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Reviewed by Cheryl C. Pace

*Thin Spines of Memory* seems to me to be less an autobiographical work than a poetic discourse on the role of the past and recollection in every human life, any human life. Hers as author. Yours and mine as readers. And to the extent that poet Star Coulbrooke peels back the leaves of her experience to reveal the seeds of human experience, she distinguishes herself — quietly and generously — as a great poet.

As a good poet, she weaves consistent, sensual images into experiential meaning, and with language, she transcends the limits of language. Fair or not, I expected that in this collection of 25 poems. But as that rare jewel — a great poet — she presents herself and her work as entirely authentic. Exquisitely humble. Unsentimental. Unrelenting. Unselfconscious. She guides us through a world most of us have difficulty navigating alone — the world of memory. She offers companionship, but no protection from its dangers. “Memory,” she writes in “Early Death,” “not the fear of dying, holds us back.”

Coulbrooke’s memory lane is a walk from past to present through experience, and there is no suggestion that we can go back, that any part of our past will ever exist beyond the moment when