous people, offers forty-seven luminous poems in a cycle coded to reveal “What *Really* Matters” in life. Joy, wit and affirmation spring from even the most bittersweet among them.

Shifts in mood are quick, but never alarming: Kenny is always in control, evident from the first poem, “The Living”:

It’s not destination, but more what silence is when
you enter it deeply—like walking in snow (the hush
and spell)...

The sequences seem more linked through sound and epigram, until you see where the poet is heading. (Sound-play and paradox are as essential to Kenny as they are to Emily Dickinson); in “Like I Said,” set on a Sunday morning, she goofs on both grammar and pop culture:

The washing machine refuses to spin,
There’s no clean underwear left, so



I'm not wearing any. Like I said,
I was tired; I didn't feel like getting

dressed, so I didn't go to church and
abdicated rights to all that grace.
I put on a pair of dirty jeans, a dirty
shirt, and sat outdoors all morning

I did nothing but talk to my dogs,
watch squirrels, and wonder what it
might be like to nibble Prozac from
Johnny Depp's lower lip.

So much for living in the present—always a good idea, especially in life's more haunted
moments. "Where Lightning Strikes" relives a horror we hope comes only to other people:

There's no translation for the terror
when the surgeon says *I have bad
news*, on the phone no less, and me
alone, a glass baton that someone
else is twirling. ...

Equipoise is restored not in lightning strikes, however, but through deft hints that all's right
with the world, as in "That Much Closer":

No big epiphanies
but smaller things
I'm more aware of:

moths that call the
porch light a party,
my dogs asleep on

pillows beside me,
their sleepy breath
warm on my hand;

and this morning a
neighbor's child
balanced on her knees

where the crook of
the apple tree flattens.
...

Plain speech is reserved for everyday sadness, as in "Selling the Family House":

The house—empty or nearly
empty—crumbles into itself.
I leave a few books on their shelf.
Some shimmer, the other are rags.

What voice do I hear (or want to
hear)? The catbird cries; the earth
turns on wing-boned fingers.

while lush figures enrich a poem evoking Dante Gabriel Rossetti's painting, *Beata Beatrix*,
the dust jacket illustration:

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Robert Pinsky

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Upcoming Interviews:

7/24: Lois P Jones

8/29: Josip Novakovich

9/4: Adele Kenny & Deborah
LaVeglia

10/17: Elizabeth Cunningham

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... a sundial casts its metal wing
on the thin, blown hour when leaving begins.
Red dove, white poppy: the woman, transfixed,
slips—diffused like light through darkened glass—
her hands open and soft.

Kenny's rich palette will be obvious to all her readers over the years, though it is more intense than ever in this tightly knit volume. The final poem, "We Don't Forget," bears the full weight of her message, and deserves being quoted in full:

Tonight you heard my
footsteps in the room

above and called to me.
I didn't answer. There
was only the movement of

air my body made when
I turned to your voice.

Later, in what might have
been a dream, a little boy
played stickball in the street,

the moon shuffled home.
Grace is acceptance—

all of it, whatever is—as
in we live for this: love
and gratitude enough.

We don't forget
how it feels to rejoice.

We're all survivors of one thing or another, and these meticulously crafted poems by Adele Kenny tell us that we're not alone.

[Amazon is offering a discount on all pre-publication orders, Click to Order "What Matters"](#)



Charles L. DeFanti is Professor Emeritus of English at Kean University.

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Adele Kenny is the author of 23 books (poetry & nonfiction). Her poems, reviews, and articles have been published in journals here and abroad. She is the recipient of various awards, including poetry fellowships from the NJ State Arts Council. Adele is founding director of the Carriage House Poetry Series (which she founded in 1998), and she serves as poetry editor of *Tiferet*. For poetry info and weekly

prompts, visit her blog: <http://adelekenny.blogspot.com/>.

Coming Home by Marguerite Bouvard

Under the spring rain, everything
is liquid: the bird calls, the branches'
languid sweep. Under this sky
with its conjugating grays, the greens

are more intense, the larks
are jubilant. The earth inhales me,
the earth that will finally embrace me.
When I unbuckle my skin,

I want to be by the lake
where I walked with my love
year after year as we wrote
our own story. I want the blessing

of *earth to earth*, not the baleful
intoning of *dust to dust*.

We were so much more than that.
We shone like the orange lichen

starring the woods. My children
and my grandchildren do not need to wander
among stones. I will be there waiting
for them when they come home.

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Marguerite Bouvard has received fellowships at the Radcliffe Institute, the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women and from the Puffin Foundation. She has been a writer in residence at the University of Maryland and has had residencies at the MacDowell Colony, the Yaddo Foundation, the Djerassi Foundation, the Leighton Artists' colony at the Banff Centre and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. (Excerpted from Marguerite Bouvard's online profile please click here: [to learn more.](#))

Dandelion Green by Irene Heimberg ©

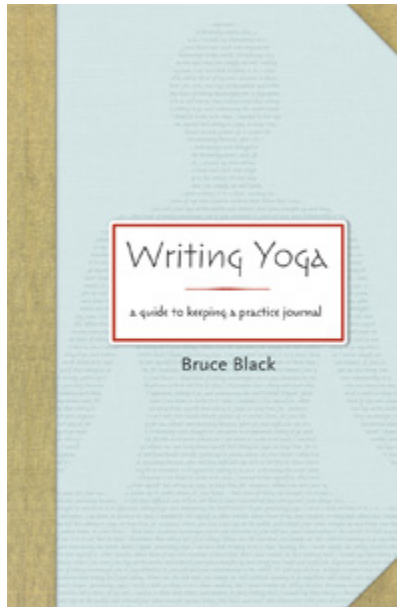


Irene Heimberg received a BA in English Literature from Pace University, with a minor in Art. She started writing poetry at age 12, and has been writing ever since. She has also drawn most of her life, but didn't begin painting in a serious way until she was in her thirties. She works primarily in watercolor, and occasionally in oil. Her work is representational, and her intent is to reflect God's glory in her work.

From *Writing Yoga: A Guide to Keeping a Practice Journal* by Bruce Black

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How did I learn to hear and trust my inner journal. As comfortable as I am with pen and writer or editor since graduating from college varying degrees of success—I never thought until four years after that first yoga class. It Rita, gave each of us in her class a spiral-bound session together. “Give it a try,” she said, and handing it to me. “See where it will lead



When I began keeping a journal to reflect on that I needed to learn was how to listen to voice that I'd first heard years ago when I'd professor in college, and which I'd I'd kept while my mother was dying of cancer. It was a voice that scared me because it made me feel so vulnerable and exposed, and yet that voice helped me feel more connected to myself—and to something larger than myself—than any other voice. If I was to fully understand myself and my relationship to the world and to others, I needed to find that voice again, to let go of my fear of being vulnerable and open. Rather, I needed to learn how to achieve the courage to be vulnerable and reveal more of myself to the world without fear of ridicule or criticism or disdain. It took writing pages and pages before I could let go of these fears and begin to hear my true voice and let it come through on the page. I could only detect that voice after I'd learned how to cast aside the voices of impersonators. I had to learn how to relax on the page, let down my defenses, and allow my heart to show in ways that I'd learned in my yoga classes over the past four years but hadn't yet incorporated into my daily life. I had to learn how to accept and let go of myself in order to be myself.

It wasn't easy. When you sit down to write something new, you face an empty page. You confront the fear that you may not have anything to say or, worse, that what you have to say may be unoriginal or foolish or downright stupid. I had to learn how to step into the silence of the page and trust that I wouldn't drown in silence, that the blank page wouldn't overwhelm me. For that to happen, I had to drop my defenses and reveal myself—not a caricature of myself, or an inflated image. I had to let myself show, warts and all. Anything less than complete honesty would have frightened my true voice and sent it skittering away in an instant.

In time, the combination of keeping a journal and practicing yoga helped me learn to view life in a nonjudgmental fashion, a neutral way that was altogether different than the way that I'd viewed the world in my youth, when I started keeping a personal journal. That earlier view was self-absorbed and turned inward. This view was focused on the relationship between the inner and outer worlds, viewing both simultaneously as places that can nurture growth if we can assume the proper attitude and perspective.

Keeping a journal has given me a way to find this perspective and to reflect on life. My journal is a safe place where I can ask questions, examine the sometimes confusing pieces that make up my life, and hear what I'm thinking and feeling when I can't always admit such thoughts or feelings aloud. On the page, I can explore in private whatever might

voice? It began, ironically, with a paper—I've worked as a freelance and kept a variety of journals with about keeping a practice journal was then that another teacher, bound journal on the last day of pulling a journal out of the box you.”

my yoga practice, the first thing and trust the voice inside me, the kept a journal for my English rediscovered in the journals that

trouble or excite or surprise me without fear of making mistakes or saying the wrong thing or appearing stupid or

feeling invisible. (When I was younger, I felt as if every word written on the page in private were somehow being shouted to the world. Now, it feels like I'm whispering, and I'm the only one who can hear.)

In the pages of my journal, I don't have to try as hard as when I was younger. I don't need to change the world, merely accept it as it is. The page, just like the mat and the world itself, is neutral. It's like an empty vessel waiting to be filled, a blank slate yearning for words. The page offers no judgment or criticism. It's just paper, silently waiting for my pen, eager to reveal and let me hear my voice. It was this process of writing in the journal each day, before and after yoga practice, that helped me learn to lower my defenses, let go of the imposters and the fake voices, open up and write from my heart.



Bruce Black

Bruce Black holds a BA in English literature from Columbia University and an MFA in writing from the Vermont College of Fine Arts. His stories have appeared in *Cricket* and *Cobblestone* magazines. He is the founder and editorial director of three blogs, including *Writing Yoga with Bruce Black*. He lives in Sarasota, Florida. Available from Rodmell Press

<http://www.rod mellpress.com/>

<http://www.amazon.com/Writing-Yoga-Keeping-Practice-Journal/dp/193048528X>. Bruce's blog is

<http://journalpractice.wordpress.com>. Photo courtesy of



Crab with Botanicals by Frances Pelzman Liscio©



Frances Pelzman Liscio has had her work showcased in numerous group and solo shows. Her work has been published in fine art and design magazines including Traditional Home and Martha Stewart Living and is included in many private collections and galleries. This bio is excerpted from her web site, please [click here](#) to learn more about Frances and her work.

Two Senryu by Robert H. Deluty

Senryu (like their better-known cousins, haiku) are 3-lined poems that seek to convey the essence of a keenly recalled or observed moment. Traditional haiku and senryu consist of 17 Japanese "onji/sound-symbols" in phrases of 5/7/5. Since Japanese onji are not equivalent to English syllables, haiku and senryu written in English are typically presented in three lines totaling fewer than 17 syllables. Whereas haiku are objective and deal with natural/seasonal events, senryu focus on human subjective situations and are often satiric or ironic.

Sunday School . . .

a nine year-old demanding

hard evidence

at a wishing well

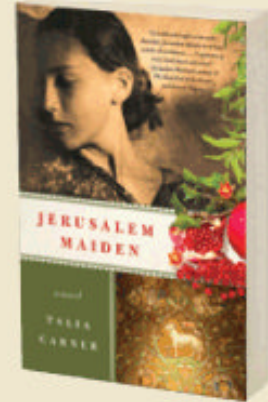
pondering the downside

of eternal life



Robert H. Deluty is the Associate Dean of the UMBC Graduate School. His 32nd book of poetry, "Too Old To Know Everything," was published this month by [Otter Bay Books](#).

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choose between
FAITH and
PASSION...



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you choose?

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