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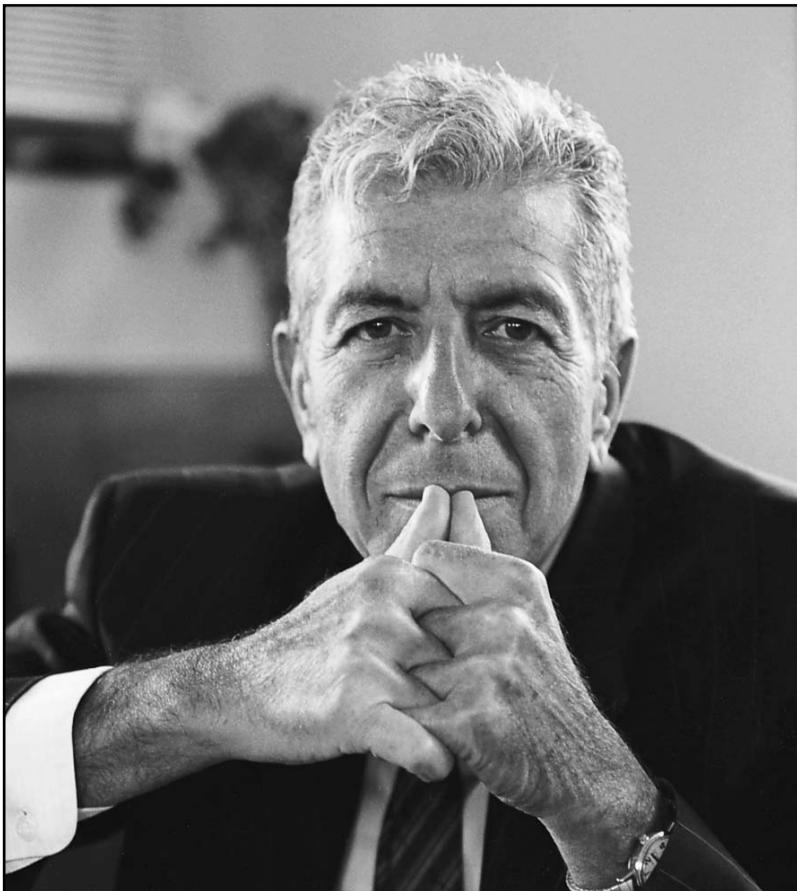
Issue Four, Fall 2006

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SPECIAL EDITION



Cohen's Recursive Longing

**IN FORMLESS
CIRCUMSTANCE...
TREVOR CAROLAN ON
LEONARD COHEN**

**RUMI: ENCOUNTERING
A REMARKABLE MAN
BY HUSSEIN SAMET**

SOUL POET:

JOSEPH BLAKE ON SAM COOKE

**REMEMBERING
CID CORMAN, PART 2
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**DIPLOMAT REG LITTLE ON
THE WORLD OF BLOOD AND OIL:
THE NEW WORLD AT WAR**

**ANDREW SCHELLING GOES
OVER THE RIVER**

**WHY OLSON MATTERS
BY PETER GRANT**

**TRANSLATOR RED PINE ON
DANCING WITH THE DEAD**

**APIS TEICHER ON
THE CRYSTAL PROSE OF
KATHERINE GOVIER**

**TANGIER RENEGADE:
IRA COHEN INTERVIEWS
PAUL BOWLES**

**LINDA ROGERS ON
DEDE CRANE AND
PATRICIA YOUNG**

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A SPECIAL EDITION

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Photo: Miles Lowry



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SOUL POET: SAM COOKE'S GHETTO MELODY

Joseph Blake

Dream Boogie: The Triumph of Sam Cooke.
Peter Guralnick . Little, Brown. \$37.95.



Peter Guralnick's exhaustive retelling of Sam Cooke's evolution from gospel music star to pop star to his shocking demise is a worthy attempt at biographical truth, but Guralnick, who succeeded triumphantly with his two-part biography of Elvis Presley, fails to capture Cooke's mysteries. Sam Cooke remains a cipher.

It's hard to remember how important Cooke was to black America in the late 1950s and early 1960s. More than a pop hit machine, (which he was), Cooke was a public figure who shared equal billing in the ghetto Pantheon with Martin Luther King Jr., Muhammed Ali, and Malcolm X.

Nat King Cole crossed over to the pop market earlier and in much the same way, using a cool, elegant, sexually understated image and mostly A.M. radio-ready party music, but Cooke always had one

foot firmly planted in the black ghetto and family ties in black gospel.

Cooke was a sex symbol and gospel's biggest star before crossing over to pen a succession of pop hits like *You Send Me*, *Wonderful World*, *Chain Gang*, *Another Saturday Night*, *Having A Party*, as well as the anthemic *Change Is Gonna Come*. He owned his own record label and music publishing company in an age when even white stars were treated like slaves by the music business. He knew what he wanted his records to sound like and ruled his studio sessions.

What Guralnick finds "most extraordinary about Sam Cooke was his capacity for learning, his capacity for imagination and intellectual growth."

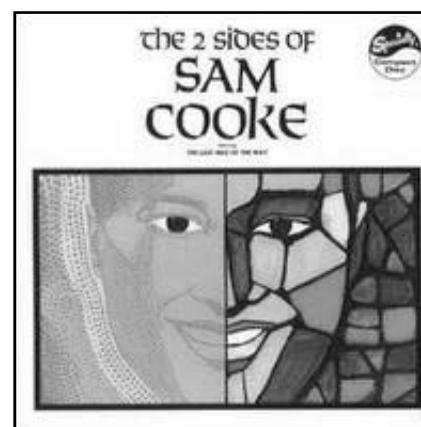
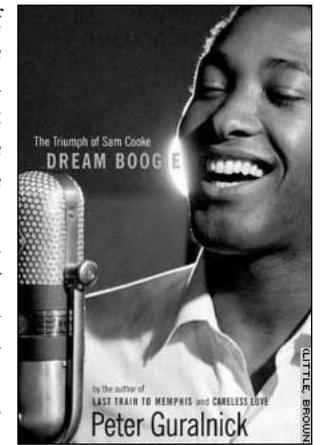
Sam's brother L.C. describes Cooke as "a thinker. He could see the whole picture. He didn't go by anyone else. He did things exactly the way he wanted. He had the looks, the personality, the education. Sam had it all."

Cooke also had several children out of wedlock, women from coast to coast throughout his career, and a doomed and deeply troubled marriage to an old girlfriend who turned out to be as tough and sexually promiscuous as Sam. Their married life in Hollywood may have been mortally wounded by the drowning death of their son in the family pool. Neither parent seems to have fully recovered from the accident.

Lou Rawls, Bobby Womack, Aretha Franklin, and other music stars worshipped Cooke, but the cool, controlled façade Sam tirelessly built right up to his triumphant

performance at The Copa and the economic success of his million-selling recording career collapsed in disgrace after a night of partying ended in disaster and death at a \$3 fleabag motel where Cooke was robbed of his wallet and clothes by a working girl. Drunk and enraged, the singer pounded on the motel manager's door while dressed only in his sports jacket and shoes. Then, convinced that she was harbouring the thief, Cooke attacked the woman while drunkenly demanding "the girl." They struggled, and the manager shot him and then hit him over the head with a stick. Sam Cooke died, but for a while his legend lived on.

Huge funerals in Chicago and Los Angeles sealed the musician's reputation as the day's biggest pop star. But in short order his wife married Bobby Womack, Cooke's business empire collapsed, and his brother began a tribute tour as "Sam's good looking brother."



Sam Cooke's Greatest Hits

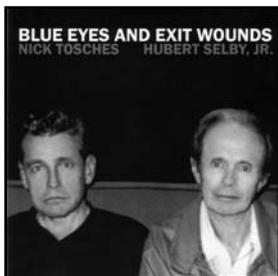
Four decades later the music remains transcendent, joyous, revelatory. Sam Cooke still lives in the music, a soul man trapped by his demons and dreams. *Dream Boogie* doesn't capture his shadowy soul or explain his sly, secretive nature, but it does lead readers back to the music with contradictory, riveting images of Sam's seemingly effortless struggle to bring himself into being.

Start with Sam's sides with his gospel group, The Soul Stirrers. Pick up a bargain-priced greatest hits collection, and be sure to check out *Live at Harlem Square Club, 1963* (RCA). It's as close as you'll ever get to the majesty and magic at the heart of Sam Cooke's mystery. It's the essence of the great soul man that this book tries and fails to explain.

For 25 years, Joseph Blake has been Canada's grittiest music writer. A widely read travel correspondent, he lives in Victoria, B.C.

CD REVIEW by Richard Olafson

Blue Eyes and Exit Wounds Hubert Selby, Jr. and Nick Tosches.
Pay or Die CD. www.exitwounds.com

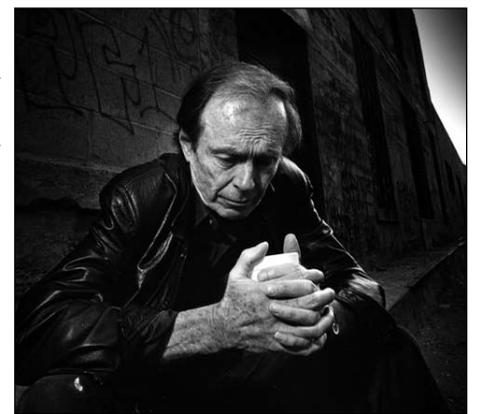


for this last opportunity to hear Selby speak.

When Hubert Selby, Jr. died in April of last year, the world had lost a writer as significant to the later half of the 20th century as Kafka was to Prague in the first half, or Dante was to 13th century Florence. I make no apologies for that last remark about Dante. He is *that* good. It is then, no accident, that Nick Tosche, student and lover of Dante, would be among his foremost admirers and wish to team up with him in this

spoken word CD from the sensational duo of Nick Tosches and Hubert Selby, Jr. is something of which everyone should take note. Both are recognized primarily as tough guy novelists writing unflattering depictions of our urban mean streets and decaying modern times. I make no bones about it: I love Hubert Selby's voice, and *Blue Eyes and Exit Wounds* is the best spoken word compilation I have heard, with the possible exception of *Kenneth Patchen Reads Poetry with Jazz in Canada*, if only

oral rendering. *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, his best known work, will endure as the perfect historical rendering of the later half of the twentieth century. *The Room*, his lesser known, but supreme masterpiece of brutality and violence, is an unqualified modern classic. Selby himself said he could not reread it—it mad him cringe. . Perhaps because it plunges into such savage and dangerous depths of the human soul that it that has made it a difficult volume to find, with its the implied critique of the current, omnipresent power structure, with its excoriating indictment of the police and petty authority. That little book is an American *Trial*; the distilled essence, as in all Selby's work, remains the triumph of the human spirit over pain, an enduring compassion, which is apparent in his love poem to Edith Piaf, a poem that will make the hair on the back of your neck stand to attention, as in Houseman's definition of a great poem.

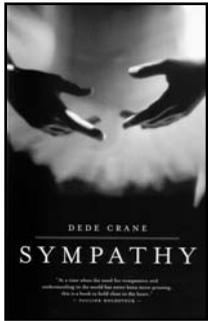


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SYMPATHY

Linda Rogers

Sympathy
Dede Crane, Raincoast Books,
2005, 348 pages.



I must admit that when Dede Crane recommended Portuguese Nobel Laureate José Saramago's novel *Blindness* for our book club, I wondered what I would be in for when her debut novel *Sympathy* was released. *Blindness* is a plague of relentless realism with the afflicted lost in their own excrement. Could I endure so much sadness again? The answer is affirmative. Shit happens, even to the evolved, Ms. Crane asserts in her story of loss and redemption, and it is the compost of life.

Crane, the wife of consummate ironist Bill Gaston, has only recently discovered that she is a word person. She comes from the unspoken world of dance, the illusion of beauty that comes from sacrifice and suffering. Prima ballerina Margot Fonteyn once made the statement that is as true of writing as it is of ballet; the hours of sweat and tears at the *barre* must become transparent the moment invisible pain becomes visible music. *Sympathy* is the catalyst for that transformation in this novel.

Crane lets us into her created world in an intimate way, demonstrating the high cost of illusion and the paralyzing force of secrets and lies. The setting for her novel is a hospital for the mentally ill. Kerry-Ann Taylor is a retired ballerina whose husband and child have been killed in a car accident that she survived for the most pragmatic of reasons. Her therapist, the differently wounded Michael Myatt, treats post-trau-

matic stress disorder as a disintegration of communication between body and mind. When the mind refuses to process grief the body expresses dysfunction. Kerry-Ann is catatonic when her unreasonably controlled mother brings her to the doctor for help.

Kerry-Ann's mother Arlene Taylor is the most historically interesting character in the novel. She is a Stepford wife whose obsessive-compulsive nature allows her to micro-manage every possible situation. Arlene is the archetypal fifties woman who believes that colour coordinating her closet will keep her world in order. When light affirms itself in inevitable cracks in her carefully crafted veneer, her recovery from a societal paralysis integrates with her daughter's healing. Thank God, because at the outset of this journey, that epiphany is a long way off.

Crane is ruthless in her description of unthinkable realities: the beheading of loved ones, the horrible condition of a dancer's feet, the corrupt politics of war, and the ugliness of unreciprocated love. In her clinical descriptions of life on the ward, she offers the variety of patient suffering as the only relief from constant sorrow. As the wounded cast becomes a family sharing their misery, doctor and patient share a psychokinetic process that reintroduces the mind and body to feeling. When her incongruent cast becomes family to one another, connecting doctor to patient and patient-to-patient, we begin to hope.

Both Kerry-Ann and the story return to full consciousness with the intervention of Hugo, the dancer to whom she addressed her diary entries before the accident that killed her will to live. To Hugo, the confessor who returns as the witty angel of redemption, she has revealed the slow starvation of herself in bulimia and emotional detachment. Pain comes from interruption in the flow of blood. He is the catalyst who facilitates the re-introduction and resolution of grief. *Sympathy* is the hairspray of community and he takes the risk that intervention and a new coiffure will complete the transformation of Kerry-Ann and the novel itself from resolute numbness to full consciousness and caring. Hugo appears to be right.

Linda Rogers writes on Arts and Culture for Focus Magazine. Her novel The Empress Letters will appear in 2007.

READING WRITERS READING

Linda Rogers

Reading Writers Reading, Danielle Schaub, photographer and editor, University of Alberta Press, Hebrew University Magnes Press, 345 pages, hardcover.



A few years ago I was invited to a garden party where Danielle Schaub, an Israeli Canadian Literature specialist and photographer, was taking pictures. Later the subject a wide variety of Anglophone and Francophone Canadian writers from our First and following nations were asked to write about reading for a joint Canadian-Israeli production, which has resulted in a very attractive book with a red cover, of course, because our flag is red, from sea to shining sea.

Reading Writers Reading is a revealing collection of one hundred and sixty-four author photographs and essays on the subject of reading. Writers being writers, there are one hundred and sixty-four ways of answering the question, "What does reading have to do with your life as a writer?" The answers are as interesting as the mosaic of faces that comprise the Canadian writing community, many of which but not all are included in its pages.

Schaub writes in her introduction that her Canadian Literature students in Israel were dissatisfied with the posed author photos on book jackets. They wanted to know more about the authors in search of characters. That was her mandate and she has satisfied it with this handsome volume. Like adolescents with their mouths open, waiting we presume to catch flies a valuable source of protein during their intense period of growth, many of the writers have their mouths open, waiting to speak, to eat or to catch the ideas they channel into the various genres of our vigorous national literature.

The book reveals the many backgrounds that make our book culture a choir as opposed to a voice. George McWhirter, from divided Ireland, looks as if he can't believe his luck, "The separation between the words and the things they stood for

flourished, as did the separation in Ireland between North and South." A bemused Joseph Svorecky writes about the freedom of open dialogue in his adopted country, "And in that bar that evening she confided to me that she, too, had recently become a Canadian writer, and invited me to her reading." An ironic Rabindranath Maharaj says about public readings, a frequent interpretation of the question, "I am mindful that the story has been written not for myself but for those people who laugh at the wrong places."

Schaub is congenial and quick. Her photos are candid and the smiles that she captures are genuine. They are the United Smiles of Canada and they remind us that we have a brave new literature based on the traditions of all of our founding nations, many of which have been redeemed by the tradition of storytelling as an oral or written art form. Schaub's students should be well satisfied by this book as should the many readers of books by Canadian writers who might wonder why we have risen to prominence in the world of letters.

On a national tour to promote her book and take photographs for the next volume, Schaub explained that the book and its inhabitants have been a distraction and a comfort to her during times of war in her own country. I asked her if she had considered Canada as another Biblical landscape, a new world Promised Land with many parallels to the state of Israel, among them the settlement of refugees and the displacement of First Nations. She agreed. The state of Israel still endures tribal warfare and the turmoil of the Old Testament. Perhaps Canada is the New Testament, our politics and our literature offering opportunities for a more peaceful disputation.

A whole piano of black and white faces carry on the dialogue in her book.. Given one hundred and sixty four frames to consider, we are as intrigued as is Schaub by this portrait of a country.

Linda Rogers is part of an ever widening circle of writers.

BOOK OF LONGING

Trevor Carolan

Book of Longing

Leonard Cohen, M & S. 232 pp. \$32.99

*All busy in the sunlight / The flecks did float and dance /
And I was tumbled up with them / In formless circumstance*
Leonard Cohen

It's not everyday that Leonard Cohen releases a new collection of his poetry. Twenty years have passed since his last volume. Meanwhile, his albums of songs keep piling up—17 at last count. Who at one time or another hasn't been captured by Cohen's plaintive meditations?

Cohen has always been a bard of flesh and melancholy. An arch-romantic, his fleshy lyrics have figured in more seduction scenes than Elizabeth Taylor, so his new title, *Book of Longing*, is worth having. For most Canadians of a certain age he was the first living poet we actually read for pleasure, or employed in getting to the heavy breathing after dinner with a consenting partner. Forget the instruction manual, keep old loverboy Cohen on your bookshelf.

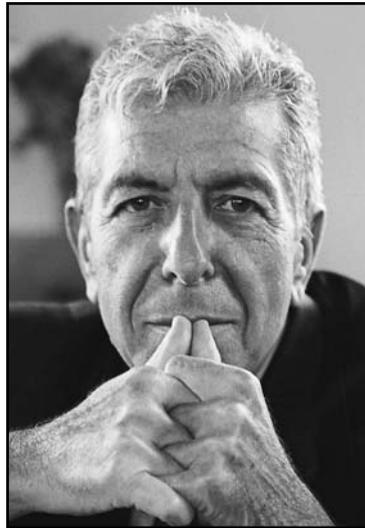
From his tragic amours, to his angst-filled business affairs, to his recent concert documentary produced by Mel Gibson, there's a lot of Leonard Cohen in the air these days. At 70, his latest collection hints at it all. In one poem here, "Love Itself", that appeared on his last album, *Ten New Songs*, Cohen offers the Zen-inflected phrase "formless circumstance." As bumper-sticker wisdom has it, Shit Happens, and it seems that's the news, in part, he brings us from his five year sojourn as ordained monk in the Zen Buddhist tradition of his master Kyozan Joshu Roshi. *Book of Longing* packs it all in: the good, the slight, and the ugly of being a Montrealer who struck it big in the world.

As poet, Cohen has kept it reasonably simple since first making headlines a dozen books ago with *Let Us Compare Mythologies* and *The Spice-Box of Earth*. It's easy to forget his first books were contemporaneous with those of Kerouac and Ginsberg. Cohen's images are clear and uncomplicated. Like Shelley, he speaks from the heart, and therein lies the secret of his popularity. Coming up at a time when Canadian poetry and literature was cloaking itself in nationalism before succumbing to the academic dullness of imported theory that too often has resulted in flakey imitations of sad originals, Cohen by contrast has always kept it easy and slow. His practice, such as it is, has been the simple bravery of publishing whatever it is he's completed and polished, warts and all, take it or leave it.

The new work, for the most part, is polished. Technical virtuosity à la Timothy Steele though, has never been Cohen's calling card. Rather, he works with mood, timbre, emotion, and as ever, a kind of cocksure undergrad élan. Many of these pieces have clearly been lugged about in pockets and notebooks for years, and there's a fair amount of rhyming ballad form, tending toward song. Cohen aficionados will observe the inclusion of what Allen Ginsberg called 'diary poetics' too, as the 70 year old master tidies up his literary flotsam and jetsam in what's a substantial compendium of more than 200 pages.

Longing is dedicated to Cohen's old master, Irving Layton. Perhaps unsurprisingly, like his mentor Cohen's work is prefigured by narcissism and an expansive view of what it means to live, breath and love as a man, artist, Jew, showman, and in Cohen's case, Buddhist seeker in uncertain times. Where Layton as egoist came on with swollen chest, Cohen's narcissism is subtle, extending even to his humility. It's a fascinating act of conscious self-exposure that weaves itself throughout the *Longing* poems, but far from being charmless Cohen makes even this work too.

Like Henry Miller, a fellow poet of the body with whom Cohen also shares a lust for spiritual enlightenment, Cohen reveals himself as an artist of considerable talent as well. Most poems are accompanied by his own drawings, woodcut-style images, or



*Poetry is just the
evidence of life. If
your life is burning
well, poetry is just
the ash.*

graphic ornamentation. The strongest are his self-portraits. Modigliani, Schiele and Van Gogh come to mind in viewing these images, often reproduced in various forms on different pages—in b & w reverses, blow-ups, close-ups, and the like. This adds a tremendous dimension and makes *Longing* not just a lengthy, absorbing read, but a coffee-table keeper to boot. An ambitious work that brings in everything but the kitchen sink, it's a compelling collection that has one picking it up again and again.

For anyone interested in Cohen the man, the Mt. Baldy poems are of particular interest. In "The Party Was Over Then Too", he explains his original retreat motivation: "I joined a tiny band of steel-jawed zealots / who considered themselves / the Marines of the spiritual world..."

Celebrating what Buddhists understand as 'everyday sacraments'—the plain taste of ordinary life maintenance activities—in poems such as "Leaving Mt. Baldy ('I finally understood / I had no gift / for spiritual matters)", "The Lovesick Monk", "Early Morning at Mt. Baldy", he bridges the sacred and profane in recounting everything from writerly solitude, to self-abnegation, dressing for zazen meditation at 4 am in the cold with a hard-on, to the joys of cunnilingus, and the curiously complementary self-discipline of avoiding female intimacy. Often, self-deprecating humour underscores his declarations, although in offerings like "Other Writers", some of the pretty-boy poetic arrogance we saw in *The Energy of Slaves* from the 1970s, and that was hinted at from his earliest collections, creeps in. No matter, this poet sees through himself and his narratives lead inevitably to the epiphanies of such enduring later Cohen classics as "Love Itself", "A Thousand Kisses Deep", and "Here It Is". But then, as Susan Musgrave has reminded us, this man's lyrics "have never been just lyrics; they are a way of life."

Ever since "The Maple Leaf Forever" faded into post-colonial obscurity as Canada's unofficial anthem, Cohen's "Suzanne Takes You Down" has pretty well taken its place as the people's hymn in the Great White North. Happily, its same style and rag-tag melancholy are still with us in *Book of Longing*. Take "The Mist of Pornography":

*'when you rose out of the mist
of pornography
with your talk of marriage
and orgies
I was a mere boy
of fifty-seven
trying to make a fast buck
in the slow lane...'*



(continued on Page 32)

DANCING WITH THE DEAD: LANGUAGE, POETRY AND THE ART OF TRANSLATION

Red Pine

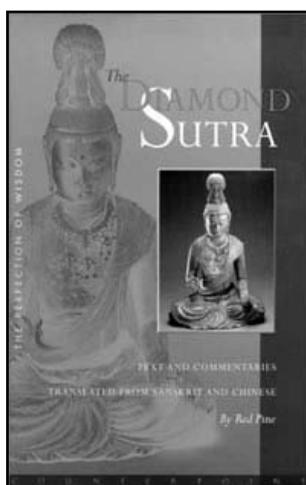
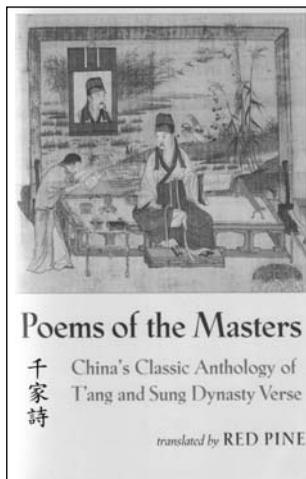
Every time I translate a book of poems, I learn a new way of dancing. The people with whom I dance, though, are the dead, not the recently departed, but people who have been dead a long time. A thousand years or so seems about right. And the music has to be Chinese. It's the only music I've learned to dance to.

I'm not sure what led me to this conclusion, that translation is like dancing. Buddhist meditation. Language theory. Cognitive psychology. Drugs. Sex. Rock and Roll. My ruminations on the subject go back more than twenty-five years to when I was first living in Taiwan. One day I was browsing through the pirated editions at Caves Bookstore in Taipei, and I picked up a copy of Alan Ginsberg's *Howl*. It was like trying to make sense of hieroglyphics. I put it back down and looked for something else. Then a friend loaned me a video of Ginsberg reading *Howl*. What a difference. In Ginsberg's voice, I heard the energy and rhythm, the sound and the silence, the vision, the poetry. The same thing happened when I read some of Gary Snyder's poems then heard him read. The words on a page, I concluded, are not the poem. They are the recipe, not the meal, steps drawn on a dance floor, not the dance.

For the past hundred thousand years or so, we human beings have developed language as our primary means of communication – first spoken language and more recently written language. We have used language to convey information to each other, to communicate. But there are a set of questions just below the surface that we prefer not to address. How well does language do what we think it does? And what does it do? The reason we prefer not to address such questions is because language is so mercurial. We can never quite pin it down. It is forever in flux. And it is forever in flux, because we, its speakers and writers and translators, are forever in flux. We can't step into the same thought twice. We might use or read or hear the same word twice, but how can it mean the same thing if the person who uses or reads or hears that word is not the same person? We speak of language, as if it was a fixed phenomenon, and we teach it and learn it, as if it was carved in stone. But it is more like water, because we are more like water. Language is at the surface of the much deeper flux that is our riverine minds. Thus, if we approach translation by focusing on language alone, we mistake the waves for the river, the tracks for the journey.

But this isn't all. A number of linguists and anthropologists are of the opinion that language was developed by early humans not simply for the purpose of communication but for deception. All beings communicate with each other, but at least on this planet only humans deceive each other. And for such deception, we rely primarily on language. It isn't easy for us to hide our feelings and intentions in our facial or bodily expressions, but language offers ready and endless opportunities for altering and manipulating the truth. Thus, the question for a translator is not only the efficiency of language, but its truthfulness. That is, does it actually do what we think it does, and does what it does have any basis other than in fiction?

We live in worlds of linguistic fabrication. Pine trees do not grow with the word "pine" hanging from their branches. Nor does a pine tree "welcome" anyone to its shade. It is we who decide what words to use, and, like Alice, what they mean. And what they mean does not necessarily have anything to do with reality. They are sleights of the mind as well as the hand and the lips. And if we mistake words for reality, they are no longer simply sleights but lies. And yet, if we can see them for what they are, if we can see beyond their deception, they are like so many crows on the wing, disappearing with the setting sun into the trees beyond our home. This is what poetry does. It brings us closer to the truth. Not *to* the truth, for language wilts in such light, but



close enough to feel the heat.

According to the Great Preface to the *Book of Odes*, the Chinese character for poetry means "words from the heart." This would seem to be a characteristic of poetry in other cultures as well – that it comes from the heart, unlike prose, which comes from the head. Thus, prose retains the deceptive quality of language, while poetry is our ancient and ongoing attempt to transcend language, to overcome its deceptive nature by exploring and exposing the deeper levels of our consciousness and our emotions. Though poetry is still mediated by language, it involves a minimal use of words, and it also weakens the dominance of language through such elements as sound and silence, rhythm and harmony, elements more common to music than logic. In poetry, we come as close as we are likely to get to the meaning and to the heart of another.

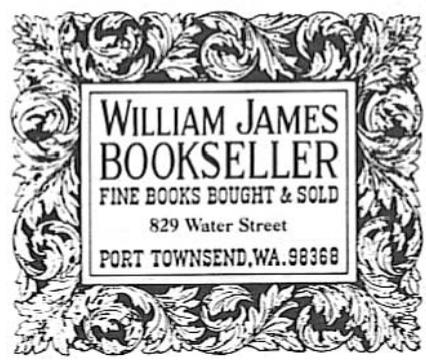
This, too, isn't all. Poetry is not simply "words from the heart." A poet doesn't make a poem so much as discover a poem, maybe in a garden or a ghetto, maybe in a garbage dump or a government corridor, or in a galaxy of stars. In poetry, we go beyond ourselves to the heart of the universe, where we might be moved by something as small as a grain of sand or as great as the Ganges.

So what does all this mean for the translator? For me it means that I cannot simply limit myself to the words I find on the page. I have to go deeper, to dive into the river. If language is our greatest collective lie, poetry is our attempt to undo that deception. When I translate a poem, I don't think of the Chinese on the page as the poem, only evidence of the existence of a poem. Poetry shows itself in words, and words are how we know it. But words are only the surface. Even after poets give their discoveries expression in language, they continue to discover a poem's deeper nuances, and they make changes: maybe a few words, maybe a few lines, maybe much more. The poem, as I see it, is a never-ending process of discovery. And it isn't just language. It's the unspoken vision that impels a poet and to which the poet tries to give expression. But the poet never gives complete expression to that vision, only a few fragments from a kaleidoscopic insight, a few steps on the dance floor impelled by music even the poet hears only imperfectly.

Then a translator comes along, and things change. It is only then that the poet no longer dances alone but with a partner. And together they manifest a deeper insight into the poem, into the music that motivates the dance. Thus, I have come to realize that translation is not just another literary art, it is the ultimate literary art, the ultimate challenge in understanding as well as performance. For me, this means a tango with Li Pai, a waltz with Wei Ying-wu, a dance with the dead.

Bill Porter, an American author who writes under the name Red Pine, is an acclaimed translator of and interpreter of Chinese texts. He has lived in Taiwan and Hong Kong and has traveled in China. He now lives in Port Townsend, Washington.





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AIRSTREAM

Linda Rogers

Airstream

Patricia Young, Biblioasis Press, 177 pp, 2006

While Dede Gaston's fictional world is surrounded by institutional walls and locked doors, Patricia Young's is no less a prison. The lost characters in *Airstream*, carefully wrought stories that are her baby steps into a new genre, live in a walled garden that has no past or future. Even the then is now as she repeats the story of the fall from grace in her own very particular idiom.

Airstream is a trailer parked in an upper middle class suburb; its human contents rocked by events beyond their control - the failure of love, the availability of anodynes, the inability of parents to keep their children safe. This time capsule is going nowhere. There is nowhere to go. They say that the mark of a good drummer is that he or she is not noticed when the band is playing. So it goes, in Young's stories. Beneath the lush texture of her poetic prose is the almost inaudible drumbeat of death. Everything appears to be normal until it isn't.

They say normal is just a setting on a dryer. Young's characters break down as easily as badly made appliances. In her oasis surrounded by wasteland, natural and unnatural disasters undermine every act of redemption. Inherently flawed human beings motivated by desire continue to hurt other human beings, often as not their own children, just as the prophet Isaiah described in that ancient book.

No wonder the mother character based on Young's own experience with an agoraphobic parent in the story "Up The Clyde On A Bike" is afraid to go out; the sidewalks could crack, the trees could fall over, another woman could devour her husband. This is a landscape the poet knows intimately. She has paced its parameters in poetry with a strong narrative content and the same sensual details that take on an even more sinister character in the stories. Bursting cherries, lilies filled with rain, and children overflowing with the inappropriate language of apprehension forecast the ruin that inevitably follows beauty. To invert Leonard Cohen's anthem, "These are the cracks the dark comes through."



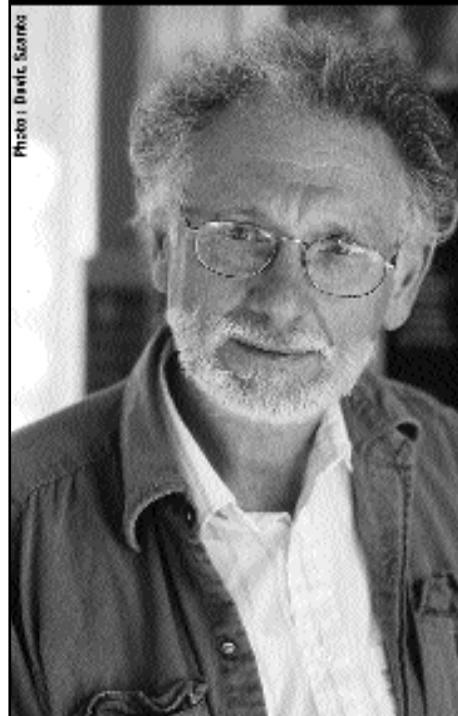
Young has never left behind the language of the fundamental religion in which she was raised. The difference is that she promises no vision of a post-apocalyptic world. Innocence is vulnerable and the possibility of redemption as fragile as the marriage that does not survive the apocalyptic fire she describes in "Majorette." Good and evil co-exist in her ephemeral garden. Just as morning glory chokes its host, these stories are faint praise for the breath that is left. That is the appeal of her fiction, which hits the garden wall with the same speed at which birds approach clean windows.

Just as the young girl and her addicted first lover rock the trailer with the love that will not save them, Young's characters comfort themselves with sex and the chilled wine and flowering trees that they take for granted in their privileged neighbourhood. This is not enough. The solace is only skin deep. Beneath the skin, there is anarchy, a lack of spiritual connection to one another and to an outside world to which they seem to be oblivious. On the other side of the wall, the fierce and hungry world that suffers to provide their good food and wine waits to devour them.

Linda Rogers writes on Arts and Culture for Focus Magazine. Her novel *The Empress Letters* will appear in 2007.



THE CONQUESTS OF MEXICO TRILOGY BY GEORGE SZANTO



George Szanto is the author of a dozen books – novels, stories, plays, and essays.

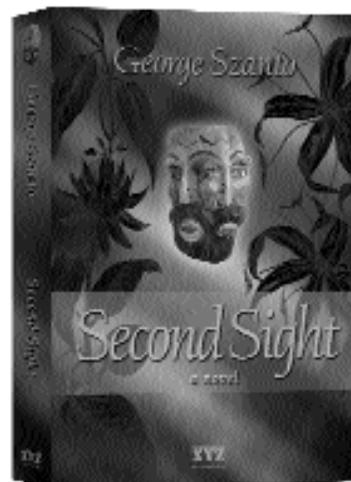
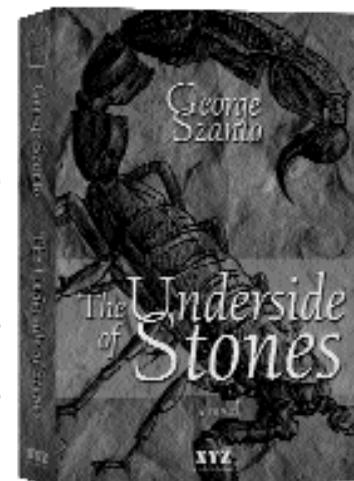
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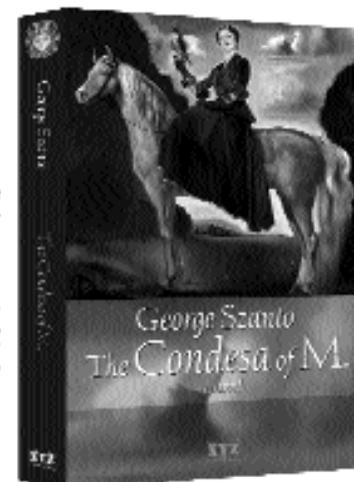
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OLSON MATTERS

Peter Grant

Poet to Publisher: Charles Olson's Correspondence with Donald Allen. Edited by Ralph Maud. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2003.

A Charles Olson Reader. Edited by Ralph Maud. Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2005.

Donald Allen was a consulting editor at the recently-founded Grove Press in New York when in 1957 he heard of Charles Olson via John Wieners and Robin Blaser. Olson had one big-city book, *Call Me Ishmael*, published in 1947, long out of print. In the interim Olson's writing, in a bold vernacular voice, bristling with awareness of the times, found publication in fledgling literary journals — Cid Corman's *Origin*, Robert Payne's *Montevallo Review*, Vincent Ferrini's *Four Winds*, — and at small presses: Caresse Crosby's *Black Sun*, Robert Creeley's *Divers*, Jonathan Williams' *Jargon*, the Black Mountain College press. No matter Olson's circle was brilliant — his readers were too few. Allen went up to Gloucester, Massachusetts in September with an offer to publish two books of Olson's poetry. Allen also wanted poems for *Evergreen Review*, of which he was co-editor. Before any of these appeared, Grove would reissue *Call Me Ishmael*. "So suddenly," Olson wrote to Creeley, "in the midst of utter despair abt where I am and what I can do, I am given this ride-out." Allen brought Olson wide readership, most notably in the 1960 Grove anthology *The New American Poetry*. Many coming to age in the post-war era have testified to its life-altering impact, comparable to *On the Road's*. Olson was the signal-bearer of the revolutionary "stance toward reality" embodied in *The New American Poetry*.

Poet to Publisher reflects but little of Olson's revolutionary agenda. Its freight is the minutiae of getting words into print. About that perilous enterprise Olson's emotional turmoils — rages, whining, keening, wheedling, disappointment — are interesting because they issue from a great mind. In his poems Olson exploited the manual typewriter's controls to spread lines across and down the page. He articulated the effects in his seminal essay "Projective Verse." When proofing galleys of *The Distances* (1960), his first volume of selected poems, then, Olson was horrified to find Grove's typesetters taking liberties:

My god they have come up with some fancy single space leading which tips the whole fucking book off — poetic and too open, fit only for prose, etc. So I have done that one in, and had to ask that the leading of the single space throughout be cleaned up. Wow.

Poet to Publisher sparkles with Olson's discussions of who should be in *The New American Poetry* and who not, and why. Here's Olson's response to Allen's nomination of Irving Layton (who had contributed to, and edited an issue of, *Black Mountain Review*):

lawd if you are going to include Canadians, above all pick Souster for yr center, there — especially for such an anthology, for he and not that Englishy slicky Layton, or that nice Migrant Gael [Turnbull]: lawd Souster is the one who has for years caught on that the American thing exists for use: ex/his Contact-Combustion, as against anything Montreal etc

Olson took strenuous issue with Allen's outline for the prose companion, *The Poetics of the New American Poetry*, but with delays in publication and his untimely death, Olson did not see the effects. No matter; their 12-year association was fruitful: Allen edited *The Distances* and Olson's first book of selected prose, *Human Universe* (1965/67), published several of Olson's shorter works at his own Four Seasons house and, in his mid-80s, edited with Benjamin Friedlander the serviceable *Collected Prose Charles Olson* (1997). Allen's brief preface to *Poet to Publisher*, published less than a year before his death at 92, is a gem. "Olson was his all-time favorite," Marjorie Perloff wrote in a recent appreciation of Donald Allen.

I can imagine no better introduction to Olson's

ever-evolving "stance toward reality" than *A Charles Olson Reader*. Ralph Maud has achieved what earlier editors could not — neither Creeley, who edited the *Selected Writings* for New Directions in 1966, nor the indefatigable George F. Butterick. The *Reader* gives us Olson in the round, lucid, the whole thinker (at last!) The illumination is partly in the *Reader's* thematic arrangement, engaging with the material dramatically, in marked contrast to Creeley's simplistic grouping by genre. It has more to do with Maud's introductory notes, which employ vast scholarship and immense sympathy in finding the pertinent fact, the telling circumstance. They throw into relief the bafflements of such familiar projective works as "La Préface" and "In Cold Hell, In Thicket." He has done this before, in *What Does Not Change*, his 1998 study of "The Kingfishers" — resolving such riddles as the identity of Fernand in the stanza beginning

Otherwise? Yes, Fernand, who had talked lispingly of Albers & Angkor Vat.

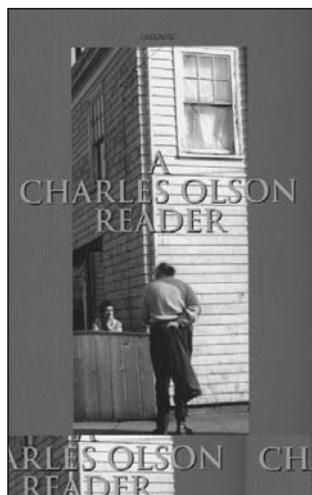
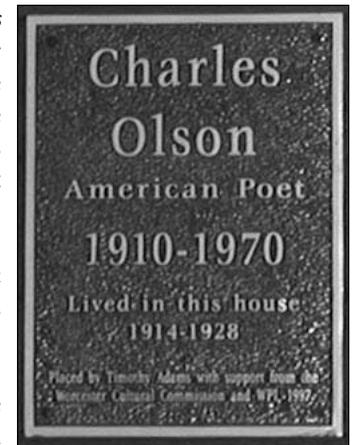
How many college instructors passed over this line incomprehendingly before Maud tracked down the needed datum? I note also how adroitly Maud compresses scholarship into apothegm in, for example, explicating the phrase "my soft sow" in

"MAXIMUS FROM DOGTOWN—I:"

Olson never kept pigs; we must take this 'sow' in a strictly geological sense (like 'veins'). 'Sow' in the processing of pig-iron is a congealed metallic mass in a groove. It connects with the 'soft rock' of a few lines later, the permeable moraine. Both are instances of the adamantly denotative language of Olson. He was not in the habit of using casual metaphors, only the causal metaphor which turns story into myth.

There's a bit of work-play here: one of the longer sections of the anthology is titled "Causal Mythology," the title of a controversial lecture-reading Olson gave at the Berkeley Poetry Conference in July 1965. Maud points out that Olson did not explicate the title. He preferred to challenge his audience. In presenting Olson to a European audience — the *Reader* was published in England — Maud exercises considerable restraint to honour the spirit of Olson's oft-repeated "find out for yourself." The later Maximus poems are notoriously difficult to penetrate, and many stumped readers have written them off as trivia. Maud's interesting selection and annotations may persuade some to reconsider. My one cavil with *A Charles Olson Reader* is that some of the illustrations are muddy.

Peter Grant is an historian and poet who lives in Victoria., British Columbia.



Charles Olson & a friend on the beach at Gloucester

JOHN FANTE & CHARLES BUKOWSKI IN HOLLYWOODLAND

Ben Pleasants

Ask the Dust

John Fante (Black Sparrow Press, 2005)

Looking back on it thirty years later, it's almost as though it never happened. I was the link between Charles Bukowski and his mentor, John Fante. Fante had never heard of Charles Bukowski; and Charles Bukowski not only did not want to meet his mentor, John Fante, he did not want to help him.

I was in the right place at the right time. After several years existing as a theatre and poetry reviewer at the LA Times, I took a brief stint at the Free Press as Special Arts editor. I lasted long enough to do a symposium with Charles Bukowski and an expose on how Edward Albee swiped his lizard



John Fante, author of *Ask the Dust*.

in "Seascape" from a play by Edmund Wilson. When Tom Thompson, the managing editor of the Free Press, moved on to form his own newspaper, the *LA Vanguard*, he took me with him as People's Arts Editor.

People's because two of the editors were Marxists, Thompson and I were anarchists and members of the IWW, and Thompson's wife Dorothy was a feminist/ environmentalist. The Free Press had given up on politics and the *LA Vanguard*, we hoped, would fill the void. It was all about politics.

The year was 1976. The paper lasted about nine months. Charles Bukowski remained behind at the *Free Press* writing *Notes of a Dirty Old Man*. We still drank together, smoked together, had late dinners at Bernie's Beanery and I lent him condoms when he needed them.

As the Free Press began its sad journey towards extinction, Bukowski felt more and more abandoned. He hated politics and he hated political types, but he admired Thompson, the big guy, (he weighed more than 400 pounds) and he loved the gossip that surrounds a happening newspaper, that attracts pretty women and pop culture cash. Bukowski asked me if the Vanguard had a place for him. I brought it up at an editorial meeting. It was a 3-2 decision in favor, but at the *Vanguard* everything had to be approved by consensus. A five to nothing vote. I told that to Bukowski. He was not pleased. I told him the two no votes had called him a sexist reactionary and a misanthrope. He said that was true of all artists, male and female. So?

So, Bukowski stayed at the *Free Press* to watch it die.

Still, I continued my efforts. I informed the other four editors that Bukowski was the most important poet of his generation. He was read more by working class types than any other writer in the world. Charles Bukowski, I told them, would be the most important writer Los Angeles ever produced.

I suggested we do a feature on Bukowski, warm and fuzzy. I took my favorite photographer, Lory Robbin out to do an interview. Linda was there and a cat I thought was Butch. It all went well. We got great photos and great comments. I wrote it up and handed it in and the editors turned it down. This time it was 3-2 against.

I gave up on Bukowski at the *LA Vanguard*. There was just no way in the era of political correctness. Hit person!

What about someone more politically attractive?

Someone suggested I try Kenneth Rexroth. He was a poet. He was a feminist. He was a radical. He was a critic. He'd been a Wobbly. He had great stories. He was old.

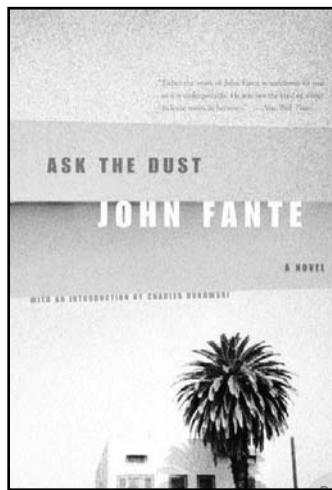
They gave me his telephone number and address in Montecito. 1401 Pepper

Lane. 805 969 2722.

I called him. He lived there with his wife, Carol. He invited me up. He lived among the rich of Santa Barbara Country in a lovely little house alongside farms and vineyards.

We talked about Chinese poets. Rexroth told me he thought Li Po had been Irish. His wife fed me a lovely meal, which we ate al fresca in his front garden. He was an angry man. He told me outrageous things about writers I'd reviewed and writers I knew. Who was sleeping with whom. Just like Bukowski, but Rexroth didn't change the names.

We talked about current poets. I mentioned Bukowski. Rexroth told me if he ever



ran across Bukowski in Santa Barbara, where Black Sparrow was located at the time, he would hunt him down and kill him with a telephone pole. I asked why. He said it was because Bukowski had once mocked the illness and suffering of Kenneth Patchen in a magazine they'd all been published in: *The Outsider*.

I wrote up the piece on Rexroth and got it approved. I left out all his slanderous remarks. The article ran in two installments. I gave copies of each to Bukowski and I warned him that Rexroth was still mad about what he had said about the dying Kenneth Patchen. I told him Rexroth had promised to hunt him down and kill him with a telephone pole if he ever caught him in Santa Barbara. Rexroth was in his eighties then.

Bukowski loved threats like that. Jungle warfare among poets. He laughed at the comments. "A telephone pole. He's tough." Later, in a story he wrote about the Taylor Hackford evening titled "A Friend", Buk changed all the names except himself, Linda and Kenneth Rexroth. I was Bernard Rifko. Into my mouth he put the following:

"I saw Kenneth Rexroth and he said if he ever saw you he was going to get you from behind with a telephone pole. He claims you killed Kenneth Patchen."



Selma Hayek & Colin Farrell in the recent filmed version of *Ask the Dust*

Rexroth had had a stroke by then and was left voiceless. The story appeared in *Wormwood Review* 81/82, a double issue published in 1980, four years after Rexroth had uttered his threat. Patchen was long dead.

By the fall of 1976 the *LA Vanguard* was also dead.

I was planning a sabbatical to Europe in the winter of 1977. Bukowski asked me to find his uncle, Heinrich Fett, which I did. (See *Visceral Bukowski* "Andernach: 1977"). He wondered about his publications in Europe. Where were his books selling? I told him I'd see many copies of his books in Germany, France and Great Britain. He asked about London. What had I seen there? I told him I'd seen POST OFFICE and some poetry books.

That made him angry. He said his London publisher had not paid him anything for his books. He asked if I'd write him a letter to enquire about sales. I did.

In the meantime, Bukowski mentioned a piece in the *LA Times* written by Carolyn See on his favorite writer, John Fante. For the 100th time he told me to read *Ask The Dust!*

When I finished the letter to London, Bukowski wrote me the following in

October of 1977:

Sat.

Hello Ben:

The letter to London sounds perfectly done. Let's see what the bastard does now. My interest in Schopenhauer at an early age—god knows when?— 16?—was because of his clarity and his bitterness and his rage, and in a way I felt, his humor. He was one of the first who said things clearly to me. But it didn't last. It was a flash, and I forgot him. Nietzsche came along a little bit later and he too was clear but he seemed to have more meat. And then, I forgot him. The whole thing was just early reading and discovery. John Fante was the first one to really make me feel something exceptional, to make that dent. Like I told you.

I'm not sure what you mean, "your remark about adversity," but Dostoevsky did say: "Adversity is the main-spring of self-realism." I presume that I didn't say that somewhere. Hope not.

o.k.

To this Bukowski added a dated response:

Oct.4, 1977

Hello Ben:

I found Fante, I'd guess, when I was about 19. He didn't live in a house in this novel but described his window and his place and his hotel somewhere in his writings and it was along the cement stairway opposite Angel's Flight—downtown L.A. I used to pass the place he described and glance at it and quickly pass. I admired his writing so much that just looking at where he had once possibly lived was quite magic to me. Of course, I had no idea of ever bothering him. Sometime early this year there was an article on him in the *L. A. Times*. I should have saved it. I showed it to Linda Lee. I told her, "Look, there he is! My god!"

I'm afraid to read him now because I might not like his writing now. I'd rather leave it like it is. Heroes are hard to come by.... No, I never met him.

My first experience with a live author? Now, Ben, you know almost everybody is an author. I suppose the first known author I ever met—and that was haphazardly—was the guy who wrote *Exit Laughing* and some other things. But I can't remember his name. I almost said Rupert Brooke, but Rupert Brooke was the great love who got it in the ass in World War One. Anyway he was a famous humorist and I had seen his photos and I was delivering mail one day and he was in his backyard and I handed him his mail, I recognized the name on his letters, and he was standing in his pajamas and bathrobe and with him was this quite sexy wench, she evidently lived with him, much younger, you know, hahaha, and I thought, the fucking writers really get the breaks.

I think I told you on the phone that I'd finished the novel. Now it's back to the poem and the short story. More shit.

That got me started. I went out and bought up everything I could find on Fante, except *Ask The Dust*. That, I couldn't find anywhere. Not at that moment.

On December 13, 1977, I wrote out a set of questions to Bukowski. There were fifteen questions and Bukowski responded to each one in detail. This is what I wrote:

Dec.13, 1977

Dear Buk,

Here is the letter about Fante. To my knowledge, he has written three novels and a book of autobiography entitled *Full of Life*. I am in correspondence with two publishers about the idea of issuing a *John Fante Reader*. They are St. Martins and New Directions. If this works out you would do the essay for about \$1000. to be paid on receipt of the essay, not on publication. The St. Martins operation would be better. Please don't mention any of this to anyone but Linda. Of course I will have to have either of the editors get in touch with Fante first, before you write the essay.

Bukowski wrote back:

Jan. 8, 1978

Hello Ben:

Now about Fante, it was a long time ago and much of it is blurred, I only remember the warmth, the emotion I got reading Fante, an opening up of the senses as if they were really other human beings around. As per exact details, I am lax there.

Question one was:

When did you first begin reading Fante?

Bukowski answered: "when I was 19 or 20."

How did his work affect you?

Bukowski replied: "see above. Of course his emotionalism without schmaltz helped direct some of the way I was trying to go. In a sense, it was like I found Fante but in another sense it were as if he had found me... not like twins stepping in front of a mirror but like two people very much alike in a certain way."

Which book did you like best?

Bukowski: "I liked *Ask The Dust* best,— except for the title—because I felt he did best there what he did best, and also it was the first one I read—it shook and whirled me."

What are your impressions of his style?

Bukowski: "his style is natural and open; you forget you're reading a writer and you just read, but you become very aware of a person, not a writer but a person."

What did you learn from his manner of writing?

Bukowski: "that there was a chance to say something any way you felt like saying it as long as the saying of it was true."

How did Fante's handling of women affect you (as in Wait Until Spring, Bandini)?

Bukowski: "Bandini's handling of women made me think of them as very real women women(sic) —magic female, distant and close at the same time—I am think (sic) of his mother- father fights and his waitress- dooper in *Ask The Dust*."

What did you find in his treatment of his father?

Bukowski: "love, respect and sadness; Catholicism, rather a second God, male but maybe a lot weaker than God number One."

Describe your trip to his house.

Bukowski: "not his house. I went to a place near Angel's Flight he described in his work. I think I told you about this in another letter"

Why do you think Fante failed to reach many readers?

Bukowski: "see Mozart, Van Gogh, and so forth. It's the angle of the action, the people aren't ready, it's the weather, it's the diet, it's the shoes they wear and most of the people are almost always out of touch with the best and the most real because they never have a chance to know what it is, you know that."

Would his books hold up today?

Bukowski: "truth is a tough son of a bitch. I'd have to say yes. And the fact that his writing is not of the exact present might remove some of the fear that people have of an outward and direct art-statement."

Did Fante go Hollywood?

Bukowski: "yes, I understand that he did, and he vanished into Hollywood, and it's hard for me to know why he did, he seemed to have so much, but maybe he just got tired, maybe he wanted to drive a new car, maybe he fell in love with a whore who stripped his spiritual chances. I don't know."

Did he understand LA in the 1940's?

Bukowski: "better than anybody. Grand Central Market. Angel's Flight. The people. He knew the street corners, not as a wise-ass hustler but as a confused young man from Denver wondering where it was hidden."

What were his neighborhoods?

Bukowski: Bunker Hill was his neighborhood. I lived there too before the(sic) leveled off the poor and put up high-rises. It was the best place for the poor, the best place for cabbage and fish heads, boiled carrots, the old, the insane, the young who couldn't fit into the offices down there."

Did the second generation thing affect you?

Bukowski: "second generation? Do you mean American-born children of foreign (spell?) parents. Of course, I understand that. Even though you were there it put you half-way in and half-way out. It was inside of your head that your roots weren't quite rooted—learned at first in the schoolyards."

Why in your mind is it important to rescue Fante now?

Bukowski: "I never said it was important to rescue Fante. I only know of the effect he had on me, even my chances to go on living. He was the spiritual shot in the arm to me where the churches, the accepted writers and all else had failed. I'm not saying I would have sunk without him. But he was a force. He gave me some heart. He made me smile a bit. I even liked the name: FANTE. What the hell, I was very lucky when I picked his first book out of the shelves of the downtown L.A. Public Library. Couldn't have been a better place to do it. O.k., Buk



(continued on Page 16)

ALONG THE WELLNESS TRAIL

Dr. Nicolas Kats

This edition, PRRB's in-house naturopathic physician responds to a reader's letter.

Dear Dr. Nick, I try to keep fit, but find that I often feel weak or get dizzy, especially when I'm hungry. Eating helps. What's going on? Alanna Chu, Seattle

This is hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar. It is very common. The problem is that your diet probably is high in processed carbohydrates and refined sugars, and low in fibre.

Examples of processed carbohydrates are most box cereals, most breads, biscuits, cakes, sweets, many canned foods and soups, fizzy drinks, tea or coffee loaded with sugar, and so on. Does this fit your dietary pattern?

These foods are deficient in fibre, minerals, vitamins and essential fatty acids. Fibre is critical for proper sugar absorption. It slows down the release of sugars from the gut to blood. The result is a gradual rise in blood sugar that is easily controlled by small amounts of insulin secreted by the pancreas into blood. Insulin is the hormone that lowers blood sugar.

Sugar in the blood is our main source of energy, especially for the brain. Fibre-rich carbohydrates, by releasing small amounts of sugar over a long time, give long term energy, and mental and emotional stability.

Without fibre the absorption of sugar from refined carbohydrates is explosively rapid and short-lived. When blood sugar shoots up dramatically, lots of insulin is needed. Hypoglycemia happens when blood sugar falls from high levels through normal to too low. You could call this overcompensation. When hypoglycemic, the stress hormones shoot up in an effort to normalize blood sugar. Low blood sugar and high stress hormones together account for the symptoms of hypoglycemia — weakness, fatigue, anxiety, irritability, loss of mental clarity, trembling, sweating, palpitations, hunger.

The problem is not the body — it is simply doing what it can, and it is actually working very well. The problem is the modern diet of processed carbohydrates deficient in fibre. This type of food is seldom found in nature. It is of very recent invention. Human physiology did not have the time to adapt to the modern diet. Evolution requires hundreds of generations, while this diet has been around for only a few decades. Your body is designed to work with whole foods. The problem is not your body. It is your diet.

You need to reduce fast carbohydrates and refined sugars, especially at breakfast. Shift to complex carbohydrates. This includes fruits and vegetables and their unsweetened juices, whole grains and their products such as whole grain breads. Brown bread often is not whole bread — it may be mostly white flour with a bit of whole wheat flour and coloring added. Look for 'whole grain' — read the label!

Hypoglycemia is part of the complex of problems caused by the dominance of fast carbohydrates in the the modern diet. Type 2 diabetes (adult onset, or non-insulin dependent DM) is closely related to hypoglycemia. This happens when body tissues get fed up with the large amounts of insulin needed to cope with fast carbohydrates. The person becomes insulin resistant. The consequence is high levels of insulin and high blood sugar. The hypoglycemic has an increased risk of developing Type 2 diabetes.

The short term energy of fast carbohydrates demands more food soon, typically more fast carbohydrates — exactly the foods that caused the problem. This is a cycle of addiction. Hypoglycemia is a major factor in attention deficiency and hyperactivity disorders. This is a common problem among schoolchildren. These children probably eat junk food for breakfast and lunch, and snack on junk in between. When they yo-yo between sugar buzzes and some degree of hypoglycemia, their attention suffers.



Grades and IQs fall, and behavioral disorders rise. They get diagnosed with attention deficiency disorder and are prescribed Ritalin, a highly addictive drug biochemically similar to cocaine. The solution is simple: minimize processed and junk foods, and shift to whole foods.

Look at your diet for a pattern of addiction to refined carbohydrates - what foods do you crave? Experiment, try whole oatmeal or barley for breakfast. You may see a big difference within hours or days. Think of hypoglycemia as an early warning signal — that it is time to take care of yourself.

Every year I'm hard hit by the flu. Can you help?

Yes. Here are a number of suggestions.

First, general health. If run down, tired, stressed out, eating junk food, not exercising, in general not taking care of yourself, you are much more liable to catch the flu. Take care of some of these things! This is the one biggest thing you can do.

When the bug is going around, take special care of yourself. Avoid stress, rest if tired, eat well, don't go out into wet or wild weather when feeling vulnerable, listen to yourself. By doing these things you protect yourself, your immune system is stronger, and you are less likely to get sick. A closer look at food. Avoid refined carbohydrates, sugars, and other foods high on the glycemic index — large amounts weaken the immune system. Avoid junk — it is hard to process, is toxic due to its fast sugars, trans- fats and additives, and has little or no minerals, vitamins or essential fatty acids, thus depleting your inner reserves of these crucial nutrients. Avoid fried food and hard-to-digest foods. Avoid overeating. Large amounts of meat are tough to digest — eat small portions. Go for foods that are easy to digest, absorb and excrete. Think minerals and vitamins — these are in fruit, vegetables and whole grains. Remember I'm talking here about prevention, when you hear the bug is out. It helps to take herbs or supplements prophylactically. Suggestions include echinacea, and Vitamin C, or a multiple antioxidant. Some people like the homeopathic remedy Oscilloccinum, to be taken at the very earliest sign of symptoms. All of these are available at the pharmacy.

If sick, a number of things: Rest lots! Drink lots. Water is important to keep mucus thin. The less water you drink, the thicker is the mucus in your sinuses or lungs, and the harder it is to expel. Always make sure your urine is light or clear — if dark you need more liquid! (Vitamin C can make the urine dark.) If no appetite, don't eat! The body is busy fighting the bug, and doesn't want to be bothered with the hard work of digesting, absorbing and excreting food. This is why there is no appetite. Respect this! If you eat when you don't want to, you may end up sicker and for longer, especially if you eat fast sugars, heavy foods, and junk. Listen to your body!

Induce sweating when you feel ready for it (if unready nothing happens). There are several ways to do this. Take a hot bath with Epsom salts in it, then hop into bed with lots of blankets. Herbs like yarrow promote sweating, ditto warming spices, eg, ginger in tea, or crushed chili in a little broth. Sweating requires water, so drink plenty of liquid. The herbalist can make a formula specific for you. He uses herbs with a wide range of approaches — antivirals, antibacterials, immunosupportive, specifics for the affected organs (sinuses, tonsils, throat, lungs, stomach, lymphatics, etc), sweat-promoting, warming, promoting blood flow, antispasmodic, antiinflammatory, relaxing.

Homeopathy also offers specific remedies. Great heaviness indicates gelsemium, deep muscle aching indicates eupatorium perfoliatum, and throbbing/pounding with heat and redness indicates belladonna. If on antibiotics, always take probiotics during and for 10 days after treatment. This is to prevent intestinal dysbiosis, a very common side effect of antibiotics.

A few observations for recovery: When appetite and a feeling of wellness return, eat easily digested foods. Don't take in tons of heavy foods at this stage — save that for later! The need at this point is for small amounts of foods rich in minerals and vitamins, with not a lot of proteins, carbohydrates and fats. Vegetable broths or light soups are ideal. If feeling chilly, add warming spices. Tasty broths can really hit the spot — you will know. Herb teas and fresh juices are good. As you recover you can build up to the heavier foods normal to your active daily life.

Hope this answers your question. Note the importance of timing throughout this article — for example, don't eat unless there is an appetite. If you grasp the timing — when the bug is going around, when sick, and when recovering, you will be far more effective at reducing your chances of catching the flu and speeding up recovery.

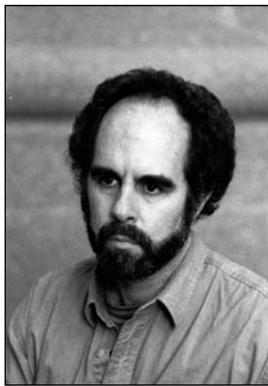
American-trained, Dr. Nicolas Kats lives and practices in Clifden and Galway, Ireland.

THE IDEAS OF A.F. MORITZ

Eric Miller

The Earl of Rochester's "Satyr against Reason and Mankind" (written around 1675) attacks the human will to replace reality with illusory and comforting concepts. Rochester's poem harshly imagines a deluded philosopher confronting the end of his life:

Then old age and experience, hand in hand,
Lead him to death, and make him understand,
After a search so painful and so long,
That all his life he has been in the wrong.
Huddled in dirt the reasoning engine lies,
Who was so proud, so witty, and so wise.



Much of A.F. Moritz's poetry involves a mortification of intellectual pride not unlike Rochester's. In the fascinating afterword of *Black Orchid* (1981), Moritz claims "poetry comes in order to smash order and admit the real, to show that ordered experience has in fact been non-experience, an abstract experience within a schema, a shell. Our experience has not been experience at all. It has been a life which is death, and for it poetry insists on substituting the death which is life: death to pride and constructed reality, the instatement of humility."

Elsewhere—in *The Malahat Review*—I have discussed Moritz's virtuosity as a satirist. He excels at deflationary techniques such as pastiche, and the range of his targets is fairly broad. Satire offers one way in which pride may be mortified, and a living death exposed for what it is. Although Moritz has talent as a satirist, I believe that what will last of his work is not the satirical element. To assault others' self-satisfaction, the emptiness of the schemas on which they rely and which they seek to propagate, can betray the pride that it seeks to expose. I recall John Dryden's admission that all satire is contaminated by falsehood or Robert Louis Stevenson's essay "The Lantern-Bearers," which celebrates the improbable poet who endures in everyone. Nevertheless, the objects of Moritz's satire could learn from it, if only they paid attention. Even Moritz's bitterest verse is potentially generous.

More interestingly, Moritz's project is in part one of exemplary self-mortification. This is exemplified most simply in "April Song of Fear" (from his great collection *Song of Fear* [1992]):

It rained tonight. Now in the streetlight
the bells of one white hyacinth shine
in the midst of a lawn
from their tower a single evening built.

And a worm has drawn its full length out
into the warm soaking air: a thing
so still, so soft, so easily cut in two,
and cut, unaware of the horror of being so.

But I'm aware. Just as I saw the worm
I was striding swiftly,
proud of my fluid beauty
and my uncut male flower.



After giving a quiet account of the terrifying accident that befell an acquaintance of the speaker, "April Song of Fear" ends with the plea:

You, who ... have power, take
my pride and give me power not to forget
you, whoever you are,
and repair your world before it comes to me.

The self-critique and the prayer are not morbid but cathartic, and could genuinely enlarge the capacity for compassion.

In the afterword to *Black Orchid*, Moritz connects intellectual delusion and human pride to the collapse of ecosystems. He diagnoses a pervasive condition of "technological and sensual sleep." "The protest against this situation," he adds, "comes not primarily from man but from the earth. The earth's degradation began simultaneously with man's ... We ought to hear this voice ... because it is a modulation of the

one we heard in childhood, before we recognized the weight that could deform it." And here, setting aside Moritz the satirist altogether, I would like to assert that Moritz is among the greatest of North American nature poets. It is his nature poetry to which I return. Moritz's practice expands the definition of "nature poetry." For him, the human body is a microcosm of external nature, and imaginative projections onto nature ought to be relished and developed for their own sake, because they open genuine avenues to reality, however risky. Hence we get, in *Song of Fear*, the wonderful poem "Savage," in which the speaker is

happy
to be like a man two hundred years old and yet powerful,
like a sun-carved monument or stark fossil,
its own era dead, still burning into this one.
Alone all of a March afternoon on barren
dark-gold slopes—he didn't pretend to be
one of the living. Only a remnant:
a savage, idle, violent, wandering and looking,
without shame indulging in songs and luxuries,
feeling himself fierce, unconquerable; knowing
he falls silent, weak, when the phalanxed Romans come.

Being an early book, *Black Orchid* may offer one moving aetiology of Moritz's affinity for nature, in the evocative poem "Mansions":

In the poor house, the child's restlessness
moves him from bedroom to kitchen,
kitchen to living room, living room to bedroom.
He longs to have been born in mansions.
He's heard of libraries and studies,
conservatories, music rooms, verandahs,
halls by which in the silence night,
water and the lawn and the stars
and voices of the dead
penetrate a huge house like a skull
blown through by wind ...

So the child found the way outside. Here
nothing is banal, the most ordinary food,
when it is his, travels to the hand
in hands of the sun and rain,
and sleep is the night, and dreams
are objects grown shadows and the stars.
Is it only, then, the habit
of a hard childhood
that enters every thicket,
lifts every rock, parts every waterfall,
looking for a door?



It's unclear to him, like the dazzling
mystery of this palace entered
and deserted continually by signs.
If he tries to follow them
there is nowhere they can have gone,
nowhere else to go: their source
and resting place must be hidden somewhere else.
And he too begins and ends here,
like the flash and whistle of a bird,
his only house the undivided weather.

Readers should be grateful that Moritz keeps perpetual open house in his exceptional poetry of nature.

Eric Miller's second book of poetry, *In the Scaffolding*, appeared with *Goose Lane* in 2005. His collection of prose, *The Reservoir*, been released from Ekstasis Editions. He teaches at the University of Victoria.

THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD

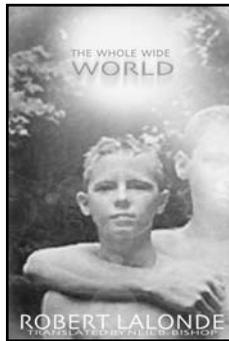
Kathryn Trueblood

The Whole Wide World
Robert Lalonde. Ekstasis Editions

Although we focus on the five senses now, in the early 20th century as many as ten or twelve senses were viewed as integrating the capacities of body and soul. Award-winning writer, Robert Lalonde, goes far beyond our paltry five senses and captures an intensity of perception in his most recent book, *The Whole Wide World*. The ten interlocking stories describe the boyhood of a character named Vallier in rural Quebec. The superstitions rampant in Vallier's Roman Catholicism have ignited his imagination and produced with rare potency the personal myth of a child discovering the world.

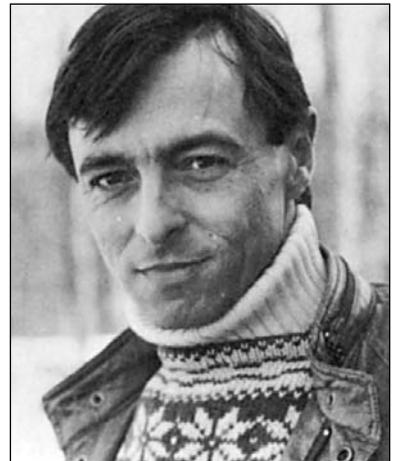
In addition to being a well-known actor and playwright in Quebec, Lalonde is novelist of international reputation. His novels have won much acclaim in Quebec—the Prix Robert Cliché and the Governor General's Award for Fiction in French—as well as prestigious awards in France—the Jean Mace Prize among them. Now available in English, *The Whole Wide World* serves as a fitting gateway to his longer fiction, each story vibrant in itself, every sentence made to count for beauty.

In the opening story, "The Devil Knows," not only is Christ's presence felt as body and blood, but the devil's as well. When Vallier's mother remarks that "The Devil is in the details," Vallier's awareness of Satan's presence in the language, as in "devil of a fever," or "sick as the Devil," or "poor devils," creates a powerful pull of propitiation that makes Lucifer appear in the unexpected, and culminates when Vallier comes suddenly upon the Sheriff masturbating in a pine grove. Lalonde is a master at shoring up each story so that their endings are like unexpected cornices from which we stare breathlessly into the steep. He has tempered his prose rhythms so that they serve a wide emotional range—a child transported by joy, revved by sexuality, or stilled by the



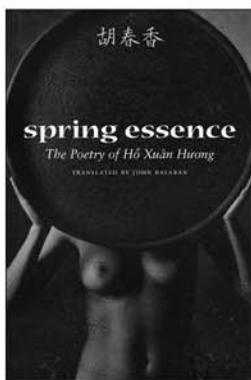
presence of death. "Hawk-eye" is story of a boy captivated by flight, convinced he will see the world as a bird sees it when he receives glasses he doesn't need. "I counted the snow crystals landing on a branch of the spruce tree in the schoolyard, convinced that, with glasses, I would count thousands more, clearly discerning the very complicated geometry of those perfect stars, I would also enjoy close-up views of the wool in the clouds, the beginnings of a butterfly in its cocoon, the undulations of a carp on the pond bottom, the eye of a falcon on the hunt, the burst meteors deep in a horse's pupil."

Although *The Whole Wide World* covers archetypal coming-of-age territory—the best friend, the town suicide, sexual experimentation—it does so with unassailable originality. "The Trickster-Teacher" is a tribute to the passion of friendship in childhood—its formative power and lasting hold. "Rowboat in the Grass" captures with striking vivacity the fever dream of early sexual impulse and the flexibility of desire at an androgynous age, treating the reader to unexpected insights about Catholic guilt—not your stereotypical repression but confession as a second opportunity for arousal through retelling. Several stories record the boy's dawning social awareness of women—he learns how a village girl feels in "Carnival" during the fat lady's freak show where the rapaciousness of the village men is unleashed; it is an experience that haunts her life and Vallier's. In "Your Mother Has a Visitor," Vallier's mother takes to



(continued on Page 26)

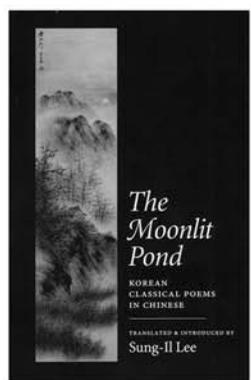
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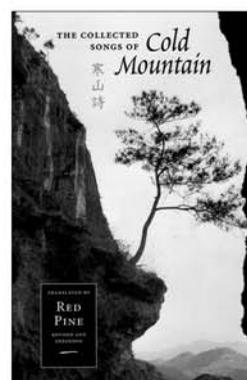
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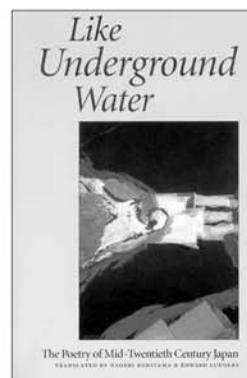
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PEAKS AND LAMAS

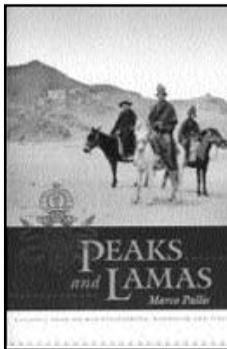
Peter Francis

Peaks and Lamas
Marcos Pallis. Shoemaker & Hoard.

No doubt the Tibetan authorities' desire to limit exposure to western values was cultivated with the desire to protect the spiritual and cultural practices of their people, but Tibet later paid a dear price for this isolationism. Tibet maintained such an independence from international relationships that when China began to assert its claim over the Tibetan territory in the 1950s, Tibet had few foreign missions in its own name, no seat at the United Nations and no international presence to use as evidence of its independence. Then, as now, in international relations, it's not whether or not your case is just, but who your friends are and how much power you can wield in the international arena.

In our world of air travel, internet communication and the ubiquitous use of English it is almost impossible to imagine the conditions under which Marcos Pallis and his companions set off for a mountaineering expedition in the Himalayas in 1933. Twenty years before the conquest of Everest, mountaineers found the immense challenges of unfamiliar peaks in India, Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet to be a siren call, sometimes luring them to their death. There was no gortex or nylon, and communication with locals was difficult without experienced translators.

As befits a story of adventure, Pallis does not dwell for long on the tremendous preparation his team undertook before the trip. However, he does mention how during the four week sea voyage, the men kept busy, not only devising ways aboard the ship to practice climbing, but also in a concerted effort to learn the Tibetan language. It is this effort that really reveals the importance of this work. Unlike so many western voyagers, then, as now, Pallis did not go to the east surrounding himself with a bubble of familiarity; he opened himself to truly understand the people who were hosting him. His words, no less than the stunning photographs included in this work bring us into contact with a world that, while perhaps surviving



in some remote places, must be rapidly approaching museum status. Pallis's cultural sensitivity is revealed first through his appreciation of local cuisine. "The quality of the native foodstuffs is on the whole excellent;" he writes "the fatal cult of whiteness and regularity of shape has not caused half their goodness to be 'purified' away." He also decries declines in art, clothing and architecture that have occurred due to contact with the European world. His documentation is painstaking and the attention to detail stunning.

Tibet, at that time, was a closed country and access permission was difficult to procure. Pallis failed in his attempt to gain access in 1936, but notes that a later expedition was able to cross the frontier. No doubt the Tibetan authorities' desire to limit exposure to western values was cultivated with the desire to protect the spiritual and cultural practices of their people, but Tibet later paid a dear price for this isolationism. Tibet maintained such an independence from international relationships that when China began to assert its claim over the Tibetan territory in the 1950s, Tibet had few foreign missions in its own name, no seat at the United Nations and no international presence to use as evidence of its independence. Then, as now, in international relations, it's not whether or not your case is just, but who your friends are and how much power you can wield in the international arena.

Although Pallis's first expedition focuses on mountaineering, his accounts of a second expedition constitute the bulk of the book and focus more on culture and Buddhism. Pallis describes his journey in gaining an understanding of the principles and practices of Buddhism through visits and study sessions with lamas in their monasteries. Because Pallis's original audience probably knew very little of Buddhism's tenets, he takes pains to familiarize us with such principles as the round of existence, the four noble truths and the eightfold path. He also provides interesting discussions of comparisons of values of Christianity and Buddhism and tells us about such Buddhist figures as Milarepa and the practice of Tantra. Even for those familiar with these and other beliefs, the originality of the discussion and the fact that he is not repeating other western religious thinkers but getting his ideas in Tibetan directly from those knowledgeable in the dharma is refreshing. Such directness lends an authenticity to this book that other works lack. Despite its length, it's well worth the read.

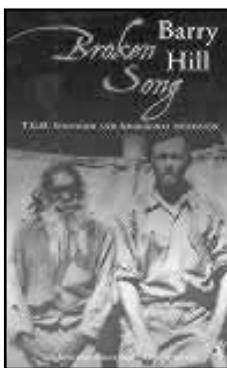
SENSING BELIEF SYSTEMS

Michael Platzer

To stand amongst the great totem poles of the Coastal First Nations in Vancouver's incredible Museum of Anthropology is a spiritual experience. I felt I was in a Cathedral of powerful beliefs. Although I had no understanding of the symbols carved into these shaven trees, I realized there was "heavy stuff" associated with these giant statues. As a Roman Catholic raised with lots of religious imagery, I have often regretted not being able to get into the heads of Buddhists, Hindus, African animists, Native Americans, or Aboriginal peoples.

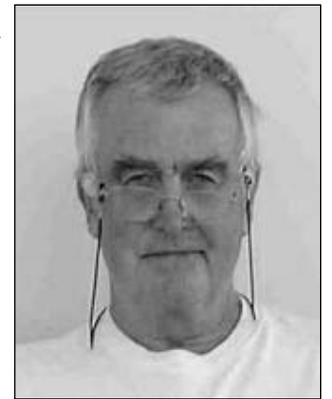
Although I pride myself on being multi-lingual, well traveled, liberal and open to other cultures, perhaps I am not clever enough and can only think only in two or three dimensions. Particularly after one has met someone like the prize-winning Australian author Barry Hill, who can successfully mix poetry, biography, history, spirituality, psychology, political analysis, and contemporary judgments in one book, do I feel small and limited.

I have just finished his Magnum Opus (818 pages) *Broken Song*, ostensibly about the anthropologist T.G.H Strehlow and his translation of the spiritual songs of the Aboriginal people of Central Australia. At the end, one has some insight into the importance of these songs to the Aborigines and their belief system, but along the way we have an exciting examination of human motivations, growing up trilingual, the influence of one's parents, ethnicity, racism, Australian identity, aboriginal politics, academic jealousies, the pitfalls of translation, personal passions, adultery, possessive-



ness and even an unsolved child murder case. What could have been a dry treatise becomes a vivid story of the son of German missionaries growing up among Aborigine children, trying to establish himself in the Anglo-Australian society, believing he was doing God's work and something good for the native Australians, but finally being accused of betraying tribal beliefs and the sacred items put into his trust. Without his efforts, many Aranda songs and artifacts might have been lost to the world. Strehlow compared these songs to Homer's Odyssey and argued that the Aranda oral traditions be considered as world literature. For this, Australia's only fluent native interpreter was branded a Nazi in the Parliament, mocked by colleagues and never received the recognition he felt he deserved during his lifetime.

One wonders how much of Strehlow is in Barry Hill. Barry also lived for awhile among the Poms and seems ill at ease with the current political climate in Australia. An enthusiastic guide of his native Queenscliff in Victoria (about which he has written a tourist book), Mr Hill seems to more at home in the great wide world or in conversations ranging from art to labor history. I have met few people who can move so quickly from abstract concepts to political details. His book about his father's participation in Australia's longest labor sit down contains personal recollections, a thor-



Barry Hill

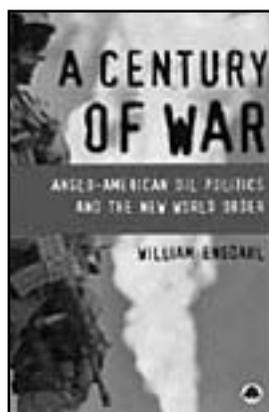
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A CENTURY OF WAR: ANGLO-AMERICAN OIL POLITICS AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER

Reg Little

*A Century of War: Anglo-American Oil Politics
and the New World Order*
William Engdahl. Pluto Press. \$24.95.

Anyone distressed by the troubled policies of the Bush administration is likely to find William Engdahl's *A Century of War: Anglo-American Oil Politics and the New World Order* illuminating, if not reassuring. Engdahl shows that, long before 'full spectrum dominance' became the explicit goal of American policy, both British and American governments had long been accomplished in the deceptive exercise of pre-emptive power of questionable legitimacy. Equally, he exposes both the demands made on an American polity that seeks to expand on British imperial achievements and an apparent decline in the efficacy with which this endeavour is conducted.



First published in 1992 and revised in 2004, Engdahl's work reveals a century of Anglo-American global policy that has been remarkably resourceful in manoeuvring to disguise and transform its own weaknesses and to outflank and outplay emerging rivals. The Balfour Declaration is sketched in all its ambiguity. There seems little doubt that the Declaration was an important element of a strategy designed to divvy up the Arab world and win the British Empire a dominant role in exploiting Middle Eastern oil reserves after the fragmentation of the Ottoman Empire.

Germany emerges as a major casualty of Anglo-American success and Engdahl's mixed German and American background may have assisted him to outline vividly the policies and actions that have allowed English speaking peoples to so command the 20th Century. It is clear that politically correct rhetoric has masked the reality of many critical situations. It is difficult to ignore a sense that the Project for a New

American Century with its bold challenge — 'Does the United States have the resolve to shape a new century favourable to American principles and interests?' — seeks to continue a well established tradition, even as it signals both strength and weakness. The reader is led to question whether the setbacks that haunt the Bush Administration reflect ill conceived and badly implemented policy or the long term dilemmas of declining American power.

Engdahl's account of 20th Century oil politics reveals British and American political systems that sacrificed strong, broadly based internal economic development for the high stakes rewards of international trade and finance, leveraged off the control of major oil resources, mostly in other people's countries. Serious domestic economic weakness and decline can be seen as a consequence of adventurous and predatory foreign policies that gave the highest priority to corporate interests in strategic global markets. The ability to control and dictate oil markets and related currency flows enabled Britain in the first half of the century and America in the latter half to shape the evolution of an international system and the emergence of the 'New World Order'.

The value of 'A Century of War' resides in its incisive account of some harsh historical realities that remind how the arts of deception are often critical in building and maintaining international power. The question it leaves unanswered concerns the continuing viability of such strategies in a world where giants like China and India have identified new strategies based on the strength of indigenous culture and domestic production and the subtlety of external diplomacy.

Engdahl concludes by recalling the words of Edward Said:

Every single empire, in its official discourse, has said that it is not like all the others, that its circumstances are special, that it has a mission to enlighten, civilize, bring order and democracy, and that it uses force only as a last resort.

PRRB's diplomatic correspondent, Reg Little writes from Brisbane, Australia.

PLATZER (continued from Page 14)

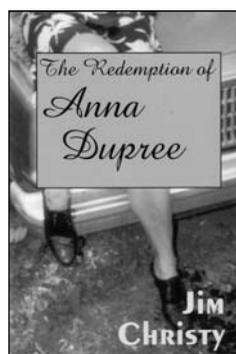
ough economic analysis, the letters of a 19th century Italian labor leader to his beloved from prison, a political critique of Australia's leaders, interspersed with an unfinished fictionalized version of the incident. And it works!

Although, one has to keep at least five strains of thought going at the same time.

We need more people who can make accessible the multi-level experiences, beliefs, and actions of North American and antipodal indigenous people. The debates about multi-culturalism must go beyond mere tolerance but provide us with some insight into the belief and value systems of the different peoples of the world. While some behaviours must be condemned as being against now generally accepted universal standards, other beliefs and customs are best understood first before being judged. The struggle to gain appreciation about how another person thinks is never ending but starts best with the North American injunction to seek to walk in the other person's moccasins.

Michael Pllatzer is a diplomate and scholar who writes from Vienna, Austria. He is a former assistant to Kofi Anan at the United Nations.

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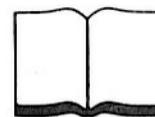
Anna has a wicked tongue and claims to have been in the movies. When the young man is instructed to take a medical leave from the retirement home on account of stomach ulcers, she persuades him to help her escape. They embark on a road trip to Mexico, and while the elderly Anna comes back to life Colin finds himself opening up in unexpected ways.



Jim Christy is a writer, artist and tireless traveller. The author of twenty books, including poetry, short stories, novels, travel and biography, Christy has been praised by writers as diverse as Charles Bukowski and Sparkle Hayter. His travels have taken him from the Yukon to the Amazon, Greenland to Cambodia. He has covered wars and exhibited his art internationally. Raised in inner-city Philadelphia, he moved to Toronto when he was twenty-three years old and became a Canadian citizen at the first opportunity. He currently makes his home on BC's Sunshine Coast.

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FANTE (continued from Page 10)

That got me started. That got me revved up. I found John Fante's number in the West LA phone book and called him up. I got his wife, Joyce. I told her I wrote for the LA Times. I was a friend of Charles Bukowski's, Fante's greatest fan. "Oh really," she said. "And my grandfather worked with H. L. Mencken at the Sun Papers in Baltimore.

She put her husband right on the line. "He says his grandfather worked with Mencken," she said.

"This is John Fante. What do you want?"

"I want an interview with the man who wrote *Ask The Dust*."

"Have you read?" he asked.

"I can't find it anywhere." He laughed. "You're just as bad as the last one the Times sent out. *Ask The Dust* has been out of print for years."

"Look," he said, "If your grandfather worked with Mencken on the Baltimore Sun, you can come out. Honey," he said, "give this man instructions to the house."

Joyce Fante got on the phone and told me how to get to their home on Point Dume. I called Bukowski and told him I was going to meet John Fante. Bukowski seemed torn. He wanted to know and he didn't want to know. Meeting your god close up can be scary.

In the meantime I found a copy of *Ask The Dust* under lock and key at the downtown public library, the same place Bukowski had read Fante's book so long ago. I read it twice. I read it slowly. I was in there all day. It was amazing writing.

Traces of the downtown of Arturo Bandini were still there: the bars on Figueroa, Pershing Square, the Grand Central Market. I'd been there before, shooting an 8mm black and white film on Spring Street, but now I saw it through Fante's eyes, Bukowski's eyes, Arturo and Camilla in love and at war.

I called a friend at St. Martin's Press. James Vinson. He'd edited the three great reference volumes for St. James/St Martins: *Contemporary Dramatists*; *Contemporary Poets*; *Contemporary Novelists*. I'd reviewed all three for *Books West Magazine*. Fante wasn't even in the volume of novelists. James asked if I could get him the book. That was the problem. I told him I'd make a photo copy from the LA Public Library if they'd let me. Then I called Bukowski. I said I was going to get *Ask The Dust* reprinted.

He suggested calling John Martin. I preferred City Lights and St. Martins. While John Martin at Black Sparrow was still giving Bukowski his monthly allowance of a several hundred dollars a month, Lawrence Ferlinghetti promised Bukowski a large payoff for his mass produced paperback *Erections*. Besides, Ferlinghetti was Italian.



After my first meeting with John Fante in 1978, I called Ferlinghetti and told him about the book. He asked for a copy and I sent him the pages I had Xeroxed in the LA Public Library. Same to St. Martins. They quickly demurred. City lights sat on the pages for several months, then Ferlinghetti wrote back on January 5, 1979, one week before I left for the second part of my European Sabbatical.

Ferlinghetti wrote me the following:

Dear Ben,

Thanks for sending this up. I can see the influence on Bukowski all right, though I'm afraid I don't see it as a great American novel. I can't say I read every word, though I tried,

and this may be the author's fault or it may be mine. I wish I were more enthusiastic about it. Why don't you try John Martin at Black Sparrow? Or perhaps you already have.

Thanks anyway, Lawrence F.

That was that. I was off to France, Greece and Egypt for six months. While I was in Grenoble, France, John Fante wrote me an update on publication:

February 19, 1979

Dear Ben:

It was nice to have your note of February 5, the details of which include your plans for *Ask The Dust* and possibly *Wait Until Spring, Bandini*. The only news I have from John Martin is that he plans to publish in April or May or thereabouts. I have a couple of letters from Bukowski, who says he still finds *Ask The Dust* very readable and plans his preface shortly. I appreciate your efforts on my behalf during your European sojourn and feel very fortunate that someone with your enthusiasm thinks about me and my work. I sent Bukowski a copy of my last novel about two weeks ago.

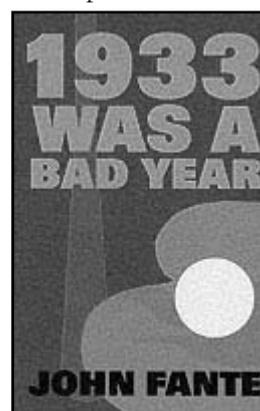
All the best,
John Fante

When I returned from Europe, the *LA Times Book Review* published my article, "Stories of Irony From the Hand of John Fante." The article mentioned Fante's blindness, Bukowski's reverence for Fante's work, the importance of *Ask The Dust* as an LA masterpiece and the terrible cards fate had dealt John Fante in life.

What I did as a young writer and critic, broke the log jam on Fante's bad luck. A number of famous writers wrote me to offer there help. Among them were Budd Schulberg, Jack Conroy and Alvah Bessie.

When *Ask The Dust* finally appeared in the spring of 1980 published by Black Sparrow Press with the Charles Bukowski preface, I received a box of books, mostly by obscure poets, with no note or acknowledgement of any kind. It was what I expected from John Martin.

But John Fante was delighted with the adventure. He invited me back to his house for several more recording sessions, where he spoke with great joy about his new novel, *How to Write a Screen Play*, which later became *Dreams*



From Bunker Hill.

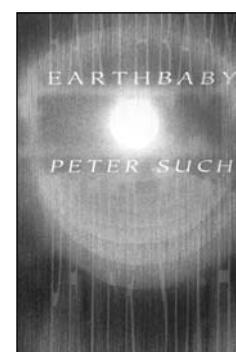
When John Fante died, Bukowski and I sat side by side at the funeral in Malibu. We had done something important together, Bukowski and I.

As the film of *Ask The Dust* comes out in March of 2006, I am pleased I was there at the right time. It's one thing in my life I got right. As Dan Fante said in 1983:

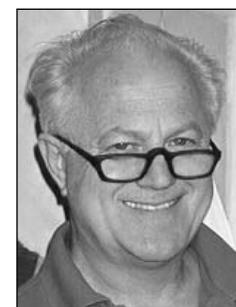
The point is you are truly the one responsible for the renewed interest in my father's work. I just wanted you to know how very much I appreciate what you have done for my dad's career and for his spirit. I want you to know that the life and work of an often difficult, ungracious, proud, egotistical genius would probably have gone all-but-unnoticed were it not for you.

That was good enough for me. Enough said.

Ben Pleasants is the author of Visceral Bukowski, among many other books. He lives and writes in Los Angeles, California



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Peter Such was born in England and came as a youngster to Canada in 1953. He was a working class member of "the group that revitalized Canadian Literature in the '70s...no one in Canadian Literature is as eclectic as Peter Such" (*Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*). He is also a founder/publisher of *Impulse* magazine and a former editor of *Books in Canada*. After many years of working in other genres he completed his new novel, *Earthbaby*, while living in Finland, courtesy of an award from the Finnish Academy.

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CID CORMAN & THE POETICS OF TRANSLATION

Gregory Dunne

Part II. Fed by The Word

In March of 2005, I was invited to join a panel discussion on the topic of translation at the Association of Writers and Writing Programs, in Vancouver, Canada. The panel, “Writers, Translators, and Editors as Cultural Representatives” was organized by Pat Matsueda, managing editor of *Manao* International literary magazine at the University of Hawaii, Manoa. We were to discuss questions related to the responsibilities of writers, editors, and translators in representing non-Western cultures to Western readers. Ms. Matsueda’s rationale for the panel came, in part, from her concern that the worldview of the people of the United States was shrinking as a result of the 9/11 attacks.

As I prepared to participate in the discussion, I thought of Cid. He had died just about a year earlier, March 12, 2004. Cid had been a translator as well as a poet. He translated from many different languages and from many different time periods. It was easy to imagine Cid responding to the questions we were preparing to discuss. I realized I could approach the panel by allowing the conversations I had with Cid, regarding translation, to feed into my responses. In a certain sense, I wanted Cid to be with us – wanted him to weigh in.

Translation was central to Cid’s development as a poet and his accomplishment in poetry. He began translating very early and continued translating throughout his life. He has probably translated from more languages and from a wider time period than any poet, living or dead. This active engagement with translation over such a long period of time has fed into his writing, broadening and deepening his sense of what poetry is and what poetry can be.

There is probably no better place to look at the effect of translation on Corman’s poetics than to look at his *summa poetica*, *of*. This five-volume book of poems—each volume 750 pages—was completed towards the end of Cid’s life while he was at the height of his powers, a mature poet. Here, in the introductory pages of the book, Cid directly addresses the reader and speaks to what the book intends. The book then opens out into the poetry of Cid Corman but also, and central to the point here, it opens out into the poetry of many other poets brought down through many different countries over vast stretches of time via Cid’s own translations. The translated poems work in concert with Cid’s own poems to form a living co-temporaneous world of poetry, a whole.

The first words of the book are written in Greek. They compose the epigraph. The epigraph comes from Philo of Alexandria (20 B.C.E. ~ 50 C.E.). It is interesting to note, that Philo’s writing itself is drawing upon the older writing of the Bible, the old testament, written in Hebrew. Corman translates the epigraph as follows:

The soul of the most perfect is fed by the word as a whole; we may well be content should we be fed even by a portion of it.

PHILO: Allegorical Interpretations of Genesis. III, Ixi, 176.

With this epigraph Corman implicitly acknowledges there is a *whole* to which we belong and are fed by – the whole of literature and humanity – *fed by the word*. He also acknowledges the individual, the *portion* of the whole – and that portion’s ability to satisfy and nourish us.

On the following page of the book, Cid goes further to detail the aesthetic stance that informs the book. He speaks in his characteristically direct manner:

*for those who find themselves here
and sounding the words care to be*

*this is a book of a life as exacting as any
other, not in chronological order, but
through as for all time: a small proportion of
what has occurred to me and to which the work
unseen is complementary*

*the title reflects a precisely physical metaphysics:
the meta the indissoluble unfathomable fact: the
genitive case: to which we are all beholden and
within which we remain hopelessly particular*

and to the extent that a poetry can, these poems articulate it - which humbly (meaning - aware of there being no choice) reveals transparently, whatever else may be felt, I trust (trust implying you), wonder, gratitude, pain, and love.

Corman makes clear that “we are all beholden,” a part of something else. And though we participate in this wholeness; this coming from somewhere else, this being “of” something else, this *be-holding*, we remain “hopelessly particular:” “. . . a precisely physical metaphysics.” With this in mind, it is easy to understand, how the opening poem in Corman’s book *of* could be the *Heart Sutra*, translated. This is an ancient prayer, a sutra, that embodies a very similar sensibility, namely a non-dualistic sensibility that recognizes both the part and the whole, reaching through both to utter the word “Friend.” The sutra passed from Sanskrit into many other languages, including the Chinese and Korean, before arriving in Japan and being translated into Japanese. Corman translates out of the Japanese and makes a poem:

SHINGYO

*Seeing reflecting sense nonsense
Friend - here is emptiness here is form
Unborn undying - untainted
unpure - no more no less - therefore
Friend - nothing to know or not to
to come to this - the suffering
reaching where it is and is not
Come - body - and go - body - no
body - gone to the other - gone.*

As we page further into this remarkable wonder of a book, we come upon translations from many different languages. We encounter translations out of Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Chinese, Japanese, German, French, Italian, and more. The translated poems include poems from Homer, Sophocles, Catullus, T’ao Ch’ien, Montale, Villon, Rimbaud, Bash?, Mallarmé, Rilke, Char, Celan, and others – all Corman translations.

Cid does not openly acknowledge the translations as translations in the volume. That is, he does not tell us directly that the *Heart Sutra* above is actually a translation. He does not accredit the individual poems with their original author. This lack of crediting the original authors has caused at least one contemporary American poet to question Corman’s intentions. He questions the morality, the ethical rightness, of what he terms the “appropriation” of other poets’ poetry in this way.

I love this kind of a debate because it sheds all the more light on what Corman was trying to do. It illuminates the beautiful and audacious spirit of Corman’s vision as it relates to his understanding of what constitutes poetry. Cid did not *forget* to identify the poem he was translating nor did he *forget* to credit the author. These were deliberate decisions of omission; or rather, these were deliberate decisions of inclusion. The gesture Cid was making was one of wholeness. This is all amply outlined at the forefront of the book as I have tried to make clear. In conversation, responding to the criticism above, Cid told me he felt the poems he was using, the translations, were too well known, to pose any real problems with regard to appropriation. *The Heart Sutra*, for example, is probably as well known in Asia, and increasingly beyond Asia, as the Lord’s Prayer is in the West. To stop the flow of the book and point out that this poem was written at such a date, in such a country, by one poet would essentially detract from the graceful symmetry of the book by extracting the part from the whole, and in so doing interrupt the full panoramic sweep of this journey through time, space, and culture – through poetry. It would be antithetical to the sensibility and understanding that Corman has told us shape the book. Cid wanted the poems from all times and all peoples to flow seamlessly into the present moment - to live there

(continued on Page 18)

beside his own words and within the life of the reader. Here, for example, is a poem that exemplifies some of this. We see in this poem, part of Corman's beautiful, generous, and far reaching understanding of how poetry can live for us, through us, for all times:

*To what are the words
dedicate? Or is
it only to whom?*

*Long dead Hakuin
listening still to
snow falling at night fall.*

By bringing these diverse voices – from different historical periods, from different countries and cultures, and placing them beside some of his own poetry Cid conveys the sense that these voices belong to us, moreover, they *are* us. We are OF this stuff. He is singing our song. Three poems:

1/
**The
Call**

Life is poetry

and poery is life—O

awaken—people!

2/

*If poetry has
any meaning it
has to be this – it*

*has to be yours and
you it. Every
word finally fits.*

3/
Family

*We know it is love
because we are – as
the stars are – because*

*Dante and Shakespeare
and Homer were and
so many others*

*who never leave us
alone – light shining
under the closed door.*

As mentioned at the outset, translation was central to Corman's poetics, to his life. It started early when he studied at Boston Latin High School. He began translating in high school, working over poems of Horace, and Ovid, and Latin and Greek poets. It was during the war years, however when he went deeper into translating. He tells the story this way:

. . .The first quatrain I wrote one Sunday two weeks after Pearl Harbor was . . . (shakes his head in disapproval) . . . almost like a translation from ancient Greek, because I had been translating the Agamemnon of Aeschylus at the time. I had studied Greek in high school, and I was very interested still in Greek literature and read quite a bit at University, mostly on my own, this was not for any course. This was just for my own satisfaction. I had read no translation of Aeschylus that struck me as being accurate or true to the thing. Browning, when he tried to translate it from the Greek, was more interesting to me because he really tried to get closer to the way it feels in Greek, even though it is a weird translation that he did. And I have the original printing of Browning's version that

was made into a play and so forth that I somehow picked up in England at a famous shop there. But at any rate, when I started out, because there was nobody else around, I wanted to know about meter. I wanted to understand how poetry was structured, why they used rhyme, the way poetry moved. Well, I was reading. I was an advanced student in French because I had studied in high school, so I was able to move quickly on. By the time I was a sophomore, I was studying Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Mallarme. And those poets struck me very strongly. They were new to me, and they were different than American poetry. But, I figured by translating I had a way of getting closer to what they were doing, and by doing that, I could learn.

Well Baudelaire is a great classicist in many ways to learn from, because he works in classical modes even though his handling of it is different from anyone up to his time because he opens up to modern urban themes and situations in a way that nobody else had done up until then. He breaks the romantic line. He has a touch of, but he breaks it as the same time that opens into people like Rimbaud and Mallarme and so.

So that it was the beginning for me. So I translated almost all of Les Fleurs du Mal for myself. They weren't meant for publication. To learn. So it was for me, my education.

For Cid, translating was an education, "a way of getting closer . . . and by doing that . . . learn." Clearly he learned well, and he never lost his interest in learning. We can gather that he learned a lot about some of the more technical aspects of poetry through his translation work, but we should also understand that he learned about culture, differing world views, differing aesthetics in art, and finally about poetry/life. As just one example of what he learned through his exposure to Japanese literature, I know for a fact that he adopted the five part structure of the Noh Drama for his books following his exposure and translation of the Japanese Noh plays. Why would he do this? What did he find in this five-part structure that made it so artistically appealing? I don't know the answer to these questions, but I know that his summa poetica, *of*, is divided into five volumes and that each volume is divided into five sections.

At this time in history when writers such as Ms. Matsueda are speculating as to whether or not there is a shrinking in the worldview of the people of the United States as a direct result of the 9/11 terrorist attack, a time when understandably people might want to run and hide behind the supposed safety and security of their own cultural values and worldviews, we need literary translations more than ever. We need translations particularly out of those cultures that we are less familiar with for they may help, even if only in a small way, to bring us closer to understanding our human commonalities as well as our differences, those things that make us who we are. To retreat into our own limited cultural views would effectively make us all the less human, denying ourselves a portion of the whole. Rather than shrinking worldviews, let us hope we are more on guard than ever of succumbing to this kind of withering into smallness.

The problems of the world will most effectively be solved by reaching out to one another, through understanding, dialogue, and compassion. Though still troubled with dispute and war, the people of the world have progressed in understanding and appreciating their differences – clearly, however, we have much further to go in making this world a just and peaceful place. I hope that Cid Corman's life in poetry and translation serve humanity everywhere by demonstrating the whole that can be experienced through the vehicles of poetry and literary translation.

In one of the last conversations I had with Cid in Kyoto, he spoke about his hope for the future. I remember him talking about the many young friends from around the world that he corresponded with. He told me very clearly that these young friends, and note that he didn't say young people, were the "positive elements" in the world for him. They gave him hope. "Not so much for a better world," he went on, "but just a world in which people can live together in, learn to live together."

Cid's work points a way towards that learning-to-live-together life. To hear Cid, we need to listen to the poetry and to the life he lived in poetry. It is not the whole truth, it is not the only truth. It may not even be a truth at all. But it is a life, a *portion*, a portion of the whole that Philo told us we could well be contented by if fed. Here's to being fed, one portion at a time, and learning to experience through it the whole.

I would like to close with Cid's poem, *Afterward as Preface*. Here, Cid turns and looks back at his summa poetica, *of*, and comments upon it:

**AFTERWORD
AS PREFACE**

*Let me write of it
so you understand
what it is. It is*

*education as
the truth. Illusion*

(continued on Page 35)

TANGIER RENEGADE: PAUL BOWLES IN 1965

IRA COHEN INTERVIEWS PAUL BOWLES

edited by Gena Caponi

An unpublished interview from the Paul Bowles Papers. Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York. By permission of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

Ira Cohen: When did you first come to Morocco?

Paul Bowles: 1931.

Cohen: That was after that conversation with Gertrude Stein. Was it really based on that, or was it just coincidental?

Bowles: No. It's completely because of that that I came.

Cohen: The sense of being able to be changed by Gertrude Stein — that I suppose had very much to do with her personality, not only her writing.

Bowles: Much more her conversation, yes. Her writing is almost meaningless without the conversation as a key. It's like footnotes to the writing, really. Particularly with regard to the approach that you take.

She wasn't particularly interested in music. She thought it was an inferior art. She once sent me a cartoon out of the *New Yorker*. I remember, two women sitting on the beach looking at a little boy digging in the sand, and one woman said to the other, "We're very disappointed in Arthur's horoscope. We thought he'd turn out to be a painter or at least a musician." She was very proud of that. She was always trying to put me in my place.

She had an ear for dissonance, consonance. But I don't think she had an ear for pitch, and I think that's the basis of liking music. She had eyes, but she had no ears. She couldn't tell a tune, whether it was going forwards or backwards.

Cohen: Didn't you write a piece of music once for her or for some piece of hers?

Bowles: There were several. Yes, a sort of letter. I made a song out of it, which was made into a record. Schirmer published it. "Letter to Freddie."

Cohen: Why "Letter to Freddie?" Is that a nickname that she . . .

Bowles: A nickname she called me. It's my middle name. Frederic. She said, "Oh, your name isn't Paul."

Cohen: "You're a Freddie," she said?

Bowles: That's right. "You're no Paul." She had certain ideas about the aura that goes around the name of Paul and it was too steadfast for me. Freddie's much more like me, she said.

She'd say, "Ah, Freddie, Freddie, Freddie." She would do that all the time and I would just grin and giggle. I was playing a part. She wanted me to be this naughty little boy. She wanted me to dress in short pants, which she called "Faunties."

Cohen: How old were you then?

Bowles: Oh, I was twenty. No, but she saw me as twelve, that's the point, and that was her whole kick with me, I know. She was sort of a very loving grandmother.

I did two other songs of hers which I've published called "Scenes from the Door." And I did some other songs later, subsequently, in the thirties. But that's all.

Cohen: Had you met Cocteau before this?

Bowles: I had, yes, that same spring.

Cohen: Did you feel in any way strongly affected by him as an artistic personality?

Bowles: No, no. He was always to me the epitome of celebritydom. He was the celebrity but his actual work never affected me very deeply.

Cohen: So Stein said "Go to Morocco," just like that?

Bowles: Go to Tangier. She said, "Go to Tangier," and Aaron Copland, the composer, and I came here. We went to the Minzah, and we stayed about two weeks, and I was very eager to get out, because I thought it was too touristy. It was very nice in those days, not like now. But I wanted to get out, so I kept wandering up the mountain. Found a marvelous house, so up we went.

She sent people off on very strange goose chases. She told me to



come to Tangier and she knew that certain people were already here, and what she wanted to see was what would happen when I hit there, you see.

Cohen: Who was here when you came?

Bowles: The surrealist painter, Kristians Tonny was here, and she knew that I would contact him, and the writer that everyone's forgotten now but who was very popular at that time, named Claude McKay, who wrote a book called *Home to Harlem*. He was living here like a Maharajah. It was incredible. He had a house full of slaves and he just clapped his hands and in they came. It was marvelous. Dancing girls.

Cohen: You mention sometimes people like Djuna Barnes here in the thirties. Was that at this time, or some time afterwards?

Bowles: It was about two years after. She came here, let's see. I got back from the long trip in the Sahara. I went to Tunis and I got back in the spring of '33. She had just come to Tangier. That's right. It was two years later.

Cohen: Didn't you share a house with Djuna Barnes? Where was that?

Bowles: Well, it's before you get to Michael Scott's, where you begin going down the hill suddenly. It was a little house there, cost fifty francs a month, two dollars. Very nice. Lots of rooms. Charles Henri Ford lived in it with her. I said, "All right, you can have the house. You don't have to pay a penny." They were short on funds or something.

She had just come from Peggy Guggenheim's in Devonshire and she had fifty dollars. Nobody had any money in those days. And I had this little house for two dollars a month, and she thought it would be nice to live without paying anything, since it was costing me so little. I lived in a hotel in town, but I had a piano in the house and I wanted to get in by 1:30 every day to work. I was writing a cantata. I never could get in. I'd go there and pound and pound. Pretty soon I'd hear Charlie Ford inside, saying, "Oh Paul, you come so early."

Cohen: Have you ever worked straight out of a dream state?

Bowles: Oh, in music many times, but only once in fiction, in a story called "You Are Not I." It begins "You are not I. Nobody but me could possibly be. I know who I am, who I've been ever since the train went off the track in the valley." It begins with a trainwreck.

Cohen: And that was a direct recording of a dream then?

Bowles: It was the result of a dream. I didn't know what it was, but I remember thinking, "I've got to get all this down." It wasn't like dream, it was like an idea. It came in a second between waking and sleeping, or sleeping and waking. I happened to know that I had a notebook of some sort there. I had been writing before I went to bed and I just reached down and picked it up without turning on the light. It was dark in the room.

Cohen: You had the mask on, I suppose, while writing, which would have kept out any light.

Bowles: I think I pushed it up because I always do when I sit up. I don't like the feeling of being blindfolded. There is always a certain amount of light in a dark room. I began to write with my eyes shut, of course.

Cohen: Did you have any trouble staying on the paper?

Bowles: I wrote quite big and kept turning the pages, covered many pages with big carefully scrawled handwriting so that I could read it, and then I just went on and on without moving until I was very tired, and stopped and went back to sleep.

Cohen: Did you ever revise the story afterwards or did you keep it as it was?

Bowles: I kept it almost as it was; I changed one sentence.

Cohen: I always liked that story for its dreamlike quality. I remember particularly one part of the story when the woman pushes a stone into someone's mouth. Was that a stone she picked up at the trainwreck or what?

Bowles: Oh yes, I know, she's in the entrance hall of her sister's house and she's supposed to transform her sister into herself and vice versa and she tries to put a stone into her sister's mouth.

(continued on Page 28)



IRA COHEN'S DISSOLUTE LIFE

Jordan Zinovich

Every cultural movement has its high-profile personalities, but it's the creative demiurges who generate action within the action. Think of Munich's Kosmiker Circle or New York dada and you can't avoid the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven. George Plimpton's *Paris Review*, No. 18, would be immeasurably weaker without the impact of Vali Myers' artistry, regardless of Philip Roth's important first story or Hemingway's commentary on writing. And the vaunted ideals of San Francisco's Summer of Love are direct extensions of the Diggers' gritty theory-to-action collectivity. So if you really want to know something about the late phases of Paul Bowles's Tangier, the Beats, Jimi Hendrix's New York, publishing in Katmandu, or provo and the Poet's Circus in Amsterdam, you should be aware of Ira Cohen's presence there.

Though the Baroness Elsa was before Ira's time, even as a boy he knew she scared the shit out of William Carlos Williams. And Ira and Vali Myers adored one another, even as Ira's friend and translator Simon Vinkenoog caught the Diggers' attention. Once, when I asked the Beat poet Ted Joans, who'd stayed a while in Tangier, for an impression of Ira, Ted simply said: "The man is evil."

When Simon learned that there was friction between the two, who were both planning to attend his 70th birthday party, he said delightedly: "Bring them both; let them fight it out." Simon's comment reconstitutes the essence of a scene, its intricate combative dance of views, where the steps trace trajectories of beauty. Only the dancers really experience the dance. The rest of us are just an audience.

For the past year a *samizdat* compilation of Ira's autobiographical pieces has been circulating among counterculture publishers in North America and Europe. When Hakim Bey (aka Peter Lamborn Wilson, the American political writer, essayist and poet) asked what the title of the published book would be, Ira quipped: "A Dissolute Life Spent in the Service of Allah." Excess and spirituality have been central to his living; he views Allah as "Everything." Ira knew intuitively that the title would yank Hakim's beard. It's not every day that a real dancer speaks. The following is a transcript of a conversation with Ira Cohen, in which he relates a story recorded by Paul Bowles.

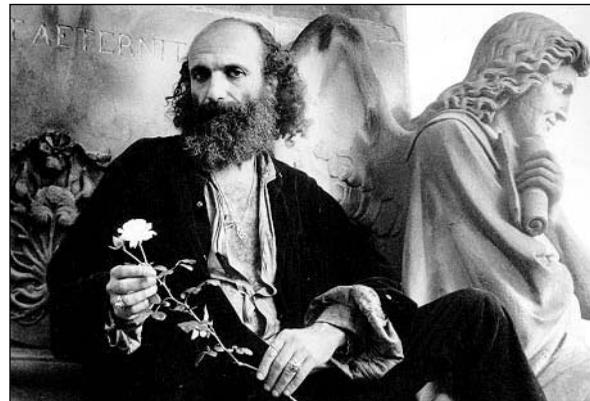
JZ: Tell me the story of the "bat palace." I've read a version Paul Bowles told, which I've heard he used to tell fairly often, but it's about you and I've never heard you tell it.

IC: My girlfriend Rozalind and I were living with Irving Rosenthal in a house in Tangier.

JZ: On the mountain?

IC: No, not on the mountain. People with money lived on the mountain. We didn't have any money. Our house was in the Medina, close to the drain.

Anyway, the Caves of Hercules weren't far away. The bats swarmed out every night, so we got curious and went to take a look. As usual in Morocco, there were "guides" there. They always needed money and never asked for much. For some reason, once we got inside the caves I decided I wanted a bat. It just seemed like a good



idea. So the Moroccan we'd hired took a long stick and poked around in a crack in the roof until one fell out.

I'll never forget that bat crashing down: it didn't just drop, it plummeted like a star, smashing down badly stunned.

The Moroccan wanted two dirhams for it. Irving and Roz went nuts. Twenty-five cents didn't seem too

much to me, but they wanted me to barter — as if they really knew anything about bartering. Some people really got into bartering, but things were cheap, and within reason I just paid what the Moroccans asked. You're never really going to beat them anyway. Since our guide had specifically asked for two dirhams, I suspected he had some special need for them, so I said: "Two dirhams, two bats." I didn't need two bats, but it was easier for both of us for me to barter up rather than down. I got two bats.

That was probably good, because the injured bat died by the time we got home. We laid it out on the table and started smoking. You know how it is: you get stoned, you get crazy; one thing leads to another. We started talking about what to do with the bat. At some point, as a joke, I said, "Why don't we just eat it?" Roz said, "Okay." She was so matter of fact about it. She got out a frying pan and some oil and started to skin it, which was the last thing in the world I expected her to do. (I nailed the skin to a board and kept it for years until it got so moldy I had to throw it out.) Irving said he wanted the lips and the penis. I wasn't really sure that I wanted any of it — but when the time came I went for a drumstick. Roz ate the brain. When Mark Schleifer dropped by it had become a theater piece. Poor Mark had a terrible time the night before at Sidi Kacem (which is the Moroccan equivalent of Walpurgis Night). He had no idea what was going on and he recoiled from us in horror. Before I knew it the story was circulating as if it was something we did regularly, which is the story Paul told.

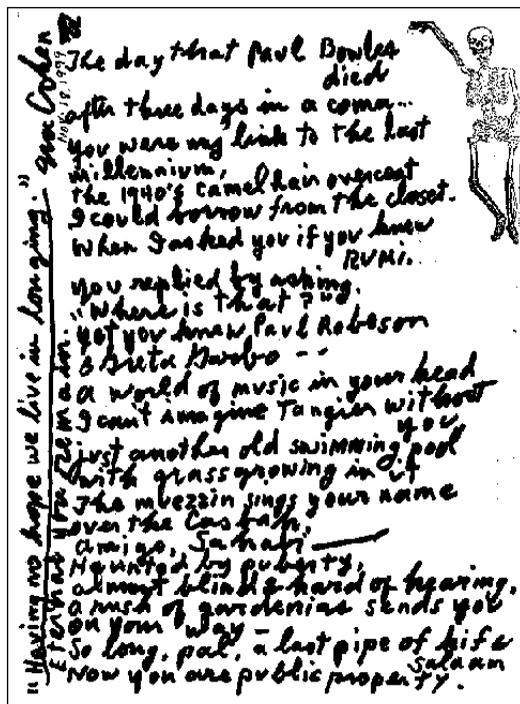
JZ: That's it?

IC: That's it.

JZ: What about the other bat?

IC: We wanted to learn more about it, so we put it in an empty room in the house and closed the door. But we never saw it again after that. No matter how quietly we moved it was never there when we opened the door. No sign of it. I guess it found its own way out.

Jordan Zinovich is the author of seven books, most recently *The Company I Keep*. He is a senior editor with the *Automedia Collective*, one of North America's most notable underground publishing houses. He lives in Brooklyn.



A poem on the death of Paul Bowles by Ira Cohen

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THREE VIEWS OF CRYSTAL WATER

Apis Teicher

Three Views of Crystal Water

Katherine Govier. HarperCollins Canada, \$32.95

In the realm of modern fiction it still isn't unusual to find any number of books and novels that deal with the west's fascination with the orient – specifically Japan. Not that the fascination with Japan is a new phenomenon – one has only to look back at the late 1800s and the influence of Japanese *Ukiyo-e* prints on the likes of Toulouse-Lautrec and Monet. There are countless depictions of what was termed *The Floating World*, images of idealized moments, vignettes of life that have long captured the imagination, engaged generations in flights of fancy. It's hard to look upon the woodcut prints and not wonder at the stories behind them, marvel at the characters that dwell within.



Vera wondered who had named these 'Three Views of Crystal water'. The pictures belonged together, and therefore they must tell a story. But it was not clear where the story began...

The focus of Govier's tale is not as easily apparent as one might think. Vera, the protagonist, is a young Canadian girl who goes off to Japan on the cusp of World War II, to find her place in life by living with the *ama* diving women of Japan. To see the book as simply that though, is to do Govier's novel a gross injustice. The basic premise seems straightforward enough – a coming of age story that will require her protagonist travel to a distant land to find her place in the world. Beyond that, however, Govier's novel surpasses every expectation of what may lay ahead in the tale. Like the pearling fever of Vera's ancestors that drives her grandfather to remark, that he hopes she will be the first in the family to be free of it, the book is a constant exercise in self-reflection. The facts are never simply that – the order alters everything, and so with each stroke of the pen or of the sword, we find its true spirit.

Govier manages to capture all the allure and magnetism of those elusive *ukiyo-e* depictions, with masterful storytelling and lyrical, elegant prose; weaves her story beautifully, switching seamlessly between points of view with a grace that is not unlike that of the *ama* diving women which she chose to explore in her writing. How is a pearl made, she reflects, over and over?

It began with an intrusion. Something got into the shell by accident – a parasite, a grain of sand, or a small crab, if the oyster did not react, it would die. Half pearls, which were simply bumps on the inside of the shell, were even called 'blister pearls', as if to emphasize the hurt.

Tellingly, each chapter is named after a different movement of swordplay – a tantalizing touch that leaves the reader wondering if there was more, if something else was missed in the reading of the text. *Three Views of Crystal Water* is a fascinating exploration of thresholds, of a series of cultural and gender interactions that captivate one with their intricacies and subtlety. Having lived in the same prefecture in Japan where Govier's novel takes place, and in Vancouver, the protagonist's hometown, I was stunned by the powerful grace of Govier's perception, and her ability to bring such nuances of culture clashes to life within her novel. She lets us view her story through frame within a frame, within a frame, until the reader feels in an Escher-esque landscape of rich textures and variety. She brings a lushness and complexity to simplicity that is luscious and beguiling; poetic descriptions and turns of phrase intertwine smoothly with sparse dialogue – a perfect replica of the challenge of communicating between languages, to carving out meaning both from common ground and from the very barriers that separate us. Vera's journey is not one to find that at the core we are the same – but rather that it is the differences that provide for a wealth of discovery. Most striking, perhaps, is how genuine all the voices in her tale are. Govier doesn't judge, doesn't pontificate or particularly identify with anyone character over another. The examination of the cross cultural contrasts feels as legitimately Japanese as it does Canadian—as put by Vera's grandfather, on the reasons he would not be able to write his memoirs :

'I know, grandfather. It puts you into an impossible struggle between truth and loyalty. You told me.'

'Good girl, you remember.'

Govier depicts flawlessly the flavour and the spirit of the Japanese festivals, the feel of the surf off the coast of Mie, Japan. Not the Japan of Edo's Floating World, not the facsimile of *ukiyo-e* or even its modern day equivalent, anime – it reflects the people that live there, faithful to the seasons and the reality of life and survival, not just the romance of tradition or expectations. Govier's writing is neither judgmental nor sentimentalist and it highlights the contrast between those perceptions:

Japan was a palace of marvels. She wanted to go there to find beauty and tranquility and mystery. She had seen this in the pictures. This was the Japan of her grandfather's travels, of his life. ... The pictures spoke the language of dreams. She went to find the land where it was spoken. But the language of dreams is loss. The love of beauty is elegy.

Three Views of Crystal Water is one of those rare works of fiction that carve a permanent place in one's psyche and one's heart. A sense of nostalgia clings not only to the ending but to the entire novel, much like the keening cry of the *ama* divers as they come out of the water; a wonderful, reflective work, exquisite in its bitter-sweetness.

Apis Teicher is a writer and artist who has called many places home, including Japan and Vancouver, Canada, where she currently resides.



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TAKING ROOT IN AN UNFAMILIAR LANDSCAPE

Frances Cabahug

Mayor of the Roses
Marianne Villanueva, University of Miami Press

Using both ends of the Pacific, Marianne Villanueva's book of short stories, *Mayor of the Roses*, collectively presents how the Filipino experience has increasingly become a matter of migration and survival. In a shrinking world rapidly turning into a global village where communication and travel have sped up the ability to connect one place to another, the eighteen stories in the book effusively point out that the insurmountable distance may not necessarily be a geographical problem, but a social one. The book explores the palpable aftermath of longing and frustration with the contradictions that rise up in the immigrant's search for identity, family, and home in a strange new land.

Mayor of the Roses pinpoints the immigrant question as primarily a question of identity. In answer to the question of what it means to be Filipino, Villanueva humorously presents many cultural fixations; the stories "TV" and "BMW" revolve around the family's preoccupations of acquiring television sets and high-end cars, while the story "Black Dog" almost dips into magic realism in explaining the pervasive belief in superstition. But these somewhat comical idiosyncrasies reveal a culture which places tremendous value on family, community, storytelling, and religion. Upon coming in contact with the Western world, the traditions that are kept are unavoidably challenged; for instance, "Wanting" explores an immigrant couple's guilt over the burden of obligation towards the elderly parents whom they left behind. The ties that bind are predictably found insufficient and incompatible with the pursuit of the so-called American Dream.

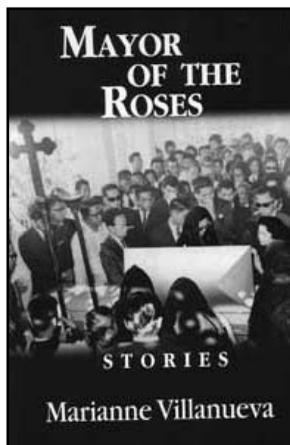
The stories depart from earlier accounts of the Filipino immigrant experience; unlike the world of the 1940's in Carlos Bulosan's *America is in the Heart*, which revolved around the harsh working realities of being a bachelor immigrant at that time, *Mayor of the Roses* leans toward a more feminist framework as it highlights instead the cracks surrounding the lives of immigrant women and the traces of interaction among families. The family is featured as the primary cultural stronghold; whether the story deals with waiting for a sister to die in "Lennox Hill, December 1991", or in easing an old family servant unto his dying days in the story "Rufino," the importance of being there for each other during the toughest times is emphasized.

However, the ties are breaking down as each family member becomes increasingly distant while facing individual pressures in assimilating to a different culture. In "Selena," a husband's midlife crisis coincides with the family's cultural uprootedness. The failure to communicate is symptomatic as the characters draw ever inward to brood over their problems. The three children in "Infected" become perceptively alienated when their mother dies and their father no longer knows how to deal with them. This breakdown of communication allows for abuse to occur, shown blatantly in "Silence," which features a subservient woman who wrestles with her inability to stand up for herself against her husband. The problems that tangle the family ties in these stories are as tragic as they are seemingly portrayed to be inevitable.

Beyond the breakdown, there is a current of muted violence running throughout the entire book. "Mayor of the Roses," the first story which the entire collection is named after, is a graphic account based on the true-to-life rape and murder of a hometown beauty queen by the mayor and his lackeys. Less shocking but equally disturbing is the subtleties of domestic abuse which evade any resolution in the story "Sutil." The cold-blooded hostility that permeates these stories is altogether apt in capturing a cultural identity that has been equated with the overwhelming sense of outrage and helplessness.

But the entire book is handled with sensitivity and grace. Villanueva's tales may cautiously walk over a thorny tightrope, but the stories mediate the tensions between idealism and disillusionment, community and withdrawal, cruelty and hope without falling deep into cloying sentimentality. *Mayor of the Roses* is a testament that coherent meaning can be drawn from the immigrant experience despite its contradictions, and that the clash of beauty and ugliness certainly adds a vibrant dynamics to the Filipino cultural identity.

Frances Cabahug immigrated to Vancouver from the Philippines three years ago. She studies English Literature at the University of British Columbia.



MANDORLA

Kevin O'Rourke

Mandorla
Nancy Holmes, Ronsdale Press

Mandorla, the title of Nancy Holmes's fourth collection, immediately catches the eye. On the acknowledgments page she gives the Oxford dictionary definition – an almond-shaped panel or decorative space, usually framing an image of Christ. This serves to whet the appetite. Investigation reveals that mandorla is the Italian for almond and that the Mandorla is an ancient symbol of overlapping circles, which form an almond in the middle symbolizing the interaction of opposing worlds. In the Christian tradition it is the linking of the divine and the human, an embodiment of the line from the psalms "There is signed upon us the light of Your countenance." In the eastern tradition it is the confluence of yin and yang. The almond space at the center is a threshold, a place between spaces. You need faith to live there. This is Zen territory, an inspirational place to locate a book of poems.

The book begins with a series of meditations on icons of the virgin. The icons are Eastern Orthodox and the Virgin is an archetypal symbol of human suffering. Sometimes the poet uses a short two or three stress line, reminiscent of Heaney's cultural digging line in his bog poems, but mostly the form of the poem shapes itself. Many of the icons have seen better days. Nancy Holmes digs down through paint, faded gold leaf and chipped frames to the undercore of belief. The icons are a place between spaces, a place that demands faith.

The second section of the book focuses on family history, specifically the experiences of the Mazepas, an immigrant family from Ukraine that settled in Alberta. The poems cover a wide range of thematic material – the natural beauty of the landscape, working the land, religion, church, family members, weddings, births, funerals, feelings of loss and alienation in the face of cultural displacement and mental disability. Critics will doubtless talk about narratives and gestures, but for me these poems transcend the critical terminology. They function where good poetry always functions, on and under the skin. New potatoes with cider clear skin; ice skating when sails ballooned out of our mouths; the baby dragged through sleep like a ball of dough through flour – images like these bring the poems alive and give the reader the feeling of sharing directly in the poet's family life. The emphasis is always on lived experience, on finding the spiritual in the real.

The final section of the book explores motherhood. The caption 'Hunting the Saint' says it all. Mother's Day, stillbirths, making valentines, speech disorders, learning disabilities, children growing up and forgetting her birthday – the mother tracks her lonely way toward a spirituality that sustains. It is a personal odyssey through pain and joy, hope and despair. The poems are a record of personal growth.

The Mandorla expresses the standpoint of the mystic. For Nancy Holmes it symbolizes the tensions of family life within which a mother gropes her way toward fulfillment and salvation. Most people do not think of the average mother as a mystic, but reading the book involves you in a growing awareness of a mother's desperate need for spirituality in her life. The circles symbolize interacting but complementary opposites. I suppose the ultimate hope is that the circles conflate into a single great circle, a kind of Yeats' wheel without the magic system. The space within is the mystic's place, redolent of another kind of magic. Zen is a fit place for poetry to be born.



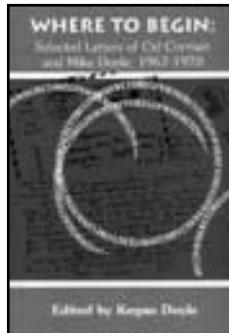
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WHERE TO BEGIN

Gregory Dunne

Where To Begin: Selected Letters of Cid Corman and Mike Doyle, 1967-1970, is a small book containing a rich plenitude of ideas that reveal a world of poetry. The topics under discussion cut to the central concerns of poetry and the making of poetry. Perhaps the most resonant subject matter touched upon in this way is simply the subject of how to be a poet. In his replies by letter and postcard to the Canadian poet, Mike Doyle, Cid Corman offers himself as a guide. Corman comments on Doyle's poems and gives advice on writing and the writing life. Here, for example, Cid comments on "economy" in poetry:



"Economy is not parsimony. What LZ (Louis Zukofsky), for me, brings decisively home, reinforces in my own sense of poetry, is the utter weight and integrity of what one is saying, to the point of it singing. Or why CLEVERNESS is weak. But this is not the same as playfulness or wit. The poem should not be reporting back to the writer, but on to the reader-listener-sayer: the re-maker. Very few poems are of this order, unfortunately."

Later, when Mike Doyle, talks about the need to get his work in print as a means of proving himself as a poet, Cid offers this counsel and supportive advice:

"...you have nothing to PROVE. You exist and you are working: you know it and those who care know it. The quieter you operate, the more patience you have with letting your voice, your deeper soundings, emerge - the truer will be the poetry. It will BE poetry, in short."

The above is just a small sampling of what can be found abundantly in this volume. If this were all there were, it would still be a book well worth reading. In fact, however, it's much more. In this small book, one encounters discussions that cover a lot of ground. Corman and Doyle discuss poets, literary magazines, the work of editing and founding a literary magazine, politics, European literature, translation, and even insects and weather. One will also discover here some very significant, although informal, critical comments on the work of poets like Louis Zukofsky, William Carlos Williams, and Charles Olson. Corman's comments on Luis Zukofsky, in particular, are significant. Corman knew the man, visited with him, and published Zukofsky's work in *Origin* magazine. He even toured the United States on a Greyhound Bus, stopping at bookstores and theaters along the way, in order to read Zukofsky's work to audiences. That's enthusiasm. What Cid has to say about Zukofsky's work is based on his first hand knowledge of Zukofsky and his extensive knowledge of Zukofsky's writing. Here, is some of what Cid has to say about Louis Zukofsky:

"LZ (Zukofsky) provides the greatest profit in terms of the art today - in English - and also the greatest delight. The oeuvre is considerable and it is worth pondering that his work - which has been steady for over 40 years and fine at every point - has been so thoroughly neglected, studiously overlooked. However, many younger poets are finding him and that bodes well.... He is much sharper than WCW (William Carlos Williams), has more intellectual depth and a finer ear and his work has more variety and richness than seems possible for one man to have. It has a lot of 'play' to it and an immense vocabulary."

The above comments were written in 1967, almost forty years ago. In the latest issue of *The American Poetry Review*, (Sept./Oct. Vol.34/No.5) we have an extended essay written on Zukofsky by the highly regarded American poet Robert Hass. It would seem that Cid was right in his estimation of Zukofsky and his belief that younger poets would find their way to him despite the "studious neglect" of his work. This volume of correspondence between Corman and Doyle is worth the reading for Corman's comments on Zukofsky alone.

To conclude, this book offers a deeply satisfying richness. It brings the words of a significant American poet, the late Cid Corman, to the table for us all to hear. For this, we should be grateful. For without the efforts of Mike Doyle, Kegan Doyle, and

Where to Begin: Selected Letters of Cid Corman & Mike Doyle
Kegan Doyle, ed. Ekstasis Editions.

Ekstasis Editions, clearly we would have none of it. Furthermore, as Cid Corman lived at such remove from the United States and Canada, living in Japan for nearly fifty years, not much of his correspondence has found its way into publication to date. His voice is not a voice we have really had much of an opportunity to hear.

Mike Doyle clearly is a poet in his own right. His probing articulate questions to Cid generated many of the open discussions on poetry and poets that make the book such good reading. Together the two of them make a world of poetry come alive on the pages of this book. I like very much what Mike Doyle has to say at the close of the book, in the *Afterward*. I believe it summarizes much of what I have been trying to say in celebrating the book - that it is very much a book about how to be a poet. Doyle talks about the advice he received from Cid and how it was useful and revealing. He is grateful. However, his poetry, differs from Cid's somewhat in what drives it aesthetically. "I have never fully met with his rigorous specifications" he tells us before going on to close the book in the following way:

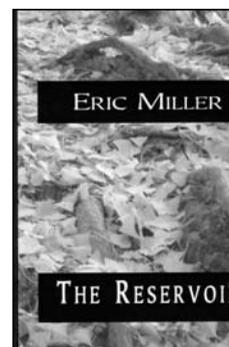


"...Much more to the point, our long exchange of letters has provided friendship, encouragement, and a unifying sense of the larger world of poetry. In the whole of living his life, Cid Corman has epitomized poetry in my generation. Admiring him and thanking him for that, I am grateful for my small part of it."

Mike Doyle's closing words evidence the rich themes flowing throughout the book, that larger world of poetry, and how one might actually be a poet And who better to learn from - who better to understand what it means to be a poet than from the one you believe "epitomized" poetry "in the whole of living his life." This book is a whole, where it begins and where it ends is not the point. The point is the life between and shared, the life now.

Gregory Dunne is a writer, living and teaching in Japan. He visited Cid Corman's coffee shop often.

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OVER THE RIVER

Andrew Schelling

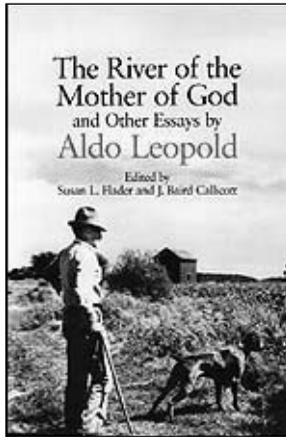
The *New York Times* obituary for Luna B. Leopold (March 20, 2006) reminds me how little we know about rivers. Luna was son of Aldo Leopold, whose *Sand County Almanac* and land management essays are basic eco-consciousness documents. A fine scientist in his own right, Luna edited his father's journals and devoted his professional studies to America's river systems. "We in the United States have acquiesced to the destruction and degradation of our rivers, in part because we have insufficient knowledge of the characteristics of rivers and the effects of our actions that alter their form and process." That's on the first page of *A View of the River*, issued in paperback shortly before his death.

What Leopold did best was figure ways to measure characteristics no one had ever established: river depth, water velocity, shapes of channels, sediments; the seemingly whimsical layout of rocks; how currents carry particles down riverbeds. Working with the U.S. Geological Survey for ten years he pioneered the study of rivers in their terrain. He angled his eye to learn about slopes, hills, floodplains, banks, and the geology that underlies river systems. Rivers take shape by meandering, and Leopold notes that the meander is "the pattern most prevalent in nature." That's why the map of a watershed looks like the veins in a leaf. As Oglala visionary Black Elk told John Niehardt in a similar context, "They have the same religion we do."

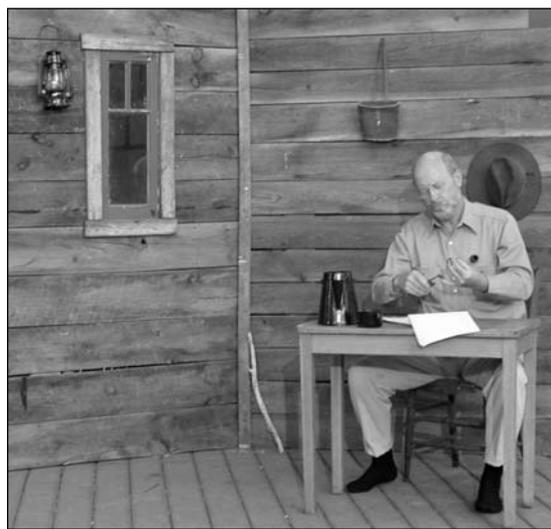
Earth is the only planet we know of with a hydrologic or water cycle. So far it is the only planet we know of with biological life. Water evaporates from oceans into the air, drops on the land as rain or snow, sinks into the soil, evaporates, & transpires from plants. About a third of what hits land drains through the continents as rivers, distributing nutrients & sediments as they pass. This life-giving cycle is reason enough for some to regard *Her* (the water cycle) as a divinity. She has moods—calm, soothing, inscrutable, benign; stormy, turbulent, withholding; overflowing, destructive. She changes shape in ways that elude us. Leopold: "Rivers are far from simple. In fact the mathematics of hydraulics and sediment movement, for instance, have become so complex that even many experts find them difficult to understand."

Each rill, spring, stream, creek, or river might be a local divinity. India is famous for river deities—always female. They draw so close to human form (in sculpture & poetry) it is sometimes hard to know whether the lady is flesh & bone or supernatural. In China, folklore & poetry are rich with rain maidens, water spirits, rainbow goddesses, waterfall shamans. Edward Shafer's book, *The Divine Woman: Dragon Ladies and Rain Maidens*, opens with, "This book is about permutations... It tells how drowned girls became goddesses, and how goddesses became drowned girls." What about North America? What do we know of the waterways that give or withhold indispensable water for us? One discovery Luna Leopold made seems so simple. Water velocity increases as rivers move downhill, towards their mouths. Simply put, they move faster. Prior to his studies people thought rivers slowed—"as when the Mississippi River widens and appears to come to a muddy standstill near New Orleans" (*New York Times*). Appearances were wrong. Water divinities are notorious shape-shifters. They hide their true forms.

Luna knew the rivers of the American west. He traveled 300 miles down the Colorado in 1965, through the Grand Canyon (where John Wesley Powell, prophet of American water policy, had gone a hundred years earlier). He charted the geology of the river and its canyon, taking careful notes and detailed measurements. Leopold's work is called science. I'd note how close it is to art. Art—science—lifting the unseen, the half-understood worlds into view. He did his work without compromising the complex, deeply mysterious riparian communities he traveled through. And he wrote only about the physical properties of rivers—not their chemistry, biology, or the life of the riparian zones—"no one volume can treat them adequately. I have neither the expertise nor the space for a proper discussion." This from a man who lived to be ninety.



The River of the Mother of God and Other Essays by Aldo Leopold
Edited by Susan L. Flader and J. Beard Calceor



North Americans have straightened, dammed, dredged, paved, channeled, & rerouted our rivers. Dumped sludge, pesticides, beer cans, nuclear contaminants, industrial waste, and pissed in them. Fought over them, poached from them, drowned in them. Some Americans have also cleaned them up, removed dams, restocked them with fish, fenced them from livestock, legislated their protection, planted native willows, & restored riverbanks. (Beavers have always managed the waterways better than humans.) We have made songs and poems about rivers, produced energetic paintings, spine-tingling photographs, and a strangely gorgeous vocabulary. Meander, bedload, swale. Floodplain, cross-bed, siltstone. My favorite from Leopold's book: *thalweg*, the deepest part of a river channel, or the lowest thread running the length of a streambed. River maidens must dwell there.

II

Here in Colorado, the engineers Christo and Jeanne-Claude have hatched a plan, decades in the making, to produce an installation along, or over, the Arkansas River. In a high altitude, fragile stretch of canyon, along Highway 50 between Salida and Cañon City, as the road winds between burgundy, burnt orange, caramel, & chocolate colored cliffs, they hope by the year 2010 to add "Over the River" to their portfolio. This is a suspension of 6.7 miles of blue fabric, held by 1200 steel cables, anchored by 2400 gigantic concrete blocks. The fabric will cover the river surface, between eight and twenty-five feet above the water.

I recently drove that stretch of canyon expecting it to be wild. It's surprisingly settled. The Ute Indians were a presence there, as the historic site sign says, for eight thousand years or maybe forever. Ranchers were in by 1870, and a refugee colony of sixty-three Russian Jews founded the town of Cotopaxi. 1880s saw the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad up the east bank. By 1915 the "Rainbow Route," a road built by prisoners from the state pen at Cañon City, ran all the way through. There are houses, gift shops, ranches. A motel under construction advertises "bunks, cafe." The river has raft tours, scenic turnouts, and quiet fly fishermen. There's lots of vernacular art including a roadside shrine to fish that "got away."

Eagles are present. "Over the River" will need approval by a patchwork of agencies, federal and local. Much of the river and its banks are held by Bureau of Land Management, which has established recreation sites with parking lots & signs—

Please be quiet in residential areas and around wildlife.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald Eagle Protection Act need to be circumvented. Eagles may very well fly into the Christos' cables, breaking their wings. Christo and Jeanne-Claude are concerned about F.A.A. restrictions on planes and helicopters. Waterfowl feed in the calms, and eagles fish.

The likely impact on a local population of bighorn sheep makes eco-activists increasingly irritable towards Christo. Bighorn rarely stray far from their native habitat—they hold "a high degree of site fidelity" as one wildlife biologist put it. Bighorn are already stressed by road building, ranches, raft excursions, antibiotic-laced apple mash provided by Division of Wildlife biologists, and bridge construction on a far smaller scale than Christo's installation. Bighorn are highly susceptible, when stressed, to lung-worm pneumonia, their principal killer. As you drop out of Salida a sign welcomes you into Bighorn Canyon.

At the BLM recreation sites:

The Arkansas River is known for its fine fishing opportunities. Fly fishermen are attracted by numerous insect hatches, most notably the caddis fly emergence in May. Prime fishing occurs during low water periods in March, April, May, August, September, and October. The Arkansas has primarily brown trout and rainbow trout.

The BLM and the Collegiate Peaks Anglers have posted a notice about New Zealand mud snails (someone walked in with dirty boots). They ask that before you visit another stream, you wash or soak boots or waders in a solution:

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MERTON MEETS THE BEATS

Ron Dart

Merton and the Beats came to find themselves coinciding in a whole area of thought and spirituality and outlook at roughly the same time.

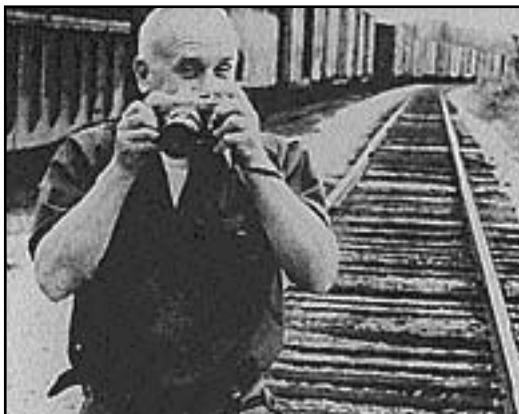
Angus Stuart

It is ninety years since Thomas Merton (1915-1968) was born, and fifty years this autumn since the Beats of the East and West Coast met at Six Gallery in San Francisco. What have these singular events to do with each other?

By the early 1950s, having joined the Trappist monks in Kentucky as a postulant in 1941, Merton had already become one of the most important Christian contemplatives of the 20th century. The publication of his early autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (1948), took the post-WW II literary world by storm, selling more than 600,000 copies in the first year; and once, in a single day, more than 10,000 copies were ordered. This was not to go unnoticed. Needless to say, many trekked to Gethsemani monastery in hope of seeing the much celebrated monk.

When the Bop Beats—Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg—of the East Coast met with the Ecological Beats of the West Coast—Kenneth Rexroth, Phillip Whalen, Gary Snyder and others—in San Francisco, Merton was not present, of course; but he had corresponded with Rexroth in the late 1940s, and his contemplative quest and journey had done much to offer shape and form to a number of aspects of the Beat tradition.

As a pioneer in East-West literary and contemplative traditions, Rexroth (1905-1982) was in the vanguard of early ecological consciousness. His rambling, tramping and fell-walking days in the North Cascades are recounted in meticulous detail in his *An Autobiographical Novel* (1964). Rexroth's deep grounding and rooting in the Western literary classics, and his thorough feel for the texture of Roman Catholic and Anglican traditions, gave him an affinity with Merton. Merton was, it seems, working on an anthology of western mystics in the 1940s, and Rexroth offered Merton much sound advice on which contemplatives to choose and why. Letters that Rexroth sent to Merton dated May 24, 1947, and August 28, 1950, highlight, in probing detail, Rexroth's thoughts on the differences between mediocre and good translations of ancient texts and the differences between substantive and marginal mystics. The letters acknowledge and affirm Merton's poetic gifts, even suggesting that Merton is one of the best Roman Catholic poets in the USA, and warmly support the monastic and contemplative vocation. Rexroth was ten years older than Merton, and as a respected elder in the West Coast literary community of 1940s, he walked the extra mile to encourage Merton's budding abilities. Rexroth's first letter to Merton, dated May 24, 1947, was written well before



Thomas Merton riding the rails

The Seven Storey Mountain had been published, and Merton at the time was still, for the most part, unknown even though he had published a few books of poetry and tracts on the contemplative life and Cistercian spirituality.

The correspondence between the two men speaks much about Rexroth's care for the younger Merton, and in many significant ways Rexroth should be recognized for his literary, spiritual and political mentorship to Merton.

Interestingly, in a similar way, Merton has been called Jack Kerouac's "elder monastic brother." Kerouac's *On the Road* and *The Dharma Bums* were iconic texts for the counter-culture of the 1960s, and Robert Inchausti in his fine book, *Thomas Merton's American Prophecy*, offers compelling reasons why. Merton and Kerouac were Roman Catholics (Merton had converted; Kerouac lived and breathed the devotional French-Canadian Catholicism of his Celtic forbearers) and both were drawn to Thoreau and the meditative life. Both were poets and novelists, and each had a desire to understand the contemplative traditions of Buddhism and Christianity. Merton

and Kerouac never met, but there is no question that Kerouac had a deep and abiding admiration for Merton. Merton started a literary magazine at the monastery in the final year of his life (Monks Pond), and Kerouac, already with a foot in the grave, had two poems in the journal that were dedicated to Merton. Both men had pronounced contemplative leanings: in 1956, Kerouac lived in a lookout cabin on Desolation Peak in the North Cascades in the Skagit Valley near Canada, and *The Dharma Bums*, *Lonesome Traveler*, *Desolation Angels* and *Book of Blues* all describe in vivid and energetic detail this intense two-month, life changing period of solitude. Merton, like Kerouac, had a fondness for lookout towers and planned, for a time, to live as a hermit on top of the fire lookout at Gethsemani monastery.

Kerouac had, like Rexroth and Merton, an ambiguous attitude towards the Beats. Much, of course, depended on how Beat was understood. This is summed up in *Lonesome Traveler* when Kerouac states: "Am actually not 'beat' but strange solitary crazy Catholic mystic." Not unlike fellow mystic Alan Watts, the final years of Kerouac's life were sad and tragic and this might have had much to do with the way both men were so individualistic and disconnected from meaningful community. There is no doubt that Merton struggled with the monastic community he lived in most of his days, but it was a community that offered him boundaries and stability. Kerouac died a year after Merton, and while they shared contemplative depth of different degrees, there is a political radicalism in Merton that Kerouac sadly lacked.

Gary Snyder emerged as a central figure of the Beat generation with Kerouac's 1958 portrayal of him as Japhy Ryder in *The Dharma Bums*. Snyder was an active high-alpinist before he met Kerouac and also worked in lookout cabins in the North Cascades. It was he who later encouraged Kerouac to seek work on the peaks. A Thoreau of the mountains, while hitchhiking east across the USA in 1952, Snyder read Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain*, and this text possibly encouraged him in his turn toward Buddhism. Merton wrote a letter to Snyder, dated September 20, 1966, and attempted to get Snyder to visit his monastery to read some of his poetry. He also asked Snyder about Cid Corman: "Can you tell me something about him? I have exchanged a few letters with him and am not yet oriented." Merton then goes on to say, "I forget where I heard about you, but I have seen your poems around and like them very much." Snyder replied to Merton on October 10, 1966, answering his questions. Unlike Rexroth and Kerouac, however, Snyder expressed no special interest in Western contemplative traditions; the Beats intuitively turned to Asia for wisdom and forms of insight practice.



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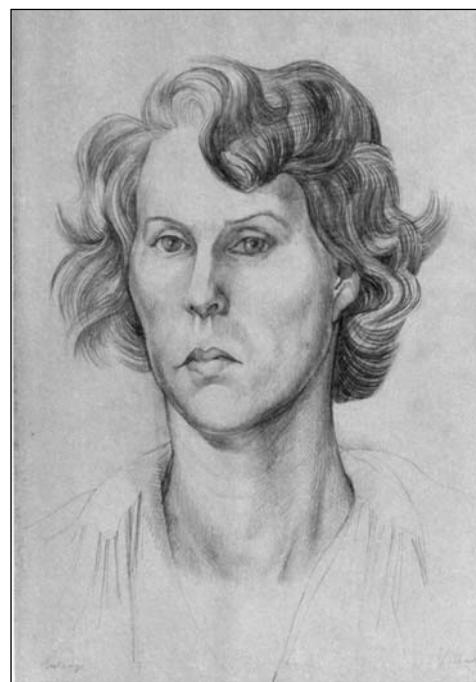
GWLADYS & RONA & ANNE & DOROTHY & HELENE & TRAVIS & ME, A VERY PERSONAL MEMOIR

Sharon H. Nelson

Reading Travis Lane's appreciation of Gwladys Downes evoked many memories of that generation of "BC writers", of Gwladys and Dorothy Livesay and Rona Murray and Anne Marriott and Helene Rosenthal. What a group they were, those BC women. What a tribe. But that's a skewed vision, one that is entirely personal and based on my experience of them: I tended to see them serially or together when I visited the west coast, and I came to know them all at about the same time.

I met all of them through the League of Canadian Poets because all of us were poets and all of us were then members of the League. This was probably in the late 1970s or very early 1980s. Relationships waxed and waned and waxed again over the years and were especially intense during the formation of the Feminist Caucus.

I remember the founding meeting in Vancouver that Leona Gom set up and that I chaired, when Rona and I argued heatedly about the name. Rona was adamant about "the woman's caucus" and continued to call it that for years. She remained bewildered at my equally adamant insistence on "feminist" rather than "woman's". Our argument was resolved in favour of "feminist", and Rona and I pursued a loving friendship that lasted until her death.



Gwladys Downes drawn by Jack Shadbolt

collected in *Aqua*, her final book, published after she was incapacitated by a major stroke.

Gwladys, Rona, and even Anne, perhaps the earliest and best-established among them, were overshadowed during her lifetime by Dorothy, the eldest and the first to go. We lost Anne next. The most considerate of friends and poets, Anne showed in her life and in her writing a forceful delicacy, a deep consideration, and an unflinching honesty that, as I knew her and her writing better, I came to associate also with Gwladys. Witty and sometimes acerbic, honest to a fault, with blue, blue eyes that twinkled, Gwladys laughed easily and deeply: an admirable woman indeed.

Helene Rosenthal, a marvellous poet who lost her taste for writing, read at Powerhouse Gallery in Montreal at my invitation, as did Rona and Travis Lane. I still have and use the remarkable blue bowl Helene brought me then as well as the many pieces I bought or received as gifts from Rona and her hus-



Sharon H. Nelson

Gwladys and Rona and Anne and Dorothy travelled to Toronto in February to attend another meeting of the Caucus. In her inimitable style, Gwladys did shoulder stands in the Vancouver airport lounge while waiting for a long-delayed flight. Not willing to appear under false pretenses, Gwladys told me that she didn't think she could support the Feminist Caucus but had taken the opportunity for a free flight (paid for by Secretary of State's Women's Program). At that long, long Toronto meeting, Dorothy adamantly opposed a split infinitive, and afterwards in my suite, Anne read some of the wonderful poems that later were



Rona Murray

band, the internationally acclaimed potter Walter Dexter, with whom Rona produced *The Art of Earth*. Over the years, I saw more of Rona than of the others, partly because she more often came east, partly because our husbands got along and we visited as couples.

In 2003, when I was touring with *This Flesh These Words*, Rona insisted that I and my husband, computer scientist and author Peter Grogono, spend a week at Metchosen with her and Walter, despite that they were packing up to move to a new home in Victoria in under a month. It was at Rona's behest that I reconnected with Gwladys,

with whom for a while I'd maintained only a Christmas-card relationship. Gwladys and Peter and I spent a wonderful afternoon together talking poetry and art, and Gwladys gave me a copy of *House of Cedars*, which so impressed me that I ordered a box of copies for gifts.



Anne Marriott

Rona, Gwladys, and I, with Peter and Walter, had a jolly, pre-reading dinner together hosted by Richard Olafson and Carol Ann Sokoloff of Ekstasis Editions, our common publisher. Then Rona and I read at Mocambo. It was her last public reading. Very soon after, Rona was working happily in the new garden when she felt unwell. She died quickly, presumably with flowers on her mind as well as dirt under her fingernails.

WHOLE WIDE WORLD (continued from Page 13)

Travis Lane, who in my mind somehow belongs with this group despite living on the east coast, over the years has brought a silk scarf I treasure and reserve for indoor, sore-throat, comfort use, and a hatpin clearly designed as weaponry rather than decoration, and cherished for that reason. Travis and I are now the remnants of that intrepid group, left to honour the others. We miss them. Like all absent friends, their voices remain in our minds, their spirits remain with our hearts, and their souls, however unscientific a concept soul may be, inhabit the atmosphere in which we make our lives and write our lines.

the attic—her visitor a change of life depressive episode—and the ever-sensitive son becomes a transmitter for his mother's longings: "I wished I could leave the house carrying Mom on my back, light as a bunch of old clothes, carefully sit her down beside me on the truck seat and quickly set off...for those countries where they danced with flowers in their hair, and carefree minds. I wanted to scamper off with her to those far corners of the world she used to describe, sighing like someone walled up alive..."

More traditional to the coming-of-age genre are those moments in which strangers to the village offer the child glimpses into the world beyond. In "The Lip-Ripper," the reader sees American slavery and Puritanism through the eyes of a Quebecois boy as he learns harmonica from a former slave. Although Vallier ultimately apprentices himself to music and in the end gains knowledge of "l'amour...life's beautiful cataclysm," he uses himself as a first instrument, experimenting to see how many tones he can achieve, a fitting metaphor for this writer who clearly wants to play the human instrument for every sound it will make.

Kathryn Trueblood is an Assistant Professor of English at Western Washington University. She is the author of The Sperm Donor's Daughter. Her new novel, The Baby Lottery, is forthcoming from The Permanent Press in the spring.



Dorothy Livesay

ART NATURE DIALOGUES

Yvonne Owens

One idea that emerges from reading the alternating voices and viewpoints featured in John Grande's latest book is that environmental art represents a potent antidote to humanistic artistic hubris. The 'God complex,' reminiscent of Enlightenment 'Men of Letters,' or of intellectually 'virile' and heroic Modern 'geniuses,' is disabled by the autonomous will (and inexorable pace) of natural phenomena. Like Yoko Ono's 'playing' of her infant son onstage, as "an uncontrollable musical instrument," water, wind, vegetal growth and the effects of Time can only be set, framed, 'staged,' or guided. Their 'performances' may be courted or cajoled, but not coerced or compelled. Any attempts to micro-manage nature will backfire; its hyper-refined, complex changes can not be anticipated with any degree of certainty, nor even fully gauged. There can be no tyrannical conquest of nature, no 'absolute rule' when working with live elements and organic materials already well colonised and subject to other micro-organisms. Environmental Art employs oxidation, decomposition and erosion as media. Rot, wearing, ageing and time are vital parts of the 'palette' and technique of process art. As Grande describes it in his introduction, there can only be a "working in tandem" with nature; she isn't really approachable on any other terms.

In *Art Nature Dialogues*, environmental artists from Europe and North America discuss their work in a casual yet polemical style. The interviews explore art practices, ecological issues, aesthetic and societal values as they relate to ephemeral or 'permanent' public art. How the works are situated, the use of materials, and the ethics of artistic production come under discussion, as well as issues of art practice, viewership, and ecological futurity. His correspondents include Hamish Fulton, David Nash, Bob Verschuere, Herman de Vries, Alan Sonfist, Nils-Udo, Michael Singer, Patrick Dougherty, Ursula von Rydingsvard, and others. Glen Harper, editor of *Sculpture* magazine, has said that these interviews, held "...with some of the most important environmental artists on both sides of the Atlantic, engage the borderline between art and what is perhaps the most pressing global concern in the new millennium—the quality and sustainability of the environment."

There is a decidedly non-hierarchical, non-authoritarian approach to the respectful dialogues broached by Grande. The polyrhythms of the varied expository styles and voices, speaking to the same themes, render the co-operative strains and concordances of an orchestrated score; there are 'solo performance' but no privileged views by any one 'art star,' elite expert, or external authority. Grande, himself, avoids becoming the authoritative 'objective view' (or BBC commentator) by being more of an involved documentarist, or environmental co-conspirator, engaging the artists in a lively, discursive approach to the art and issues. "Notions of 'environmental' in relationship to art multiply and conventions are challenged by Grande's constant theoretical nudgings and plain curiosity in his dialogues." (*Sculptures Pacific Magazine*). The conditional, contractual and reciprocal nature of natural dealings necessitates (and produces) respect – a kind of co-creative professional courtesy. Another term to describe the interviewee's equitable accommodation of greater forces, and their tolerance for other agendas, might be "humility," a word that carries spiritual overtones. But this is not at all inappropriate to the subject or Grande's treatment of it; respect and reciprocity are the fundamental moral precepts of environmentalism and ecological awareness. The ideas of 'man as the measure of all things,' or as 'the crown of creation,' awarded stewardship over the earth and all her creatures at the Creation, tend to be leavened and dispersed in the multi-perspectival, pluralistic discourses afforded by the book's approach.

The creative stances maintained by Grande's respondents assume a co-operative attitude toward issues of creative control. This represents a partnership approach to artistic process, abandoning the colonising prerogatives of historical, Eurocentric, dominator models. When Grande asked artist, David Nash, "Is it an exchange process," Nash replied, "It has to be for it to work." Without exception, the artists interviewed provided a spiritual context for their works, whether ritualistic, performative,



**Art Nature Dialogues:
Interviews with
Environmental Artists**
John K. Grande,
State University of New
York Press. 251 pp.
\$24.95 pb \$75.50 hc

or magical/shamanic. As Nash, put it, "To varying degrees we spiritualise material by our work with it. Unconsciously, we are creating a language that another human being can pick up on. We connect to that spirit quality that has been put into it."

Masculine entitlement to rulership over the earth (and all of her dependants) had remained largely unchallenged throughout Modernism, via models of the heroic male genius figure (scientist or artist) as godlike creator. Post-modernism opened the door to the deconstruction of the heroic male, meta-authority as paradigmatic. Pop Art, Minimalism, Appropriation, intentional Kitsch, faux naïve, and other 'low art' tactics took turns knocking Fine Art off its pedestal, though 'art stars' and elitism continued to proliferate within the new discourses. Artists like Smithson and Christo gained fame with their massive-scale drapings of landscape features or supremely impractical earth works. Grande describes this earlier era of environmental art, as opposed to his correspondents' genre, in his introduction: "This is no longer the age of Land Art, of these vast earth-moving projects... The art remained an imposition on the landscape, and this, in an era when space exploration, the landing on the moon, was experienced abstractly, as imagery on the television set in every person's home."

The artists in Grande's book enjoy more modest reputations, and generally work to a smaller scale, in an elusive discipline located somewhere between fine art, architectural design, found art, and landscaping. Their creations are multi-media interdisciplinary feats executed in collaboration with the least predictable (and fundamentally awe-inspiring) elements available, such as decomposition, oxidation, weather, growth patterns and fertility cycles. Their materials are usually humble and often disreputable; Jerilea Zempel deploys 'bricks' of horse dung for her ephemeral creations and "mock monuments." She defends her idiosyncratic artistic choices with blithe anti-Romantic irreverence: "I thought it was time to make a reclining female nude out of horse manure." ("The Lady Vanishes," dried horse manure, 2002) By and large, the artists are non-idealising in their approach to their subject matter. They don't seek to beautify a site so much as to interact with local elements. In this, their approach, as pointed out by Lucie-Smith in his foreword, does approach Romanticism in that it apprehends, and stages, the 'sublime.'

Weaknesses I found in the book include the failure of Lucie-Smith's foreword to address the fundamentally revolutionary approach of both the featured artists and Grande's format for his dialogue/interviews. Another weakness — perhaps unavoidable with a 'risky' format of this type — is the unevenness in the clarity of the artist's verbal responses to Grande's questions. Some are brilliantly articulate; some are not so. I occasionally wished Grande would just paraphrase his respondent's answers and render them readable and illuminating, as is typical of his own critical prose. But then, there's a reason why the artists are artists; if they are not also writers, they do their communicating through visual creations. And these are eloquent, as the 80 black and white photos of the works attest. If you find your eyes glazing over while reading the artists' sometimes-murky descriptions of their art and their intent, just look at the pictures. They speak. Overall, Grande does a good job of eliciting enlightening information as to why these artists do what they do.

Yvonne Owens is an art critic, art historian, cultural theorist, writer and musician. She has written many catalogue essays for galleries and museums, and will be pursuing a doctoral degree in London this fall, specialising in art history.



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COHEN AND BOWLES (continued from Page 19)

Cohen: The stone was in her mouth, wasn't it?

Bowles: Yes, I guess she had to have had it in her mouth. But she only put stones in the mouths of dead people. That was amusing because several years after that I remember reading an account of tribal customs in Melanesia, I think, and that was one of the customs. I had never heard of it — putting stones in the mouths of dead people. It's amusing — one knows things about knowing it.

Cohen: Haven't you taken ideas for your compositions from sounds you hear?

Bowles: That's true. Once in my hotel room in Taza, I had nothing to do, couldn't sleep, and had taken something against the fever and felt really crazy. So I just starting dripping water in the sink at different speeds. It was a very good tap. I got my idea for my two piano concerto in 1946 from the same idea, in the bathtub. The water was dripping in, and suddenly, it kept dripping the same way and it made a melody. I got the whole first part of the first movement from the water that morning. I immediately wrote it down. It has to do with acoustics of the basin and the acoustics of the bathroom in which the basin was. Have you ever noticed that certain notes when you're in a bathtub will come out three times as strong as other notes? If you hold that one note, even very slightly, it fills the whole room or as you go down a bit, it doesn't do it. You go up a bit, and it doesn't do it. You've got to be right on that spot. Well, it was lucky that way. The water dripping seemed to have overtones, echoes, pitch echoes, inside the room.



You often get things, from the squeaking of a door, the singing of a bird, or a certain rhythm of a truck on a highway backfiring. Anything can be the stimulus. If you can do that with a symphony orchestra, how much more can you do it with electronics and just with ordinary tape recorders.

Cohen: You generally work at night, don't you?

Bowles: Yes, recently for the last six or seven years.

Cohen: Is that why you wear an eyeshade when you sleep, to keep the sunlight out during the day?

Bowles: Yes, although I wore it before. I've worn a mask for sleeping ever since I had typhoid, that was in 1932. That was because in the hospital there in Paris the windows were big and the light came in, and with typhoid you get photophobia. I had a nurse who kept coming in every day saying, "How's your photophobia?" She was one of those joking buxom women. I didn't know what she meant until she explained it to me, and then I said, "Yes, it's true. The light bothers me very much. As soon as it gets light I'm wide awake." She got me a black mask and earstoppers.

Cohen: I somehow always think of you as a scorpion, with a cat somewhere around in the background, a parrot maybe on its shoulder.

Bowles: I used to carry the green parrot around on my shoulder. I carried him all over the Sahara. They're very good to travel with. They're happy, they're not miserable traveling. You try to travel with a cat, and it's miserable. Parrots don't mind moving. They really attach themselves to a person, and the place they're in be damned.

Cohen: When you talk to a parrot is there some special tone or pitch you use to cue into that parrot language?

Bowles: I try to imitate them, yes. Naturally that's the only thing you can do. I suppose, mimic them in order for them to mimic you later. You try to make the exact sounds they make, because each one's different. Not one of them is like another. They have different voices, speak in different pitches. Each individual parrot is different from each other one.

My gray parrot lives in the kitchen in Jane's apartment downstairs. It's better for her to be with people and they worship the bird, talk to it all day, give it things. As they cut up food they give it pieces. That's the way it should live. I would neglect it here. It's much better for it to be there. It likes to come up. It doesn't get worried at all when I bring it up.

Cohen: Does it relate to you as a person separately when you come in?

Bowles: It won't let anyone touch it anyone touch it at all except Cherifa and me.

Cohen: I know it pecked a real piece out of my finger one day.

Bowles: Well, it bites everybody.

Cohen: When it comes up here does it get into a certain conversation that it's used to having with you?

Bowles: I don't find it as amusing really as the green one I had, which really got into conversations with me. It was more like songs, or dialog that both sides learn, and we would put it on, and he would always take my cue and go on from there.

Cohen: Could you give me a sample of it? I know you could do a perfect mimicking of it.

Bowles: As a matter of fact. I have it taped somewhere. If I ever find it, I'll put it aside and you can hear it. It's music after all. You play a tune and try to imitate the instrument it's being played on. Imitating a parrot's voice is playing over a melody.

Cohen: Have you ever heard tapes of bird songs slowed down? Does it really come out like a composed piece of ordered music?

Bowles: Absolutely. Very accurately.

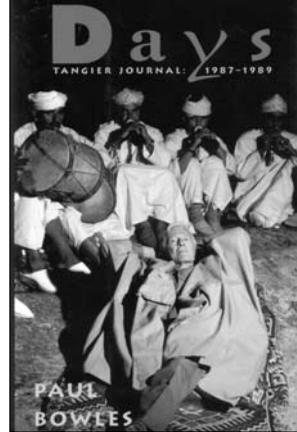
Cohen: Is there any way of transposing a slowed-down bird song into some music that could be played?

Bowles: You mean actually reorchestrating it for musical instruments? Sure.

Cohen: Do you know any piece that's ever been done like that?

Bowles: It must have been done. Without the use of the tape recorder. If you slow down bird song far enough, it sounds like lions roaring. It makes one assume that their sense of time must be quite different, so to them it must sound like what it sounds to us slowed down. Obviously the spectrum of their aural sensibility must be very different from ours, because some of the tones we can't even hear. So their time sense obviously is also different, since it goes so fast it may quite possibly be that to each other they sound like people talking or lions roaring.

Cohen: That's really the basis of all music, this kind of inactive communication, like bees, crickets, birds. What is the first instrument?



Bowles: It's supposed to be the drum, the palm of the hand, and the voice.

Cohen: Those are all the closest to direct communication.

Bowles: Good music is still based on that. The hand-clapping and the voice.

Cohen: But that's just in so-called "primitive music," isn't it?

Bowles: Even symphonic music is still based on the same idea. It should be. Although it gets extremely refined. Instruments imitate the human voice, most of them, at least the first ones. I suppose the only instruments that don't imitate the human voice in one way or another are the stroke instruments, and they're really ramifications

of the drum. The piano is closer to the drum than to the human voice.

Cohen: Brion [Gysin] has been living upstairs from someone who has been giving Arab boys piano lessons. Brion considers this the most blasphemous thing.

Bowles: It's not so blasphemous, but it's very bad, because it gives all the young people the idea that music must be read, and they must know solfege in order to be musicians. First-rate intuitive musicians have become twelfth-rate learned musicians. No taste and no real ability. Very hampering.

Cohen: Brion said he thought it was an impure cross between a string instrument and a percussion instrument, and that it was not one or the other.

Bowles: The piano has been incorporated pretty much into Moroccan music, and even into the Andalous music. It's terrible. It ruins the sound of the orchestra.

Cohen: What's the most primitive instrument that they still use here in Morocco? Do they ever use anything like a flute made out of a bone?

Bowles: Yes, but not here in Morocco. Instruments with one string. You see the Tiznit musicians in the Djemaa El Fna in Marrakech playing them. One cat gut that makes a very rasping sound. That box of leather that the Gnaoua play. It's not a *gibrei*. A *gibrei* is Moroccan. And the *gogo* is a completely different shape. It's a beautiful looking instrument. Rectangular. The *gibrei* is generally oval. It can even be made out of a big turtle, but generally they are made of wood. But the *gogo* is leather on all sides, and looks like a shoe box and a long bar with resonators on the end.

Cohen: The Jilala use just *bandiers*. It's amazing how much music can be made with those two simple basic instruments, and how beautiful.

Bowles: They're masters on both. They could make good music on anything.

Paul Bowles, also an American composer, is the author of The Sheltering Sky, among other books. He is one of the most significant writers of the 20th century; some would consider him on par with Joyce and Proust. He lived most of his adult life in Tangier.

Ira Cohen was a friend of Bowles in Tangier. He is a filmmaker, photographer and poet. He has the distinction of being present for most of the major art movements in the latter half of the 20th century: he was with Burroughs and Bowles in Tangier, was among the Beats, witnessed the founding of the Velvet Underground at the Factory, filmed the Living Theatre and was with the in Amsterdam. He lives in New York City. He has recently released his lost film Invasion of Thunderbolt Pagoda.

FIRST FIRE / CE FEU QUI DÉVORE

rob mclennan

First Fire / ce feu qui dévore
Nadine McInnes, Buschek Books / Vermillon

Fifth in a series of translated works is Ottawa poet Nadine McInnes' *First Fire / Ce feu qui dévore*. Built as a loose collection of poems new and selected, the collection includes uncollected poems, as well as pieces taken from her three previous collections, *Shaking the Dreamland Tree* (Coteau, 1986), *The Litmus Body* (Quarry Press, 1992; shortlisted for the Pat Lowther Award and winner of the Ottawa Book Award) and *Hand to Hand* (Polestar, 1998). With poems in their original English on the left side, and in French on the right, the collection was edited and translated by Ottawa poets and translators Andrée Christensen and Jacques Flamand. A contemporary of Ottawa poets Colin Morton, Sandra Nicholls, Susan McMaster, Blaine Marchand and John Barton (since moved to Victoria, to run *The Malahat Review*), Nadine McInnes was included in Morton's *Capital Poets: An Ottawa Anthology* (Oroboros, 1989) and, as well as author of three poetry collections, went on to publish a book of criticism, *Poetics of Desire* (Turnstone Press, 1994), on the love poetry of Dorothy Livesay, and an impressive collection of short fiction, *Quicksilver* (Raincoast) which was nominated "for national, provincial and regional literary awards."



A series that seems to alternate between English-speaking and French-speaking authors, publishing similar collections by Christopher Levenson, Denyse B. Mercier, Joe Rosenblatt and Virgin Burnett, I'm disappointed that this faux-selected, the only one of the series I've seen, doesn't include an introduction of any sort. One of the most important parts of any selected poems is the introduction, included to put the author's work and history into a particular context, writing a stance of the work, or even to know which poems came from which collection, and which ones are new (the arrangement of the poems in McInnes' book aren't chronological). Promoted and packaged as a collection of love poems, the back cover writes "[t]he poems in *First Fire / Ce feu qui dévore* explore passion in all its forms: from the first sparks of sexual awakening to the steady embers of a mature love that is increasingly aware of how death makes love that much sweeter. This is the fire that kindles the creativity of motherhood, of poetry, of life itself."

With only one hundred and twenty pages in total, it's perhaps telling that the collection doesn't actually come out and call itself a selected poems (or tell us who might have made the selections), which would suggest a kind of representation to her body of total work, which this collection doesn't, focusing instead on the domestic poems of motherhood, marriage and the beginnings of young girls. Unfortunately, with that as the collection's strain, the book as a whole tends to come of repeating itself through similar kinds of poems working the same territories again and again. One of the more interesting poems in the collection, the title poem to her collection *Hand to Hand*, works a much darker image in a poem suggesting the First World War, getting McInnes outside of herself, writing:



He holds a man's hand in his own at night,
behind the field latrine, the one private place.

For some, escape is possible: they seep out of their heads
like blood, their eyes close,
thoughts vanish into the humid ground, through roots,
down to a red glowing core.
They swim towards it like nascent fish.

But for him there is only this wakefulness,
this endless ringing in his head

even though the guns

are now silent, standing in their metallic trance,
all the same, one after another.

He is not the same.

(*His hands must remember what they have forgotten.*)

That's why he hides the hand in a drab military sock,
why he's cleaned the hand with water in a tin cup,
dipping his finger into the shaky reflection of the moon
to clear the bad luck from the lines on its smooth
brown palm.

He thinks about the hand
when he leaves it behind for the day,
the memory of it thrilling.

With his rifle to his shoulder, the world flattens
into a disk intersected by two thin black lines.
Through the sight of a rifle everything

is crucified.

But there are no holes in his flawless hand.
Even the severed arteries, the cut bone is clean,
already hollowing towards nothingness.
The skin, unbroken, gives him comfort.

Other men might have preferred a breast
but a breast in his hand would melt away
like childhood snow.

(*His hands must forget what they have learned.*)

He's seen other men pull women from their huts,
women smeared with their own faeces.

He's seen a woman led back to camp on a rope, hosed down
and reclaimed from the mud.
Youngbloods taking turns planting the American flag.

His hand is clean. He did not take this from a man.

For whatever reason, any attempts to bridge the gap between the English-language and French-language writers in Ottawa (a history that goes back to 1865, when the Civil Service was moved from Quebec City to Ottawa) has never seemed to stick; hopefully through this series, some sense of community can be passed back and forth between the two groups. Still, I am hoping that once Nadine McInnes does actually come out with a selected poems, the construction and selection of the collection might be more deliberate, and more about the whole of her work than about any particular strain taken out of context. Unfortunately, as an introduction to McInnes' work, focusing on her love poems leads the reader astray and comes off as a bit thin, showing off more of the repetition of such works, and not the range of what she is actually capable of. Any first reader of McInnes' works would get far more of a sense of her poetry by starting off with her previous collection, *Hand to Hand*, or even back to *Shaking the Dreamland Tree*. I think she deserves better.

rob mclennan is the author of ten trade poetry collections, most recently what's left (*Talonbooks*) and stone, book one (*Palimpsest Press*). An Ottawa resident since 1989, he often blathers on about various things on his clever blog — www.robmclennan.blogspot.com

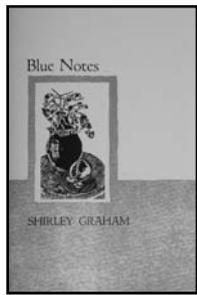
THE FINE BEAUTY OF LETTERPRESS

Nola Accili

Island Poets Series
(m)Öthêr Tϕñgué Press

“Beautiful books make the heart sing” is the insignia inscribed on each of the hand-crafted chapbooks published in 2005 by (m)Öthêr Tϕñgué Press, Salt Spring Island’s private book art press. Established in 1990 by Mona Fertig (founder of Canada’s first literary center, The Literary Storefront in Gastown) and husband Peter Haase, this press, run out of the basement of the couple’s 100 year old home, has yielded a series of aesthetically rich literary works by local B.C. poets.

Typeset in Italian Old Style Roman, hand-stitched with fine embroidery thread from France, printed on velvety-smooth recycled paper made of 50% sugar cane fiber and complete with letterpressed covers by Haase and colourful textured endpapers handmade by Reg Lissel (produced from cotton, summer seaweed, dried arbutus and wasp nest harvested on Salt Spring Island), these books are the perfect antidote to the mass produced variety, a refreshing anti-fast food option for those interested in the book as “objet d’art”. While promoting a West Coast Canadian regionalism and exhibiting an attention to detail unrivaled by most book presses, these limited edition chapbooks (only 125 copies) are about as organic as literature gets and worth the \$20 to \$25 (Cdn) cover price.



Blue Notes by Shirley Graham (20 poems)

It is all about blue in this Island poet’s pastel chapbook. Graham moves us from a prosaic rendering of domestic type musings or “notes” on simple objects such as a cup or vase that, as is the case for all beautiful and delicate things, must inevitably end: “Sooner or later, it will break.”, to grammatical blues in which linguistic abstractions such as pronouns become the subject—“They”, “You”, “We”: “We’re so complete, in fact, we hardly fit in our chairs.”—to, finally, a more formally poetic vision that takes the reader with camera-like precision through the *BLUE WINDOW* of reverie. Here we gaze at the fragile splendour of a “Butterfly Man” whose “...wings are a walking, moving painting—but painful, painfully sensitive.”, or quietly observe and listen to the blue-toned rhythms of “Nasturtiums with La Danse”:

But he misses catching
his wife’s hand
just at the point where the chairs sink
into the floor,
crowded out by red music.

and languid harmonies of “The Reclining Poet”:

it is now, as the forest gathers
night breath and sends it out,
now words stick in the throat.

(Note too the blue cover art: original linocut by Peter Haase.)

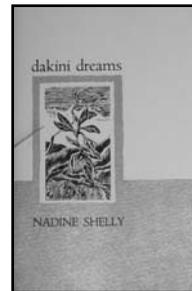
Distance from the Locus by Murray Reiss (11 poems)

Reiss’s arbutus-covered chapbook paints a vivid picture of the detrimental effects chemical manufacturing has had on the city of Sarnia, Ontario where he grew up. In “I Stood on Guard” the poet, with a resoundingly human voice, attempts to distance himself from the locus of a community ravaged, mutilated, by industry:

Ask me where I was born these days, I’ll deny it. I keep up with the headlines, I follow the news: toxins trucked in daily over the bridge I used to guard; open pits where the trucks back up to void their bubbling tanks. I’ll tell you I was born in Whitehorse or Lucerne or Kapuskasing, deny the twisted chromosomes twitching away in my genes.

The painful effects of mesothelioma (a rare type of cancer) are graphically described in the piece “Tiny Pink Needles” where we encounter a Fibreglas factory worker named Archie—the tragic embodiment of this horrific disease. Left in charge of the nodulator room, a dreadful place “where they sent you for your first shift the first day they called you in, just to give you a taste, I guess, of what was waiting at the end,” Archie, just 40 years old, would inevitably dissipate into one of those emaciated ghost-like figures “who wandered into Sarnia straight from a death camp.”

A poignant and moving description of the author’s personal experience.



dakini dreams by Nadine Shelly (16 poems)

Centered on the figure of the *dakini* (a Sanskrit word meaning “celestial woman” and symbol of enlightenment), this chapbook laden with Sapphic images provides a feminist commentary that speaks in a voice both ethereal and, at times, simple and direct. The title piece, “dakini dreams (circular breathing with trees)”, sets the tone of the work. From the outset we are transported into a verdant mythic realm that, while capturing the beauty and mystique of the West Coast forests, conjures the mysterious power of a Diana:

she hides herself in the shadows of leaves
each green vein revealing
a secret pulse, a sacred syllable

This feminine presence moves from land to water in “Solstice”, where a naked swimmer is embraced by a cosmic aura: “sky bends silver rings around/the pale frog of my body”. In “Umbilicus”, the embryonic form re-emerges as supra-human; it is the maternal force that has created a being linked with the heavens: “Space-being, your spirit is far too large/for your tiny, strange body.” But the *dakini* is also earth-bound as her dreams become reality and she must witness death. When faced with the cremation of a father in the poem “Final Regrets”, the female voice spins the narrative in a straight forward diction and with a punch of black humour too:

I try to console myself with the fact
that my father would have hated to waste
a good bottle of Scotch, and besides,
he liked to travel light.

In her various flights throughout the vast universe of Shelly’s chapbook, the *dakini* touches us briefly down in countries such as France, India and Belize.



This is Paradise by Mona Fertig (a long poem)

This is *not* paradise is the ironic twist here. Or this *was* paradise. This attractive chapbook hand-cut with photographs taken by the author of the Island’s “paradise lost”—the former Mt. Belcher woods and trails (before being logged)—provides a visual representation of the beauty that is disappearing due to a growing and rampant commercialism. Fertig’s long poem reverberates with its haunting chorus and images of past and present. It is a love song, a Greek tragedy, a reality show that’s actually real. Fertig reminds us that the land taken from the Japanese has been exploited for the purposes of a voracious and unrelenting capitalism, leaving the earth raped of its sacredness:

But land robbed from the Japanese dislodges grave markers, buried rice bowls,
they skim through crisp air, smash open on Rainbow Road.
Emptied of the past, the earth sings hollow, seedless: grows stones.

What has gone along with the land is a mentality: the pure, simple Buddhist way of thinking that binds humans with the earth. As Fertig notes all too clearly, we are a dehumanizing species. This psychological change has made us susceptible to the insidious workings of the money making machine, “The Beast”, for “...stationed in studios artists pray for the big sale, hustle tourists like hookers.” And in our lame attempt to temper this force, we are pathetically comical: “Locals renovate, put in heated tile floors, mortgage like clockwork, practice yoga.”

The moral of the story? “Nothing stops Growth.”

Nola Accili lives in White Rock, BC. Her poetry has appeared in *Manoa*, *A Pacific Journal of International Writing*, *Room of One’s Own*, *Jones Av.*, and *Down in the Valley*.

BEFORE I WAKE

Yvonne Blomer

It looks like Random House's enthusiasm for *Before I Wake*, written by a first time novelist, has been worth it. As of August 31, *Before I Wake* ranked fifth on Macleans' top ten bestsellers list and its author Robert J. Wiersema has been thrown into the limelight accompanied by TV and radio appearances and book signings. Whether planned or by divine intervention, suddenly this book buyer for Bolen Books at Hillside Mall in Victoria, B.C. is on the receiving end of the book industries marketing machine.

What's fantastic about the book, or at least one of the fantastic things, is that it is set in a very cool, earthy Victoria where all sorts of unusual characters converge to witness the potential miraculous healing powers of a four year old girl.

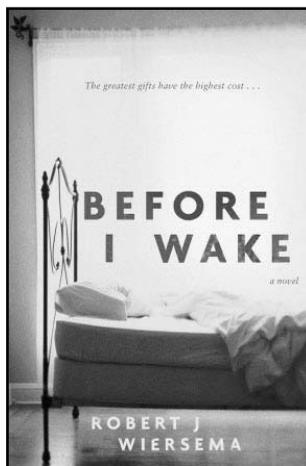
The book opens with a prologue that explores the idea behind the opening line: "I only looked away for a moment." Karen Barrett watches as her daughter is hit by a truck, destroying the idea that if we don't look away our children will be safe. From this beginning, the story moves head-first into a descriptive enactment of the accident. Karen and her daughter Sherry are walking to Hillside Mall across Hillside Avenue when a truck, its driver attempting to swerve around Sherry, hits her sending her into a coma. When her parents and doctors turn off life support, Sherry doesn't die, in fact she remains in coma but otherwise preserved in a constant state of good health. From here, miracles begin to happen.

While the story has some twists that bring the family into conflict with religious leaders and protestors the novel also explores human relationships and how tragedy can bring out the best and worst – but that sounds so banal, and the novel teeters more toward sentimentality with a somewhat apt Jobian ending, than toward banality. As for belief, Karen doesn't have any, so for her, and her husband, the test is to explore their disbelief while living the nightmare of having a child who may never wake up.

Set up in a series of first-person narratives in small-bite chapters that jump from Karen to Simon her husband, Mary his lover, Sherry's nurse, the driver of the truck, and many other characters, *Before I Wake* explores the inner-thinkings and dilemmas of all involved. Occasionally the shift from an internal "I" to an external, speaking "I" caused me to jolt out of the story and become aware of the language; language that otherwise is straightforward and direct in story telling. As Wiersema says, "It's not about the writing itself...it is narrative-driven rather than style-driven."

As for Victoria, it simply comes alive with unusual characters: a group of not dead but not-alive-either folks take up night-time reading in the public library, a stranger from the Biblical past who attempts to resolve the problem of this particular miracle watches from dark corners, and mobs of zealous religious Victorian's converge. Suddenly, Victoria is the center of a new mysterious and all too appealing world – and with this novel, it is on the literary map.

Yvonne Blomer is a new mom. She has written reviews for Arc Magazine and Monday Magazine. Her first book of poems, a broken mirror, fallen leaf, came out in the spring.



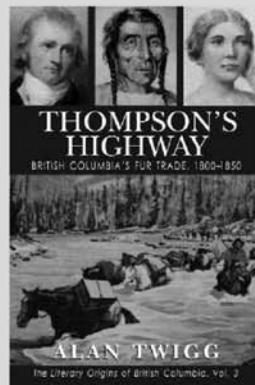
Before I Wake
Robert J. Wiersema,
Random House of
Canada. 384 pp.
\$32.95

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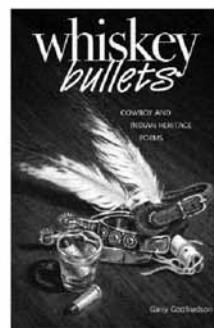
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TWO BY RHENISCH

Linda Rogers

Harold Rhenisch is “hard of hearing,” but as far as I know, no one has accused him of having a tin ear. In the new book, *Winging Home*, another in a growing collection of lyrical non-fiction, the conversation of birds is pitch perfect.

Rhenisch, a poet to his bones, is a new world essayist with an old world sensibility. Growing up “German” in the post-war years in the interior of BC was no easy task. Germans were the old axis of evil, every last one of them. Even the descendents of Mennonite exiles, like the writer Andreas Schroeder, felt the prejudice. Perhaps that is what gives Rhenisch the outsider’s perspective that makes his writing so rich in fresh impressions. He is the perennial newcomer, his senses alert to phenomenal information. Every paragraph is a virtual landscape complete with the sounds he struggles to hear. Every line is poetry.

A few years ago, my husband and I had dinner with Harold and his wife Diane in a German restaurant at a posh ranch in the Cariboo. Replete with six-foot Teutonic blonde buckaroos, the dining room could have been directly translated from the Black Forest. No one but us spoke English. “Ask them why they are so smitten with our wilderness,” I insisted to our host. “No,” Rhenisch refused, “I only speak Canadian.” That was true and not true. Of all the contemporary writers, Harold, his perceptive eye trained on his surroundings, could be the most indigenous of our writers. And yet, he is also the quintessential European, his DNA informed by an ancient culture, his other language the Low German of his ancestors.

The birds have their own language, a *singspiel* of life on the move. Like Rhenisch, they are questors on journeys determined by genetics and circumstance. A German Romantic to his core, Rhenisch is fascinated by the harmony and cacophony of his feathered co-evolutionaries. In the solitude of the sound challenged, he hears more than most people.

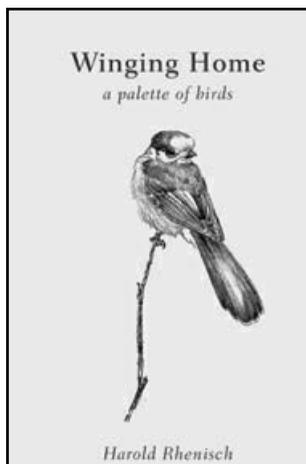
At once a diary recording the seasonal visitation of birds in his neighbourhood, *Winging Home* is also a map of Rhenisch’s overlapping civilizations, old world and new. His observations of bird species are parallel to human references. Birds are social. Human beings are social. In the magic of transformation the reader is invited into the very minds of his feathered visitors. Humorous in their aspirations, touching in their loyalty, and frightening in their fury, birds are us.

“The chorus of blackbirds is definitely not a song. It is a lot more like the sound of a factory, choreographed by a mad genius in a green velvet jacket cut from a curtain in 1914 London... It has been compared to the sound of an orchestra tuning up... The blackbirds make all these sounds at once. They may be in a group, but they do not sing as a group.”

Rhenisch offers chicken feed and rotten apples to his flying guests. To his readers he gives prose as rich as fruitcake. His musings are to be browsed, taken with a glass of port and savoured, bite-by-bite, as chapters introduced by proverbs progress like seasons beside the lake, which holds memory in patterns as beautiful and dangerous as the ice-covered water that sometimes tempts the traveler to exceed his reach.

If *Winging Home* is the diary of a poet circled by wings, *The Wolves at Evelyn* is about a poet running with the wolves, their teeth nipping his winged heels. Both memoir and meditation, *The Wolves at Evelyn* is the recollections of a boy whose imagination ran wild in an orchard of Eden enclosed by fences as rigid as the Berlin Wall. A dreamer trapped in the hardworking reality of immigrant life, the poet goes back and forth in time, explaining in jump cuts the history that illuminates the present.

“For my brother and me, it was still World War 11. We were hidden from terror and kept distant from the corrupting influences of art and culture, history and philosophy. For our parents, those were the killers. It was the artists who had betrayed, the artists whose desire to dismantle culture had led to war. To keep us safe, we were hidden among working people in a mountain valley two hundred miles from the ocean, hidden on a farm in the midst of a settlement of Canadian soldiers, hidden in work and the folds of the land, wrapped up in a Hudson’s Bay Company trade blanket, washed in a wash tub, taught to whistle for birds by a woman who could still

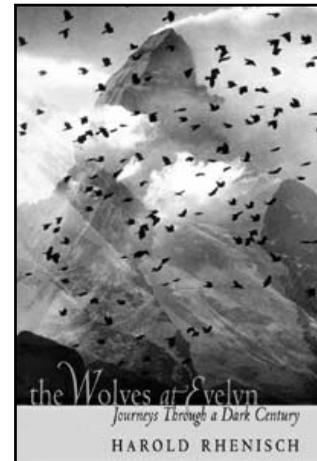


Winging Home:
a palette of birds
Harold Rhenisch,
Brindle & Glass. 242 pp.
\$24.95

remember operas, without the words, if that was possible. It was possible. A new world would come from us.”

How ironic that the young ironist, his malice leavened by humour, would become a poet, the most “frivolous” of artists. The charm of *The Wolves at Evelyn*, is his lucid presentation of the confused songlines of a child lost in the wilderness of the Twentieth Century. Speaking directly to the reader in idiosyncratic language, a compelling mixture of rhetoric and plainsong, Rhenisch has made a folktale out of his own history. The writer is Hansel following breadcrumbs out of the black forest of mythology back to the humble hut where the Canadian journey began, and back to Europe with his eldest child, Anassa, where they trip on the dreadful family legacy. As Father and daughter follow the breadline from the Third Reich to rural British Columbia and begin the healing process of reconciling past and present, guilt and redemption, that new world at last becomes a real possibility.

Linda Rogers writes on Arts and Culture for Focus Magazine. Her novel *The Empress Letters* will appear in 2007.



The Wolves at Evelyn:
Journeys through a
dark century
Harold Rhenisch,
Brindle & Glass. 312 pp.
\$24.95

COHEN (continued from Page 5)

Balance this with the sheer bullshit nuttiness of “Dear Diary” (“Dear diary / I mean no disrespect / But you are more sublime / Than any Sacred text. / Sometimes just a list / Of my events / Is holier than the Bill of Rights / And more intense.”). It’s like we’re hearing the same impish voice that Donald Brittain’s NFB documentary, *Ladies and Gentleman, Leonard Cohen*, brought to us, but only four decades further along the razor-blade of life. For this poet whom we’ve loved with that mixed regard peculiar to Canada, is indeed growing old. Cracks about aging—wrinkles, prozac, hearing aids, halitosis, gaining weight—abound in this volume.

Even so, for this self-confessed creaky sybarite, Woman still exists as muse. If expressions of whatever Buddhist awareness he acquired may seem slim after five years of renunciation atop Mt. Baldy, Cohen’s salty old tangos in homage to the female of the species still bump and grind along with the limp and swagger of a mythic boulevardier. From the title piece:

*I know she is coming
I know she will look
And that is the longing
And this is the book.*

Prepare yourself for a jolt when you read this truly long-awaited book. Mortality can be a bitch, even for the blessed, but we can be grateful for this look inside the medicine cabinet of experience that keeps Leonard Cohen out on point for our graying culture. *Pax vobiscum* homeboy.

Trevor Carolan is the international editor of PRRB.

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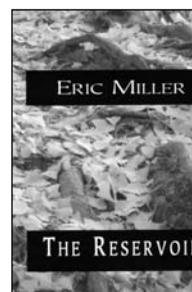
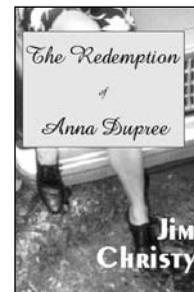


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ALERT BAY POEM

Joan Stone

Mismatched Mittens

What behavior is called for
 From a person ending a marriage
 Uprooting a life.
 How should one hold the head
 Or glint the eye?
 The step—may it slow or quicken?

There was laughter at first
 And kindness
 In the beginning,
 Worn out perhaps by repetition
 Or unmindfulness
 Wiped clean along with the jam mustaches
 From the children's faces.

Ah, now there's the rub
 The children.
 Almost all grown now
 The little ones
 Who unbeknownst in tears and smiles
 Held familial harmony in their sticky hands
 Spilled communion into conversation
 Whilst love slipped away
 Out the back door
 Ran down the street
 And could not be found—
 Same as the left handed mittens
 Come spring.

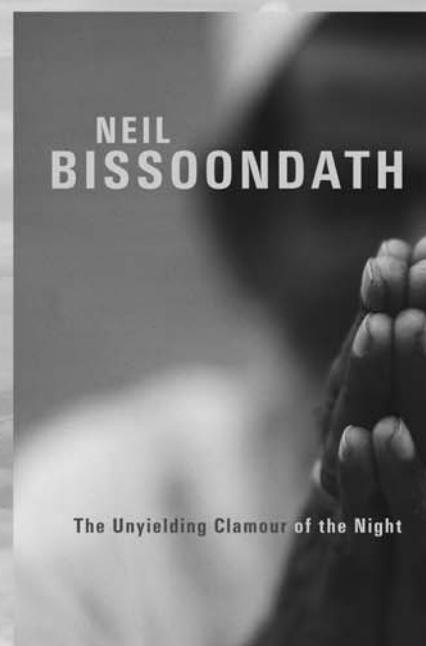
Alert Bay, B.C.

MERTON (continued from Page 25)

Lawrence Ferlinghetti, eternal Beat elder, attended the Six Gallery reading and his book store, City Lights in San Francisco, was and remains an international literary and political mecca. Ferlinghetti had written to Merton in the early 1950s, and a sensitive exchange between the two developed regarding Roman Catholicism and interfaith dialogue. In 1961, Ferlinghetti asked Merton to contribute to the first edition of *Journal for the Protection of All Being*. Merton sent him a copy of 'Chant to Be Used in Processions Around A Site With Furnaces'. The poem is a stinging, prophetic-like critique against political apathy, the banality of evil, and the American military industrial complex. A lively and animated correspondence followed between Merton and Ferlinghetti in 1961 about the publishing of the poem and Merton's problem with censorship. Before he headed to Asia in 1968, he stayed with Ferlinghetti at the City Lights apartment in San Francisco. The voluminous correspondence between Merton and many other writers, including the Beats, is published in *The Courage for Truth: Letters to Writers* (1993).

In retrospect, Merton and the Beats saw clearly and cleanly that the Willy Lomans of post-WW II America had the wrong dream. Their response was an engaged activism and renewal of contemplative traditions from both Western and Asian traditions in pursuit of an authentic life. Merton was a friend of the Beats, and, as a good friend, was always ready to ask them hard and critical questions. His role in bringing back the contemplative ideal to the modern world was formative in the inspired work of integrating life's ecological, literary, communal and political dimensions. This profoundly interdependent vision continues to serve as a wisdom-path, even in our own uncertain, fragmented age.

Ron Dart teaches political science at the University College of the Fraser Valley in Abbotsford, BC. His works include The Red Tory Tradition (Synaxis).



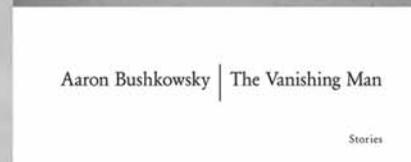
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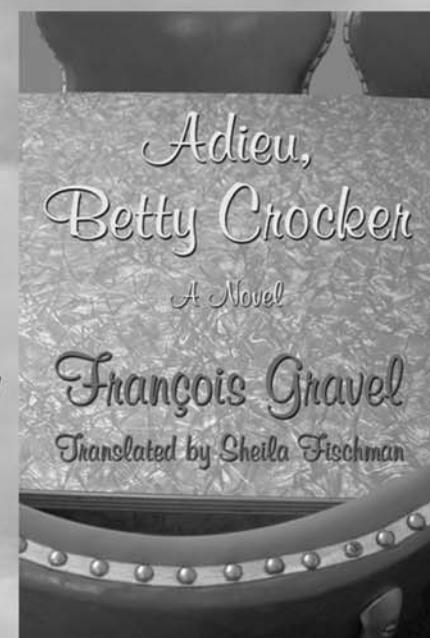
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MOWLAVEE: ENCOUNTERING RUMI

Hussein Samet

At a time of unprecedented discord between the modern nations of the West and Islam, it is hard to escape the irony that Rumi al-Haq, a 13th century Islamic mystic from eastern Persia has become the best-selling poet of our times, currently outpacing even Shakespeare. Associated with the growth of Sufism among western seekers, and commonly regarded as the greatest mystic poet of any age, Rumi continues to elude critical description. On the hunch that it might be a good idea for North Americans especially to know a little more about this iconic figure from our shared literary past, we invited Hussein Samet, a distinguished Persian journalist and former university professor in Birjan, who now lives in Canada, to share his thoughts on the man known among Central Asian peoples as Mowlavee.

We don't need wine to get drunk,
or singing or dancing to feel like a child
No poets no leaders no songs
yet we jump around totally wild totally wild
~ Rumi

children. And creation belongs to God. This idea is not popular now in Iran.

Poetry and philosophy are hard to translate. That's a problem. In the U.S., the Iranica Project is trying to make a new dictionary. This could help us update the Nicholson texts that brought Rumi to readers in English. The language of the translations is dated. We could do with new, clear versions.

Regarding Sufi tradition, this is connected to Rumi. It comes from him, and more has been added. For historical

purposes it is useful to understand that Rumi originates from a family of Balkh and Khorasan, a large eastern province of Persia. When he was about 12, war drove his family westward toward Bagdad, and around 1219 AD his family settled in Oromiyyah (Rumiyah), a city in what is now Turkey. This region was under the control of Byzantium. His title "Rumi" derives from the city name of Oromiyyah. Following the rise of Islam, the city name was changed to Konia, and it was here that he became a preacher and orator, as his father Baha'Valad had been before him in Balkh.

Once Rumi's work became known and popular, it circulated in handwritten form. Because Sufis like singing and music, Rumi's work is part of their tradition. From the Sufi perspective, Mowlavee invites us to "Think, and open your mind." Because it is both poetry and philosophy, its politics—such as they are—is more like sitting with your neighbours and helping each other out with common problems. In this sense, the politics of Rumi and Sufism is peace, and its body of literature is about discovering yourself.

One thing about Persian life that's important, is when you have more than enough, you should go to Mecca. Rumi differed in this. He said, "Why should I go there, such a long way, when I can see God anywhere?" The modern mullahs don't like this.

So Mowlavee is for everybody: peace, love, being together, being kind to one another. It's very simple.

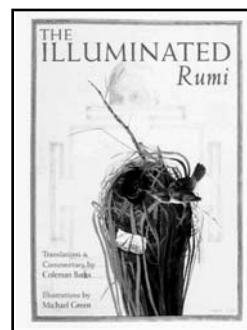
The abiding affection that we Persians have for Mowlavee is simply because he describes and tells us about love and peace, and because in his poetry he so clearly tries to understand himself. The message for us as readers, for each of us, is that "I should try to understand myself also."

What Mowlavee's poetry offers us is a way of seeing life from creation through to death. He explains how everything is unified, or whole; he also explains how everything is in a process of coming and going, until at the end there is unity with God.

Mowlavee wants to say that, finally, everyone—if everything goes the right way—will be cleansed and their soul unified with God.

In Persia, people know and love Rumi. But currently in Iran he isn't as well loved because they are not doing as he urges. For example, in his beautiful poem "The Love of Woman", Rumi even takes woman as an example of God. This, of course, is not the love of woman as sex, but as the 'light' of God. This is Rumi's idea of the beloved. It's very wonderful.

By contrast, Rumi says man is like an actor. But woman creates—she creates



CORMAN (continued from Page 18)

and reality

together. The word
in short and the word
in love - a book of

love - for all - beyond
all differences and
yet feeling honored

by difference as
such - glad of being
and fearful of it -

not myself alone
but every self
alone - in concert -

in recognition
of God in the act
of you being here.

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A Mother's String, Andrea McKenzie, Ekstasis Editions, 2005 73 pages, paperback.

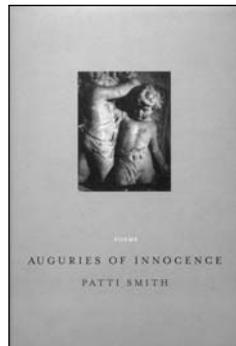


It is astonishing that such a young poet is so aware of the ambiguities of string. From umbilicus to birthday wrapping to leash to apron string, Andrea McKenzie uses the emotional material at hand to present the ordinary and sometimes extraordinary experience of girls—rejection, love, cruelty and reconciliation—in neatly wrapped packages of loss and

redemption. Already McKenzie has learned how to offer her poems as gifts for the world. Her last lines make magnificent bows: I said it back/ When this happens, remember your body and stay there/the cord gets tangled/a hand coming down upon her head. Her linked images are proverbs knotted on a string so that none of them may be lost on the journey from darkness to light. Most delightfully, McKenzie's quest takes her directly from the intensely personal to the universal. Unlike those poets who circle themselves and get nowhere, she has already turned from self-healing to mending a broken world.

Linda Rogers

Auguries of Innocence, Patti Smith, Ecco, 2005, 80 pages, \$22.95 hardcover



The first book of poetry from Patti Smith in more than a decade, *Auguries of Innocence* is a striking achievement. Echoing William Blake, Arthur Rimbaud and a trail of beloved ghosts and luminous children, Smith's vision moves us through a dreamscape that calls attention to the woes of the past, present, and a future she clearly intends to inhabit. Despite the awful

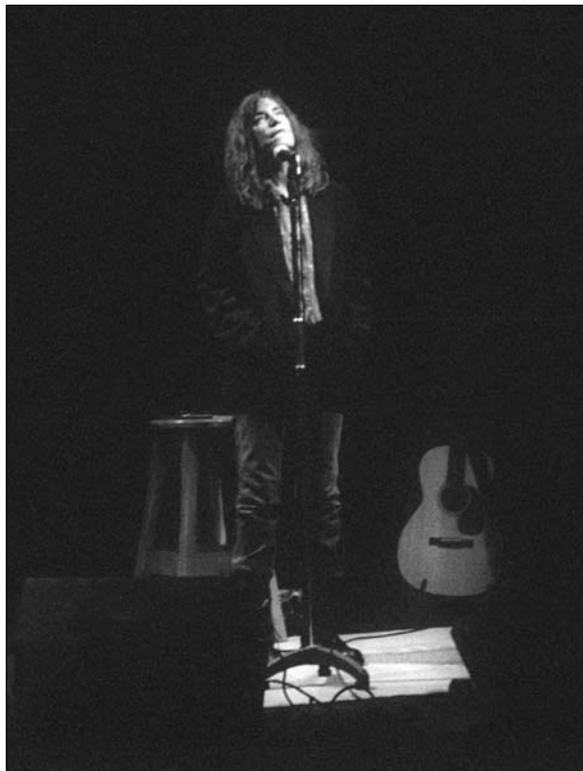
and miraculous truth of a world gone wrong she is careful to reveal a tender concern as well as express her outrage through protest.

As a performer she is well known for her debut *Horses*, one of the most influential albums of the 70's and considered by many to be her masterpiece.

Today Smith continues to perform with unbridled energy and a matured and soulful integrity. Assembled with care, this elegant and slim volume harnesses the errant wordsmithing that she has developed through improvisation in her songs and music. In her singular style she embodies the dreams and visions of those who have passed away by awakening the heart of the beat poets. Smith sheds her tears into an abandoned wilderness, dutifully reclaimed by her quest for spiritual renewal and a safe world for her children.

Her poetry employs structures both archaic and modern and shows a facet of her love of language in words that are carefully measured and deeply felt yet filled with surprise. In "The Birds of Iraq" she moves through intimate moments with mother and child to a blasting indictment of war to a feather light image of wishes blown into the sky like birds ascending.

Her mystical inquiries take over many of the



Patti Smith in Sligo, Ireland

poems and are held in language that demands inspiration from both writer and reader. The workload must be shared: she never merely entertains or tries to impress. Instead the words wear an aura of self-discovery, wisdom, and belief where the reader is invited to find correspondences through their own spiritual enquiry.

Near the end of the book Smith's more measured and controlled imagery is challenged by a streaming flow that lets loose in the brutal realities of "Our Jargon Muffles the Drum." One can hear Smith's distinctive speaking voice in these lines, running together to build in momentum and releasing the side of Patti Smith that reminds us that her creative powers are matured but not diminished. Through anger and catharsis, Smith empowers us with a reminder that though innocence is lost for many there is still a prayer and a hope and a challenge in the language of the soul.

Miles Lowry

Beyond the Pale Elizabeth Rhett Woods, Ekstasis Editions, 2006, 240 pages, \$22.95 trade paper



When I picked up a copy of Elizabeth Rhett Woods *Beyond the Pale*, I was hooked by the third page. The plot is simple. Emily, the protagonist, has just been left in the financial cold by her ex-husband. She needs a job, and her friend, Caitlin has a suggestion: someone she knows wants someone to open an art gallery, and run errands for him, part of a cover for his marijuana smuggling business.

Emily figures she's right for the job. She's an artist, after all. And she likes the idea of setting up a gallery. But she falls for her boss, a black amputee, named Adam. The thing is, even if I wanted to put the book down at this point, I couldn't. I wanted to know what was going to happen next. Because Emily gets a

whole new identity, Elinor, with ID and wardrobe included and a make-up job to age her ten years. While Emily is falling head over heels for Adam, Elinor is having a hot time with David/Luke who also works for Adam.

In *Beyond the Pale* you get two plots for the price of one, and the kind of turbulence involved in being two people at once. Not that Emily/Elinor isn't up to the task. There is some hot sex, some s&m, always a dangerous edge to this new two-sided life. But the biggest danger of all is Emily forgetting who she is. "...as I became more involved with Adam, I also grew in lust and boldness. I was, for the first time in my life, really questioning who I was, or rather, who I might become. While not having quite resigned myself to middle-age, it seemed to me now,...that I had come perilously close to entering, without really noticing it, the well-concealed, well-padded cage of respectable maturity."

Beyond the Pale is about is the danger we all face when we approach the uncharted territory of our lives. Haven't we all been two people at various points in our lives? Haven't we faced danger? *Beyond the Pale* is more than a thriller; it is a statement about how we can be in the dangerous world, as one whole person.

Wendy Morton

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JOHN PASS

Allan Brown

Stumbling in the Bloom

John Pass, Oolichan Books, 2005. 120 pp. \$17.95 Cdn

This vibrant and well-produced volume completes John Pass's four book poetic project *At Large*. The set began with *The Hour's Acropolis* in 1991 and *Radical Innocence* in 1994, both issued by Harbour Publishing. The third book, *Water Stair* (Oolichan Books) appeared in 2000.

These collections sometimes include and set in a new context prior material that was published independently — with the chapbook *Mud Bottom* (High Ground Press, 1996), for instance, preparing for and being included in *Water Stair*. Similarly the individual longpoems *nowrite.doc* (Leaf Press, 2004) and *Twinned Towers* (Fox Run Press, 2005) are re-printed and thus poetically realigned in Parts I and III respectively of *Stumbling In The Bloom*. These pieces are indeed crucial to an understanding and appreciation of the book as a whole and deserve close examination and regular back reference.

The four sections of *Stumbling In The Bloom* all bear subtitles taken from one of the poems, the first being "Trumpet Vine," a thoughtful and contented celebration of the writer's fiftieth birthday. But the centre of Part I is "nowrite.doc," a wryly humorous and gently affectionate account of his struggles with his project, moving somehow "in the labyrinth" of the awkward, obsessive thing, with any and all writings or art makings, and his all so recognizably human response to them "standing there blank in my head splashed bright, hopeful." The struggles repeat, but they also become more specific as the "writing-against-not-writing" effort pushes into "entries, entrances at domesticity's margins—" and a richer kind of humanity returns; and then a place apt to these writhing energies at "garden edge, lake edge, kitchen counter, rooftop—" and a bit further and a bit further yet till it becomes "certain onto beauty's / shade-shifting sun-splashed / high ground."

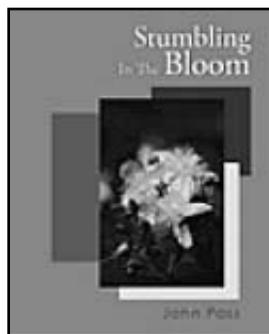
Not all of the work in the book is so intricately woven, though all of it maintains an equally high professional sheen. There is an easy and open, chatty tone to the anecdotal "Dismantling The Treehouse" in Part II ("The Crowd All Over The Sign"). Here is the poet plain as he remembers and recognizes the "scrappy superstructure" of the old fort in all its details, even the "nails / pulled and bent are those I took up // with me, driven to enter and hold." His theme, how the energy of a taking apart becomes another putting together, is presented merely, and rests quite openly with a kind of insouciant grace, allowing us to hold or release it as we wish.

In Part III ("Idiot Of Place") he deals with the causes and effects of human anxiety, in its historical as well as its existential dimensions, with the persistent uncertainty of the personal/artistic as well as the political forum: "No straight lines in art or nature." ("Twinned Towers"). Our changing, ever distorting perceptions may well be the only instruments we have to fully or at least sufficiently understand the limits of death or life. They alternate in "Twinned Towers" and other poems in this section with a compulsive rhythm. "The world is terrible with names," he brusquely states in "Ground Zero," and he names/speaks the history and terror of them in "Twinned Towers," a massive meditation upon the 9/11 attack that isolates and considers the Hagia Sophia, anonymous minarets, the Old Testament's Babel, our own CN tower, Hart Crane's Brooklyn Bridge, and with a grim irony, the leaning tower of Pisa, near which the renegade poet Ezra Pound was imprisoned "in a cage" after World War II.

*

The alternating rhythm of pain and pleasure, crisis and contentment, comes to a resonant close with the neatly balanced voices of Part IV ("Wind Chime"). The domestic and the destructive meet without merging, each authentically independent, yet also strangely linked, in a quiet, confident vision that is "[h]oly and goofy" at the same time, as the poet evokes in "Sundeck In Houselight," the first piece here. It is a place both prayerful, as an "icon of belief," and practical, able "to make a little floor, smudged at the edges, on the cedar planking." It is home.

I first encountered his words some 3,000 miles away from that home when I wrote a brief review of *The Hour's Acropolis* for a newspaper in Kingston, Ont., where my wife and I were living before our return to B.C. A year and a bit after that return I



The editors of *The Pacific Rim Review of Books* would like to apologize to Allan Brown, John Pass and our readers. A part of the following review of John Pass's significant book was accidentally truncated in the production process in an earlier issue of the *PRRB*. It is reprinted here in its entirety, with sincerest apologies, to reviewer and reviewed..

was given another review copy of the first book, along with the newly published *Radical Innocence*, with the demanding but satisfying task of producing an extended study of both for *The Malahat Review*. Shortly after this I had the pleasure of meeting John who lives with his wife Theresa Kishkan in a well-hidden yet commodious house in the bush near Sakinaw Lake. One meeting has led to another over the last ten years or so, as I have continued to read his work and respect him as a person, a poet, a scholar, and a gardener.

Yes, the garden and orchard work he speaks of with casual yet confident detail in the new book is based on fact as much as it aspires to and reaches interesting and stimulating heights of fancy and something like prophecy. The title he has chosen derives from what is undoubtedly the most famous use of this verb in English literature, by Andrew Marvell in "The Garden," where he describes himself as "Stumbling on Melons, as I pass" (and the pun for our John is obviously irresistible).

More seriously, all the poems in *Stumbling In The Bloom* are richly referential in one way or another, but a couple of the specific literary references are particularly significant. The central "Twinned Towers" cites and quotes both Hart Crane and Ezra Pound, the two out-of-place Americans met here in their exile — with a soft, almost pleading echo of Crane's "visionary company" (from "The Broken Tower" of 1932), and a startling glimpse of Pound's heavenly city, "Dioce, whose terraces are the colour of stars" (Canto 74), and the haunting whisper of "Let the wind speak" (Canto 120) as the epigraph to "Wind Chime."

And the influence of Uncle Ez extends beyond such passages. There is an on-going sense in all of the *At Large* series of the famous exhortation to "make it new," of the urge toward and the excitement of the discovery of "news that stays new." These notions, which are so closely a part of John Pass's poetic knowing and doing, have also been usefully summarized by Vancouver teacher and intellectual activist Stan Persky, in his recent *The Short Version: An ABC Book* (New Star): "Writing gives us a second chance to make sense of what we do, to enlarge our existence in the direction of shared human experience." Persky shares these thoughts with Pass, and provides another opportunity for the rest of us to share them as well.

Allan Brown's poetry has been published across Canada since 1962 and is partly collected in seventeen books and chapbooks. His reviews have appeared since 1976.

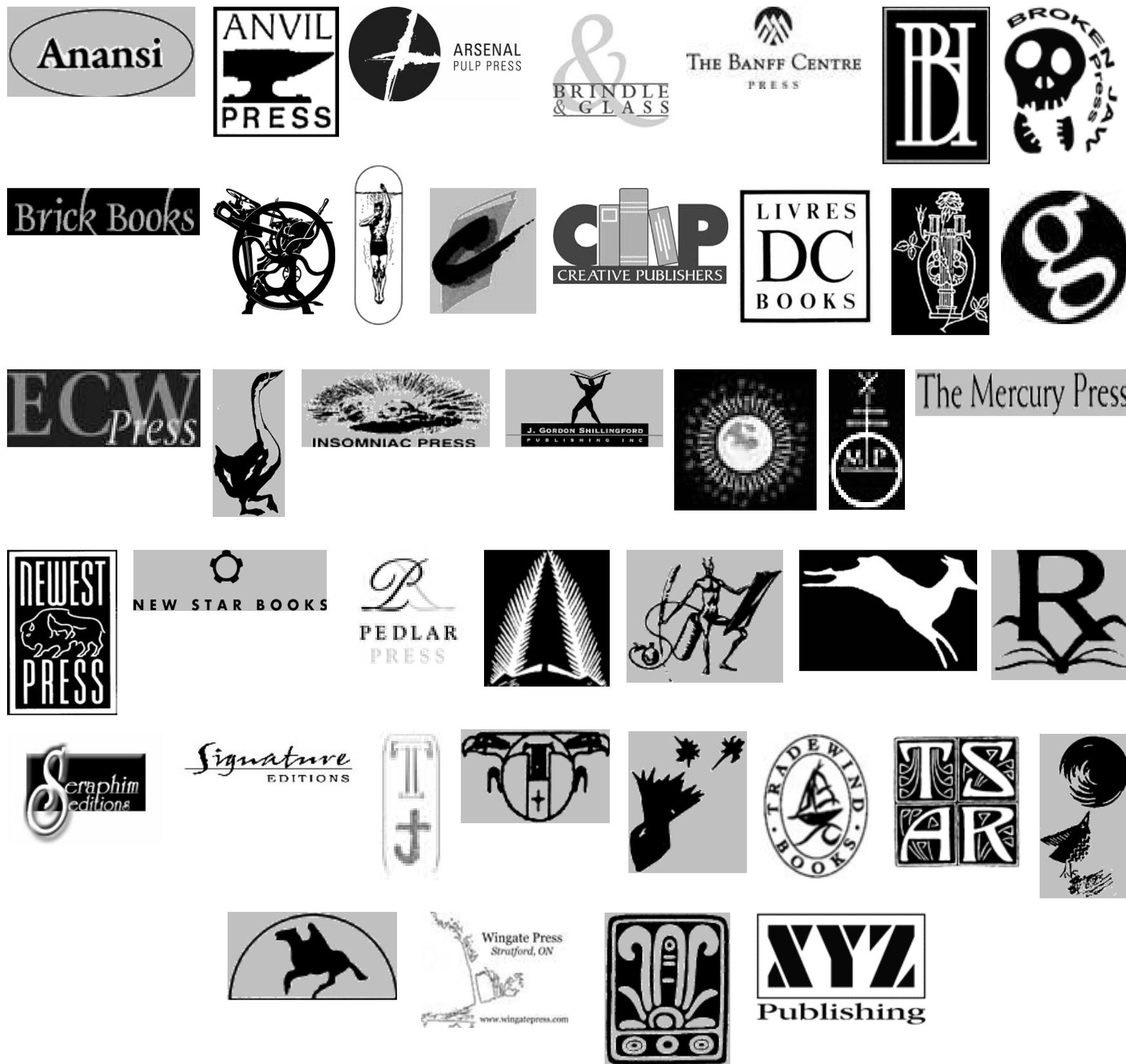
SELBY & TOSCHES (continued from Page 3)

Nick Tosches honed his style writing staccato record review in the backpages of *Rolling Stone* magazine, along with Lester Bangs and others, and then later went on to write some very significant biographies of such figures as Jerry Lee Lewis (*Hellfire*), Dean Martin (*Dino*) and perhaps his best work, *The Devil and Sonny Listin*. He has also dabbled less successfully in fiction (*In the Hand of Dante*) and even less than that, poetry. As a poet, Nick is a good journalist, but he does have some very good lines, rendered with a muscular precision. His presentation is rough and tumble but educated, reading in a granite voice forged by too many whiskeys in late-night clubs listening to smoky jazz. At times the poems conflict with the austerity of his voice and the referential subject matter, trying to pose as a hitman with a classics degree. The best, however, possess a clarity of imagination and vision, as in the self-realized construct, "Dante at Ravenna." "I Dig Girls" is a little too long, and seems almost pointless and takes up too much space on the CD; however, Nick, in spite of its overt misogyny, clearly believes this to be his masterpiece. Nick's poems are not always successful, and seem at times excessive. However, Nick's collaboration on the CD is clearly an act of homage. *Il miglior fabrica*, as Eliot (quoting Dante) to Pound. Nick's constructed posturing, while offering moments of razor sharp brilliance, pales next to the authenticity of Selby's tales of the street.

Selby clearly "lives the life he lives" as Mose Allison would put it, with a deep sincerity the shines through all. The real pleasure to be derived from this CD is Huibert Selby's gentle voice., that goes straight to the heart, searing like corrosive acid all our emotions. It is impossible to listen to him with the flow of tears. In every poem he reads "In the Heat of the Night," "Only the Lonely", "Anticipation", and of course, the "love" poem to Edith Pife "La Vie En Rose", a deep spiritual sadness pervades all. What is most apparent is that Selby is first a foremost a religious writer, like those poets of the Mississippi Delta, who sang of grief, eternally caught between God and whisky'n'wimmen. Because of the sheer originality of style and subject matter, Selby remains one of the few authentic geniuses of modern time. Not bad for a guy that dropped out of school in the ninth grade. Stick it on your iPod.

Richard Olafson has published 5 books of poetry. He is an editor of the PRRB.

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You can alternatively soak them in very hot water, or freeze your boots overnight. The river will bear scars after Christo's bulldozers and cranes have moved on. "Over the River" is scheduled to stand for two weeks, after two years of construction. Christo hopes to draw a half million "art lovers." That's about thirty-five thousand people a day. The Christo and Jeanne-Claude website speaks of the art coming out of the two artists' hearts. It describes how they "prospected" 14,000 miles of Rocky Mountain roads as they searched out a river over which to hang their industrial mega-art. Funding for the project will come from sales of artist drawings and souvenir pieces of fabric. I've written about this before. When the two artists slung a "Curtain" across a Colorado valley near Rifle—haunting, even gorgeous as the artist drawings look—heavy winds tore the actual fabric apart within twenty-four hours. Shredded orange fabric blew for miles through the valley.

What might seven miles of shimmering fabric do to geomorphic forces like wind or sunlight? What will be the effect on waterfowl, fish, wildlife, plant life? How will the caddis fly respond? Local officials are concerned at heavy traffic in a narrow canyon, and visitors who climb steep, crumbling terrain populated by rattlesnakes. This year on February 15th a truck of uranium ore overturned on a sharp bend near Swissvale, the hamlet where the roadside shrine to lost fish stands. "The Department of Transportation is pretty concerned about a thing like that happening with all those tourists packed into the canyon," says a BLM official to *The Denver Post*.

If the river or the wind does something unpredictable—as at Rifle—and miles of the Arkansas get clogged by blue fabric, what will it look like? Geomorphology of a river system is delicate. The mathematics elude even specialists, as Luna Leopold

notes. Ecology up there is an even more delicate weave—a "fabric" ecologists sometimes call it. We don't know the basics of its response to sunlight, wind, temperature change, or sedimentation. We do know the rivers of North America are in trouble—that's one of the reasons Luna Leopold states for devoting his life to them. How will miles of industrial fabric, and a string of automobiles, buses, and helicopters, alter the many microclimates along the Arkansas?

Now is a good time to recognize that art can be imperialist, as invasive as commerce, industry, mining, or military adventure. Many of us believe rivers & their curious deities are better celebrated by non-industrial projects. Poems & songs have been traditional—they meet the riverbank less intrusively, and usually point out something overlooked—about the water cycle, or the trembling human heart. I'd like to propose a poetry reading "Over the River," in place of the installation. (Poetry readings are notorious for drawing small but respectful crowds.) In Frances Densmore's study, *Northern Ute Music*, published in 1922, I found a proper opening song, recorded by a Ute named Nikavari. It seems almost prophetic of Christo's project—

<i>a'nagar</i>	red
<i>vi'nunump</i>	wagon
<i>ku'avi'tsiya</i>	dust
<i>ma'rikats</i>	white man
<i>pumi'wanupahai</i> ...	looking around

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Shafer, Edward. *The Divine Woman: Dragon Ladies and Rain Maidens*. North Point Press: San Francisco, 1980.

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ROOM WITH BATH

HÉLÈNE RIOUX
TRANSLATED BY
JONATHAN KAPLANKSY

Outwardly happy, Éléonore despairs of a shallow existence. One day “the valve bursts” and without saying a word, she rents a small room in a run-down neighbourhood—a modest ‘room with bath’ in which to write and reinvent herself. Told in the first person, *Room with Bath* gives voice to a woman’s compelling tale of sexuality, birth and death. Originally published in French, this daring novel received several literary awards in Quebec.

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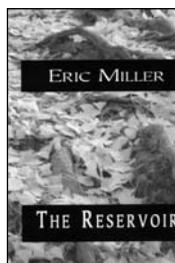
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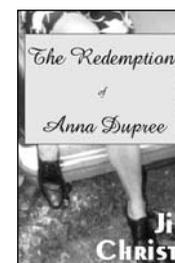
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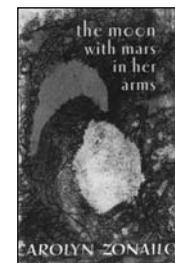
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