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Helen Lawson's Newest Shares Small Moments

By LAURA THORNTON
'Live Me a River' by Helen Lawson; Blue Spruce Press, \$4.50

Town resident Helen Lawson has recently published her second volume of poetry, entitled *"Live Me A River."*

Her new book is added proof that she is a preserver of life's special moments. The poems are sparse, clear and simple, but even a cursory reading can evoke emotions in a reader that an art enthusiast experiences upon entering a room filled with Impressionist watercolors.

In a small painting of words, Ms. Lawson carries you to a world where women wear lace petticoats, curtsy coquettishly or lovers, skin the rabbits for dinner and tend gardens of moss and crocus.

The poems have a European flavor, and with good reason. Czechoslovakian-born, Ms. Lawson moved to the United States in 1969. She writes in the "mother tongue" and, not unlike Isak Dinesen or Joseph Conrad, seems to take greater care with her use of the English language than most conscientious writers.

Paul Engle, an established poet and director of the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa, has said of her work, "The poems are not like anyone else's. They confront reality lyrically, the hardest thing to do, not shrinking from the tough fact, but finding expressive language for it."

Her struggle to produce a desired effect seldom goes unrewarded. "Live Me A

River", even more than her first volume, "Women As I Know Them," shows that Ms. Lawson pays strict attention to her roles as mother, lover, sister and friend.

She shares small moments in her life and in so doing captures the happiness, sadness, strengths, fears and longing experienced by many women.

Throughout her poems can be found sprinklings of such child-like descriptions a "wriggle-worm eyes," "Oh, your smiling eyes,/those

love birds/fluttering into mine!," "Petrified Mole's Ever-Bride..."

But the reader never misses the sound of the woman's voice behind the words. It is a voice which talks about women's collective experience in a unique way.

The minor inconsistencies in the collection are easily forgiven. Ms. Lawson's most apparent weakness is her inappropriate title selection for most poems. But writers from Tolstoy to Lardner encountered similar problems, an advice from good editors of creative friends can be the ultimate solution.

In her piece "Me and My Poems" Ms. Lawson writes: "My previous bundle of poems/and all those motley feathers of words/beside the typewriter, falsely conceived, /unloved, /pitifully faceless, but clambering for adoption,/all these are me...."

We can hope that the words she accumulates beside her typewriter will become the special paint for another self-portrait. And like Monet's watercolors, her finished pieces are worthy of our adoption.