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MICHAEL MCCLURE A CELEBRATION

THE MCCLURIAD BY JACK FOLEY

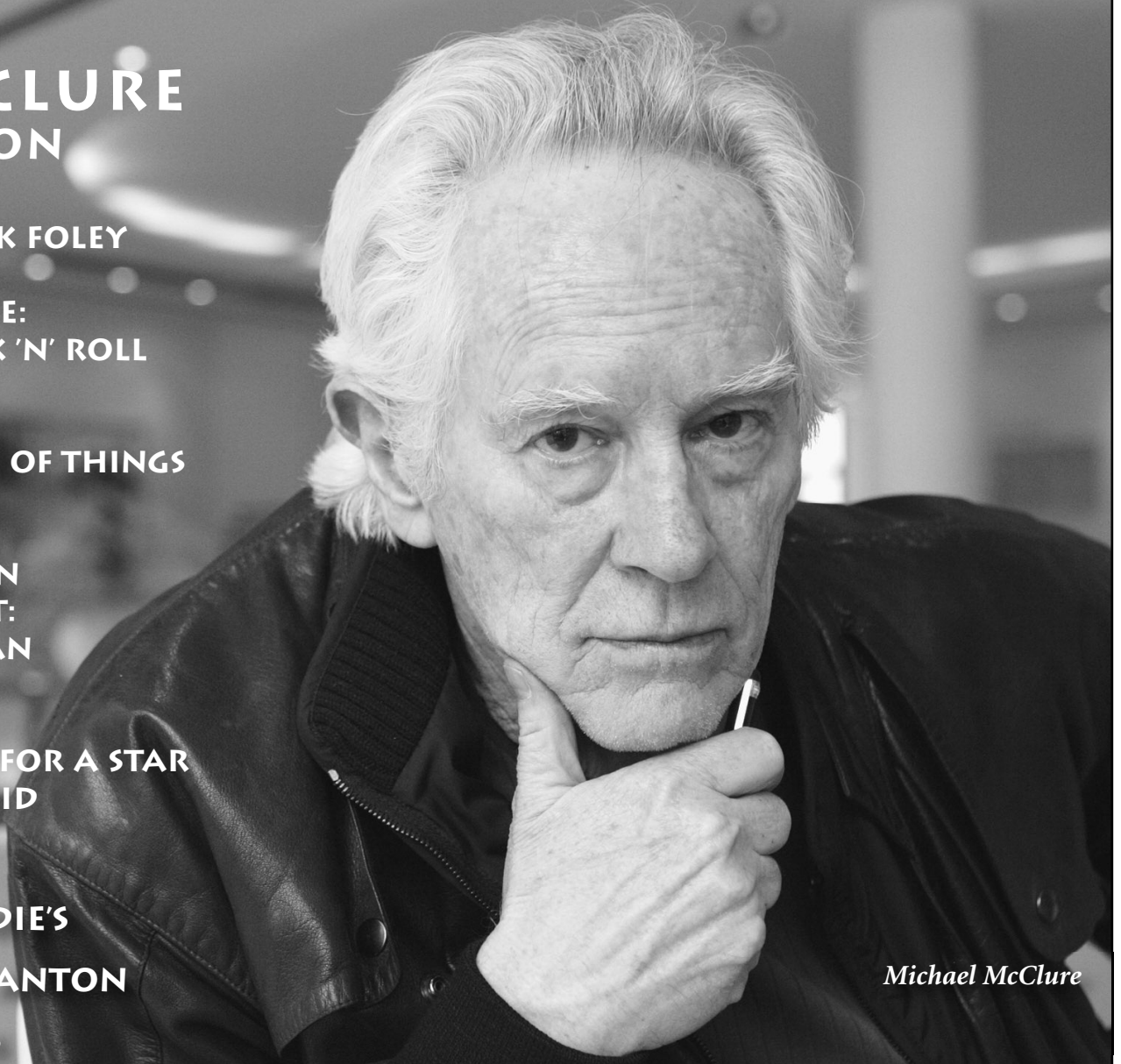
MICHAEL MCCLURE:
PURE POETRY, PURE ROCK 'N' ROLL
BY JACK FOLEY

THE EVERLASTING UNIVERSE OF THINGS
BY JOHN OLSON

THE MEAT REASON
OF THE LAST BEAT:
MCCLURE'S LATIHAN
PAUL NELSON

INTERGALACTIC GREETINGS FOR A STAR
JAMES EDWARD REID

PLUS: SALMAN RUSHDIE'S
VALENTINE FOR JOSEPH ANTON
BY LINDA ROGERS



Michael McClure

ROBERT DUNCAN'S *THE H D BOOK*
REVIEWED BY MIKE DOYLE

DENNIS MALONEY ON WHITE PINE PRESS:
THE PRRB INTERVIEW, BY GREGORY DUNNE

HEIDI GRECO ON VANCOUVER NOIR

SHARIF ELMUSA'S
"PALESTINIAN HEART",
REVIEW BY GARY LAWLESS

THE BEAT WORLD OF VOJO SINDOLIC

THE THIRD POETRY
BY LEN GASPARINI

THE SOUL OF JOHNNY CASH
BY RICHARD WIRICK

PLUS: NEW ORLEANS SOUL; GEORGE FERTIG'S LIFE; COMING
HOME TO THE LOTUS SUTRA; YIDDISH WOMEN WRITERS;
PHILIP LAMANTIA; MICHAEL ROTHENBERG & MORE



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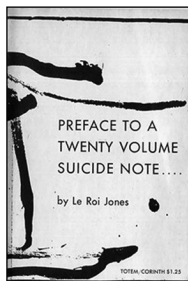
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This issue of the
Pacific Rim Review of Books
is dedicated to the memory of
Amiri Baraka (1921-2012).
Poet, dramatist and revolutionary,
he will be missed.



Preface to a
Twenty-Volume
Suicide Note
Totem/Corinth



Digging (The Afro-
American Soul of
American Classical
Music)
University of
California Press

CONTENTS

MICHAEL MCCLURE: A CELEBRATION

“Michael McClure: Pure Protestantism, Pure Poetry, Pure Rock ‘n’ Roll” by Jack Foley	page 3
“The Everlasting Universe of Things” An Essay by John Olson	page 5
“The Meat Reason of the Last Beat: McClure’s Latihan” An Essay by Paul Nelson	page 7
“Intergalactic Greetings for a Star” An Essay by James Edward Reid	page 9
“The McCluriad” A Poem by Jack Foley	page 10

FEATURES

“Sacred Rage: A Valentine for Joesph Anton”: <i>Joseph Anton</i> by Salman Rushdie Reviewed by Linda Rogers	page 14
“Still Keeping the Beat” AnEssay by Vojo Sindolic	page 17
<i>The H D Book</i> by Robert Duncan Reviewed by Mike Doyle	page 24
Interview with Dennis Maloney of White Pine Press Interviewed by Gregory Dunne	page 27
“The Third Poetry” <i>An</i> Essay by Len Gasparini	page 46
“Man in Black Again: On Johnny Cash” An Essay by Richard Wirick	page 54

DEPARTMENTS

Young Readers: <i>The Matatu</i> by Eric Walters and Eva Campbell Reviewed by Linda Rogers	page 39
Music Books: “New Orleans Roots”: <i>Ernie K-Doe: The R&B Emperor of New Orleans</i> by Ben Sandmel <i>Bounce: Rap Music and Local Identity in New Orlean</i> by Matt Miller; <i>Congo Square:African Roots in New Orleans</i> by Freddi Williams Evans; <i>Louisiana Saturday Night</i> by Alex V. Cook, reviewed by Joseph Blake	page 40
Mind and Body: “Coming Home to the Lotus Sutra”: An Essay by Trevor Carolan	page 43
Fine Arts: “Looking at the Moon Man”: <i>The Life and Art of George Fertig</i> by Mona Fertig Review by Marina Parapini	page 52

REVIEWS

“Hello (Again) Honey”: <i>Dating</i> : a novel by Dave Williamson Reviewed by Hilary Turner	page 11
"At Play in the Open Field": Two Films Reviewed by Peter Grant	page 12
<i>The Lotus Singers Short Stories from Contemporary South Asia</i> edited by Trevor Carolan Reviewed by Reshma Kalianpur	page 13
<i>Indefinite Detention</i> by Michael Rothenberg Reviewed by Tom Hibberd	page 20
<i>The Collected Poems of Philip Lamantia</i> by Philip Lamantia Remarks by Allan Graubard	page 22
<i>The Exile Book of Yiddish Women Writers</i> edited by Frieda Johles Forman Reviewed by Linda Rogers	page 25
<i>Vancouver Noir 1930-1960</i> by Diane Purvey and John Belshaw Reviewed by Heidi Greco	page 30
"Two Quiet Giants": <i>Brave Genius</i> by Sean B. Carroll Reviewed by Richard Wirick	page 31
“Curtal Sonnets and Vodka, Sestinas and Chemotherapy”: <i>Overpass</i> by Steve Davenport Reviewed by James D. Sullivan	page 32
“Butterflies in the Ghetto”: <i>The Survival Rate of Butterflies in the Wild</i> by Murray Reiss Reviewed by Scott Lawrance	page 33
<i>The Stories That Are Great Within Us</i> Reviewed by Linda Rogers	page 34
"Falling (Downstairs) For Late T’ang Poems”: <i>Echoes from Pluto</i> by Mike Doyle Reviewed by Hannah Main-vanderKamp	page 35
<i>This Drawn and Quartered Moon</i> by klipschutz Reviewed by Steve Potter	page 36
<i>House of the Unexpected</i> by Julie Rogers Reviewed by Neeli Cherkovski	page 37
<i>We Are Born with the Songs Inside Us</i> by Katherine Palmer Gordon Reviewed by Trysh Ashby-Rolls	page 38
<i>Alphabestary: A Poetry-Emblem Book</i> by H. Masud Taj & Bruce Meyer Reviewed by Christopher Levenson	page 41
<i>Collage</i> by George Whipple Reviewed by Sheila Martindale	page 42
<i>Living Artfully: Reflections from the Far West Coast</i> edited by Anita Sinner & Christine Lowther Reviewed by Barbara Julian	page 42
<i>Anita’s Revolution</i> by Shirley Langer Reviewed by Linda Rogers	page 45
<i>A Garden in the Wilderness</i> by Edeana Malcolm Reviewed by Sheila Martindale	page 47
<i>Lighting the Global Lantern</i> by Terry Ann Carter Reviewed by Richard Stevenson	page 47
“From the Palestinian Heart”: <i>Flawed Landscapes: Poems 1987-2008</i> by Sharif S. Elmusa Reviewed by Gary Lawless	page 48
“Looking at the Moon Man”: <i>The Life and Art of George Fertig</i> by Mona Fertig Reviewed by Marina Parapini	page 49
“Theatre Between Languages”: <i>Dramatic Licence</i> by Louise Ladouceur Reviewed by Eric Spalding	page 50
“To the Painful Heart of Africa”: <i>Drink the Bitter Root</i> by Gary Geddes Reviewed by Ralph Maud	page 52
<i>Muse</i> by Mary Novik Reviewed by Linda Rogers	page 53

MICHAEL MCCLURE:

PURE PROTESTANTISM, PURE POETRY, PURE ROCK 'N' ROLL

Jack Foley

These are poems from what love I have invented, what soul I have made.
—Michael McClure, *Of Indigo and Saffron* (2011)

Poet/playwright Michael McClure has long been identified, rightly, with The Beat Generation and the extraordinary—and extraordinarily successful—assault on consciousness that the Beats represented. McClure appears as a character in Jack Kerouac’s novels, *Dharma Bums* (1958) and *Big Sur* (1962), and McClure’s own *Scratching the Beat Surface* (1982) has a wonderful, much-needed appreciation of Kerouac’s brilliant but neglected book-length poem, *Mexico City Blues* (1959): “Kerouac,” writes McClure, “was writing a mystical..., anarchist, epic-length, and open-ended poem”:

This great self-organizing act of verse-energy as it flows on and on, becoming more diverse, stronger in its self-supporting complexity—like the systems described by H.T. Odum in his remarkable Environment, Power and Society—begins to create a fundament that never existed before...creates a substrate—creates a new world, place, ground, or nourishing energy, in which a vision may come into being...I began to understand that there is never a final mystery—there is always a quark within the quark—always a structure reflecting itself in Indra’s net.

It’s a terrific passage of thoroughly deserved praise, but does it sound particularly (in the usual way we mean the word) “Beat”? It certainly doesn’t sound at all like what Kerouac might have said about a book.

It is perhaps time to remove McClure, at least a little, from the Beat context in order to see his work—his “great self-organizing act of verse-energy”—as the extraordinary, and extraordinarily complex, *ecstatic* achievement it is. “The struggle,” writes Leslie Scalapino in the introduction to *Of Indigo and Saffron*, “also is an open innocence.” From McClure’s earliest work—when, as a child, he believed himself to be William Blake!—to his most recent Buddhist-oriented productions, Michael McClure’s poetry has been an exploration of the *beyond*. “The surge of life,” he insists in *Lighting the Corners* (1993), “drifts in every direction.” And in “Simple Eyes (FIELDS),” 1994, he says, “Demands for communication are of small voice when art is pushing towards a oneness with the possibilities of imagination.”

McClure’s frequent references (as in *The Beard* and “Simple Eyes”) to what he calls “the kid” are an indication of his determination to remain connected to that open, child-like innocence of which Scalapino speaks and to a restless, multi-motivated spirituality which refuses to disentangle itself from the physical (and thus from that extension of the physical, the ecological) and which does not move towards “God” but towards the creation of—itself:



Robbie Robertson, Michael McClure, Bob Dylan and Allen Ginsberg in 1965



Michael McClure

*You and I
are a river of light
that pours
and gleams
in
the
blue-black
snows.*

*

*We dive into
the black, black rainbow
of the end
unless we spend
our life and build love
in creation of
what is organic.
The old views
(worn and blasted)
are a structure
of death.
Our breath
IS
TO
SERVE
THE ULTIMATE
beauty
of ourselves.*

—Jaguar Skies (1975)

How does one arrive at a consciousness which is not “Christian” or “traditional” but which nonetheless transcends the everyday—which is *different* from we usually think and yet, in some mysterious sense, familiar (“ourselves”)? How can we achieve “Knowing in all possible directions” (*Mysteriosos*)?

“The Death of Kin Chuen Louie” from *Fragments of Perseus* (1983) is one of McClure’s least celebrated, least anthologized poems. Yet I think we can see very clearly in it the creation of the new consciousness for which the poet yearns, “the river of

light that pours and gleams in the blue-black snows.” Indeed, we can see it all the more clearly because the poem is rooted in the everyday—in an experience which in fact had “happened” to McClure.

NOW, ON THE DAY BEFORE MY DAUGHTER’S
TWENTY-FIRST BIRTHDAY,
ON THE AFTERNOON OF HER PARTY,
I REVISIT THE SCENE OF THE DEATH
of Kin Chuen Louie.

He too was between twenty and twenty-one.
The newspapers called him
a smalltime extortionist.
But what are we all but small
time extortionists in the
proportionless
universe?
(I am in awe of the thought
of the coolness and sureness
of his assassin.)

Twelve days ago, on the Festival
of the Lord Buddha, shortly
after two in the afternoon,
Kin Chuen Louie left his flat
on Kearney Street.

Louie’s young, long-haired murderer,
in black jacket and army pants,
waited with a .380

Walther automatic pistol holding
fourteen bullets. Kin Chuen Louie,
spotting his assailant, leaped
into his bright red Plymouth Fury.

The murderer stepped
to the driver’s side and fired a shot
into Louie. Louie started the ignition
and slammed into reverse.

His foot stuck on the accelerator.
The car, propelled backward with great
force, jammed between
a building and a white car
parked there—knocking loose shards
of red brick painted over with beige.

The murderer stepped quickly
to the passenger side of the trapped
and roaring car and fired seven bullets
through the windshield
into a tight pattern on the head and neck
of Louie. A ninth shot missed,

going finger-deep
into brick. The killer
fled a few yards, turned at the corner,
and disappeared down Sonoma Alley.

A moment later,
we arrived on the empty street
and looked through
shattered glass
at the young Chinese man—
blood pouring out of the holes
in his head—slumped over
on his side. It was like the close-up
in a Sam Peckinpah movie.

He was completely relaxed
—finally and almost pleasantly limp
and serene—wearing an army jacket
and grubby levis...a slender, handsome,
clean-cut face with short hair boyishly
hanging in his eyes above
the dime-size bullet holes.
The blood pouring onto the seat covers



Michael McClure with Janis Joplin

was a thick, reddish vermillion.
There was a peaceful, robbe-grilletish,
dim light inside the car.

The shattered window was like
a frosted spider web.
Either death is beautiful to see
—or we learn the esthetic
of death from films. BUT I do know
that our physical, athletic body,
a thing of perfect loops, and secret
and manifest
dimensions and breathings of consciousness
and unconsciousness, emanates
rainbows and actions,
and black flowers
and
it is there
to bear us through this world
and to kiss us goodbye at the doorstep
of any other.

I praise Everything-That-Is
for that blessing.
I drink chrysanthemum
tea in his memory.
Candied ginger, scented with licorice
from Hong Kong
is on my breath.

I know each death
shall be as fine as his is.

What could be more repellant than the miserable death—carefully detailed by McClure— of this stunningly unimportant Chinatown hood, his name now immortalized in McClure’s poem? Yet the poet’s deep sense of the “beauty of ourselves,” of *absolutely everyone*, combined with the operation of the “innocent eye” of childhood allows him to arrive at an awareness which is

simultaneously strange—out of bounds—and deeply familiar. In an extraordinary but entirely believable leap, McClure does not deplore but *estheticizes* the event: “I am in awe of the thought of the coolness and sureness of his assassin”; “It was like the close-up in a Sam Peckinpah movie.” We suddenly think, *Of course that’s true*. From the point of view of Beauty alone—beauty removed from moral, societal considerations, beauty removed even from our personal fears of murder—the scene *is* beautiful. Isn’t the redness of blood a beautiful thing? A “kid” in his innocence might see it in that way. And once that perception comes, something more follows:

BUT I do know
that our physical, athletic body,
a thing of perfect loops, and secret
and manifest
dimensions and breathings of consciousness
and unconsciousness, emanates
rainbows and actions,
and black flowers
and
it is there
to bear us through this world
and to kiss us goodbye at the doorstep
of any other.
I praise Everything-That-Is
for that blessing.

It is at this point that the entire universe enters McClure’s poem. It is from this point of view, from the operation of what might be called this “river of light,” that we can see even Kin Chuen Louie and his miserable, horrific death as a portion of the “Everything-That-Is.” Even Kin Chuen Louie “creates a new world, place, ground, or nourishing energy, in which a vision may come into being.”

There is a passage in Ralph Waldo Emerson’s essay, “Nature” (1836) that seems to me to be pure Michael McClure—a strain that is deeply, spiritually, even (sometimes) catastrophically American. Emerson’s courtly, elegant, carefully notated prose should not blind us to the fact that the matter of his essay is pure Protestantism, pure poetry, pure rock ’n’ roll. “Why should not we,” Emerson asks, “...enjoy an original relation to the universe?”

Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? Embosomed for a season in nature, whose floods of life stream around and through us, and invite us by the powers they supply, to action proportioned to nature, why should we grope among the dry bones of the past, or put the living generation into masquerade out of its faded wardrobe? The sun shines to-day also... There are new lands, new men, new thoughts. Let us demand our own works and laws and worship.

To put it in a way that is closer to McClure’s idiom: Celebrate deep mammal genius.

Jack Foley is a widely published San Francisco poet and critic. Foley’s recent, monumental *Visions & Affiliations: A California Literary Time Line 1940-2005* has received international attention and is recognized as an important compedium of California poetry. He lives in Oakland, Ca and June 5, 2010 was proclaimed “Jack Foley Day” in Berkley.

THE EVERLASTING UNIVERSE OF THINGS

John Olson

*The everlasting universe of things
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,
Now dark—now glittering—now reflecting gloom—
Now lending splendour, where from secret springs
The source of human thought its tribute brings*

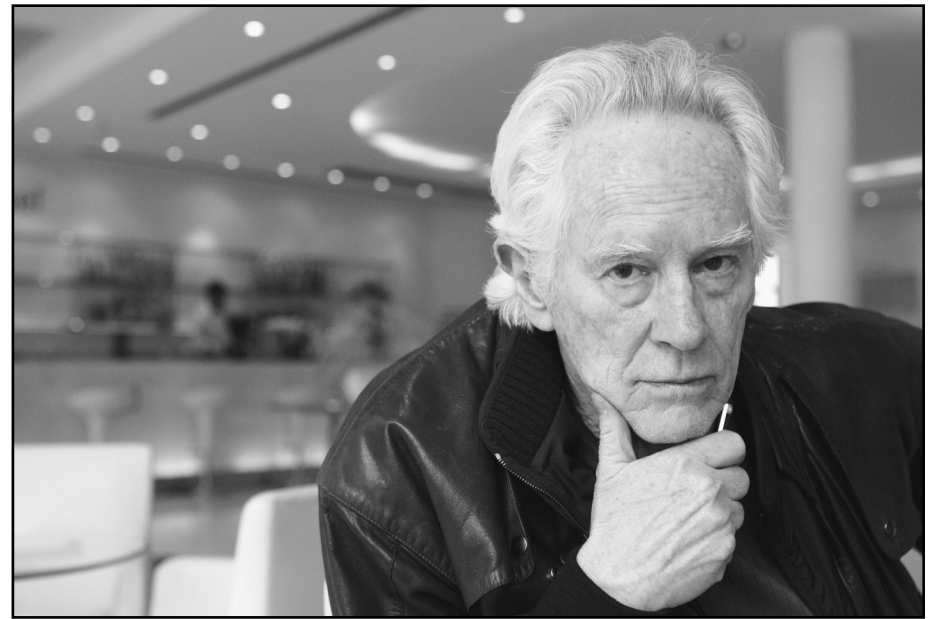
Percy Bysshe Shelley,
Mont Blanc, 1817

McClure's poetry, which has been a remarkable force in world literature for over five decades now, has evinced one consistent property that marks it immediately as a creature born out of McClure's hand and brain: it is alive. Each poem is a lump of jelly startled by its own energy. Each appears to have its own DNA. Each undergoes a metamorphosis of self-perpetuating change. Each is a theatre of mutation and flux. Emotion rides into the world on the back of desire. Wings form in a pod of silk. Words form on a palette of flesh. Senses bloom "in tendrils of spirit." Dramas of soul tremble and incandesce "in the sky of the room."

Transmutation has long been a driving force of poetry. Imagery jubilates in transition. Words thrive in interrelation. Two thousand years ago, the Roman poet Ovid composed a long narrative poem called *The Metamorphoses* whose very theme was transmutation. He presents a world of exciting instability in which universal being comes to life in a war of winds and fills with images of its own kind. Change follows change. The elusive Daphne, whose floating hair falls in tendrils at her throat and forehead, runs from Apollo's lust, "swifter than light air that turns to nothingness as we pursue it," and turns into a laurel tree, her "white thighs embraced by climbing bark, her white arms branches, her fair head swaying in a cloud of leaves." We hear in Ovid's lines the "roaring echoes of the ceaseless river pour from cliffside and cave." Jove turns the young maiden Io into a cow. The ever-shifting Proteus rides two great whales, "gliding through glassy waves." The young Phaethon drives the chariot of the sun across the sky, pulled by a team of horses "fed with ambrosia and breathing fire, wing-spread and flying feet through cloud and wind, charging, wild, wherever their desire turned, tossing their chariot through wilderness of air."

Ovid used the mythology of his time to enact his poetry of change. McClure draws from a cauldron of multiple ingredients, a mélange of biology and eastern philosophy, Whitehead and Blake and Shelley and Francis Crick. Schiller and Goethe and Kerouac and Zen Master Dogen. McClure's blending of biological science with older mythologies and classic Greek and contemporary philosophy reveals a stronger link with Ovid's predecessor Lucretius than with Ovid. Or perhaps Augustus Caesar's wild granddaughter Julia, who may have been partly to blame for Ovid's banishment to a coastal town in Romania on the Black Sea, and in whom I imagine a Jean Harlow of flippant disdain for stodgy Roman convention. It is not so much Ovid the man - Ovid the old Roman poet who was married three times and went shopping for onions and garlic in Rome's hectic streets - in whom I find McClure. I do not sense much rapport there. Ovid is too distant in time for me to flesh him out, and the overall architecture of his poetry is as classic as a colonnade. It is in the theme of metamorphosis that is enacted so brilliantly and with so much imaginative force and psychological realism that I see parallels with McClure's protean energy.

McClure's poetry evolves and expands the meaning of being itself in its celebrations of the genius in nature. Transformation is experienced as immanence, transcendence, ecstasy, apricots, hailstones, lichen, and modalities of birth and death. "Mozart playing with the universe." "Ants / celebrating rites / of blackness / in the sweetened air." The landscapes are large and thick with the kind of oil Van Gogh gobbled on his canvas in swirls and whorls of dynamic exploration.



Michael McClure

The same energies that drive biology drive poetry. In nature we find caterpillars becoming butterflies, tadpoles becoming frogs, and tiny seeds becoming giant sequoias. Thunder breaks on the face of a mountain and minutes later raindrops plop from the brim of an old man's hat. Mass, velocity, torque and friction combine to produce waves of pulsing energy, "A LAUGH / OF / PASSION / with the nothingness of meat / expanding in all directions."

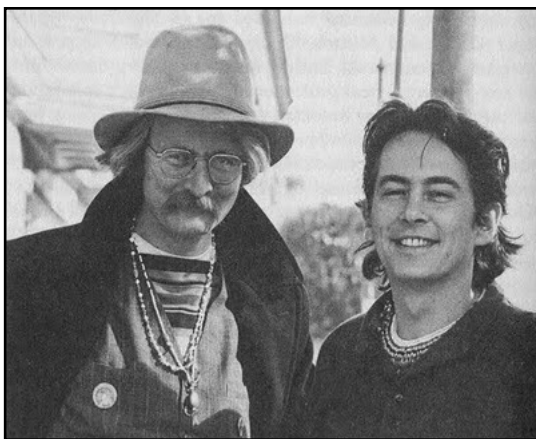
Nietzsche refers to the "I" in lyric poetry as an expression of human consciousness that is as much a phenomenon of nature as a sunrise or rainbow. This is most definitely the case in McClure's poetry where the identity involved with the writing has less to do with personality than with a harmonizing and dilation into cosmic realities. "It is the edge of the precipice that the Fool on the tarot card is strolling along," McClure remarks in a short essay titled "Self-Experience of the Other." "It is the edge of matter, of what the Greeks call [physis: nature, natural bent, or outward form] where material and spirit come into being in nothingness. We write ourselves, our bodies, on what we presume is a common darkness behind our eyes."

It is the sense of otherness that Rimbaud had in mind when he wrote "I is other." Rimbaud used the predicate for third person singular to emphasize just how other that sense of being happened to be. What we think of as personality is a crazy-quilt amalgam of incidents, accidents, random occurrences. It is superficial. Soul, or essence, is where the ghostly other scintillates from nothingness into being. It might be described as a form of systole and diastole, a rhythm of being and nothingness in which both are the same and both are different.

For example, in the poem "Portrait of the Moment," from which I've been borrowing lines, we find the play and energy of transmutation everywhere. "Maya and molecules / and nothing are the same" McClure proclaims. The ultimate reality is change. Nothing is static. The universe is everywhere. Scales of big and small are collapsed. We find the huge in the small and the small in the huge. It is a world of quantum flux where nothing of real value is quantifiable, or frozen, or twinkles expensively and ridiculously in a diamond engagement ring. It is all a continuous melting and fusion. "All there in the iris / WHICH / IS / THE / WHORLING, / / WHORLING / CONDENSATION / / of / the / moment / into the purr and feather of hands / with the mouth slightly open / in a pose."

"A creature is about itself," McClure observes in his collection of essays *Scratching the Beat Surface*. "A living organism is perceived as a complex chunk, or lump, or bulk, or motile body of reproductive plasm. And of course it is that." "A way of seeing an organism," McClure continues,

.... other than as a lump or bulk of self-perpetuating protoplasm (and there's nothing wrong with that) is the view that the organism is, in itself, a tissue or veil between itself and the environment. And, it is not only the tissue between itself and the environment - it is also simultaneously the environment itself. The organism is what Whitehead and Olson would think of as a point of novelty comprehending



Michael McClure with Richard Brautigan in 1966

itself or experiencing itself both proprioceptively and at its tissue's edges and at any of its conceivable surfaces.

There is, in fact, a central force in the organism and it IS the environment.

The organism is a swirl of environment in what the Taoists call the Uncarved Block of time and space (a universe in which time and space are not separated into intersecting facets by measured incidents).

The veil, the tissue (or the lump or bulk), is created by the storms from which it protects itself - and is itself the ongoing storm. Herakleitos saw it as a storm of fire, the raging of an active and energetic principle.

The organism is a constellation (like a constellation of stars or molecules) or resonances between itself and the outer environment. The organism is a physical pattern of reflections and counterreflections that we call a body and we see it clearly as a physiology. Ourselves. A rose bush. An amoeba. An apple.

One of the reasons I have always felt at home in a McClure poem is the warmth and sensuality that animate his lines. He is not at all like the more forbidding modernists Stevens and Pound and Marianne Moore. He is scholarly, but not like the regal Kenneth Rexroth, or stentorian Charles Olson. The only other poet that offers such warmth is Robert Duncan, in whom I find many similarities. Proust also comes to mind because he was able to theatricalize a very intimate experience of human consciousness while simultaneously preserving a sense of universality. I despise aristocrats



At the Cafe Trieste, San Francisco, 1975. Left to right: Allen Ginsberg, Harold Norse, Jack Hirschman, Michael McClure & Bob Kaufman. Photo by Diana Church

and snobbery. I cannot, in fact, stand most of Proust's characters. I pretty much hate them. But Proust allows me entry into this world at a very deep level, a phenomenological level, where I can see Henri Bergson's philosophy of thought and movement come to life.

McClure's world is one I am far more familiar with. It is fundamentally that of biology and creation itself. Raw, unmitigated being. It is a world in which, as Zukofsky put it, "contemporary particulars may mean a thing or things as well as an event or a chain of events." McClure's eye for detail is positively exquisite. He is able to find such remarkable beauty in the everyday, in much the same way the eighteenth century French painter Jean Baptiste Chardin was able to paint objects into existence so that they veritably glow with phenomenal, palpable charm. His mugs and partially eaten fruit and wine glasses are imbued with a voluptuous numen.

McClure is about to turn eighty. This is a venerable age. And yet he doesn't seem old. He is wrinkled, his hair is blazing white and his body may creak like an old galleon after many a rough sea voyage, but there remains a spirit that is quick and mercurial. There is a very moving poem in a recent collection of his work called *Mysteriosos* in which he addresses the pathos of growing old. The poem is situated in one of those coin-operated photo booths like the one that plays such a pivotal role in the movie *Amélie*. They used to be a common sight at bus stations and fairgrounds and have all but disappeared, gone the way of the pinball machine and jukebox.

The poem appears in a section titled (appropriately) "Dear Being," and is dedicated to his wife Amy. I will conclude by presenting the poem in its entirety:

NOW I UNDERSTAND, THE SEXUAL ADDICTION

of my young manhood
was a CRUCIFIXION –
glittering and lovely
AS

an ostrich boa and smashed mirrors
seen on acid.

Now: I am an old man with a handsome face

and after the bloody movie full of guns and stabbings
and helicopters, I stop at the photo booth

and in the mirror is a dog with jowls, a silver fox,

an eagle in the whirlpool. Here's the strip of four photos

a sincere man with white hair and eyebrows,

eyes almost inside-out, staring from a black Armani collar

Then the same man, still in front of scarlet drapes, with his eyes

looking up into science fiction in his forehead.

Now his head rests dazed against the side of the booth.

In the last photo I am fully alert: JUST AS I ALWAYS AM,

A SUICIDAL CHILD IN LOVE WITH EXPERIENCE

RISKING ALL TO BE ONLY WITH YOU

as the dragon world with its hundred eyes passes.

And I still long to be Shelley.

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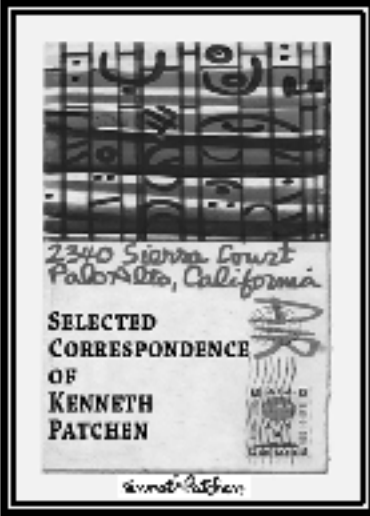
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John Olson is a poet with several titles published by Black Widow Press, among them *Backscatter: New and Selected Poems*. Clayton Eshleman said "he is writing the most outlandish, strange, and inventive prose poetry ever in the history of the prose poem."



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THE MEAT REASON OF THE LAST BEAT: MCCLURE'S LATIHAN

Paul Nelson

A man writhing on the floor with his eyes closed, perhaps groaning and twisting in sunlight that pours through a window, may not be the picture you get in your mind in direct connection with a word like REASON. By 1966, the process described here was a true embodiment of reason for a major US American poet associated with the Beat and San Francisco literary movements.

The lying down, writhing, grunting and, as the poet put it, denying himself “nothing that the sinew and tendons and heart and lung request. He has allowed his consciousness to become a blank field” is how Michael McClure describes his experience with a process called *latihan kedjiwaan*, which could be translated from Indonesian as “spiritual training” or “spiritual exercise.” This essay seeks to examine the nature of McClure’s Organic¹ process, how he utilizes the word REASON in that 1966 essay and in his 2011 poetry collection *Of Indigo and Saffron: New and Selected Poems*, and how the latihan kedjiwaan is likely to engage in a similar manner with the consciousness of an artist, poet or person who has developed an intuitive connection with pure intuition.

Michael McClure was one of the original poets to read at the Six Gallery in San Francisco on October 7, 1955, the first reading of the Beat Generation. His work also has connections to the San Francisco Renaissance and the Black Mountain School of poetry.

The latihan kedjiwaan is the practice at the center of the worldwide Subud organization. As a person who was “opened” in Subud in 2004, and who has studied McClure’s work since 1995, I feel particularly suited to the task of finding the symmetries of these dual paths and relating them to McClure’s unique take on spontaneous composition.

In the expanded edition of *Meat Science Essays*, the final essay is entitled “Reason.” The essay begins with a description of the Subud latihan kedjiwaan, the man writhing on the floor, occasionally growling and:

There is a passage of time but measurement has ceased and there are only the muscles enacting themselves and creating shapes and motions that... have been forbidden in daily life.

Here is an official definition of the practice from the Subud organizational website:

The spiritual practice of Subud, known as the latihan kedjiwaan, is the result of a renewed contact with the divine force of life... a natural process that arises within any person who asks for it, taking place at his or her own pace and according to his or her own nature. Sometimes, when we are still and quiet, or in an unusual heightened state of awareness, we can be suddenly aware of this deeper life going on. The process of the latihan reconnects us with something greater than ourselves and keeps this special awareness alive and active... The essence of the latihan is to allow and follow the spontaneous inner movements from within. It involves no instructions...

This has many parallels to the process of McClure’s spontaneous method of composition. Robert Hunter, in the introduction to McClure’s *Three Poems*, suggests McClure’s is a “theoretic bias grounded in specific objectivizing technique” by which [or through which] he “firmly guides words to report objects of experience, however visionary these objects may be.” Hunter recognizes that McClure’s “conceptual forte is grounded in an informed Zen mode of perception focused at ease within the moment” employing the “Projective method primarily to report movement of... primordial ecstasy in the life of the biological organism, the visions of its biological mind, and its essential animal spirit.” Writing projectively since the late ‘50s, you can see how McClure’s is a higher developed intuition resulting in work that has a completely natural flow.

In the “Reason” essay, McClure relates how, during latihan, the notion of how long the exercise has been going on arises, but then the practitioner quickly understands it as being not enough time and then “the question recedes.” At ease within the moment, McClure’s description of latihan is more a *transcription* of his biological mind in motion. In his 1985 book *Specks*, McClure would describe this as mind/body,



Michael McClure

body-mind.

According to the Subud hierarchy of life forces, this is indeed the best use of one’s own “animal nature.” The powerful, best less than human force is then in service to the organism’s higher self in the process of surrender to what Charles Olson might have called “The Single Intelligence.” Robin Blaser used the phrase “spiritual discipline” to describe Jack Spicer’s process of dictation, which no doubt shares common ground with McClure’s Projective approach and the fact that Blaser was writing this in a seminal essay entitled “The Practice of Outside” gives us additional clues to the parallels between 20th century Open Form (Organic) process and latihan. Engagement of a power source outside or beyond the individual, yet connected. The unbound self is how some might describe it.

In Subud literature, largely taken from talks given by Subud founder Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo, there is a model of seven “life forces” which, if in integrity in the human being, goes from the mineral, to the vegetable, the animal, the human, the divine human, the angelic and finally to the infinite. The latihan practice is designed to reconnect the Subud practitioner with that infinite (divine) energy and it is said to be a cleansing process. It’s not a leap to suggest that McClure would have accessed certain realms of consciousness higher than the self (the human level in the Subud model) in his writing practice before 1966 and was able to recognize it when accessing the latihan for the first time in the mid-’60s. Its non-linear and non-dogmatic approach likely appealed to him considering that the Projective process was first described by Olson as a use of speech “where it is least careless—and least logical.”

McClure goes on in the essay to point out that “the majesty, the reason is there within, changing and being created... guided by the melodies of truth and honesty.” And that the latihan participant “realizes the outer universe is a reflection of his reason!” This stance-toward-reality has rather potent implications, the best of which being a freedom brought on by taking responsibility for everything in one’s realm.

In the Organic process, there is a reason present. Denise Levertov argued in the essay “Some Notes on Organic Form” that approaching the poem organically, “form is never more than a revelation of content.” The content, the shape of the poem, the music, the imagery all become part of a process of reason which the practitioner begins to intuit more deeply with practice. She would call it a “method of apperception, i.e., of recognizing what we perceive, and is based on an intuition of an order, a form beyond forms, in which forms partake... Such poetry is exploratory.” She wrote her essay about the same time McClure was beginning to experiment with the latihan, 1965.

McClure’s notion of reason continues. He writes “Reason is freedom.” Such is the tangible, subtle and yet palpable form of freedom present if there is a proper relation to the “lower” forces in the Subud model (mineral, vegetable and animal). These forces are to be in service to the divine aspect of the human and to divinity in general.

That freedom the latihan enables would be described in Subud parlance as surrender. Surrender is the essence of the power of latihan yet in process, during latihan, one always has the sense that there is a balance. One is never in a trance, or out of control. If there is a situation which demands a more subtle approach, the growling which McClure writes of, or the song, chant or other manifestation of the latihan in the practitioner can be modified. It can be toned down. The human active in the process can modify his or her response to the signals emanating from outside.

McClure goes on to state “At the highest pitch of reason WE CREATE EVENT through synthesis of events that we determine and bring into being... events that lie in the past need not have to do with the end result of a new creative act or thought put into motion.” Here he’s echoing notions gleaned from Alfred North Whitehead, who felt reality was more clearly understood as occasions of experience. So the act of latihan, very similar to the act of composing in the Projective/Organic manner, is a kind of deep awareness or perception that is what Whitehead would call “Prehension.” It is the organism is going beyond noticing to a state of coexistence (oneness) with the perceived. You can understand it as the difference between gobbling a pizza while watching a football game on TV and experiencing the incision of eyeteeth into the skin of a Pink Lady apple, feeling that first spray of juice on the tongue or the roof of one’s mouth and feeling more juice cascade down the throat as the chewing commences and the apple savors the experience of the human life force.

Such is the awareness of both McClure’s composition method and the process of an engaged latihan. That the practitioner is still capable of thought during latihan suggests that there are some awarenesses that can come to him or her during the process and this is not at all uncommon, not to mention specific variations on latihan focused on specific questions². Of course there is a language inherent in this act that must be developed by each practitioner to refine literacy and precision. Here we are “recalibrating the mechanism of perception,” in the words of Gary Snyder. This is why I have argued that an Organic approach is an aid to individuation. McClure recognizes this when he states “Reason is a physical process felt kinesthetically by the body.” It’s a use of language as “enactment of being.” When one reads work at this level, it puts more shallow gestures into the proper perspective.

“Reason is the revolt of the senses against regulations that dull them... we move among cliffs and icebergs of chance events coming at us... sidestepping oncoming events can be just as purposeful an act of reason as any other.” Here, McClure continues the notions of Whitehead. He’s describing “negative prehension” or purposefully not engaging with certain things in one’s environment (intelligence). It would be another 25 years from the moment of composition until McClure would embrace sobriety, but you can see here that the seed had been planted.

One can mine this essay quite extensively and one must experience the work at a level approximating that with which it was composed. This only requires attention, using “the richness of one’s being to have the experience of the poem.” Yet there are a few more points McClure makes which tie in the kinesthetic intelligence developed by the latihan with McClure’s own perception:

What comes straight in through the senses and combines with imagination without distortion is the concrete reality on which reason is based.

Poetry is an act of reason at its highest and most farflung pitch—and is a demonstration of reason.

Reason may call one to emit a guttural moan, make chopping motions while singing an indigenous melody, chant ALLAH ALLAH ALLAH or JESU CHRISTO JESU CHRISTO JESU CHRISTO over and over. It might require the screaming of obscenities or laughter with hands raised high into the air. It might require whistling or mimicry of cats or birds or wooden flutes. Ours is a culture that prides itself on being very reasonable and yet we destroy our own ecosystems in the name of corporate profit, eviscerate old growth forests for paper production, waste trillions of dollars on pre-emptive wars, bomb wedding parties, and torture human beings. Given this moment in history, it is a tremendous gift that we can indulge ourselves in at least two of the methods that have helped formed the substrate of McClure’s energetic gesture. We may be able to steal a little of his fire to set off on the road maps we can create to negotiate the cliffs and icebergs of chance to come, real and metaphorical. Reason is also composting, recycling, gardening, volunteering, going off the grid, using mass transit, watching for a newborn’s first smile or simply taking time to see the plum blossoms bobbing in another wet April wind. Mindfulness.

The elder McClure would see it as forgoing ferocity for lunch, polishing the stars off his boots, morning kisses on the back of the neck, understanding the body as a gate of liberation, forgetting this is a vigil, “blind seeing,” a jellyfish swimming on the powerful wing of its body, black sparks in a baby bird’s eye, or even Calvin and Hobbes. Transcending the shallowness of postmodern culture’s irony and surface, McClure’s

work points the way to a more fully embodied poetics (a cosmology) as antidote to the industry-generated-culture and its life-destroying urges, or as he might say, the dead stepfather emerging from a dream to denounce the dreamer stepping from a waterfall, a forest of glazed horse heads or runes. In short, BREADTH OF BEING as he states in the 31st stanza of “Swirls in Asphalt” from his 2011 collection of new and selected poems *Of Indigo and Saffron*. Or in stanza 29, the

*sweaty sparkle
of the thrills in the darkness
of meat and reason
and sunshine and shadow.
It is inside-out
in the moment
and it makes much
mammalian
REASON
when our bodies
touch in sizeless
pleasure.
There’s the smell
of cedar
intermingling
with lavender
into a nonsense scent
holding the masked thoughts
of hummingbirds
at the feeder
and flat black blobs
that dart in the eye.*

5:22P - 4.16.12
Hillman City -
Seattle, WA

Notes

- 1 In this essay, I use the words Projective and Organic rather interchangeably. Charles Olson’s preferred term was projective. Robert Duncan (McClure’s teacher) and Denise Levertov used Organic for a time in the early to mid ’60s.
- 2 In Subud the practice of testing is done on specific questions by members with the assistance of helpers.

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Paul Nelson is a poet, teacher, broadcaster and founder of the non-profit Global Voices Radio. A professional broadcaster, he has interviewed hundreds of authors, poets, activists and whole-system theorists for a syndicated public affairs radio program.

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INTERGALACTIC GREETINGS FOR A STAR

James Edward Reid

Michael McClure turns 80 this year. When I heard this, I pulled out my copy of *Star*, a book of his poems. It was the 1978 third printing of the collection of his poems published from 1964 to 1970. It was a time of great change and hope. His book and many others reflected what was happening. I took some of them down off my shelves. My recollections here reference books that I have. I have not referenced the music, art and film of the time.

The literati were getting all shook up in the 60s. Allen Ginsberg delivered *The Fall of America: poems of these states 1965-1971*. His pen pal William S. Burroughs brought out *The Wild Boys: A Book of the Dead* in 1969, about halfway through a career that culminated in his powerful trilogy: *Cities of the Red Night*, *The Place of Dead Roads*, and *The Western Lands*. Thomas Pynchon nailed a piece of the zeitgeist with *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966). In *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1971), Hunter S. Thompson opened the can of worms in his paranoid consciousness: "We were somewhere outside of Barstow on the edge of the desert when the drugs began to take hold." More paranoia struck deep in Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, a book I read while working at a psychiatric hospital in South Porcupine. And just in case you weren't paranoid enough, Richard Farina offered far too true and deep paranoia in *Been Down So Long It Looks Like Up To Me* (1967). Keeping it all from getting too heavy, *Fat Freddy's Cat* arrived in 1969, and most memorably shit in Fat Freddy's headphones.

Reverse colonization began to sweep north from Latin America into North America. In the space of two years, 1969 and 1970, two major translations of Pablo Neruda's poetry appeared. Everyone seemed to be reading Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1971). In 1969, the troubled giant, Ezra Pound published *Drafts and Fragments of Cantos*, with that haunting line, the farewell line in his collected Cantos, "To be men not destroyers."

The spiritual world opened up beyond church on Sunday morning. In 1968 I heard Chögyam Trungpa speak at a church on Bloor Street just east of Yonge in Toronto. His appearances and books made him one of most effective teachers of Tibetan Buddhism in North America. The 1968 edition of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* poked out of knapsacks, occasionally accompanied by the 1967 Wilhelm Baynes edition of the *I Ching*. The immensely readable *New English Bible: With the Apocrypha* appeared in the hands of Burning Bush Button wearers in 1970. Outside the box, John C. Lilly published *The Human Biocomputer* (1967) and *The Center of the Cyclone* (1972). And Castenada's *Don Juan* (1968) turned out to be a hoax.

What was going on in the publishing world of Sexual Politics? The lights suddenly came on in the bedrooms with the publication of Masters' and Johnson's *Human Sexual Response* (1966). *Scientific American* described their research as a "very important field of investigation," as if a previously unknown small creature had just been discovered, and brought to light. With 8,000 nerve endings, shouldn't the clitoris have spread its wings and stepped into the spotlight before this? Germaine Greer launched *The Female Eunuch* (1970), the first of her many bull's eye salvos. Feminist books flourished.

The fabric of the great Vietnam lie was unraveling. Daniel Ellsberg and the *New York Times* took a great risk with the publication of classified documents in *The Pentagon Papers* in 1971. Ellsberg is still speaking out today about the cruel and unjust treatment in prison of the US Army Private Bradley Manning, who is suspected of being the source of the hundreds of thousands of classified Army documents released to WikiLeaks. Alfred W. McCoy took another risk in pointing to American government involvement in the drug trade, with *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia* (1972). More of the bright shining lie was shredded with Philip Agee's revelations in *Inside the Company: CIA Diary, 1956-1974*. Newspaper reporting from Vietnam that often tried to get it right during 1959-69 and 1969-75 was republished by the Library of America in *Reporting Vietnam*. Why were the streets at home in America burning? Martin Luther King and Malcolm X had been murdered. And more black books arrived: *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1964), H. Rap Brown's, *Die Nigger Die!* (1969), and Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* (1968).

Alexander Solzhenitsyn survived hell, and shook up the USSR with *The First Circle* (1968) and *Cancer Ward* (1969). In retrospect, his early books seem like bomb tests for his horrific three volume *Gulag Archipelago* (1973, 1974 and 1976), that eventually helped to shatter the Soviet monolith. Buckminster Fuller pointed the way to a holistic approach in *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth* (1969), and eventually pub-



Robbie Robertson, Michael McClure, Bob Dylan and Allen Ginsberg in 1965

lished his two volume summa in the 1,469 pages of *Synergetics* (1975 and 1979). Still arguing for a deeper look at widespread environmental toxins, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) remained in print throughout this period, and laid the foundation for today's environmental activism. The Ministry of the Environment (Environment Canada) was finally established in 1971.

Athletes moved toward independence. Since books about athletes often come later, we may recall that Sandy Koufax refused to pitch in Game 1 of the 1965 World Series because it fell on Yom Kippur. His team's management was furious. In the late 1960s, the young Cassius Clay (Muhammed Ali) was still so fast in the boxing ring that his opponents rarely laid a glove on him, before they found themselves lying on the mat.

Susannah Moodie retreated to the bush as a sea change came to Canada. House of Anansi (founded 1967), New Press (1969), Coach House Books (1965), Douglas and McKintyre (1971), and Press Porcépic (1972) were part of a new wave of authors and Canadian publishing houses. Dave Godfrey's *The New Ancestors* (1970) from New Press, won the Governor General's Award over Robertson Davies *Fifth Business*. The first chapter epigraph in Godfrey's unprecedented book announced that a change was gonna come: "Dullness, after all, is the garment of nightmare." *Goddam Gypsy* (1972), by the Montreal gypsy Ronald Lee, opened yet another door. *White Niggers of America* (1971) and *The Assassination of Pierre Laporte: Behind the '70 Scenario* (1975) by Pierre Vallières shoved the *soi disant* Quiet Revolution right out the door and into the St Lawrence River. And if you were heading back to the land to get away from it all, you could take the *Canadian Whole Earth Almanac* (1970-71). And if you were really trying to figure out what was going on, you could read Marshall McLuhan's *The Medium is the Massage* (1967), *War and Peace in the Global Village* (1968), and *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964). Or you could attend his packed lectures at St. Michael's College. For free.

For books, it was truly the best of times. The memoirs of two highly regarded editors and publishers, André Schiffrin in *The Business of Books*, and Jason Epstein in *Book Business: Publishing Past Present and Future* have both made it clear that we will never see another time as rich, varied, and profound in book publishing. "It was the best of times. It was the worst of times. It was the age of wisdom. It was the age of foolishness." And Michael McClure's young multicoloured motorcyclist on the cover of *Star* roared into it all. Happy 80th Birthday Michael!

James Edward Reid is a regular contributor to PRRB. He also publishes in *The Sarmatian Review* and *Vallum*: new international poetics, and most recently published "Inside the Glacier" in the Alaska journal *Cirque*.

THE MCCLURIAD

Jack Foley

Octogenarian?

The word seems scarcely applicable to the man I see
sitting across the table
of this El Cerrito eatery.

Magnanimous

Inquisitive

Challenging

Happy

Amorous

Elegant

Laughing

“Writhing multidimensionality of thought” *

“The surge of life drifts in every direction.”

“I think all art should be extreme.”

“Demands for communication are of small voice when art is pushing towards a one-
ness with the possibilities of imagination.”

“EACH. EACH SIDE OF EACH DUST SPECK

turning in sunlight is a movie.

C

A

V

E

S

in the movies

reach to the tiny end of infinity

and each speck grows

to fill all.”

“If the type and placements of lines seem strange, read them aloud
and they will take their shape”

MANJUSHRI

Comedian

Clairvoyant

Lover

Ursine (California variety)

Radiant

Energy

“seated on his white lion,

swinging the sword

of

CONSCIOUSNESS

into deeper mines

than our knowing”

“a self portrait without a mirror”

*Here is a perfect melting and merging of all realms, the all-in-one and the one-in-all,
the dissolving of being and non-being, the convergence of Voidness and existence...All
these mysteries of totality consist...in one basic principle: namely, all things...are void.
In contrast to doctrines of various monisms and monotheisms, the Hwa Yen Doctrine
holds that the wonders of Dharmadh tu are brought into play not because of the one,
but because of the great Void. This is as if to say that zero, not one, is the foundation of
all numbers.*

*the mutual penetration and Non-Obstruction of realms ***



Michael and Amy McClure, photo by Jack Foley

“Would a sensitive man of Periclean Greece taken up from time and placed in the
N.Y.C. Garment Center at rush hour, or in Peking, or Tokyo, or London, imagine
himself in Hell?”

In the act of play, and under the influence of the rebellious imagination, *even war
transforms itself*

“the simultaneous expression of spirit and matter.”

AGNOSIA

knowing through not knowing

“Perhaps blackness is the best window”

“a full measure of black wine”

*But now you put a question to me asking, How shall I think about [God], and what is
He? And to this I can only answer you, I do not know ****

“I sensed that [Antonin] Artaud’s poetry, a breakthrough incarnate, was a way
into the open field of poetry and into the open shape of verse and into the physicality
of thought.”

Not symbolize but simple eyes

“Sculptured hands

of a seated figure.

Half-closed eyes.

Plain as disturbance and straw
and Grandpa’s tin snuff box.”

“thoughts

in

the

hands

make

one

big

zero”

(continued on page 11)

HELLO (AGAIN) HONEY

Hilary Turner

Dating: the title is synecdoche—the figure of speech where the part substitutes for the whole. Dating is the part of life that comes after (but sometimes during) the identity crisis of late adolescence; and it is the part that comes before (one can but hope) the more serious endeavours of procreation and family life. Ordinarily, there exists a loose causal thread amongst these phases, a connection of which Dave Williamson is aware, and about which he speculates in a witty yet thoughtful way. But the premise of this novel (his fifth) is that there remains a dating scene that is yet uncharted, really no different in kind than the first, yet more complicated and baffling. Whereas premarital dating is at least mitigated by youthful resilience and promise, the post-marital version (following a death or divorce) seems to abound in unexpected ironies, absurdities, and pratfalls. Appealing to mature tastes and the enhanced appreciation of incongruity that one gains with age, Williamson stakes his claim on what may be an entirely new genre: the comic dating novel for older adults.

The comedy of manners is a venerable genre, though possibly not the first that comes to mind when discussing the Canadian novel. Unlike his classic predecessors, Williamson writes in an elegiac mood, contrasting the past (“raucous” and devil-may-care) with the correct and puritanical present—the most rigid representatives of which are not parents but, mysteriously, one’s own children. The chronicle begins at a New Year’s Eve party not long after the death of Barbara, Jenkins’s wife of many years, and it soon veers off into nostalgic flashbacks of dating *then* that sharpen the uncertainties of dating *now*. The unassuming Jenkins, an Everyman pursuing what we all pursue, is by turns bemused, mortified, and eventually (sort of) enlightened.

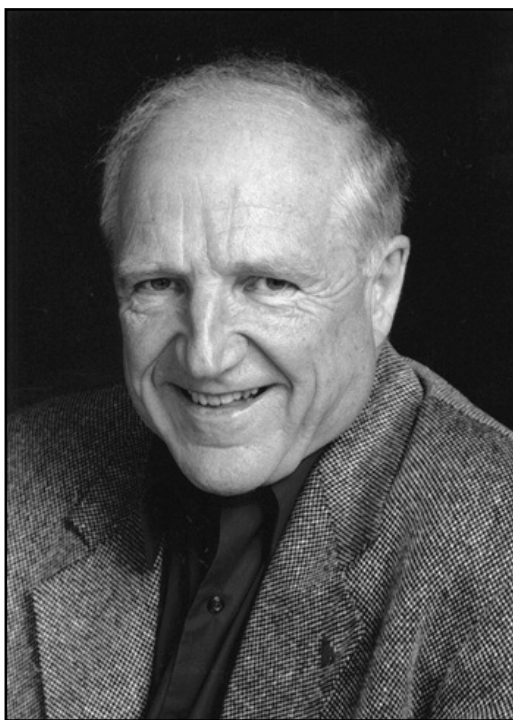
He sallies forth boldly at first—out to a movie with a suddenly-single old friend, and then for dinner with the-girl-who-got-away back in high school. But the former is canoodling with a married man of their mutual acquaintance, while the latter is, shall we say, a secret slave to the demon drink. Having steered through these choppy waters without permanent damage, Jenkins next encounters Iris, a newcomer to his circle—young, hot, and sexually assured. The only problem is that Iris isn’t looking for a long-term relationship. She’s been there, done that. “Don’t get into your head about us,” she breezily advises after a night that leaves Jenkins pleasantly flabbergasted.

Comedy notwithstanding, the most absorbing parts of this narrative are those that describe Jenkins’s past with Barbara—both before and during their marriage. Juxtaposed with scenes of emotional gears that don’t mesh and the rusty squeak of the intimate *malentendu*, the difference is plain to see:

My palm covered the back of her hand; her keeping her palm turned from mind was virginal—beautifully so. Somewhere near the end of the movie, she turned her hand over so that her palm faced mine, a gesture that seemed suddenly submissive, loving, trusting. It sent a wave of warmth throughout my body.
(153)



Dating: a novel
Dave Williamson
Turnstone Press
2012, \$19.00



David Williamson

A great gulf may well be set between the past and the present, but a greater and less navigable one exists between those who have been fulfilled by love and those who have been disappointed. It is the gap between these two kinds of people, no matter what their generation, that makes dating so weird. Despite the occasional mishap, then, Jenkins has had a good run of it. And in this recognition, he resolves to stay in there pitching. He audaciously cashes in on a casual offer from Iris to visit Disneyland. What would the alternative be? “Twilight is coming,” he says, “but not yet.”

Hilary Turner teaches English at the University of the Fraser Valley.

MCCLURIAD (continued from page 10)

“The experience of self is what
all things seek
because it is the deeper breath
they breathe”

“the mind
in a mirror of flames”

—
His mater is delectable,
Solacious, and commendable;
His English well allowed,
So as it is emprowed,
For as it is employed,
There is this mighty Void,
At these dayes moch commended,
O Godde, would men have amended
His English, and do they barke,
And mar all they warke?
McClure, that famus clerke,
His termes were not darke,
But plesaunt, easy, and plaine;
No worde he wrote in vaine.

surge blackness meat SWIRL gesture kid
grahhr

.

There are certain words that are forever Michael McClure.

Notes

* All matter in quotation marks by Michael McClure. The passage in Middle English is an adaptation of a passage by John Skelton in praise of Geoffrey Chaucer.

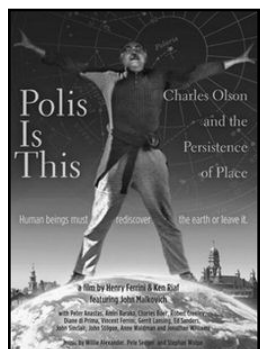
* * Garma C.C. Chang’s *The Buddhist Teaching of Totality*—one of McClure’s favorite books.

*** *The Cloud of Unknowing*.

Jack Foley is a San Francisco poet and critic. He is the author of the monumental *Visions & Affiliations: A California Literary Time Line 1940-2005*. He lives in Oakland, Ca and June 5, 2010 was proclaimed “Jack Foley Day” in Berkley.

AT PLAY IN THE OPEN FIELD

Peter Grant



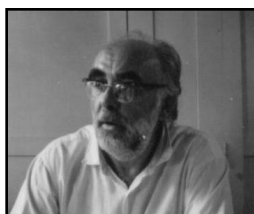
Polis is This: Charles Olson and the Persistence of Place dir. Henry Ferrini and Ken Riaf; DVD

Some revolutions come on little cat feet. So the overthrow of established poetics in the decades following World War II.

Two rewarding films on DVD celebrate what was called *The New American Poetry*. Both are a bit less than an hour long, but lively, packed with the workings of ideas presented in pastiches of original and archival material.

The first was Henry Ferrini and Ken Riaf's *Polis Is This: Charles Olson and the Persistence of Place*. Came out in 2007 and featured the people of Gloucester, Massachusetts, Olson's adopted polis (city). Both the filmmakers live there so can deftly work in a postal worker's charming story about how the big guy wrote a poem about him and his buddies when they were kids on playing on the beach. The through-story of *Polis* is Olson's life; bits of narrative carry the evolution of his thought by a series of artful digressions. The talking heads include Diane Di Prima, Amiri Baraka (the poet formerly known as Leroi Jones), Robert Creeley, Robin

Blaser, Charles Boer — he wrote Charles Olson in Connecticut, one of the most interesting of many works about the poet and is uniquely qualified to narrate Olson's last days — Ed Sanders and Pete Seeger (with a wicked good story about Olson's literary midwifery on Woody Guthrie's behalf) and a dozen other large thinkers whom Olson inspired and befriended. Ferrini's coup was to film John Malkovich declaiming several of Olson's signal pieces. Filmed in tight close-ups, the actor's trademark stillness, unnerving stare and dry undertone truly do form "a high energy construct," to use Olson's words. Is Olson's vaulted gravitas apparent in another's recitation? Yes indeed. Has the language lost even a bit of its energy or freshness or relevance? I think not. There can be no mistaking its relevance. We are so in need of new ways of thinking, this film shouts. Which means seeing. "Polis is eyes," Olson wrote. The title of the film comes from a poem addressed to the city. Titled "Maximus to Gloucester, Letter 27 [withheld]," it is presented first in a voice-over, accompanied by Ferrini's inspired filming of the Gloucester waterfront, then artfully segues to Olson in his kitchen, filmed in black and white in 1966 by the old NET, reading this:



Charles Olson

*No Greek will be able
to discriminate my body.*

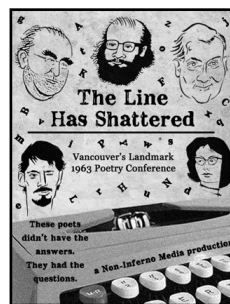
*An American
is a complex of occasions,
themselves a geometry
of spatial nature.*

*I have this sense,
that I am one
with my skin*

*Plus this—plus this:
that forever the geography
which leans in
on me I compell
backwards I compell Gloucester
to yield, to
change*

*Polis
is this*

As is often the case when experiencing Olson Thinking, no questions are answered, but they are posed, and in a way that invites investigation. What are we doing here?



The Line Has Shattered dir. Robert McTavish DVD

How do we live? What is important? What are your ideas?

I've watched this brilliant film perhaps ten times. It has weak moments — a staged encounter in the street where a local citizen opines why (most) people don't read poetry, ending with a shrug both disappointed and -ing. There's the odd error of fact (I don't believe Olson ever did get Albert Einstein to come to Black Mountain College, much less sit on the board of directors), and the odd mismatch of sound and image (Robert Creeley's keen philosophizing over the distracting strobe of a Super Bowl game). On the other side there's much inspired street-level documentary film-making. A woman who works in a restaurant narrates an affecting vignette of Olson's modesty and generosity of spirit, and she recites eight lines of Emily Dickinson with energy. There are several such piercing moments. This is in part the filmmakers' love-letter to Gloucester. Malkovich nails Olson's dismay in "A Scream to the Editor," 1965, at the

crumbling heritage of its four centuries as a fishing centre. Now that cruise ships have started to call in at Gloucester for the tourists to buy Chinese figurines of sailboats, it's clearly also the filmmakers' cause. Sometimes Ferrini's camerawork rises to the visionary: he captures the human polis and the particularities of Place that, as someone says, opens the door to cosmos. The original music accompaniment is cool as an ice pick.

Polis is This can be watched, low-res, on YouTube

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=evWPIeA_gW4&list=PL4347B78F9FB209A3, or the DVD purchased from the filmmakers: <http://www.polisisthis.com/>.

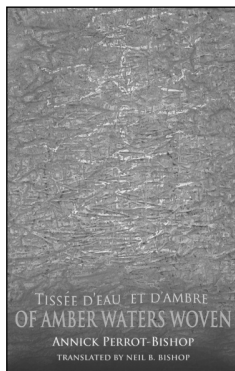
In the past year appeared a fitting companion piece, *The Line Has Shattered: Vancouver's Landmark 1963 Poetry Conference*, a film by Robert McTavish. I became aware of the project when attending a 2009 Vancouver gathering of 1963 poetry conference attendees. (I'm in the film — at 34:52, the guy in the red shirt off to the left — and was at the time totally absorbed in my conduits, to borrow another phrase from Olson.) It was a long time coming, well worth the wait. McTavish, late of Salt Spring Island, now living in Canmore, Alberta, made much of the reunion, getting a lot of heads talking to each other and the camera. They have a lot to say, the 15 or 18 out the 40-odd students from the 1963 "conference," congregating again towards the end of almost unanimously literary careers, some quite successful — Michael Palmer, Clark Coolidge, Daphne Marlatt, George Bowering, Fred Wah, Judith Copithorne, Dan McLeod ... Their reflections on its significance spill over into some pretty deep meditation on the evolution of poetics in the interval. It's all mighty edifying. The film dazzles — the ease with which it marshalls and builds ideas — not the first time of viewing, but the second or third. While focusing on the three-week gathering in 1963, the film manages to anatomize the whole revolution in thinking behind the 1960 Grove Press anthology *The New American Poetry*. Which, a voice proclaims, students with the rebellious individualism of the day brandished like six-guns. There's some playful spoofing of a period newsreel with a killer newsreel voice presenting Poetry News of the Day — and some of the



The Vancouver gathering

(continued on page 16)

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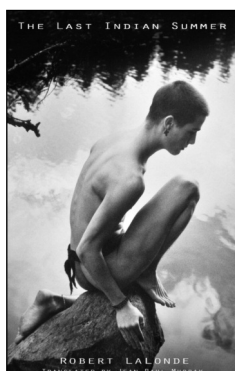
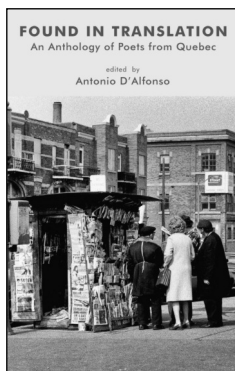
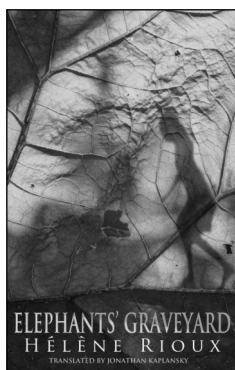
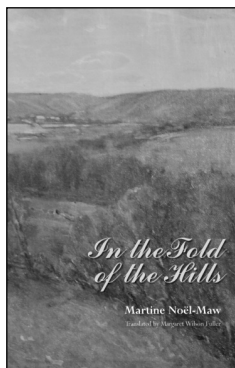
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THE LOTUS SINGERS

Reshma Kalianpur

In the electronic age, the physical reality of trade might often be forgotten and with it, the travelling merchant. He is a peddler of goods and – in a time before global internet connectivity – bringer of stories. And it is in this respect that that image still lives: when an editor such as Trevor Carolan brings together a collection such as *The Lotus Singers*, a bounty of contemporary short stories from locales across South Asia.

Gathered in *The Lotus Singers* are stories from amongst the best new writing from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives, called the “Seven Sister” nations of South Asia. The new anthology, edited by Carolan, an English professor at the University of the Fraser Valley, is a companion to *Another Kind of Paradise: Short Stories from the New Asia-Pacific* which he released a year earlier and explored the nearby region of South-East Asia.

Together the two are both a handsome and timely collection of stories. “More than ever, especially Asia commands our attention,” Carolan says in his introduction to *The Lotus Singers*. It is no secret that Asia is a rapidly growing region of the planet, nor is it that it is a multi-faceted place, where cultures, people, geography and even time seems to jostle for its proper place. Here is *The Lotus Singers* task then: to give readers a chance to understand – on a human level – South Asia in the twenty-first century. This it does, delivering clarity and understanding of a place which is no longer an exotic locale or exploitative colonial hang-out.

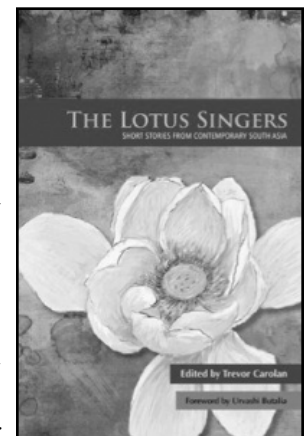
The package that these stories arrive in is worth noting in itself. The design of the collection is wonderfully functional and beautifully designed like its predecessor. Helpful notes of translation and author biographies are present along with the stories in a fashion that is thorough without being heavy-handed. Altogether both books are quite handsome.

Yet it is the stories that make the book. The writers of South Asia have no problem standing next to other world-notables and Carolan has done a superb job selecting the *crème de la crème*. Mahasweta Devi's “Arjun” is a striking tale and “Nina Awaits Mrs. Kamath's Decision,” Salil Chaturvedi's story of a blind girl in Goa is uplifting and beautiful, exploring the consequences of choices in love and religion. There are moments of surrealism in “A Government of India Undertaking” by Manjula Padmanabhan, giving some Indian spice to already frequently absurd world of bureaucracy. The story of feminism landing the small country of Bhutan by Kunzang Choden is a worthy addition, where new worlds and old collide and we gain a rare peek into the kingdom of Bhutan.

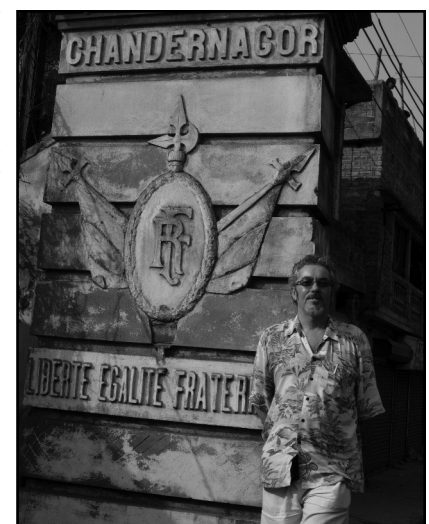
The collection moves from Nepal to Sri Lanka; Pakistan to Bangladesh exploring themes as universal as love, the preservation and destruction of tradition, frustration and loss, but even when it veers towards regionalism, the appeal to readers remains universal.

The Lotus Singers is a real honest look at South Asia through its own eyes. “These are literary voices speaking not from a comfortable distance or from South Asia's far-flung Diaspora, but from the home range; they are sure of their ground,” assures Carolan, the merchant bringing goods from afar — in the modern age, stories; the experience of a place in its most extravagant and most mundane.

Trevor Carolan is the international editor of the PRRB.



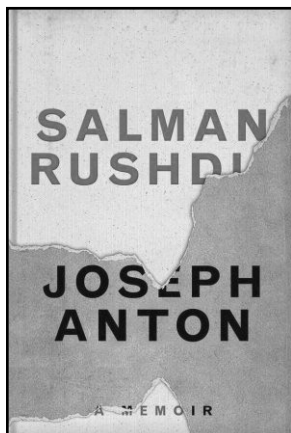
The Lotus Singers: Short Stories from Contemporary South Asia
edited by Trevor Carolan
Cheng & Tsui, 2011,
\$22.95



Trevor Carolan in Chandernagor

SACRED RAGE, A VALENTINE FOR JOSEPH ANTON

Linda Rogers



Joseph Anton: a memoir
Salman Rushdie
Knopf Canada
656 Pages, \$34.95

Mr. Joseph Anton, international publisher of American origin, passed away unmourned on the day that Salmon Rushdie, novelist of Indian origin, surfaced from his long underground years and took up part time residence in Pembridge mews, Notting Hill. Mr Rushdie celebrated the moment, even if no one else did.

British-educated author Salman Rushdie, expatriated by the partition of India, had become a star of the Indian literary diaspora. However, with the publication of his philosophical Odyssey *The Satanic Verses*, his flash in the firmament turned into a literal plane crash. Rushdie's pragmatic examination of good and evil in a modern world defined by anachronistic prophecy offended fundamental Islamists, who rejected his portrait of a fallible Muhammed, tested, like Jesus in the wilderness, by conflicting voices.

On February 14, 1989, Rushdie received an unfunny valentine from the deranged and dying Ayatolla Khomeini, and his *fatwa* is the first page in this autobiography,

a cry not a whimper for civilization under siege, where silence (and) or death is an unacceptable option. For more than a decade, the condemned novelist lived with the ubiquitous protection of the Special Branch, as one of the Level One Club, a trinity that included the Queen and the Prime Minister - using the name that is now the title of his autobiography. Almost every aspect of his former self, except his voice, became invisible.

Now Rushdie is a free man and *Joseph Anton*, his doppelganger, is the dark angel he recreates and incinerates on the threshold to personal freedom, a more open life in art.

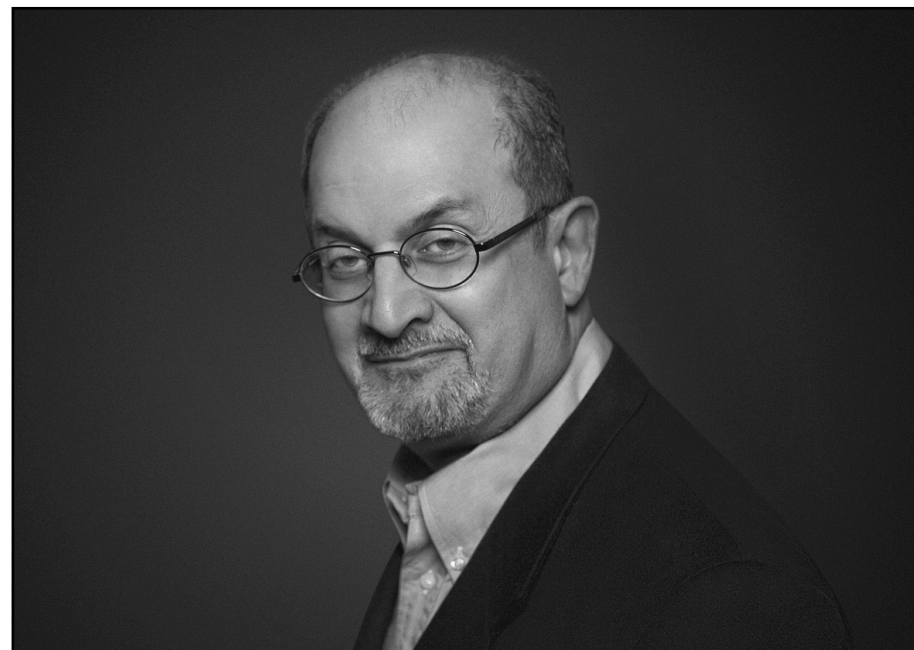
Literature tried to open the universe, to increase, even if only slightly, the sum total of what was possible for human beings to perceive, understand, and so, finally, to be.

But, he has observed, "...humans are pushing one another to a narrower definition of themselves." With the limitation of our most significant bond, the species that distinguished itself with the invention of language devolves into nonsense. So much of the newspeak is babble: political correctness, dialects of exclusion and confrontation, jargon and social media jabberwocky. Freedom of speech may occasion unintelligible or derisive language but, as Rushdie has shown, it is an essential component of human rights.

Sentenced to death by the enemies of intelligent skepticism, Rushdie was condemned to live on the edge of a well-tempered sword, the literal conformation of censorship. The record of his extended season in hell is a key for translation of meaning (a noun and a verb in the context of cruelty) for end times, a real possibility for all "intelligent" beings.

The very definition of the Greek *skepsis*, to examine, is the key to understanding Rushdie's thirteen years in the wilderness and the post modern world's absorption with the true social, political and theological meanings of Islam. That Rushdie, the Indian ironist and chat-wallah, approaches his personal social context with humour may have been his indiscretion. Irony, a vital ingredient in skepticism, the leaven that makes loss of faith bearable, is anathema to dogma.

The mullahs felt compelled to erase Rushdie's laughter from the firmament, requiring him to cover his tracks. Having chosen his undercover name from favourite authors, Joseph Conrad and Anton Chekhov, Rushdie's challenge was to reinvent his life in the third person (first degree of separation) without sacrificing the integrity of his identity. The heart of darkness in his cherry orchard, a literary paradise, is the repudiation of his gift, a magical facility with words and the infrastructure of critical dialogue. As he struggled to keep his balance in a shifting political and familial landscape, so does the world. Privacy, safety and wisdom are all under siege in the technological surge that has turned the global village into an ideological minefield.



Salman Rushdie

He predicted his own trial in the closing paragraph of the Mahound chapter in *The Satanic Verses*, the knot of his problem with the theo-fascists.

...and then they fall on him from the night sky, the three winged creatures, Lat Uzza Manat, flapping around his head, clawing at his eyes, biting, whipping him with their hair, their wings. He puts up his hands to protect himself, but their revenge is tireless, continuing whenever he rests, whenever he drops his guard. He struggles against them, but they are faster, nimbler, winged.

Mahound's (Mohammed's) temptation is his, and, because they are human and curious, they are punished.

Locked in his tower, the raging dragon, a prisoner of political correctness, one of the great issues of our time, breathes prescient windows into the prisons we have been building with our great conversations, agreement and disagreement about personal entitlement, climate change and anachronistic belief systems. Joseph Anton is a metaphor for the expatriated artist, an exile in his own skin. His banishment from normalcy is a soul-eating disease, the malaise of a restless planet of social and political nomads.

Some critics have described the 636 page *Joseph Anton* as a ramble, but Rushdie's song-line in his own version of the Biblical desert rewards as it resonates with our familiar landscape. People we know in the age of instant celebrity, events we have vicariously experienced and books we have read come alive as Rushdie puts them in the context of his out of body experience. That is the writer's holy obligation in an unholy world as he, like the ancient mariner, doomed to tell and retell his story, witnesses devastation and redemption in his personal sphere. He quotes William Blake, "A true poet is of the Devil's party," describing his burden and his gift. Truth is the devil's obligation, and the poet's as well.

Did we need to be reminded of Heine's observation, "Wherever they burn books they will in the end burn human beings?" The fire in Rushdie's belly, although occasionally tamped down by the inertia of depression, was the belief, not only in the *me* under lockdown but also in his significant struggle to maintain a sacred rage.

In the battle of reason versus demagoguery, Rushdie had to become his own word-slicing sword, tempered in his Odyssean journey of the soul by betrayal and the temptation of sirens. Like his good friends John Diamond, the articulate husband of Nigella Lawson, and Christopher Hitchens, the avatar of unbelievers, whose tongues were stolen by cancer, Rushdie compensated for the attempted theft of his voice by ideologues whose cancer has infected the beauty of Islam.

In the end it will be people like the author of definitive books about the contem-

porary experience who may give Islam back to its entitled custodians, the millions disenfranchised by lunatics. In his obituary for Hitchens, he wrote:

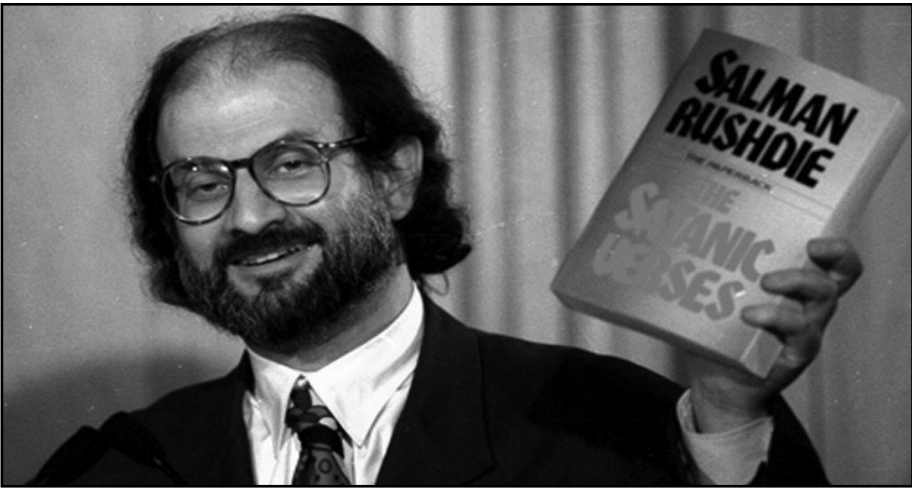
He and I found ourselves describing our ideas, without conferring, in almost identical terms. I began to understand that while I had not chosen the battle, it was at least the right battle, because in it everything that I loved and valued (literature, freedom, irreverence, freedom, irreligion, freedom) was ranged against everything I detested (fanaticism, violence, bigotry, humorlessness, philistinism, and the new offence-culture of the age). Then I read Christopher using exactly the same everything-he-loved-versus-everything-he-hated trope, and felt...understood.

They were true non-believers, magnificent atheists, straining to redefine anachronistic god notions in terms of a more inclusive definition of world community. Heine wrote, “Atheism is the last word of theism.” Rushdie reasons like the *rebbe*s who have argued the meaning of the Pentateuch for millennia, advocating for a flexible heterodoxy that embraces ideological difference. He was the poster child of difference, born on the cusp of India’s emergence from colonialism and exiled to colonial nurseries, prep schools where privileged children of the Raj learned to be proper Englishmen; and his by definition a life of contradiction.

No sooner did India free itself of the Raj than it began the process of re-birth by cell division, the reproductive process of the simplest organisms. But India is not simple and half a century later, the two solitudes, Muslim and Hindu, still struggle with their organic separation. Like Saleem in the Booker Prize winning *Midnight’s Children*, Rushdie, “...had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country,” when partition was parturition, the unsafe separation of mother and child.

Born into a milieu of split tongues and forced to straddle two continents, language became the writer’s defense and offence. As Rushdie began to make sense of his alternate realities in *Midnight’s Children*, he earned the right to speak for a generation of exiles. This is the mandate of the imaginative child confronted by an intolerable choice; separation from his roots and loved ones, or compromise. He created his own reality. The child inside the adult writer transcended his material existence, and, with special vision, examined his cultural surround. This is how the “normal” of writers like Rushdie and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, children of conflict, becomes magic realism.

If the art of the novel revealed anything, it was that human nature was the



Salman Rushdie with *The Satanic Verses*

great constant, in any culture, in any place, in any time, and that, as Heraclitus had said two thousand years earlier, a man’s ethos, his way of being in the world, was his daimon, the guiding principal that shaped his life – or, in the pithier or more familiar formulation of the idea, that character was destiny.

Attack came from every imaginable corner including media that demonized him for his appearance, a hooded eye condition (ptosis) that allegedly made him look satanic. That certainly didn’t scare off the illusory Amazons. In photos, he resembles the cat that has just eaten the serially astonishing birds of paradise standing beside him. Objectivity dictates certain pragmatism and as his various prisons closed in on him, Joseph Anton chose the familiar vertical escape, a gothic rapture. The ballast is family, his dearest relationships, as he levitates from beauty to beauty, one of them described by Rushdie as having a magnificent narcissism and by my friend, the couturier who designed her dress, now in my possession, as “a miserable moose with pumped up tits,” each one initially presenting as a rescuing angel holding the strings that prevent him from falling into a black hole of despond not unlike the seven inch hole that captivated Dr. Aziz in *Midnight’s Children*.

A stunning succession of partners offers the fictitious Anton illusory shelter and temporary laughter. Like Saleem’s grandfather whose prayer injury precipitates loss of faith, Rushdie reveals the deficit that renders him a victim of carnal love, “This decision made a hole in him, a vacancy in a vital inner chamber, leaving him vulnerable to

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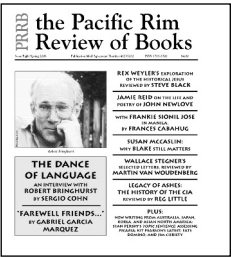
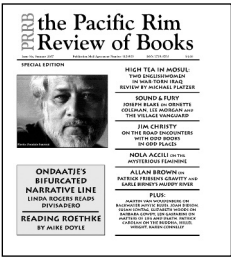
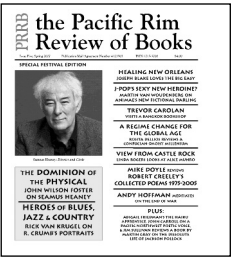
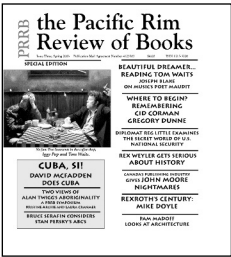
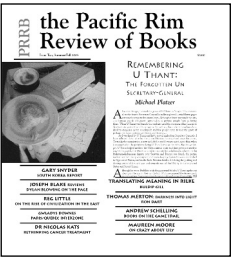
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women and history.”

Now Saleem’s parallel history with an independent India, a story so sprawling it defies the parameters of moving pictures, has at last been filmed by director Deepa Mehta, with a textured voice-over by the author himself. Saleem’s voices, children of alchemy caught somewhere between straw and gold, are the precursors of Mahound’s confusing angels. We are left to wonder when truth is encoded in babble.

Love is the true language of redemption. Over and over in his litany of battered trust and relationships destroyed by stress, his two sons are described in metaphors of light. They are the infant stars by which he and his fictional characters navigate, loss transformed into hope, ironically another burden for the grandchildren of the Raj, who carry the past, some of it glorious and some of it shameful, into the present.

When writers are compressed, the best route to sanity is to write. Pushing through the barriers of mental and physical imprisonment during the thirteen-year *fatwa*, Rushdie first fought back with *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* for his son, Zafar, whose life was horribly impacted by the edict. A novel told in linked stories with humour and fantasy as the magical ingredients, it is a fairytale for our times and a possible last testament from father to son, his apology and legacy, “As I wander far from view/Read and bring me home to you.”

The Shah of Blah explains his compulsion for storytelling to his son with a fine image of a writer’s thirst for life and the physical need to explain, “I drink the warm story waters and then I feel full of steam.” Sadly, the narrative Rushdie and Zafar were drinking from was no joke. “What’s the use of stories that aren’t even true,” Haroun asks? The answer could be that they make sense of a scrambled universe. Zafar would have to understand that.

There is no doubt that *Joseph Anton* allows Rushdie to at last rebut those who either refused to acknowledge the justice of his cause or lacked the courage to stand with the man standing in the crosshairs of depravity. Rebuttal is his prerogative; but in this book bitterness is balanced with the sweetness of irrefutable loyalties. Like every work of fiction, Rushdie’s story has heroes and anti-heroes, laughter and tears, a healthy dramatic balance.

He is a *chatterjee* blessed with the Indian gift of the gab, malarky that scents night soil with the lotus that grows out of dung and common sense that has correctly identified the scent of oil in America’s bungled intervention and the rise of radical Islam in the Middle East and Asia. Rushdie, the analytical thinker *Interrogations at Noon* and cosmic joker, would not have survived Anton without a keen sense of irony, the nose that transports midnight’s child, the mid-century voyageur who is blessed with a compass for survival and many friends.

Friendship is the new religion. Orthodoxy in a country or a world divided unto itself is no longer salvation. Every word Rushdie writes is a facet of his grief for the familial comfort that history has denied him. His orthodoxy is heterodoxy, ethical choices. That is what history and the Iranian mullahs attempted to deny him and that is what he rages against in every action and on every page. It is, actually, the highest integrity that comes at the highest personal price.

If terrorism is to be defeated, the world of Islam must take on board the secularist-humanist principles on which the modern is based, and without which their countries’ freedom will remain a distant dream.

The details of Rushdie’s life under siege and the protection of Her Majesty’s Government are significant, interesting as back story to the bigger picture and even larger fiction, but when they fade away, it is the gestalt of his principles that will endure long after we have forgotten the kindness of friends, the self-serving diffidence of political cowards like the Prince of Wales (supposedly above politics), self-serving heads of state, particularly in his Indian motherland, and psychopathic clerics. Rushdie has used his considerable gifts to protect intellectual freedom when he could have taken an easier route to fame and fortune.

It is amazing that under threat of death, Joseph Anton managed fatherhood, relationships with the handful of bottom blushing women who enjoyed his jokes and a baker’s dozen of exceptional books. It is unfair to argue for the isolation of a social being, but the results are stunning evidence for the beauty of adversity.

Great literature went to the edges of the known and pushed against the boundaries of language, form and possibility, to make the world feel larger, wider than before.



Salmon Rushdie

Rushdie, who only occasionally wavered in his martyrdom, never apologizes for his spectacular courage in speaking out against false religion in his reprise of the satanic verses of false prophecy offered to (Mahound) Mohammed by the three angels, text that already existed when he began his critical journey. The exile will not be banished from his conscience and no man has the right to ask him to recant his opposition to religious hypocrisy, not even the god hidden in obfuscating politics. That god lives as the common good, something Rushdie the skeptic can probably accept, because the matrix of great design is goodness, the honey from a perfect hive, the maintenance of which falls partially on artists whose sacred covenant is freedom.

That is a contract he shares with all great writers, no one more than Joyce, whose liquid poetry is another facet of the Imperial diamond. Perhaps the Prince of W(h)ales has better radar than his obtuse public persona would suggest. Perhaps he is alarmed by the realisation that the language he was born and sworn to protect has its apogee in the mouths of oppressed peoples.

Joseph Anton is Rushdie’s Rosetta Stone (more colonial plunder), a valuable reference point for polyglot armies clashing in the night and the literary beds he makes, where everyone dreams in the same archetypal language. Long live its creator and the human rights he defends, which include the right to redemption, the life-affirming gestalt of sin and salvation, death and renewal.

In the final lines of *The Satanic Verses*, he predicts his own luck.

It seemed to him that in spite of all his wrong- doing, weakness, guilt –in spite of his humanity – he was getting another chance.

Linda Rogers, author of Homing, selected poems, and The Empress Trilogy, thought she saw Rushdie at Groucho’s in London, owns a dress worn by one of his wives (the alleged moose), missed an interview with Deepa Mehta, the director of Midnight’s Children

FILMS (continued from page 12)

the parties, “eighty people in a two-bedroom apartment,” where there was lots of intake but no rowdies — “there was too much going on. It was mellifluous.” She draws out the consonants, mellllllliffllffllououssssss. You want to know what that means.

Among many highlights I’d have to put the way McTavish worked Robert Duncan in, restoring to him the prominence he enjoyed as a gay rights pioneer and San Francisco cultural kaleidoscope. In one of several voice overs (we seem to be able only to see them, the people of 1963, or hear them, not both) — Duncan starts with Whitehead — “human being is an event, not an object” — and talks his way to “You only can know yourself.” Duncan appears near the beginning of the film, explaining his take on Olson’s concept of composition by field, seeing it as a real field where things grow in wild profusion or neat cultivation; his first major collection of poems was *The Opening of the Field* (1960). But sir, I want to interject, sir, didn’t Olson call the poem a “high-energy construct?” Isn’t a field of crops a relatively low-energy construct?

Some of the clips of Olson in discussion are breath-taking rapid-fire improvisations — “The minutest particulars are ALL that is important ... How do you get language and act to register that?” Sometimes it gets downright oracular, as in the NET kitchen shoot, where Olson explains *The Projective* as a posit of “some difference of art and reason and [proposal] that there be that.” Clark Coolidge remembers how “Olson was all over the place ... It was wonderful.” Michael Palmer adds, “If anything is possible ... what is needed?”

Palmer wowed this viewer with his trenchant commentary. I have to say I’d never heard of him before the 2009 reunion. He is a powerful speaker with a quiet intensity and tremendous gravitas. I was moved by his story of conflict with his father.

The one Canadian among the “faculty” was Margaret Avison. (Creeley had lived for a year in Vancouver, teaching with Warren Tallman at UBC.) Avison made a spirited contribution to the discourse; the line that drew the biggest frisson: “Our cunts are ugly.” (No!) (Avison removed herself after a week, calling the conference “an Olsonfest.”)

For making the many one, for cutting to the chase, for all-round best interviewee, my vote goes to Daphne Marlatt.

Outside the film, recurring to the 2009 reunion, I vividly recall the poetry readings in the evening, where the most energetic, smart, engaging readings were those of George Bowering and Fred Wah, reminding us that Simon Fraser University took up the lamp of Olson Learning some time ago, with Ralph Maud and Robin Blaser and Lionel Kearns and Colin Browne and others to boot.

How that field has flowered McTavish’s film poignantly shows. An education in itself.

Charles Olson, “Maximus to Gloucester, Letter 27 [withheld]” from *The Maximus Poems*. Copyright © 1968 by Charles Olson. Reprinted by permission of the Estate of Charles Olson. Source: *The Maximus Poems* (University of California Press, 1985). Medium: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/238348>.

Peter Grant is a historian and poet who lives in Victoria, B.C.

STILL KEEPING THE BEAT

Vojo Sindolic

Forty-odd years ago as a student of comparative literature at Belgrade University, I wrote music reviews for *Jukebox*, the only Yugoslav rock and roll magazine. Then for four years I worked as international editor and during trips to Europe, England and the USA I was able to meet and interview an amazing litany of pop heavies from the times—Dylan, Lennon, Jerry Garcia and others. I also met Allen Ginsberg and became an avid reader of many of his long-time associates—Ferlinghetti, Kerouac, Burroughs, Corso, Snyder, McClure and others. Some I also translated, and have kept this up now for 35 years. By the late 1970s I'd edited, translated and published a small anthology titled *Poets of the Beat Generation* for Yugoslav readers—my small contribution to Stalin's downfall.

Allen Ginsberg eventually introduced me to his Beat writer friends, and through him I was able to come into contact with Kenneth Koch, Andy Warhol and other unique Allen's helpfulness in these things is legendary, but he was like that. When we were together he'd often ruffle through his black notebook and jot down the names and addresses of poets and publishers he felt I ought to meet.

Among these was Lawrence Ferlinghetti, for whom I've always felt a profound tenderness and deep gratitude. He has long enjoyed travelling to Italy and in addition to his frequent poetry readings has held numerous exhibitions of his paintings and drawings there. When Lawrence entitled one of his later book of poems *How to Paint Sunlight*, I wasn't at all surprised. I'd once asked him "how to paint sunlight?"

He'd answered,

Well, I've probably spent more than half my time in San Francisco painting, and so I've been concerned with this. Poets and painters are the natural bearers of light, and all I ever wanted to do was paint light on the walls of life. Did you know that I did an MA on Turner, Ruskin and Turner? It's curious, because Ruskin was Turner's big champion and traced the history of painting from the Dark Ages—how it was always dark in the canvases and gradually the light in the Renaissance came in a little bit, and when Turner came along the light burst forth for the first time. It seems to me as if not only Turner, but Ruskin too, was obsessed with light. Then, many years later, Ruskin's letters were published, which had been banned; they weren't to be published until 75 or 100 years after he died, something like that. So we find out from his letters that Ruskin was impotent. And it's curious, because light is a big fertility symbol—it all adds up!

But, the paintings can't be explained. The best of them have a certain mystery about them that can't be explicated... It is a mysterious process, painting. The figures, the creatures, the faces appear 'out of nowhere', so to speak—messengers or harbingers from some other place or time... I only know they exist in their own world and time, and I'm only the means of their articulation.

Getting back to Allen, until his death in April, '97 we met whenever it was possible and sometimes we did long reading tours together. One of my favourite memories is from the autumn of 1980 when he and Peter Orlovsky came to Dubrovnik for a week and stayed at the Hotel Dubravka inside the city's ancient stone walls, near the marketplace. We made plans for me to do a book of my translations of Allen's selected poems. Now, I've often considered that the poems Allen wrote in the mid and late seventies to be of uneven quality, but two poems he wrote in Dubrovnik—*Birdbrain!* and *Eroica*—still stand among the best poems he ever produced. In conversation, Allen told me:

Birdbrain! is a 1980s equivalent of my America from 1956 poem. In the same form it compresses journalistic information into aphoristic statements. The difference between the two is not in the method of composition, but in the different use of speech pauses. I wrote the entire poem Birdbrain! in one long run, except for the last line, as well as the entire Eroica. My basic measure is a unit of thought. So, in my case, it's not so much a unit of sound as unit of thought. The tension that builds in Birdbrain! is expressionistic in the sense that it's organized along a narrative, but very rhythmic line; and in Eroica it's a line in which I'm trying to tell a logical sequence of events during the concert of Beethoven's Eroica in the atrium of the Rector's palace in Dubrovnik.



At the Cafe Trieste, North Beach, San Francisco, 1975. Left to right: Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Minelte Le Blanc, Peter Le Blanc, Allen Ginsberg, Harold Norse, Jack Hirschman & Bob Kaufman. Photo by Diana Church.

Strangely, one day while the three of us were walking on the slippery streets of the old town that have been worn smooth from centuries of foot traffic, Peter slipped and broke his right arm.

As one of Allen's translators, personally I half suspect that his deep interest in Buddhism and involvement with long hours of sitting meditation somehow weakened his poetry, especially when he tried to mix Blakean themes with Buddhistic insight. Michael McClure shared this view in the early 1980s when we exchanged letters on this subject. McClure also wrote:

Allen and I had had visions of Blake in our childhood, and we had two different Blakes. Allen had a Blake who is a Blake of prophesy, a Blake who speaks out against the dark Satanic Mills. My Blake is Blake of body and vision. Blake was such a powerful, such great being that it's possible for every one of us to have an entirely different Blake.

Ferlinghetti had his own views too about how Allen's poetry was affected by his personal inclinations. During a conversation after Allen's death, he expressed the idea that

Without Allen Ginsberg there wouldn't be any Beat Generation. He articulated and created it out of whole cloth. Without him, there would be great poets in the landscape, but not what is called a 'Beat' generation. He'd worked in journalism and could write a tight piece of prose. Everything he ever published had that same compactness and attention to detail. He had this really great discipline for economy of prose and direct statement, but I feel he didn't develop beyond that. He wanted to be rock star, instead. Allen wanted to be more and more a performance poet with music on stage—performing with Bob Dylan, or a punk group like The Clash, for instance. I think it did his poetry a lot of harm.

Also, speaking of Allen's poetry, I think Buddhist practice really harmed his poetry. It was turning inward. In Zen you sit facing the wall for your meditation. I find there isn't the fresh observation, the freshly observed minute detail that's in his early poetry. The whole concept of 'no mind' was an unfortunate motto in a lot of ways. But, as you know well, Allen was a devoted Buddhist; his later poetry was heavily influenced by 'first thought, best thought'. On the other hand, Ginsberg had a crazy, creative mind, really a genius consciousness, a sort of rat-pack mind that siphoned everything from all directions: whatever he wrote down on the page was always interesting.

Regarding the notion of a Beat Generation, I recall one humid August afternoon in 1986. Allen and I were talking in my Belgrade apartment and I'd asked him to explain to me what that Generation was really about. He said decisively, 'Kerouac and Burroughs between 1945 and 1955 were the Beat Generation.'

I asked him if he was still felt the same way. He answered,

Absolutely! Because after 1955 or so comes the San Francisco Renaissance with new friends like Gary Snyder, Philip Whalen, Michael McClure, Kenneth Rexroth, Peter Orlovsky, etc. And in the Sixties it all became too political and the feeling of the old comradeship, togetherness, candor or frankness was gone... Or maybe was transformed...I think that the Sixties were politically awry because of animosity. You know... the notions of rising up and getting angry, using anger as a motif. Things started fucking up when people got angry because they started action from that angry pride. By 1969 more than 50% of the American people thought that the war in Vietnam was a big mistake, but instead of leading people out of the war, seducing them out, people got out onto the streets and got angry...

I'd once asked Lawrence Ferlinghetti about Kerouac and America, and he told me,

Jack couldn't handle fame. Neither could a lot of other famous writers. Unfortunately, as he got older, Jack became more reactionary. But to answer your question, Kerouac was really writing about an America which was a pre-WW II. Instead of On the Road, I urge every Kerouac reader to read his very first novel The Town And The City. It's a very conventionally written novel, much like Thomas Wolfe's Look Homeward Angel, which was Jack's big model; and it's a 1930s American story of his own family growing up in Massachussetts. But, even in On The Road, which was presumably happening after the Second World War, it was still really a pre-WW II America which no longer exists, except in small lost dusty Greyhound Bus terminals, and small lost towns out in the outback—this enormous nostalgia for an America that's definitely gone.

About Gary Snyder, I've been involved with his writings – mostly by translating heavy portions of his works, poems and essays both, and as a great admirer of his words for almost 35 years. Through the years we've exchanged scores of letters. He's written about Buddhism, work on the Zendo in the late seventies and early eighties, his ground at Kitkitdizze, growing a garden, troubles with chickens, doing the chores, his love for family and close friends, how ecological insights and bioregional organizing might help a Buddhist society under seige from the witless expansionism of the industrial world, and so on. In the early years of our friendship our letters had a brighter feeling, dealing with environmental problems, questions about translation, our mutual love for nature and the like. During the 1990s, our letters grew longer and somehow sadder in feeling—dealing with Tiananmen in China, the Persian Gulf War, and finally with the political and religious madness in my own country, the former Yugoslavia which, after civil war, split into six different independent but inevitably nationalistic states.

Snyder's letters can be six-line notes, yet some go on for pages, typed or by hand. Quite often there's a poem or a small poetic enclosure like one dated 18th April 1981:

Spring budding here – apple trees blossoming & grape vines just leafing out this week. Last week was prime for Japanese flowering cherry. I found a baby owl on the ground yesterday (it was able to fly a little – I think it will be O. K.) and saw a coyote leisurely trotting through the woods.

Or this one dated 12th November 1986:

I've been all over Alaska and British Columbia lately & then down into the central Sierra Nevada... studying the disappearing Grizzly Bear and the disappearing Forest as well... We are working hard, cutting firewood & gathering and drying mushrooms, so many boletus this year... and working with our friends on forestry and Nicaragua politics...

Or this funny one from 1994 about a trip to Africa he did with his son Gen to meet his other son Kai, who at the time was living and working in Botswana:

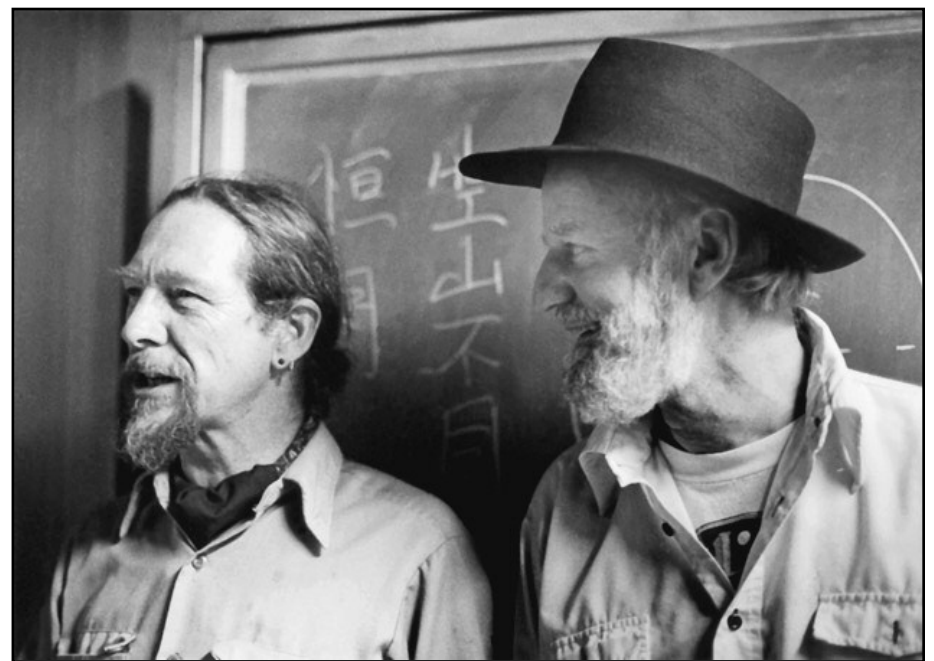
Hitch-hiked east into Zimbabwe and visited 15,000 year old cave paintings by old-time Bushmen, including a marvelous rhinoceros drawing. Saw endangered rhinoceroses shit but no rhinoceros in person in Matopos National Park.

Drank hippopotamus river water but nobody got sick. Flew back home the day after Nelson Mandela was announced the winner of the South African elections, black people everywhere so jubilant...

Speaking as a poet and translator of various types of poetry myself, I think that almost every translation is a kind of linguistic mathematics. On the other hand, the old problem of translating is, I think, one of visualising. For example, when I translate Gary's poems, I try to visualise what the poem says as a kind of little movie that runs in front of my eyes, and then write it down in my own words, as close to the original as possible. As far as I know, Snyder himself has also used and still uses this 'linguistic technology' when translating poems he likes from Chinese or Japanese.

For example, explaining some 'logging lines' from the 'Logging' section of *Myths and Texts*, Gary once wrote to me,

This is all language from logging operations. Some of it parallels techniques used in Japanese logging. For example, when in Japan loads of logs come down from hilltop on a cable, high in the air, as I have seen many times in the hills north of Kyoto. This is small version of an American 'sky-lead cable.' When a log from a tree that has been felled is laying on the ground and then picked up by a hook attached to a cable from a tall tree, and that pulls it back toward the trucks it is a high lead. A crawler-tread tractor is called a Cat but is also called sometimes a 'bulldozer.' When a bulldozer pulls a trailer behind it which



Lawrence Ferlinghetti & Gary Snyder. Photo by Chris Felver

in turn is pulling and lifting a log, that is a 'logging arch' trailer. Sometimes they have rubber wheels, sometimes crawler-tread, as bulldozers do. I am enclosing a sketch of a logging arch, with butt hooks and choker cable attached. A 'skid trail' is simply the path through the woods that gets worn in when you drag logs down it. This is cat-skidding.

After a tree is felled it is cut in 16 foot sections. The 'butt-log' is the bottom, or first, log from the stump, and thus the thickest. 'Setting' a choker is to put the noose of a choker cable around the end of the log. A larch is a species of conifer.

Could any translator in the world be more blessed and honored than with such answer? Writing to me about *Myths and Texts*, Snyder explained:

This is known to be a difficult series of poems, and some of them are to be seen as evocative, magical, dream-like, surrealistic, and mythic. They cannot in every case be translated so as to make rational sense.

All of Myths and Texts in fact is playing with the theme of the Fires at the end of the Kalpa (and thus with the terrible wars and destruction of nature in our own time) and it comes up again in the last section & the last poem.

Gary's admirers will; recall another interesting, precise and extensive explanation about the „Song of the Taste“ poem that appears in his book *Regarding Wave*. Gary's personal answer about this poem can be read as a small but very precise essay about his own poem:

This is one of my favorite poems. This poem, about what we eat, is a meditation on the main feature of ecological systems, the food-chain, or food-web, in which energy is passed through various bodies by being eaten. It is a scary thought, and is also, in a certain sense, the sacramental side of biology. And so I bring the poem to look at what it is that human beings are actually eating. Without guilt or fear. Rice and wheat are the 'germs of grasses.' Apples, peaches, persimmons, are the sweetness around the tree-sperm. 'Clustered points of light' is an image of the seeds in a grape, each of which has a kind of gleam in it. And in the whole of biological life, we are all 'eating each other'. This also has the resonance of oral love-making. The last lines suggest, then, that even as you eat bread, bread's mouth is eating you... But then, 'kissing the lover'? Your food is also your lover... bread is the source of life; the woman's vulva is also the source of life, the erotic level of this image again... And finally, in Catholic sacrament, the wine is Christ's blood and the bread is Christ's body... which is a wafer, a kind of bread. So Christ is the bread we eat, lip to lip, like a kiss... the final level of imagery in this final stanza.

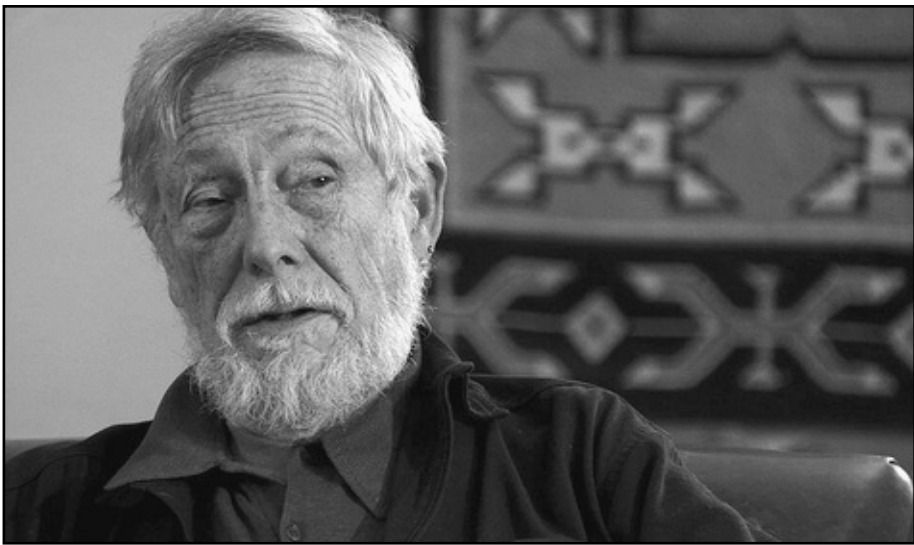
Snyder also explains the title of the book, *Regarding Wave*:

Regarding is used with both those meanings here, a natural double meaning. Also the term 'Regarding Wave' is almost a translation of the name of the Bodhisattva Kannon, 'Regard the Sound' (and sound is sound-waves).

During the tumultuous war period in my former country, the third of June, 1994 Gary wrote saying,

You and I have clearly come to very similiar views on poetry, life, work, and translation and Western Civilization, and the curse of the Nation-state. At the moment all alternatives seem indistinct, and the real possibility of a kind of global capitalist-anarchy is looming. Meanwhile I am still working on local forestry questions (by which I learn a great deal) and the great questions of planetary biology.

In one of his later letters he declared,

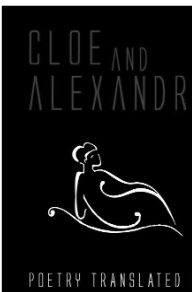


Gary Snyder in "Practice of the Wild" a film about his life and work by John J. Healey

The introduction to the fifth-century B. C. Chinese 'classics of poetry', the Shih Ching, says, "Poetry is to regulate the married couple, establish the principle of filial piety, intensify human realationships, elevate civilization, and improve public morals.» This is to suggest, reasonably enough, that poetry in a halfway-functioning society has an integrative role. We do recognize that poetry can make one remember one's parents, celebrate friendships, and feel tender toward lovers. Poems give soul to history and help express the gratitude we might sometimes feel for the work and sacrifices of our predecessors. Poetry strengt-hens the community and honors the life of the spirit.

Need anything be added?

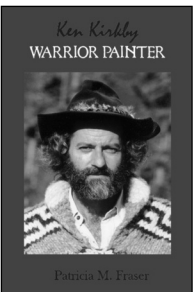
Vojo Sindolic was born in Dubrovnik, in what is now the Republic of Croatia. A poet and translator, he has translated and published more than 40 books.



Cloe and Alexandra

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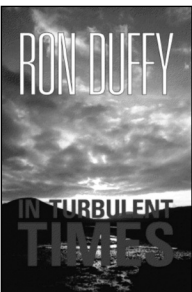
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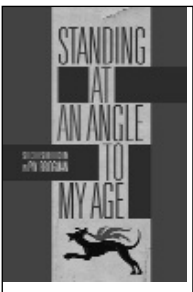
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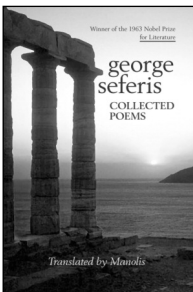
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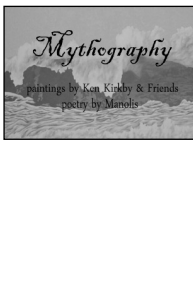
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INDEFINITE DETENTION

PRISONER OF THE STARS THE POET'S JOURNEY

Tom Hibbard

*"trailed halfway across empty skies, lit
color surging elemental and swelling."
-Meng Hao-jan*

Of all the great variety of impressions that the poetry in Michael Rothenberg's new collection, *Indefinite Detention: A Dog Story*, left me with, I think the one that stands out most is that of displacement. I was thinking of that word in a larger context—metaphysical, environmental. There are many writers today that are carrying the discussion of the relationship between humanity and the global environment to new heights of insight. In his book *The Great Work*, for example, Thomas Berry writes

Perhaps a new revelatory experience is taking place, an experience wherein human consciousness awakens to the grandeur and sacred quality of the Earth process. Humanity has seldom participated in such a vision since shamanic times, but in such a renewal lies our hope for the future for ourselves and for the entire planet on which we live.

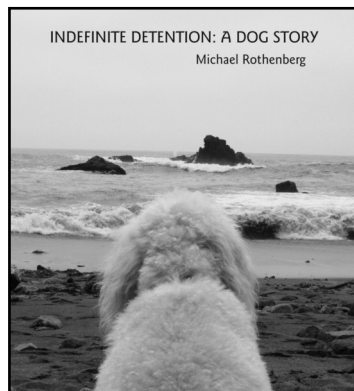
Berry's notion of alienation or displacement would be derived from industrialized and "extractive" economies which he wants to replace with more "harmonious" life styles based on less materialism and a greater perception of reality. As "strangers" and "prisoners" we attempt to discern the qualities and configurations that would constitute a more fulfilling existence, a more meaningful conception of "homeland," where we feel at rest, complete. This is a large subject that many writers approach in many ways. A writer such as Jacques Derrida would introduce terms such as the trace, the distance (which Derrida links with woman), conflagration, disdain, happiness, quiet place. Other writers focus on diversity and difference. I think the ideas of marriage, divorce and confinement are central also.

Rothenberg's poetry has always begun with Walt Whitman.

Of Life immense in passion, pulse, and power,
Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine,
The Modern Man I sing.

Or perhaps I should say it has begun with an advanced amalgam of Whitman transformed by the temporality and expressionism of the Beat generation, of which Rothenberg has some first-hand knowledge. Gone are blank verse, rhyming lines, sonnet-length poems with four or five word lines. Like Whitman, like Ginsberg's *Howl*, Rothenberg writes from deep inside in bold sentences, gushing paragraphs that often reduce down to a secularized or temporalized objective correlative of a general philosophical idea. Often the depth of what he is writing is disguised by a very plain or even vulgar word or image. The collection's title is an example of what I am describing. The title seems, at first, innocent, trivial. Then we remember that "indefinite detention" references those held illegally and barbarically in American prisons without charge or trial date. But the poetry is subjective. The poetry is about Rothenberg's life. In what way could Whitmanesque "democratic vistas" be construed as "detention," as confinement? On its own, the word "indefinite" tends to connote non-restrictive. A sophisticated theme is being put in place. Rothenberg seems to have brought together words of opposing meaning. A new idea of freedom being confinement seems to emerge. Sometimes the effect of Rothenberg's poetry borders on Surrealism, but invariably it has the sense of a reinforced contemporaneous weightiness.

In *Indefinite Detention*, the author's passion and intelligence remain, but he seems discouraged about the appropriateness of that passion. The first poem in Rothenberg's collection, the first section—a somewhat prosy wide-ranging piece of writing, the middle of which is basically a visual poem similar to the writing in Joyce's *Finnegan's*



*Indefinite Detention:
A Dog Story*
Michael Rothenberg
Ekstasis Editions
2013



Michael Rothenberg, photo by Terri Carrion

Wake—is titled "Maybe I Want To Go To Canada." Its first strophe reads

Bye, Bye USA. Hello Finland! Or maybe I want to go to Canada...I'm fresh out of patriotism. Tired of disappointment and hurt, I need a bigger world view. O, Samsara!
Let it go, let it go! Ziggy, my dog, sleeps in the sun. Everything will work out here at home. But no, there are 17 countries more Democratic than this one. I want to go there!

The second poem in the collection, beginning the second section, is the title poem. It begins "Poet Dog // Poet dog / sad dog / Fluffy / Ziggy / pink dog // Dream poet / sad poet / Dog... [indentation] Ziggy and I alone in the woods / Terri gone to Florida with her dog Puma / to visit her mother" So we have the trace (the woods), the distance, associated with woman, woven together producing a feeling of alienation and absence. The poetry that follows—one-hundred-and-thirty pages of it—is a substantive panorama, bordering indeed on conflagration, but which often takes place on the ocean shore or among the California redwoods. These places of distance, in their perfection and exhilaration, especially highlighted against snapshots of U.S. society today, are what Derrida calls "simulacra"—suggestions, symbols. The restful solitude of these places is evidence of disdain, injustice elsewhere. They portend different places, different circumstances that would bring about the same exhilaration but that relate to the future. This is the meaning of the trace—"a past but a past that never has been present." The trace is a mysterious ineffability, a *logos* of the open community that urges us forward. Rothenberg uses the word in his poetry.

The collection is made up of six sections: the introductory section; a second section of newer writing that includes the title poem; "Head Shed" previously issued as a collection on its own; "The Book"; "Track"; and the last section, beginning with the poem "Gray Days." The collection could be viewed as a unified long poem, one sustained stream of the author's consciousness. But I prefer viewing it from a formal standpoint as a voluminous, non-iconic outpouring with natural topography of dales, outcroppings, fissures, hills, cities.

In his happiness, in his quiet place, Rothenberg is unhappy, lost. He talks about this, about wishing he were in other places. He talks about his rather being in New Orleans. He becomes conscious of being Jewish. He strikes at friends, at obstacles and delays. To a great degree, the material of his poetry is that of a journal or day book. In the way that it imbues the everyday with the contemplative and philosophical, it is

similar to *American* Post-Modernism, books such as Robert Lowell’s *Day By Day*, Wilbur’s *Things of This World*, Berryman’s *Love And Fame*. American Post-Modernism is novelistic, descriptive, rather than abstract. It employs the marginal and the discarded, the muted middle-class endeavor as the subject matter of its poetry. Beat writing and Rothenberg do the same, perhaps more radically, more graphically, as in Ginsberg’s *Kaddish*—or as in Rothenberg

Oh, this aching world.
I must get over it quick!
That mist in the oaks
as thick as fire
It’s a pleasure to be an angel!

Anselm sends the Collected Poems of Marianne Moore
I think he knows me better than I thought
Or we just happen to be on the same wave length

—

A blind fury escapes my mouth.
Dry mouth. Singing gums and lips.
A scream passes through my torso into the tree limbs until it finds the browning leaves,
red and orange-gold leaves. My probing fingers,
I try to stop the bile. It’s a mind working on its own, a virus from a genetic mutation, an instruction from another afterworld inflames the tendons in my shoulders.
My fingers whisper kindness because I was taught to be good.

Like the Post-Modernists, Rothenberg brings in the menial and unpicturesque.

Yesterday the toilet turned jackhammer
(some kind of air pocket in the pipes)
How much will that cost?

Dog needs his teeth cleaned
Trunk release won’t release

This has also to do with Kerouac’s notion about the inadvisability of editing. The material of writing is the *difficulty* of life, not a preconceived palatable misrepresentation. Kerouac was concerned with the fact that human instinct covers rather than reveals what needs saying, an instinct that leads ultimately to the abyss. Rothenberg is good at recalling obstacles encountered in the daily journey.

“The door’s wide open!” Terri says
“I did that on purpose” I say
“I know but you’re letting in all the bugs.”

In passages and sections that hearken back to the Modernists themselves, Rothenberg makes out of the despised and discarded an exalted and encapsulated holistic vision. In truth, there is proportionately much less use of world events or everyday descriptiveness in *Indefinite Detention* than in previous Rothenberg collections. The ethical commentary, the philosophical underpinning of all that is written is much more thoroughly and prominently present in the writing.

Wake up and smell the roses. The plastic pinwheels that smell like hoses in a suburban summer.
Sprinklers play church music.
A sad commentary on physics.
The flight of stones, agate, and molecular bits and pieces threatening to blow up this world. Unless we map it quick.
Mars and the living dead.
Cigars from pre-revolution Cuba smoking from his head. He spits in the street and looks uphill as the trolley rolls back down and crushes his alligator shoes.
Another species lost.
Map those meteorites and comets quick or we’re done for, any day eventually, and inevitably. Make laser guns and pinpoint razor bombs to annihilate small buildings headed our way.
Better do it now. Map it!

The end of “Head Shed”—as is the end of Eliot’s *Wasteland*—is essentially a visual

poem, consisting of isolated English words, Latin, French, German phrases—symbolizing our world’s broadly historical and multi-cultural foundation—a paragraph of automatic writing from various names from other times and cultures, with the last lines of

Pole shift

Earth change

Cosmic convergence

Hajj.

“Take ye heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is.”

* * *

Rothenberg’s expressions of discontent are real enough, but they also are an aesthetic feature of his mosaic of the times. They represent the plaintive cry. As Hannah Arendt writes about Bertold Brecht (and this should be true to some degree of every good writer), “He never let himself be seduced by purely psychological considerations and always saw the comedy of a sentimentality which would like to measure the maelstrom of events with the yardstick of individual aspirations.” In general, anger, wars amount to being seduced by self-interest and purely psychological considerations. Despite certain undeniable quizzical longings and provocations, Rothenberg the writer stands at a distance from Rothenberg the generic human character in the poem. In *Indefinite Detention* Rothenberg places his material in a larger context. The absolute becomes temporary and baseless; common consideration becomes enduring salvation. Dog becomes God. The book’s inscription from Lawrence Ferlinghetti—“The dog trots freely in the street and sees reality and the things he sees are bigger than himself...”—informs us from the start that the collection is made out of actions and emotions from a world-wide perspective, the big picture. “I’m not cynical. I’m an idealist. An anti-utopian idealist.” In the end, Rothenberg is offering *Indefinite Detention* as a faithful redefinition and reassertion of literary tradition.

*As long as the master lives
there remains objective evidence
of a beautiful tradition* [italics the author’s]

Some of the most memorable poetry in the collection is in the lines explicitly about Rothenberg and his dog, Ziggy, romping on the Pacific beach. At one point Ziggy barks at a raven on a rock.

The dog still barks, but can’t say exactly what he believes
Is that a dragon or civilization burning on the beach?

Coming in or going out
I can’t tell which way the poetry is running

A wave followed by another wave followed by another
A sleeper wave

Tide of the underworld rushing overall, blowing silver
Over shipwrecked shores and tortured skies

Rothenberg is, like the rest of us, in the prison of an indefinite world in which he cannot escape the duty of making decisions for himself. I think that this sort of limitation on our powers, this lack of absolute confirmation, especially puts a strain on our interactions with other people. What do we have to say to them? What do we tell them about our paltry selves? The thing we know is that certainty, especially certainty in uncertain times, in the times that impose on us a demand for answers and ask for subjugation, is a dangerous goal. In his poetry Rothenberg discovers reaffirmation.

We will wait
for your silent reply
Look for a word
and world of peace

The reason moments on a misty frothy beach are happy ones is because they give
(continued on page 22)

PHILIP LAMANTIA: REMARKS ON A REMARKABLE POET

Allan Graubard

It is very easy to say that the publication of this book is an event, and then trace through it this advance and that retreat, those themes and that encounter as if by such enrichment the poems took on qualities that they do not possess intrinsically: including the where, why and when of each of Lamantia's 12 books, and those poems that went unpublished during his lifetime but now appear. Or to detail the turns in his history fed by voyages, triumphs and despairs that nourish us or do not.

More significant, I think, for each reader is an intimate response to whatever work they encounter, in whatever period Lamantia wrote in, from his first appearance as a teen of 15 in *View* and *VVV*,¹ the realm of *Touch of the Marvelous*, to his final efforts five to six decades later in the aptly titled but unfinished *Symbolon*.

And as a reader, like you, I take that route, encountering and re-encountering works that by their metamorphic power have few equals. I should add that, having read Lamantia when 18 and 19, I discovered within this living presence a link to those from which I first, and previously, began to appreciate the wealth that poetry can bestow.² I also knew that Lamantia's was a realm that configured, within language and the silence that informs it, a possibility which at its best has not deserted me: the poem as genius loci, a place for erotic-magnetic meetings, convulsive leaps, sublime infections, and a transparency equal to the lyric that bears it. There may be other values here I have not mentioned, and I am certain there are. But this is enough to seize upon, as Lamantia did, making of the poem, in advance of action, an incendiary force in constructing how we live and what we live for. The poetic as an ethical medium for the freedom it conjures and enchants us with...

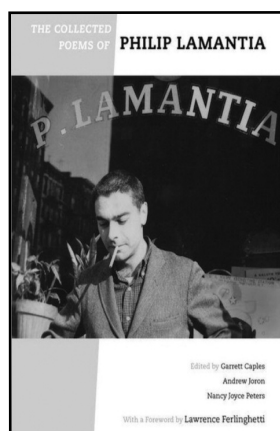
That Lamantia's full array of choices are not my own; that most of his visionary religious poems finally deaden rather than enliven me, and that he seems in his later period to have fallen prey to a kind of logomania that does not, and I believe cannot, substitute for the authenticity of the poetic, that voice which while solitary fully realizes its power in proportion to how well it communicates, is, no doubt, what also makes him poignantly human. Who does not find in his opacities subtle revenge upon the demands that life makes of us? So, while I do not discount these works, I rarely return to them.

In counterpoint, there are several of his collections that reveal supreme values: the aforesaid *Touch of the Marvelous*, then *Destroyed Works*, and *Blood of the Air*. Numerous other poems in other collections reach similar heights: "Terror Conduction," "Towers of the Rose Dawn," "Capricorn is a Wounded Knee," "Coat of Arms," "The Romantic Movement," "Bed of Sphinxes," "Becoming Visible," "Oraibi," "Bile Nature," "To Begin Then, Not Now," "Vibration," "The Jewels of the Vatican Board the Atlantic Cipher," "The Uncertain Sciences," "Egypt," and more and others, and more again.

Of those familiar with his work, you will note that the majority of these poems come from a certain period when his return to surrealism, and something of his origins as a poet, reformulated now for a mature man with greater context and experience, take shape. You will make of that what you will. Certainly, this is not evidence of a programmatic enclosure, excluding other works from other times written for other reasons and with other mechanisms. It is simply a list of poems that orchestrate and transmit vital epiphanies -- transparently, lyrically and umorously.

Yes, it's easy to say that this book is an event. It is. And if that's what does the trick for you, and gets you to open it and find your way to immense sudden confabulations and distinctive luminous rapports that embrace us, person to person, species to species, conscious beings to vegetal and material entities flickering with light, with darkness, with music and with silence, then so be it.

Philip Lamantia left us in 2005 at the age of 77. His poems remain. And in the absence of some of his titles, which are rarities now, and in which I prefer to read him, is this collection: a touchstone and stage upon which you can chart, as you desire, and as your desire finds, in Lamantia's words, "desire's desire," the arc of a life given to the sirens.



The Collected Poems of Philip Lamantia
edited by Garrett Caples, Andrew Joron, and Nancy Joyce Peters, with a Foreword by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, University of California Press, 2013



Philip Lamantia

¹Lamantia's poems debut in *View* in June 1943, the leading literary and art magazine in New York then, edited by Charles Henry Ford and Parker Tyler. That same year he appears in *VVV*, the organ of the exiled surrealist movement, edited by David Hare, Marcel Duchamp and André Breton.

²The names are familiar and, for a few of us at least, decisive: Poe, Baudelaire, Lautrémont, Rimbaud, Jarry, Picabia, Breton, Artaud...

Allan Graubard is a poet, playwright and critic. He is the author of the play, Woman Bomb/Sade. He is the author of the book of poems And tell the tulips the summer. He lives in New York City.

ROTHENBERG (continued from page 21)

us optimism rather than certainty—optimism about uncertainty, about the unknown. Rather than being divided from reality, we become connected with it. As Sartre writes,

When all instruments are smashed and useless, when all plans have come to naught and every conscious effort is senseless, then suddenly the world appears in a new childlike and frightening freshness, hovering freely and without marked paths.

Where are these absences and unmarked paths leading? Writing in the 1930s in an essay titled "Literature in a Political Decade," Philip Rahv and William Phillips stated that in previous decades writers had been "isolated from society" and "[driven] to extremes of individualism." Have we today in fact closed the door of difficulty? Have we inadvertently allowed ourselves to be seduced by cynicism and self-interest? At one point in Rothenberg's book the line appears (in quotation marks) "This is eternity." One thing that makes liberating sentient moments on a beach or in a woods into simulacra, one thing they tend to leave out is—other people. The passion and fervor of Whitman were meaningful not as a simple-minded categorical dismissal of sadness (rain) but as a participatory acknowledgment of and reconciliation with all emotions along with sadness during one of the most dire times in our nation's history. Whitman is associated with the open road, possibly even with the seashore. But he is also associated with the incredibly stark suffering of Civil War hospitals. Whitman places himself at the core of humankind, telling us that we don't reach eternity apart from our fellow human beings. Perhaps the happy place that Pacific shores reference in *Indefinite Detention* is an entirely different type of place, such as the offices of political campaigns. Perhaps we should view the opening section of *Indefinite Detention* as more than a plaintive cry but as a call for political action. Perhaps Rothenberg's disaffection and distance will soon realign themselves as a direct political writing.

Tom Hibbard is a poet and critic from California. His book of poetry The Sacred River of Consciousness is available online at Moon Willow Press a Hibbard is working on a new collection of poetry and further articles on visual writing.

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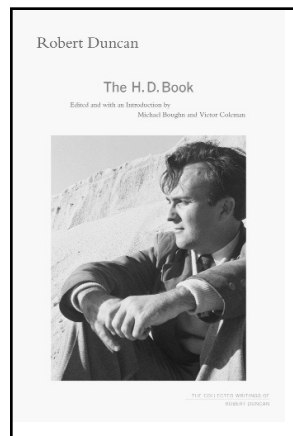
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THE H. D. BOOK

Mike Doyle



The H D Book
Robert Duncan
edited and with an
introduction by
Michael Boughn and
Victor Coleman
University of California
Press, 2011. 678pp.

An excellent thing at last, to have *The H.D. Book* in print in an elegant, well-edited edition. Responding to it, evaluating it, however, is a complex matter, much depending on any reviewer's position in relation to its writer and the book's context. In my case, this involves a personal engagement with two significant American poets, the writer of this book and its ostensible subject.

Duncan began writing the book in 1959 and engaged with it for the next five years. At the beginning, he corresponded with H.D. (1886-1961) for the last two years of her life. In November 1958, on a six-month UNESCO Artist's Fellowship, I spent the first month in San Francisco: Lawrence Ferlinghetti helped me find living quarters, I met Duncan, even attended one of Jack Spicer's workshops. Thus began my interest in the Black Mountain poets, notably Robert Duncan and Robert Creeley, later a long term friendship with Cid Corman. My direct interest lasted fifteen years or so.

Later, in 1967-1968, I spent a year as a Visiting Fellow in American Studies at Yale University, working on the poetry and career of William Carlos Williams. As it happened, during that year Duncan spent several months living in New Haven, Connecticut; on two occasions I met him for discussions, one notably on the poetics of Ezra Pound. In 1970 I invited him to Victoria. He gave two readings here, one in my house in Cordova Bay, the other at the university, and on one memorable occasion I took him to afternoon tea at the Empress Hotel, he being dressed in a harlequin jerkin under a capacious cape, a wide-eyed spectator of the local scene.

In that same Yale year I wrote *Earth Meditations*, a booklength five-part sequence of poems published in 1971 by Coach House Press, Toronto, whose editor was then Victor Coleman, co-editor of the present book. The trigger material for 'Earth Meditation 2', given me by Robert Creeley, acknowledges Duncan:

...sat
at a cook-out bench by Branch Brook
thumbing Duncan's Roots and Branches.
Stilled by the fine 'Apprehensions'
turned to the Blake bits, epigraphed
mental things alone are real.

This quote from long ago (Duncan is quoted again, later in the same section) is apposite in bringing me back to *The H.D. Book* to observe the first complication in my response. I do not believe that 'mental things alone are real', and don't recall that I ever have (I'm an Aristotelian!), which does not prevent me from respecting Duncan's view, or H.D.'s. In a quite direct sense, involving the Imagist movement in which H.D.'s work was so significant, concreteness, observation of the physically particular, became truly important, crucial even, for the vast majority of poets in the next hundred years. Duncan saw himself, and saw H.D., as 'seeing beyond' that condition, experiencing the 'numinous'.

Duncan greatly admired H.D.'s late poetry and attempted to follow her concern with hidden or lost modes of thinking as he does in Book 1 of *The H.D. Book*, 'Beginnings'.

As with me, it was a schoolteacher who put Duncan on to poetry: part of this introduction was H.D.'s, 'Heat', not an independent poem but second section of her early sequence "Garden", for Duncan a kind of epiphany connecting inner and outer reality, or the earthly with the numinous.

On H.D.'s behalf, Duncan sets about redefining the 'image' of Imagism away

from *quidditas* back towards 'an intellectual and emotional complex', towards what he calls the mythopoeic, 'a numinous event in language, a showing forth of a commanding Reality...'. One might here pause to wonder whether the dichotomy is necessary. Duncan notes that H.D.'s fellow American Imagist, John Gould Fletcher, reviewing her slim volume, *Sea Garden*, says: 'It is really about the soul...'. At this point, Duncan's thinking about H.D.'s realm of discourse (and Pound's) is subtle and deeply interesting, connected with Neo-Platonism, the Image as Idea, involving in poetry every aspect of the poem including the line movement ('A new cadence means a new idea').

With a main text of 590 pages (a useful further 70 appended), this is a long work. For a book rooted in the life of the intellect and the spirit, it is a pleasurable read because Duncan writes well. It might as easily have been titled 'The Robert Duncan Book' (The R.D. Book?) for, as much as anything, it displays the play of his mind, an inclusive mind, that ranges, often with vivid empathy into the minds and work of many others, widely known artists or people private to Duncan himself. The last ten pages of his long opening chapter, for example, respond to Joyce's slim volume of poems *Chamber Music* in the context of two women, one Italian – one Jewish, given only forenames but radiantly present. In the opening sentence of Chapter 2 he sees his immediate theme as 'how I found my life in poetry through the agency of certain women'.

Soon one begins to wonder whether the work might be offered as 'The Book of Poetics', then a little later as 'The Book of Eros' or 'Eros and Poetry', an Eros multifaceted and uninhibited, in considering which we find Duncan deeply immersed in Biblical and other classical mythology, always distinctly including the feminine. In much of this he follows Ezra Pound, Pound citations taking a full page of the 18-page index.

In a relatively brief review, it is not possible to explore the whole book, which is divided into two major parts. So far, I have been talking about 'Beginnings', in six chapters. At this point Chapter 5 deals with the occult, which Duncan approaches from two angles, the appearance of Madame Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* in 1877 and A P Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism* in 1883 ('midden heaps', Duncan calls them), their general effect and their effect on his family 'out west'. From here he proceeds to Yeats and the Order of the Golden Dawn and from thence to a (not so) brief history of late nineteenth-century hermetic movements. Duncan writes with fluent clarity and neatly blends family history with the cult history of the time and the beginnings of psychology. All this is rich meandering for the right reader, the movement continuing into 'Rites of Participation' (Chapter 6), an esoteric wandering among the links between ritual and language, threaded through a series of summarized texts. Duncan was a capacious reader with an adroit mind who could reconcile the internationalist or 'cosmopolitan' poetry of the 'exiles' (Pound, Eliot, H.D.) with the localism of William Carlos Williams and see them merging in 'a world-mind in process' 'to imagine one human Language from many tongues'.

The second, and longer, part of *The H.D. Book*, 'Nights and Days', in eleven chapters, begins more loosely constructed and rambles towards H.D.'s 'War Trilogy' (the original focus of Duncan's admiration) then to Olson and Projective Verse, from here weaving back through the H.D. – Williams

connection. Duncan's presentation becomes more memoir-like, but he is an adept cross-referencer among contemporary texts, back and forth in time, and between milieus. He adeptly interlaces minor figures, such as the novelist Mary Butts or Algernon Blackwood. Then he segues into German romantics such as Ludwig Tieck and E.T.A. Hoffman, and on. At times, he seems to over-elaborate, or put too much weight on, H.D.'s late work, but in doing so provides a treasure trove of reading. In the process, he stretches the definition of 'image' from the realm of concreteness, presence, immanence, into some kind of universal that one might go on exploring for evermore, to reach 'an eternal state of mind'. This can be a compelling strategy, but a dangerous one in stretching the task, or experience, all the easy way towards meaninglessness, rather than reattaining

(continued on page 26)



Robert Duncan, c. 1955
(Photograph by Jonathan Williams)

THE EXILE BOOK OF YIDDISH WOMEN WRITERS

Linda Rogers

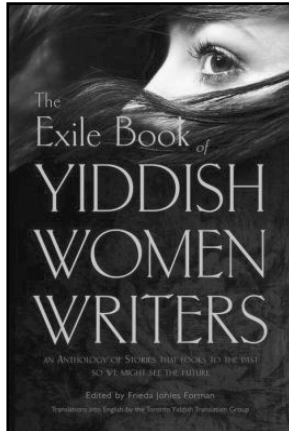
We can imagine the translators getting together over tea in glasses and poppy seed cookies, their laughter and tears as they gathered this book of women's short stories in Yiddish. It is a cookbook of sorts, beginning with the main street in Rifkele's *shtetl*, "without even a name stretched out like a noodle," the One Story of human beings stirred, baked and eaten - kugel knitted and purled and shared by successive generations.

The committee might argue that only a woman would describe a street full of huts filled with good cooking smells. For so long, the culture that separates men and women at worship has been largely represented by male writers. Now the women have an opportunity rise up singing.

There is no doubt that Yiddish writers like Isaac Singer live in the pantheon of great storytellers. His seamless ironies endure, but his was an uprooted man's world saturated by nostalgia for patrimony and populated by hummingbird boys bouncing from tree to tree, their nests destroyed by tyranny, leaving casually inseminated women to sing their own songs of lamentation.

The Big Interrupt that dropped the stitches, a common language and ritual, of course was the Holocaust, and this book begins with stories that define and defy empathy as humans are separated into apples and apples, the transcendent and compromised fruit that grows on the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

While the men tore (and tore off) their garments, the women cooked and continued to tell their stories so the children would not forget. *Nizkor*, they say, forgetfulness is carelessness, as we are reminded in Chalele Grober's luminous memoir, "In 1945, when the earth of my ancestors was incinerated along with the remnants of their descendants, I had the overwhelming desire to write down what I remembered; to immortalize the names of those who bestowed upon me their love and friendship; to transmit what I had received from my teachers and mentors; and to share the experi-



The Exile Book of Yiddish Women Writers: an anthology of stories that looks to the past so that we might see the future
edited by
Frieda Johles Forman
Exile editions, 2013



Yiddish women poets: Edith Kaplan Bregman, Celia Dropkin, Kadya Molodowsky

ences I had lived through along the way."

Yiddish is now infrequently spoken. A polyglot of Hebrew and European languages, it stands as a symbol of partial assimilation. Perhaps that does not fit into the parameters of the new political correctness. One thing is certain. These stories will live in translation and words from the diaspora will continue to surface in *Spanglish* and *Yinglish* and all other permutations in the evolution of our possible common international language.

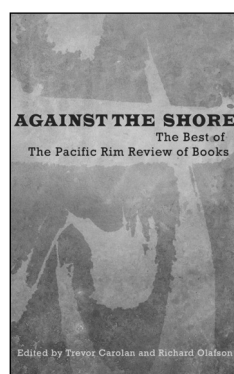
In this collection, stories of the Holocaust with the Yiddish theatrical conventions of changed identity and Chagallesque magical thinking, as in Lili Berger's "Jewish Children on the Aryan Side," stand beside folk tales that are evidence of the oral tradition that saw familiar archetypes in Jewish storytelling, many of which are introduced and explained in the following glossary, a grace note for the non-Yiddish-speaking reader.

This book reminds us of historical precedents, the narratives of first novelist Lady Murasaki, writer of the tales of Prince Genji, and other Heian period lady authors who wrote and spoke in the Japanese vernacular rather than imitative Chinese, which was the preferred language of scholars. This literature survives because it is real, just as Yiddish storytelling has the real furniture of *shtetl* village life, where women braided *challah* and gossiped and maintained tradition, and the private rooms of assimilated

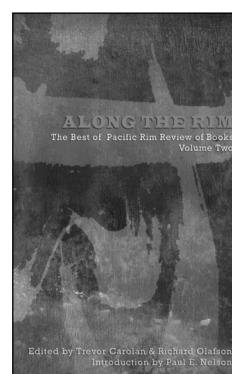
Against the Shore The Best of PRRB

Along the Rim The Best of PRRB, Volume 2

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& **Richard Olafson**



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From its inception in 2005, *The Pacific Rim Review of Books* has cast a close, constructive eye on contemporary literature. With the publication of these anthologies, the PRRB now confirms its place in contemporary Canadian arts & letters. Addressing a broad horizon of topics and issues in engaged East-West culture, serious poetry, international relations, history, and ecological inquiry, contributors include such distinguished writers as Gary Snyder, Josef Skvorecky, Red Pine, Rex Weyler, Andrew Schelling, and Michael Platzer, as well as many of the veteran and talented young West Coast writers whose work *The Pacific Rim Review of Books* has consistently championed.

Trevor Carolan has published 13 books of poetry, fiction, translation, memoir, and anthologies. Active in Pacific Coast watershed issues, aboriginal land claims, and Asia-Pacific human rights campaigns, he now teaches English at University of the Fraser Valley in Abbotsford, B.C.

Richard Olafson is an editor, poet, book designer and publisher. He has published a number of books and chapbooks, and lives in Victoria with his family. He is publisher of *The Pacific Rim Review of Books*.

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Jewish families of the Habsburg Empire where wealthy families were watched by servants spying for Imperial governments.

When the music of women is falsely attributed, as in the case of Fanny Mendelssohn whose brother took credit for her genius, women find alternate ways to voice their issues. Yiddish, like *Nu shu*, the Hunan women's secret dialect, with its domestic provenance is a perfect vehicle for the daughters of Adam's singing rib. It is not that men didn't understand *mama loschen*, but that they were distracted by study of the Pentateuch written in Hebrew, the father language.

On the surface, "The Shop" by Rokhl Brokhes is the tragedy of a gentle aesthete henpecked to death by materialistic womenfolk, and we grieve at his death by suicide. *Non servium*, Velvl shouts with his final act, but who should he have been serving: God, himself, or the family? No one is weeping for the women in this story who have been conditioned to support the benchwarmers at the *shul* with their domestic work and are left to repair a family in tatters. Brokhes's irony is not lost on women readers.

Self-inflicted death is a recurring theme in this book. Victor, the neurotic writer in Chava Rosenfarb's "A Cottage in the Laurentians" commits spiritual death when he writes the final draft of the life-sucking memoir that has destroyed his marriage in gibberish, perhaps his dying language, and suicide by default when he "accidentally" causes the fire that ends his mortal existence.

Suicide by men, a perverse convention in the Jewish diaspora, is an interesting phenomenon given men were the chosen among the chosen. It is another failure of the system of Talmudic law that women like the writers of these stories are beginning to challenge. Victor's wife, for instance, acts like a man when her marriage breaks down.

In her description of the Montreal Yiddish poet Ida Maza, who "walked like a foot bound woman", Miriam Waddington describes, in *Mrs. Maza's Salon*, the dual nature of the mama-didact. That familiar icon, the Jewish Mother may be in the process of radical transformation into the emancipated Jewish woman of the twenty-first century, but, "somewhere Ida Maza is still urging hungry poets to eat, and turning on the light in her dining room to illuminate a crowd of displaced Jewish writers. And behind them stretches a larger crowd, the long procession of every writer who ever wrote in whatever language. No matter. Each one paid his individual resources. And their traces still linger, marking out the path for all writers still to come."

Whatever their provenance, the women with stories in this collection are Everymother sharing the rituals and recipes, braiding the bread representing community.

Why, someone recently asked as yet another modern adaptation of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* hits the big screen, and the answer is because civilization changes and remains the same. Stories like the heartbreaking "The Holy Mothers" by Sarah Hamer-Jacklyn and Rachel Korn's "Shadows," where lost souls

seek desperate cures for loneliness, continue to remind us of who we are and who we ought to be in a possibly devolving world. These mortals are still fools who need instruction from writers like Chava Rosenfarb who "felt like an anachronism wandering across a page of history." This book exists to prove her right to write in her *mama loschen* and wrong in doubting the power of her legacy. *Nizkor*, never forget.

People's Poet and Poet Laureate Linda Rogers is the author of The Empress Trilogy, the saga of a Jewish-Chinese opium and rum running family in the Golden Triangle.

H.D.(continued from page 23)

(in Pound's words) 'the radiant world where one thought cuts though another with a clean edge'.

To finish I shall take one chapter, Chapter 4 of this second section, on Poundian *phanopoiea* ('throwing the object...onto the visual imagination' - 'faces on a wet black bough'), not forgetting *melopoiea* and *logopoiea*. Among other things, this involves the question of the cinematic technique of 'montage' and its possible relevance to poetry. Here Duncan comes in to the realm of what Robin Blaser would later call 'The Holy Forest', linking human language with 'the great language in which the universe itself is written' (p 314). Beyond this point, Duncan seems to equate the concept of the image with organic form or, as he puts it 'the poem as organic crystallization'. (p 327). Crystallization is a tricky word, in that it may be received either as 'concrete' (a crystal) or ('crystal-clear') as attribute. Anyway, in Duncan's case, in my view problematically, it takes us beyond the image as a concrete presence towards the realm of epiphany.



The editors and publisher have done a fine job with this book. Its capaciousness means it is not easy to review in brief, but to wallow in it is a deep pleasure.

Mike Doyle's latest book is the non-fiction Softwood Trumpets, a sequel to the earlier book Paper Trombones: Notes on Poetics. Ekstasis Editions published his Collected Poems 1951-2009 in 2010. He lives in Victoria.



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INTERVIEW WITH DENNIS MALONEY OF WHITE PINE PRESS

Gregory Dunne

This interview was conducted at Cid Corman's cake shop in Kyoto. I had traveled up to Kyoto from Miyazaki City in southern Japan where I reside; Dennis Maloney had traveled to Kyoto after a brief stay in Korea. We spoke for about an hour and a half, as customers came and went, and as we enjoyed chocolate cheesecake, home made ice cream, coffee, and tea.

Dunne: Good Afternoon Dennis. As you know, we are meeting today at CC's cake shop. This cake shop serves homemade American cake and ice cream and was established by the American expatriate poet Cid Corman some forty years ago. When I stopped by yesterday, Sachiko Konishi, the present owner, and Cid's sister-in-law Corman wife, told me that she was celebrating the fortieth anniversary of CC's. I was struck by the coincidence that the press that you founded, White Pine Press, and the cake shop were both celebrating forty years of operation. So with this rather auspicious occasion in mind, I would like to begin this interview with you.

You arrived in Japan about five days ago from Korea. Could I begin by asking you, what were you doing in Korea, and what brought you over to Japan this time?

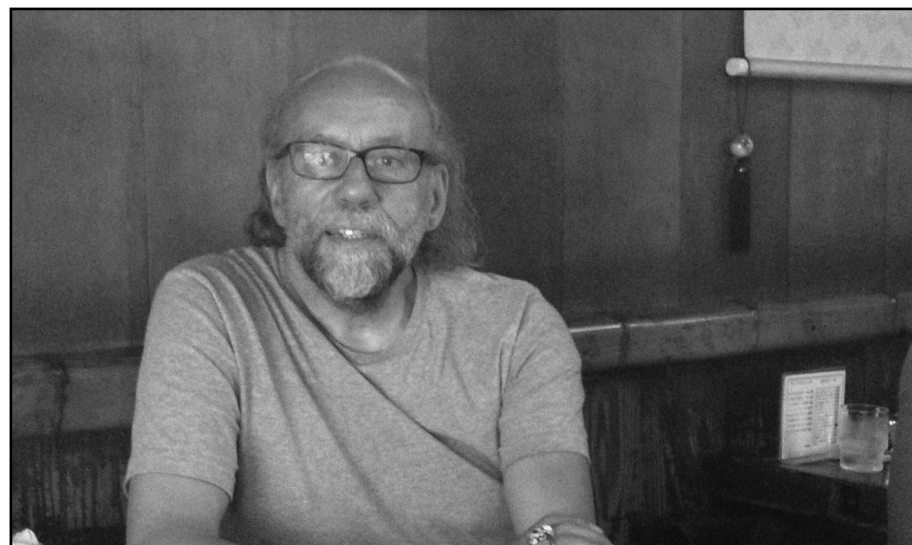
Maloney: I was in Korea to accept an award from the Korean Literary Translation Institute (KLTI) for our work in publishing Korean literature in translation. Twenty years ago we established a *Korean Voices Series* and have published nineteen volumes to date including both classic poetry and contemporary work. We have also recently signed a long-term agreement with KLTI to publish two volumes of Korean translation per year starting in 2014. I am visiting Kyoto this week to visit many old friends and to work with John Einarsen, the founding editor of *Kyoto Journal*, to finalize a book we are publishing in the fall of his photographs of Kyoto with poetry by our old friend, Edith Shiffert.

This year is also the fortieth anniversary of my first journey to Kyoto in 1973 when I studied here as a student.

Dunne: As mentioned, you are celebrating the fortieth year of White Pine Press this year. Could you talk about the genesis of the press – how it started – where it started, and the reasons that lay behind your decision to establish the press?

Maloney: I first encountered Kyoto in 1973 as a student doing an independent study of Japanese Gardens from my college, the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse, NY. I was trained as a landscape architect but was also writing and translating poetry and studying Zen as well, so there were many reasons to come to Kyoto when my program gave me the opportunity to do an independent study somewhere in the world. Gary Snyder was one of my early influences, both with his own work, and his translations of the Cold Mountain Poems, and those of Miyazawa Kenji, led me to the cultures and poetry of Japan and China.

While I was in Kyoto I picked up a copy of *Poetry Nippon*, a magazine of Japanese poets writing in English. The group met monthly and their next meeting happened to be at Edith Shiffert's house so I phoned her and asked if it would be OK to attend. She invited me to the meeting and I stayed on afterward and we ended up meeting many



Dennis Maloney at Cid Corman's coffee house in Kyoto

more times and becoming good friends. She later introduced me to Cid Corman at the cafe where he hung out. This was early in 1973 so it was before he opened CC's where we are now.

Edith had lived in Kyoto for a decade by then, earning her living as a teacher, first at Doshisha College and later at Kyoto Seika University. I was inspired during my stay in Kyoto to establish the literary publishing house White Pine Press, now entering its fortieth year, to publish poetry and literature in translation. Edith was one of the first poets we published, and we are still publishing her work today.

One of the reasons for starting the press was my interest in translation and the fact that there were few outlets publishing literature in translation back then. The inspiration for this includes Cid's work with *Origin* but also Robert Bly's pioneering work with *The Sixties Magazine* and Press which brought a lot of foreign poets to the attention of the US reading public for the first time.

In the early days, I was a recently graduated student with little in the way of funds so our first efforts were rather modest – small postcard folio's, the first of which was titled "Japan" and included poems by Edith and Cid along with several of the Japanese poets who wrote in English. After that, we graduated to chapbooks and several years later to perfect bound books. Along the way we also found out about various grant sources including the New York State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts, which continue to fund us to this day.

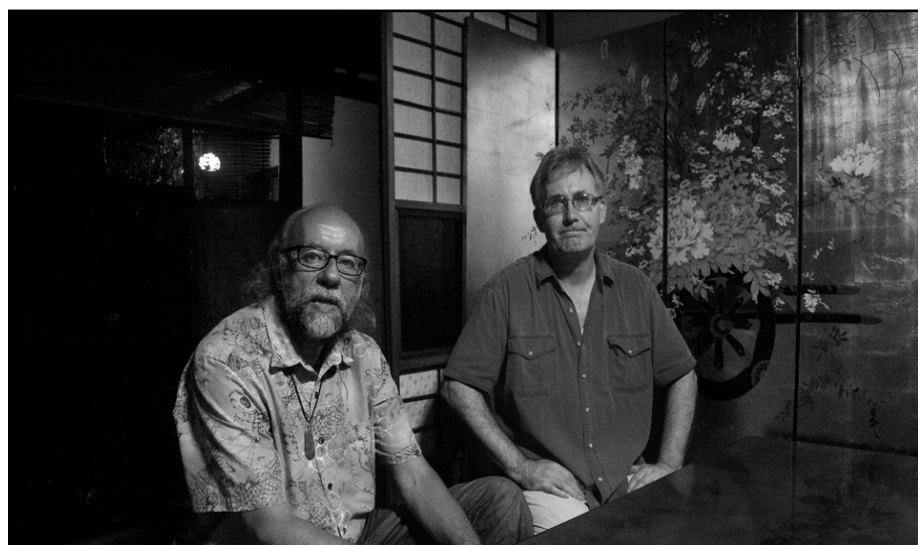
Dunne: Did you have any fears or concerns in starting up a press? When you began, did you imagine you would keep it going so long?

Maloney: In the beginning I didn't have any fears largely because I didn't know what I was getting myself into. I sort of learned by doing and asking other editors for advice. Over the years through meeting other editors at book fairs and other events I began to develop long term friendships with many. I had no thought when I started that I'd still be here forty years later publishing and also had no idea we would grow into the presence we now have from such humble beginnings. As the song says, "Still crazy after all these years."

Over the years we have benefited from several key developments in our growth. The advent of computers made book design much easier. A key development grant from the Lila Wallace - Reader's Digest Foundation allowed us to hire Elaine LaMattina fulltime as our Managing Director. She has been responsible for all of our book design and copyediting. This allowed us to increase our output to 10 - 12 books per year and upgrade the look of our publications significantly.

Dunne: Where their any mentors that helped you early on with the press – that gave you encouragement or support of any kind?

Maloney: There were a number of mentors in the early days. Alan Brilliant of Unicorn Press was an old hand at publishing poetry and translations. He published the work of Vietnam poets during the Vietnam War bringing a face to the so-called enemy. His work was an act of political courage at the time. Others later included Sandy Taylor,



Dennis Maloney and Gregory Dunne in Kyoto

the editor at Curbstone Press, Allan Kornblum at Coffee House Press, and Sam Hamill at Copper Canyon among others. They were very generous in sharing their knowledge and resources.

Dunne: What advice would you have for those considering starting up a press?

Maloney: It is both easier and more difficult to start a publishing venture these days. Easier in that with the advent of computers and digital publishing it is much easier to design and publish a book than ever before. Difficult in that the bookstore environment has significantly changed from when we started. In the old days there was a network of 6000 plus independent bookstores around the country. After the rise of the chain bookstores, those being Borders and Barnes & Nobel, many of the independent bookstores went out of business. In the subsequent years, the landscape has changed further with Amazon taking over a larger share of the book business. The Border's chain has now disappeared and Barnes & Nobel is struggling to stay in business. Independent bookstores, those that have found a way to stay alive, are now making a comeback.

I think some of the younger editors starting up small publishing ventures are communicating with their audience almost entirely online through social media, blogs, and are developing new ways of reaching their market.

Dunne: In addition to being a publisher and an editor, you are a poet and a translator, as well as a landscape architect. Could you talk about how publishing and editing influenced, and/or affect your work in these other areas?

Maloney: I heard Gary Snyder read when I was a student and he suggested that poetry should be your avocation rather than your vocation since, unless you were going to be a member of the Academy, it would be very hard if not impossible to make a liv-



ing at it. As it happened I had a trade that I was studying, landscape architecture. Soon after graduation I was lucky enough to land a job with the City of Buffalo designing parks and playgrounds. I stayed there in various capacities for thirty-four years until my retirement in 2007. It provided a steady income and now a decent pension, which allows me to pursue my literary activities. I think the training has helped me in other areas. For example in translating poets like Antonio Machado and Pablo Neruda, I have been able to make better word choices because of my background.

I think being a translator has made me a better poet since translation is such an act of sympathy with the author you are translating and by doing a close reading of their work and trying to transform the work into good poems in English. The work of being a publisher and editor has certainly widened and deepened my knowledge of poetry, much for the better.

Dunne: In perhaps a somewhat similar question as the above, I would like to ask you what unexpected events – surprises – have come to you through your activities with the press?

Maloney: One has been winding up in expected places; including where we sit right now is Cid's old cafe. A great joy has been to meet many of the authors we have published. In the late 80s we took a trip to Sweden for a Scandinavian book fair. There we met Tomas Tranströmer, the recent Nobel laureate, six months before his devastating stroke. We had met him previously when he read in Buffalo many years before but the meeting in Sweden was particularly memorable because so much changed for him shortly after. On the same journey we went to Norway and visited the two fathers of Norwegian poetry, Olav Hauge and Rolf Jacobsen both of whom were in their late eighties at the time. On my several trips to Korea, I have met some of our authors there and they have become good friends. Also we have made many good friendships with the authors we publish in the US.

Dunne: What role does the small press publisher play in the life of literary culture of our time?

Maloney: I think the cultural role of small independent literary publishers has become increasingly important in this age. Much of the commercial publishing in this country, mainly centered in New York City, has with a couple of small exceptions been taken over by conglomerates whose interest is solely in the bottom line rather than the

type of literature they are publishing. Much of the serious fiction, poetry, and literature in translation has shifted to University and independent literary publishers.

Dunne: How does one keep a small press alive and flourishing for forty years? What is the secret of that success?

Maloney: With great difficulty. Since, like many other literary publishers, we are non-profit organization we must rely on government funding agencies, private foundations, foreign grant sources, and the kindness of friends and strangers to support our publishing efforts. By and large the books we produce are not commercial enough to support themselves in the marketplace so other sources of support are necessary. We view what we publish as a cultural activity essential to presenting the literary diversity that exists in the US and around the world.

We have been successful at obtaining grants from various government and foundation supported organizations in foreign countries to support the translation and publication of their literature into English.

Dunne: How many books has White Pine published over the course of its forty years? How many books do you currently have in print?

Maloney: We have published over 400 titles in our forty years. Much of the early material has been out of print for some time. We probably have close to 250 books still in print. We look at our backlist closely and try to keep books that still have a sales life in print. In some cases the books have become part of a larger book with another publisher or we feel there is no longer a market for a particular title. We are in the process of seeking grant support to reprint a number of our key backlist titles that continue to sell, mainly for use in college courses and also to convert some of them to the e-book format.

Dunne: How do you acquire manuscripts?

Maloney: We acquire manuscripts in a variety of different ways. Some arrive unsolicited through the mail, some are suggested by the various series editors or advisors we have, and some work we solicit.

Since we publish a great deal of literature in translation we are often approached by translators that are working in languages we are already publishing in. I have also been a member of the American Literary Translators Association (ALTA) for over 30 years and often attend their annual conference. There I have a chance to meet other translators and hear them read from their work and often encourage them to submit to us when the manuscript is ready. We have several ongoing translation series including: The Secret Weavers Series of Latin American women's writing; Terra Incognita: Writing from Eastern Europe; and the Korean Voices Series of classic and contemporary work from Korea.

In addition we publish the Marie Alexander Series, largely a series devoted to prose poetry, which is edited by Robert Alexander and c.

Dunne: What contests is White Pine Press currently sponsoring?

Maloney: We currently sponsor the White Pine Poetry prize, now in its 19th year. This prize is open to any US poet and guidelines can be found on our website. We have also recently collaborated with the University of Missouri, Columbia and The Cliff Becker Endowment to publish the winner of the The Cliff Becker Book Prize in Translation. This is the first prize to publish a book of poetry in translation. It is named after Cliff Becker, who until his passing, was the Literature Director of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Dunne: Since first encountering White Pine Press some years ago, I have associated it with translation. Was this a deliberate decision on your part to focus on translation from the start? If so, what prompted that?

Maloney: As we spoke about earlier, when I started White Pine Press translation was a main focus from the beginning influenced both by my own interest and work in translation along with the realization that there was very little work in translation being published in the US. The situation has improved in the past two decades with other literary publishers focusing on translation as well but translations of serious literature still make up less than 1% of the books published in the US every year.

Dunne: Wow, that is a remarkable statistic in a world that is ever more intercultural involved. White Pine is not only publishing translations from Asian countries but it is also publishing translation from European countries. Could you talk some about the evolution of that activity? When did you begin publishing works of translation from Europe? How involved is the press with such work now? What recent translations from Europe has the press published?

Maloney: We have always had an interest in work from Europe. Early on in my writing career the poet Robert Bly introduced me to the work of a number of European and Latin American poets, particularly those from Spain and Latin America. Eventually I translated some of them myself including Pablo Neruda, Antonio Machado, and Juan Ramon Jimenez. In addition to these we have published translations of a number of other European poets including: Francis Ponge, Jacques Prévert, Jean Follain, Max Jacob, Tomas Tranströmer, Rolf Jacobsen, and many others. We have recently published our first translations from Polish and German.

Dunne: I would like to turn the conversation to a discussion concerning some of the

Kyoto-based poets that you have published over the years. For nearly as long as the press has been in operation, you have published the work of Edith Shiffert. Although Canadian born, and raised in the United States before coming to Japan, she is not a poet that is widely known in the US today or Canada, for that matter. Could you tell us about her? We spoke earlier of how you met. What attracted you to her work? What can readers expect to find in her poetry and in her translations?

Maloney: When I first met Edith we shared the idea of the ancient Asian tradition of the poet/hermit that many American and other poets have embraced. Her early work reflects a life in nature, particularly her second book, *For a Return to Kona*, which revisits her early years homesteading on the Big Island of Hawaii. I learned more of her life as we became friends over the years.

While she would probably never refer to herself as a feminist, she was certainly a woman who choose her own path at a time when very few dared to do so. She was born in Toronto, Canada, in 1916, she spent most of her youth in upstate New York before moving to Redondo Beach, California, in the mid 1930s. In 1938, at the age of twenty-two, she traveled alone to Hawaii, first to Honolulu and then to the Big Island. There she met and married her first husband, Steven Shiffert, with whom she homesteaded on the Big Island during the war years. After the war, she and her husband moved first to Washington, where they constructed a log cabin near North Bend, and then moved on Alaska for several years. After she and her husband separated, Edith, at age forty, enrolled in the University of Washington to study poetry with Theodore Roetke. She remained there from 1956 to 1962.

After she graduated she moved to Kyoto, in 1963, on the advice of a friend, first teaching at Doshisha College and later at Kyoto Seika University. She taught long enough to receive a pension, a rare thing for foreigners living in Japan. In 1981 she married Minoru Sawano, a retired teacher, and they shared an active life until his death in 2004. After her arrival in Kyoto much of her work took on a Japanese sensibility and was physically rooted in old Kyoto. Her first book published after her arrival, *The Kyoto Years*, reflects that. She loved to hike and spent many hours walking the hills around Kyoto and learning the names of the flowers, trees, and birds.

We have seen each other many times both here in Kyoto and in the US on her trips there. In 2006 I had the great pleasure of reading with her for the first time in one of her last public readings. She is now living in an assisted living facility here in Kyoto. In addition to her own work she has co-translated several books of Japanese poetry, most notably one of the first anthologies of Modern Japanese Poetry to be published in English and Haiku Master Buson, which for many years was the only full length collection of his work in English.

Dunne: I understand that you are preparing to publish a new work that will include some of Edith's poems. Could you talk about that?

Maloney: Part of the reason for my trip to Kyoto this time is to work with her and John Einarsen, the founding editor of Kyoto Journal, to finish up work on a book, *Kyoto: The Forest Within the Gate* which we will publish in the fall of 2013. The book is a longtime collaboration of Edith's poetry with John's photographs of Kyoto. It will celebrate Edith's half century of living here.

Dunne: Another Kyoto poet that you've worked with for many years was the late Cid Corman. Could you talk about what it was like to work with him?

Maloney: I knew Cid much less than Edith and only met him a couple of times in person over the years. Once or twice in Kyoto and once in Buffalo when he was doing a reading tour of the US. We usually met, as most people met Cid, through exchanges of those famous blue aerograms. I was familiar with his translation of Basho's *Back Roads to Far Towns* and thought it would make a great addition to our list. He agreed to our publication and a Japanese artist friend, Hide Oshiro, offered to paint *sumi-e* illustrations for the book. So a new collaboration came about and we published it in

the mid 80s. We reprinted it a few years ago in a small 5" x 7" format in a series we publish called, *Companions for the Journey*, small format books, many Asian classics,



that you can fit in a bag or jacket pocket.

While there are many versions of Basho's journal out there, Cid's is unique in that he choose to try and replicate the style of the original and many folks think he succeeded admirably.

Dunne: The late British poet and translator, David Jenkins, was another Kyoto-based poet whose work you have published: *Simmering Away: Songs from the Kanginshu* (2006). You rescued this out-of-print book and re-issued it. Could you speak to why you decided to keep this book in print? What did you find within it that recommended its being kept in print?

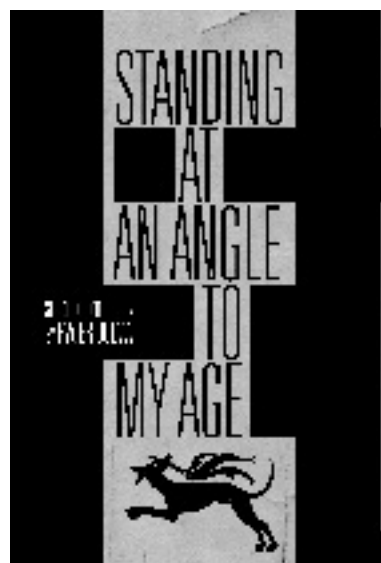
Maloney: I became acquainted with David's work through some mutual friends in publishing who published some earlier translations of his. On one of my trips here I met David and he gave me a copy of a hand bound Japanese edition of *Simmering Away* he had put together with some of his friends for an exhibit here and I thought it would make a great volume in our *Companions for the Journey* Series. Michael Hofmann, the *sumi-e* painter had done some illustrations for the original Japanese edition so I asked him to contribute some additional work for our book. Unfortunately David passed away unexpectedly around the time the book came out.

Dunne: Thus far we have talked about the press and about some of the poets whom the press has published. I would like to topics a bit and finish up by asking you about your own work as a poet and as a translator. What works of translation have you been involved in recently, and what works do you intend to translate in the future?

Maloney: I have been translating for over 40 years. I began inspired by the Spanish and Latin American poets Robert Bly had introduced me to. I started translating some poems of Pablo Neruda with two years of high school Spanish and a big dictionary. A few years after I graduated from college and had more time I decided to tackle a whole book of Neruda's. I learned from that experience and decided to work with co-translators who could give me a rough English version to work from. What I found I did best was to recreate them as good poems in English, which I found much more satisfying. I have gone on to co-translate two additional book of Neruda with various hands. Working with Mary Berg we have done *The Landscape of Castile* by Antonio Machado and *The Poet and the Sea* by Juan Ramon Jimenez.

I have also done some co-translation from the Japanese with my now departed friend, Hide Oshiro. Together we translated a volume by the Zen poet, Ryokan (*Between The Floating Mist: Poems of Ryokan*), a book of love poems by Yosano Akiko (*Tangled Hair: Love Poems of Yosano Akiko*) and the classic anthology, *Hyakunin Isshu: 100 Poems by 100 Poets*.

(continued on page 30)



"[These works] inhabit a wide range of genres and modes, but are distinguished by the steady craft of an elegant literary stylist. Bridgman's carefully polished stories perform agile narrative feats: one page evokes a full-length short story; ten pages read like a novel. Each piece is an experiment and P.W. Bridgman is a writer of exceptional talent ..." - David Stonck, Professor Emeritus, SFU, in *B.C. Bookworld*

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VANCOUVER NOIR 1930-1960

Heidi Greco

A first glance at a copy of *Vancouver Noir* might lead you to expect it to be a book of photographs. And it is. Only it's a whole lot more than a coffee table book.

The black and white cover shows a '30s vintage car being pulled on chains up and out of a watery grave. God knows who or what might be inside. As a cover, the image is brilliant, luring potential readers with the promise of murky secrets revealed. And the secrets contained are many – the result of a vast amount of research by Diane Purvey and John Belshaw. Both are affiliated with universities – Purvey with Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, Belshaw with Langara in Vancouver. Each of them has an impressive list of publishing credits and the two of them have worked together before, notably on a 2009 title from Anvil Press, *Public Mourning: The Rise of the Public Shrine in BC*. To say that their research appears to be thorough would be an understatement. The book's bibliography runs six pages; endnotes – and in a compressed font at that – extend for a full 13.

Yet, despite their extensive qualifications as members of academe, their account of these three pivotal decades in Vancouver is anything but dry or stodgy. In part, it's designer Derek von Essen's artful layout that draws one in. He's incorporated well over 100 photos and maps into the text. But if the photos are the hook, the text is the meat. This marriage of image and text is most appropriate, especially when we stop to consider what *Noir* is all about. Most of us probably link the term most closely to film, those black and white classics, *The Big Sleep*, *Key Largo*, *The Maltese Falcon*. Yet the authors expand on this, proposing that Vancouver went through a phase when the values of *Noir* were embodied in the very growth and development of the burgeoning city.

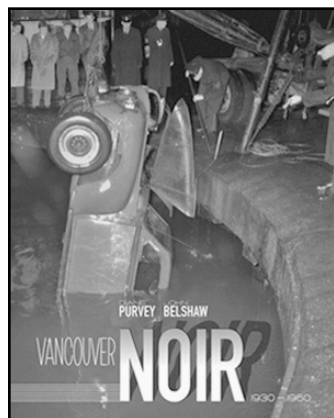
Appropriately, they employ the Speed Graphic camera as the primary vehicle for their argument. Light enough to be portable, yet solid enough for an able photographer to document events, it served as *the* press camera of its day. With its three viewfinders, it allowed the shooter to select the most appropriate point of view for confirming what the photo would contain. The Speed Graphic's back panel opened to reveal a screen-like square on which the photographer could check the image's composition. Because this view corresponded to what the lens saw, the image revealed was upside-down and reversed horizontally, left to right. The idea of a camera with three viewfinders as a guiding metaphor for this book is apt, considering the many new points of view on Vancouver's history which it presents.

An example of one such distinctive point of view is embodied in a map on page 34. Not the usual representation of the city, it looks South from Burrard Inlet, with Chinatown, Strathcona and the old Central School districts in the foreground. The map's compass rose orients South at its top, with West on the right and East on the left – the same upside-down and horizontally-inverted image in which the camera 'sees' the world. Appropriately, van Essen has placed this map directly above a section header called "Reimagining Vancouver".

Most of the book's photos are from police or newspaper files. Aside from depicting street scenes or political figures of the day, many provide a sometimes-gory look at car crashes or streetcar incidents or even murders. But if this book is beginning to sound like mere titillation, nothing could be further from the case.

The first chapter could stand alone as a one-of-a-kind history of the city. Unlike the 'usual' portrayal of a city's growth, Purvey and Belshaw offer remarkable insights into the chasmic divisions we still see in some of today's Vancouver with its East/West mentality. The Downtown Eastside, with its all-too-well-known Skid Road, seems to have been an actual construct – an area deliberately set apart from the upper crust (read: white) inhabitants of the city's west side. This appears to be an outgrowth of racist attitudes and policies that fed on the concept of a 'Yellow Peril' during the first half of the 20th century. And it wasn't only Chinese who were discriminated against as threats to the white population, though for a long while they seemed to bear the brunt of the abuse.

Prostitution has long been one of the Eastside's afflictions. During the '30s it provided fuel for a series of race-based confrontations between police and Chinese restaurateurs. The practice targeted by then-Chief Constable Foster was the "...use of white



Vancouver Noir: 1930-1960
Diane Purvey and John Belshaw
Anvil Press, 2011
222 p. \$25



John Belshaw and Diane Purvey

waitresses" in Chinatown restaurants. "The target may have been prostitution, not Chinatown waitresses, but increasingly middle-class reformers could not make this sort of distinction. In their failure, [Mayor Gerry Gratton] McGeer and Foster not only reinforced the prejudicial image of vice-ridden Chinatown and morally bankrupt, sexually predacious Chinese males, they effectively mined and paraded the *Noir* image of the woman of dubious morals. The Yellow Peril was invoked, not for the first time in Vancouver's history: white women were prey to the cold-blooded sexual appetites of the Asians. Inter-racial sex – long a source of visceral fear in a white community weaned on Social Darwinism, eugenics, and straight-ahead racism – resonated with the locals. When Foster found his efforts frustrated by the courts, he turned to the City's Licence Inspector, H.A. Urquhart, a like-minded bureaucrat who could close down offending restaurants. And offence came cheap: 'loose conduct' included 'a white waitress sitting down with a Chinese,' which was thought to be a sure sign that the sale of sex was being negotiated."

Yet any treatment of *Noir* would be incomplete if it only treated the sordid and criminal elements. The chapter on Glamour reminds us of the many stars who passed through the city, the vibrant nightclub and music scenes for which Vancouver was so well-known.

Glossy, with plenty to gawk at, *Vancouver Noir* provides more than mere glitz. The black-and-white vision of history it presents is one that's well worth investigating. I look forward to the next exploration into the past this team of researchers embarks upon.

Heidi Greco's most recent book is *Shrinking Violets* (2011), from Toronto's Quattro Books.

MALONEY (continued from page 28)

I am taking a break on translation right now to concentrate on my own work but I'm sure I will be tempted back into it at some point.

Dunne: What poetry projects are you working on presently?

Maloney: I am presently working on new poems, which hopefully one day assemble themselves as a book and a long-term project, a poetic prose book on Japanese gardens.

Dunne: Thank you Dennis for participating in this interview.

Maloney: Thank you for your attentive questions. It was a great pleasure to see you again in such a wonderful location and remember our dear old friends.

Gregory Dunne is a scholar living in Japan. He was a friend of Cid Corman's. Two parts of a memoir of Cid Corman by Dunne appeared in issues 3 and 4 of the PRRB. His memoir of Cid Corman will be published by Ekstasis Editions in 2014.

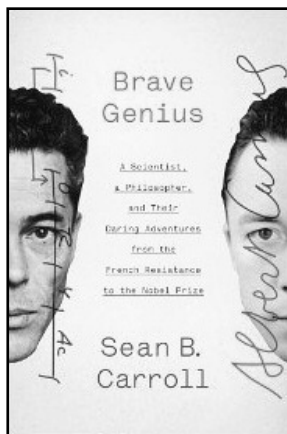
TWO QUIET GIANTS

Richard Wirick

Fast numbers of the French kept their heads down all during the German occupation. They were *collabos*, or collaborators, and if they were writers, their “craft and sullen art,” however compromised, was allowed—within the parameters of censorship—to flourish. If they did not cooperate, their creative efforts were vitalized, by cunning and subterfuge, while still keeping their essential character. Hiddenness let them hone whatever they did to a fine new sharpness.

Some figures, like (surprisingly) Samuel Beckett, involved themselves in dangerous, direct operations, like gun running, bombings, and highway ambushes. Others worked more subtly, but no less effectively. They supported the front line resisters whether it be with underground journalism, scientific assistance, or scattershot or pinpointed disruptions of the tentacular Nazi machinery.

Other figures operated with more subtlety. Two were Albert Camus and the molecular biologist Jacques Monod. Few had heard of both. Camus’s books were nearly everywhere, and were quite influential. Monod’s



Brave Genius
Sean B. Carroll
Crown: 473 Pages

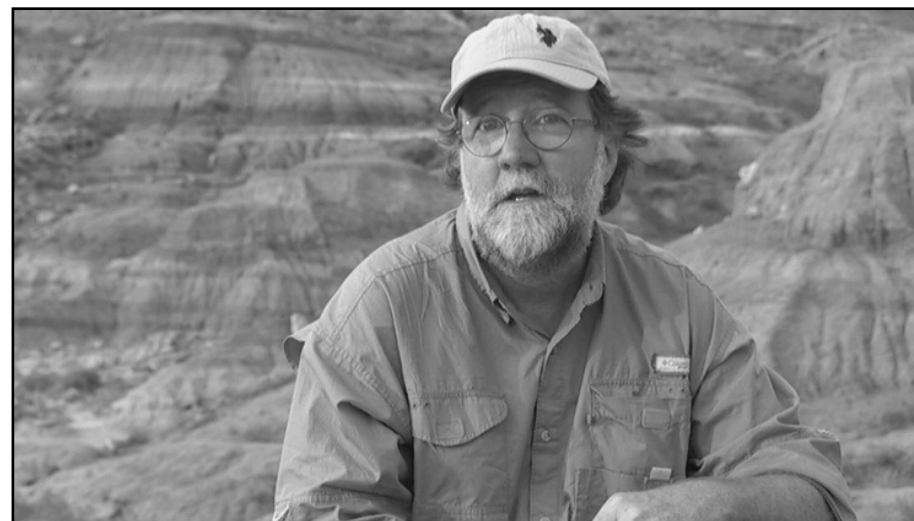


Albert Camus

were more abstruse and specialized, reaching a wider audience later, though he was not a “popularizer” of science or of his subspecialty. One crucial thing Camus and Monod shared was the formative experience of Occupation. Both had what the British call “a good war”. They were in the Resistance, and, while neither of them blew up any locomotives, shot any Germans or led any Jews to safety across the Alps, their courage was unquestionable. Monod, whose Jewish wife made it through the war with false identity papers, was a courier and an organizer; Camus was primarily a writer for the Resistance paper *Combat*. But these were dangerous things to do, and both had colleagues who were shot or taken off to the camps. Camus and Monod must have passed each other many times in the streets of occupied Paris, but there is no evidence that they then met. Their first meeting happened in September 1948, or, put another way, on page 290 of “Brave Genius.” The thoughts and doings of Camus and Monod here are woven through masses of background information, but the protagonists sometimes disappear for many pages.



Jacques Monod



Sean B. Carroll

Carroll sets out the correspondence between the two in less than 50 pages. The connection between the them was sort of backwardly reified when Monod flirted with philosophy in his “Chance and Necessity” (1970), where he stated he was emerging as a new incarnation of “[m]y friend Camus, albeit in a lab coat.” Monod had both artistic and philosophical tendencies and read his friend’s books, but Camus knew little about science. Nevertheless, they soon found some common sensibilities, and Monod’s personal copy of a book of Camus’s essays was inscribed by the author: “A Jacques Monod, sur la même chemin” (“on the same path”). It was a path partly marked out by anti-Communism. Monod had been in the Communist Party during the Occupation; Camus had a brief fling with it when he was a student in Algeria. They came out of the war despising both right- and left-wing totalitarianism. For Monod, the break finally came with Lysenkoist genetics—the same-mandated Soviet dogma that characteristics acquired by an organism during its lifetime were inherited by its offspring, and that the will of the proletariat somehow operated at the sub-molecular level. Some fellow travelling Western scientists felt obliged to defend Lysenko and criticize “bourgeois genetics,” but Monod denounced Lysenkoism for the pathology it was, and he left the party. Monod’s gesture impressed Camus. Revolutions, Camus wrote, tend to degenerate into repression; to be human was to rebel, if necessary to rebel even against a state wrapping itself in a revolutionary flag. Freedom was a human right, and the struggle to be free, to be authentic, and to oppose violence was a major basis of modern morality. There could never be a justification for barbarity and murder, or even for capital punishment. (See Camus’s brilliant long essay “Reflections on the Guillotine” in *Lyrical and Critical Essays*.) His friend Sartre, trying to look on the bright side of Stalinism, arranged for Camus’s *The Rebel* to be trashed in his magazine *Les temps modernes*, ending their long friendship in one of the great intellectual battles of post-war France.

In reality, how close was the Camus-Monod friendship? Though there were deep parallels in their work, Carroll does not foreground the precise encounters and communications other than through letters. There were letters and exchanges of inscribed books. There were never any speaking engagements, shared seminars, or mutual faculty tenures. Carroll, himself a scientist, deftly shows how close a tenuous and detached friendship can in fact be. And it was based on the overlap, the mutuality of their disciplines, which delighted the two men and many who worked with them. Monod’s molecular biology, with its serendipitous, eruptive creations out of seemingly nothing, grew to resemble the causal circus of quantum mechanics. One thing did not necessarily follow from another. Events did not lend themselves to covering-law models or hard science explanations. Carroll puts it succinctly: “Molecular biology had brought Monod full circle to Camus’s territory of the absurd condition—that contradiction between the human longing for meaning and the universe’s silence.”

The book is a fine testament as to how two fine minds from very different disciplines, forged in the crucible of war, could come together in a fruitful if intermittent collaboration.

Richard Wirick is the Los Angeles correspondent for the Pacific Rim Review of Books.

CURTAL SONNETS AND VODKA, SESTINAS AND CHEMOTHERAPY

James D. Sullivan

When Steve Davenport starts flinging words, you better duck or you might get smacked in the face with a curtal sonnet. Step into his new book *Overpass*, and you're liable to find a sestina wiggling up your pants leg. Then the only thing to do is remove those pants and run naked through his syntax for a while. As his earlier collection *Uncontainable Noise* (2006) had sonnets that could poke your eye out, this book, too, shows that form ain't dead: the dead don't yowl when you stuff their mouths full of jalapeños. Davenport carries around a pocket full of peppers for just such an occasion.

The poems are set in the American Bottom, a flood plain industrial wasteland tucked under the bluffs on the Illinois side of the Mississippi River from East St. Louis up through Alton and Grafton and on up to the mouth of the Illinois River. He described his literally toxic hometown (condemned land soaked in petrochemicals) in his non-fiction prose chapbook *Murder on Gasoline Lake* (2007). The central character in this new book is a friend he calls Overpass Girl. Most travelers, as they highway over the Bottom on their way to or from St. Louis, glimpse this land from the overpasses that carve it up. The smells and textures of that land have seeped into Davenport's soul, but they've entered Overpass Girl's body. Her breast cancer lies at the earnest center of all the poet's wit and fireworks.

Though he toys with some other forms—cinquain, villanelle, diminishing sonnet (fourteen syllables, thirteen, twelve, etc.)—the curtal sonnet (ten-and-a-half lines, three-quarters of a sonnet) and the sestina are the main formal commitments here. The curtal sonnet, more compressed even than its fourteen-line namesake, is for the curtailed state of Overpass Girl's life as the cancer consumes her. Parts of her body have been curtailed, cut off and stored: "Somewhere a container labeled right breast//flanked by four others. Lymph node, sentinel/one. Sentinel two. Axillary tail. Breast skin." Sestinas—the Davenport's struggle to work through another and another permutation of the same damn words—are his way of struggling along with her through wave after wave of chemotherapy.

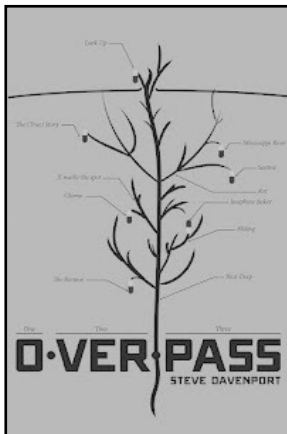
Overpass has only three sestinas, but they leap out as some of the wildest writing in this book full of bravura. What surer sign of passion is there than an angry break-up rant? "The Sestina Has Been Sinking" begins:

*Sestina, tonight's the night I push you off the overpass.
I'm done with your six kinds of hell. Your demanding sky,
your French complications, your clouds in my happy wagon,
your forty-two words for rain, your pearl-handled gun,*

But later, as happens after many a furious break up, "The Sestina Has Been Drinking." The problem is "That poem next door poured a bottle of Anne Sexton in me," and by the end, "Give a hammer half a chance and form's a thing to break/Ah hell, Jimmy crack the shine of your best moon over me/Sestina, O Sestina, this guy's in love with you still."

And later still, "The Sestina Has Been Thinking"—one of the finest American sestinas I know about. The sestina and Overpass Girl have, in a boozy way, become one. Six pills she has to take, pills that disperse and metamorphose in a body—or more visibly disperse when dropped into a glass of vodka—become the six words the poet needs to manipulate.

*Repeat the bowl of pills, Sestina, with a double shot.
Triple-spin the chamber of a pistol as steel-blue
as a vise clamped where a tit used to be, where mind,
Sestina, hollows a pipe like dumb prayer on a bad night,
shakes out another set of six, six times three, into a bowl,*



Overpass
Steve Davenport
Misty Publications
2012. 64 pages. \$15.

names them Shot, Blue, Mind, Night, Bowl, and the sixth Six.

The poem is about the treatment regimen, her scarred and sick body, and the repeated transformations worked upon it by cancer, surgery, and chemotherapy. The poem is about form and language, the transformations that the poet and the succession of stanzas work upon a set of words:

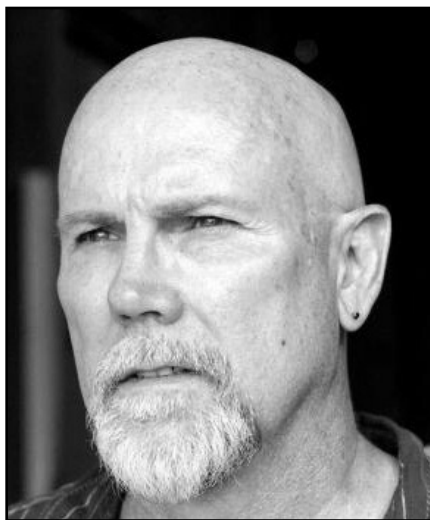
*I'm three hours away, door shut, floating, anything but blue,
this bottle and glass, this thin book, this tub an oblong bowl,*

*claw-foot, white, holding all this hot water and me, the ball
game on the radio and my rough hands making you mine,
Sestina, your lines, the six words I bend, your blue to blew,
your body cut, one tit short, more rot inside, the six to sick,
bowl to ball, mind to mine, the shot to something you'd shoot
if the needle liked you. Thought tonight's a repeating note,*

*a stuttering hymn. Lift a glass, Sestina, your vodka neat
as a cutter's line. I'll pour some mash for the healing bell,
a gift to guide next week's knife, to get it all, the killing shit,
the rot in and under that second tit. Rough as the moon,
my hands twist Shot to Shoot to Shit, Six to Sick to Sink,
beat Bell back to Bowl, Neat to Night, knock Blue to Blow.*

Verbal play is a way to try to confront, contain, and transform the psychic pain.

Davenport hopes his talent for sheer verbal inventiveness can build aesthetic joy out of American Bottom, the sordid place he loves. Formal verse, Overpass Girl, American Bottom: anything he says about one of them, he says about them all. But he knows the limitations of what a writer can do on behalf of all that grand wreckage:



Steve Davenport

*I want a bottom song getting happy
in an open field down by the river,
black folks, white folks, a few covered dishes
out past the temples I've made of rusting
abandonments. My stupid Kumbaya.*

What can he do for any of them or anybody else in that unclean home? What can he do but offer to transform such denizens as Coffee Joe, "local remedy for married women/who can't afford the full cure," or Murfy "in his two-room cabin/next to nine shitty bean rows and the outhouse/he calls Lake Isle of Innisfree. Wattle-and-daub/job, snot green paint, pastoral as all hell." He can place Overpass Girl, like Murfy, in a context of literary history. And if Murfy, pissing on a pile of empty bottles behind his cabin, seems shabby next to Yeats, then how do some of the refined moments of literary history look when Davenport places Overpass Girl next to them? For one things, vocabularies jumble: "Once again she's become as clouds veiling/the fucking moon. She's mutability/on display." Can the tradition find grace even in a biopsy needle, or is such pain too awful—"hollow/for twisting, crunching into, rotating/out an answer 2mm wide, //2cm long." To make up for such a graceless and painful fact requires a furious and wild dancing. What that place has done to Overpass Girl's body is sordid indeed, but Steve Davenport describes them both—the place and the woman—with affection.

This is the first book published by Susan Yount's Misty Publications out of Chicago, publisher of the inventive journal *Arsenic Lobster*. Starting off with Davenport, she's setting high expectations for this new project. I'm looking forward to seeing Misty try to top that.

James D. Sullivan lives on the edge of a tiny town in Central Illinois and teaches English at Illinois Central College. He is currently working on a follow up to his book on poetry and art, On the Walls and in the Streets: American Poetry Broad-sides from the 1960s.

BUTTERFLIES IN THE GHETTO

Scott Lawrance

"He who cannot attain his own visible field and vineyard is held fast by the dead, who demand the work of atonement from him. And until he has fulfilled this, he cannot get to his outer work, since the dead will not let him...Do not look forward so much, but back and into yourself, so that you will not fail to hear the dead." – Carl Jung, Red Book.I

Sitting in Starbuck's, going at these poems again as the fog rolls up Oak Bay Avenue, still trying to understand the hold they have on me. Halloween, All-saints, All-souls, the Day of the Dead, La Dia del los Muertos, is coming on, and that synchronicity provides me with at least some entrance into this question. But first, a few words of introduction.

Murray Reiss, in this handsomely produced book from Hagios Press in Regina, confounds the usual trajectory of the poet's career. His poems have previously appeared in several literary magazines and anthologies, as well as a chapbook, *Distance From the Locus* published in 2005, but this is his first full-length book of poems. This is a work that has demanded of the poet patience, silence and the long wait, despite whatever stirrings the author may have experienced in youth and younger days. "Not knowing how to live/I went searching for ancestral wisdom/not knowing where to look/I turned to my father's dead." This turning has given rise to this marvelous and unflinching book.

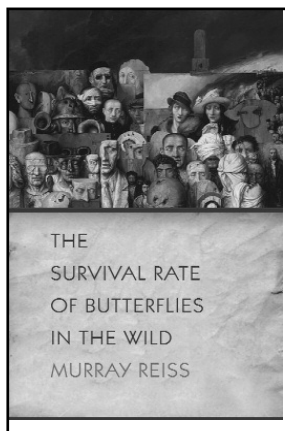
In some ways, it brings to mind Carolyn Forché's marvelous anthology, *"Against Forgetting: 20th Century Poetry of Witness"*. This book mirrors many of the poems in that work in tone and substance, but invites us to not only engage directly with not only the victims of the Holocaust, but equally, dance with the presence of their absence in the person of the poet and his family. The burden that is surrendered here is not merely personal, though if it were, that would be accomplishment enough. For Reiss performs here a shamanic and historical function, and brings us a gift from the dark underworld, which is a large part of why this reader finds himself, even as gey witness, an outsider, so engaged. I am reminded, in fact, of Ulysses, in the first canto of Pound's masterpiece, descending into Hades to confront Tiresias. The poet makes the blood offering and steps back.

The first poem in the collection, "Multiple Choice", creates a frame for much of what follows. The poem takes the form of a multiple choice exam beginning with , "After everyone my father:

- a) loved
 - b) left behind
- was:
- a) gassed
 - at: i) Belzec
 - ii) Chelmo
 - iii) Sobibor
 - iv) Treblinka
 - v) Auschwitz....."

and continuing in that vein. This journey to the underworld is similarly composed of a series of tests and examinations, but also riddles, jokes, and koans (those indecipherable conundrums of Zen designed to confound and collapse the rational, language entranced mind.) The figure of the psychopomp or underworld guide hovers in the shadowy basement of the book for its duration, wearing the vestment of double., fool, jester, or trickster more often than that of illuminator, least of all, an engineer. This figure comes and goes, bringing into focus another central theme, "disguise", while always flirting with its relationship with death, disappearance, annihilation and transformation..

The butterflies, which feature centrally in the focal poem of the book, act as a cipher for this activity: The poet and his wife visit a butterfly farm in Costa Rica where a video "explain(s) every turn of their complicated cycles of disclosure and disguise".



The Survival Rate of Butterflies in the Wild
Murray Reiss
Hagios Press



Murray Reiss

While, strictly speaking, the work adheres to neither the form or theory of the serial poem or to Olson's "composition by field", there is nevertheless a similar quality (energy?) to this book. The individual poems function holographically. Each poem, in and of itself, is virtually pitch perfect and each deserves quoting at length. But what captivates and enchants is the cohesion of the work, the book functioning as a whole, with each poem mirroring, resonating, and vibrating with the others.

This trickster guide functions by providing a series of tests. While answers are not readily provided, the poems provide a container within which questions are posed, but always with pre-existing limits and constraints (as with the opening poem, "Multiple Choice"). The choices arise within a field of possibilities, but the field itself is predetermined, not entirely open. Some lines may provide the reader with a sense of this theme: "My father set me an insoluble riddle before I was born"; "but if I don't know where I came from/how can I know who I am"; and, "Yiddish was my parents' secret/language. They used it to tell/each other what couldn't be told."

The riddling guidance of the father is accompanied and paralleled by the silent weaving of the mother. Like Penelope, she weaves, stitches, unravels and repairs, while the action goes on elsewhere.

The title of this volume itself suggests a riddle or at least a query, if not a quest. "The Survival Rate of Butterflies in the Wild" implies at very least the question, "what is....", though we might still ponder the identity of this interlocutor. It would suggest an answer provided to this question posed. The central poem, that bears this same title, is the longest in the collection. It contains a series of questions that the poet attempts to answer and provocations that move him and the reader along unsuspected pathways, always further into the underworld, accompanied constantly by the presence of the Dead.

In the central poem, they appear first in memory as "extinct, my father's family crowded around my crib, their/faces fog, their bodies smoke, their voices soft and insistent/as the flutter of butterfly wings.' And then reappear, transformed: "a fluttering crowd, from which familiar voices call. A little raspy, a little wispy,/I haven't heard them since they surrounded my crib." They ask the poet, "Did you ever stop playing dead?"

It is this inquiry that stops me, holds me, and beats upon me with insistence and grace. As our century bears down upon us with ever greater invitations to fear and terror, ever stronger motivation to just numb oneself and disappear into mere surfaces of being, the book suggests an alternative response. Rather than numbing out the terror resident in the Holocaust and in the blizzard of other previous and ongoing genocides and ecocides, we can choose to be present to the dead, not only as their witnesses, but as their promise. Carl Jung, in his Red Book, writes,

What the ancients did for their dead! You seem to believe that you can absolve yourself from the care of the dead, and from the work that they so

(continued on page 51)

THE STORIES THAT ARE GREAT WITHIN US

Linda Rogers

The *Stories That Are Great Within Us* is a large book, one to be sat on the lap and not held up, one to be savoured piece by piece and heard as much as read as the great sidewalk rolls out, let's say Queen Street, a diverse choir, with doors opening on the pong of cue balls, the tinkle of jazz piano, and the voices of satanic verses boiling in bistros. Even the pavement cracks open up to music as rogue notes emerge from the bowels of inner earth, its bass line the rumbling pipes that carry clean water and waste, with tram tracks providing the descant refrain. This is the infrastructure of Toronto, it's deep language and various truths.

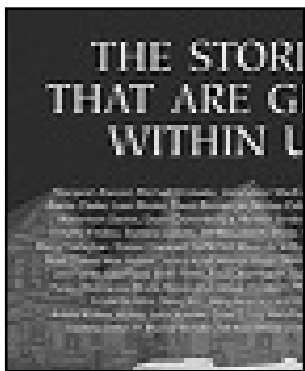
Every Chinese emperor had a tone, a note carefully chosen to represent his reign. The atonal progression of dynasties is a dialectic diagram for modern cities. For Imperial America, a polyglot society, it might be the bent notes in Gershwin's fusion classic, *Rhapsody in Blue*. Similarly, There is no one note or even one key for heterogeneous Toronto. Toronto is a pungent jam, fruit from the hybrid sutras of good and evil: Spadina street erhu, Queen Street Blues, Rosedale fugues, Kensington klezmer. It's all there, in *The Stories That Are Great Within Us*, the title suggesting collegiate flatulence, a great subterranean burp from the pipes that run under the street, the ecstatic noises of birth and re-birth, a jouissance.

Murray Schafer, mentor of sound walks, advocates for careful listening in his aural/visual "Ariadne," a pedestrian willingness to "...push my mind into the darkness, to feel its claw." We are offered another perspective on the cement garden, the garbage and the flowers, morbidity and vitality, those rogue plants that push through concrete as the reliably louche Barbara Gowdy undresses language in an upstairs window. Necrophilia, love of the past, is the regenerative phase of the cycle of sex and death, one sacrament in the city at the end of things.

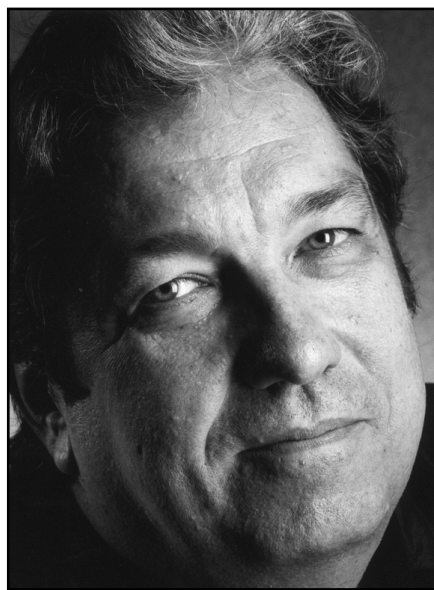
The Stories That Are Great Within Us is an inclusive collection. Stars with names like Atwood, Rooke, Davies, Cronenberg, Findley and Ondaatje land on the sidewalk but also effusive gems, voices that represent the various diasporas that compose the vibrant inner life of the city, not to mention the chalk drawings that relate their own graphic narratives. bpNichol, in a tattoo from the apocalypse, exhorts us to LOVE/EVOLVE. That is the message in Charles Pachter's "Family" and Nina Bunjevac's "Real Deal," cartoon de Maupassant. The good times roll, even in dark alleys and gravedirt.

This collection is Toronto's contribution to the growing canon of citybooks: *Humans of New York*, *The Verse Map of Vancouver*, Winnipeg's *Walking at the Fringes*, and Victoria's *Framing the Garden*, each revealing the DNA of their origins.

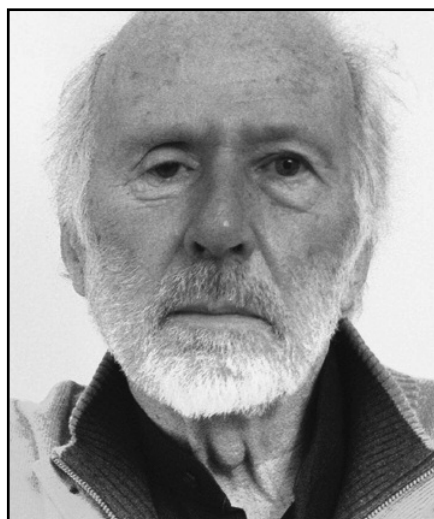
Toronto is a walking city, a collection of small towns strung and knotted by arterial traffic like Atwood's adolescent knitting and Masud Taj's calligraphic strokes. In "The Tower" Gwendolyn MacEwen draws a map, "Was this city somebody's rough dia-



The Stories That Are Great Within Us
Barry Callaghan, Editor
Exile Editions, 2013



Barry Callaghan



R. Murray Schafer

gram of reality, or was it pure mirage?" Is mirage not another reality, one of a different, imaginative substance?

In "Our Thirteenth Summer," the threshold of manhood, Barry Callaghan relates the deception that earns respect, the civility that colours empathetic dialogue. In his city, there is compromise, the give and take that levels streets and connects neighbourhoods. Michael Snow's "Walking Woman" is a shape shifter, defined by every window she passes. The windows are in focus. She is not. The city lives frame by frame in the great conversation of mutual identification.

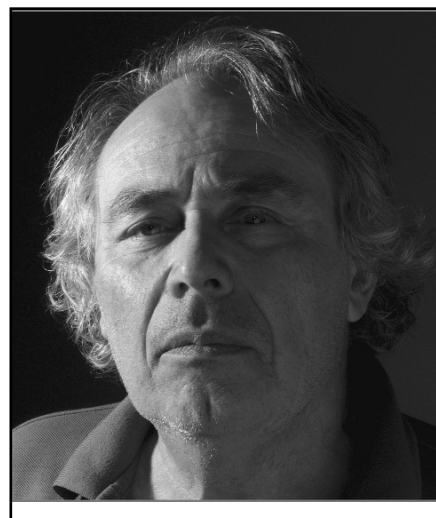
Joe Rosenblatt's infamous walkabouts, which included descriptions of pulchritude observed through bare naked windows, led him to cavernous wanktanks, dark theaters with silver screens where the closeness of his narrow escape from the maws of Nazism is revealed in a heartbreaking newsreel featuring the piles of discarded shoes that make Holocaust Museums so unbearable. In his imagination, the dance slippers and baby shoes of his tribe segue to soles worn down by his own congenital orthopedic signature, the wounded wanderer. What he leaves out of "Stormed by Sunlight," the postcard story that tells of his childhood on the safe side of the final solution, is the anti-Semitism he experienced in his day job labouring beside Poles.

From its recently emigrated taxi drivers to the titans of Bay Street, Toronto is a city of refugees lured by dreams of a better future. But even dreams have shadows. There is no hiding place in the metropolis, and many dissonant notes. Imperfect people build imperfect cities. You have the Ford Nation, which is hard to ignore. Do we laugh? Yes. Do we weep? Yes. Do we celebrate? Certainly. The stories in this collection do all of that.

Christine Miscione reminds us of the malignancies and ameliorating acts of grace in "Skin Just." The skin of the city is elastic and vulnerable, broken and healed, its acne pits and potholes the imperfections that create the possibility of redemption. Her hyperawareness echoes the immigrant response, ghosts that rise up even in Arcadia, the New Jerusalem, voices like that of Morley Callaghan and Austin Clarke, still writing home. This is the pocked skin of a city marked by migrating humans, shoes of every description on the move from past to present, birth to death. It is marvelous in its diversity.

From a western perspective, Toronto is all about power and money, fat yellow haired monkeys bouncing off Queen Street, the loser side of the coin. But much more than that, it is a mongrel choir that sings about the loving aspirations of the beautiful and the damned. That is what this book, tuned to reality and imagination, the ironic key of real community, shows us.

Linda Rogers, recently awarded the Gwendolyn MacEwen Prize for Poetry, is the author of *Homing*, poetry, and *The Empress Trilogy*, the story of three generations of women living in the opium triangle.



Joe Rosenblatt



Christine Miscione

FALLING (DOWNSTAIRS) FOR LATE T'ANG POEMS

Hannah Main-vanderKamp



*Echoes from Pluto,
Poems 2009 - 2013*
Mike Doyle,
Ekstasis, 2013

Which other Canadian poet in the ninth decade of life is still producing poems as prodigiously as Mike Doyle, not to mention his extensive reading, correspondences and journaling?

Doyle is showing his age, in a good way. The poems are as good as any he has published over his long career and many are of his best. In another way, the age is showing in his often-humorous comments about geriatric events. Not snide or cynical, Doyle hasn't finished yet. Perhaps the urge to do *Collected*s and to publish journals in book form is a slightly out of date fashion but at his age, who cares. Younger poets blog, elders Gutenberg. The two will travel side by side for some decades like horse and carriage did with motorcars.

This volume follows a much thicker (508 pp!) *Collected*, 1951–2009 published in 2010 by Ekstasis. Doyle is a versatile poet but any collection that covers

fifty-eight years is bound to be a little uneven.

Pluto is the work of a prolific poet who is also a sponge for the poetry of others. “Sponge” not as in “sponging off others” but as in taking it all in, digesting and integrating with gratitude. Everywhere there are quotes and “responses to”. Poetry can be an obsessive companion but there is much fun and affection in this collection as well as variety. The reader senses that poetry is Doyle’s never-ending banquet as well as his “daily bread”.

He revisits old poems, he pays homage to writing mentors, recalls and recollects literally. He also confesses to readapting from now “untraceable cribs”.

In his recent journal *Softwood Trumpets*, Ekstasis 2012, as well as an earlier journal *Paper Trombones*, Ekstasis 2007, he discusses the artists and poets he’s reading, corresponding with and/or meeting. Never vindictive, he offers some delicious snipes about poets in group readings who take up more than their allotted time and poets who rudely leave when their own reading is done! Doyle is a prodigious reader and generous to other writers. The list of poets with whom he was a friend reads like a *Who’s Who* of contemporary literary notables e g Cid Corman, George Woodcock, P K Page

Doyle has a habit of using his poems as journal entries but does the reader really need to know the date when he began a poem or the dates when it went through drafts? In his endnotes, this poet succumbs to the temptation to tell too much. It’s the professional hazard of teachers, “now I’m going to tell you what I told you”. If a poem about, say, horses is a good poem, who needs an explicating note telling the reader what a white horse symbolizes? Occasionally Doyle also succumbs to weak phrases such as “the joy of life”. An editor might have red-penciled those. And he just can’t leave a little word play alone.” A larf of skylac ooblay”, “every last wicture on your palls”. Never self-deprecating, he larfs at his pratfalls



and falls, literally down the stairs on his way out to the Library to read Meng Chiao. No whiner, he has his share of losses and regrets. In previous publications, Doyle has admitted disappointed in the fact that, though prolific, he has not been a much-noticed poet. Who can say what it takes to be “established”? Luck, self-promotion, contacts, the-catching- the -crest, hitting the sore point, horse race, fashion, boozing buddies, affairs, headline media darling and many mysterious factors. Many good poets and very good poets do not make it into the limelight. In Doyle’s hometown, Victoria BC, there are a good dozen of those elders of the word.

There’s a hint of a new romance, the homeliness of home, there’s his pleasure in



the practice of Tai Chi and his constant reading especially the Chinese poets. The most touching pieces are the set dedicated to his brother, now deceased. The old days, the questions, things not said; throughout neither the differences nor the affection are fully allowed to appear. Doyle had eleven Irish aunts and what a set; he remembers tiny details, yet there are decades when he is out of touch. To visit them is painful, those in dementia, the ones who died young. He and his brother were raised by one of those aunts and his reunion with her after decades is tenderly handled yet in inarticulate. How to write articulately about inarticulation? Describing a Tai Chi session

More far more to the wise

*one’s merest inflection,
or the grace...
or anything at all
the spirit has entered into
wholly, in self-delight,
holy, in self-forgetfulness*

from Grasp Bird’s Tail

One of Doyle’s mentors was the remarkable New Zealand poet James Baxter. *The Night Shift*, 1957, is an anthology of New Zealand poetry to which both Baxter and Doyle contributed. Baxter who died in 1972 at the age of 46 is generally considered to be one of New Zealand’s most accomplished poets. Monkish and mystic, his best-known work is *The Jerusalem Sonnets*. Amid alcohol and illness, Baxter found ways to express brokenness/blessedness/broken again/blessed again.

Influences of Baxter echo in *Pluto*.

“They bring me in two eggs and a slice of bacon/ I shout and dance on the floor in the middle of the room”

are lines that might be a Doyle breakfast poem.

You reach

*for a first cup, the tea
warming a lifetime, curve
of your arm, grip of your fingers
a prayer of the blessed*

from Winter Morning Kitchen

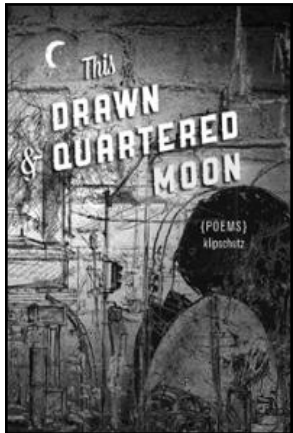
Try as you can, there is no big ego operating in this collection. Doyle is ambitious for Poetry, not just his own. Having taught at UVIC for many years, (he retired ten years ago), Doyle could retire to his Tai Chi but something, an indefatigable zest, keeps bubbling up. Reflecting on the rich events of past years, some tragic some ecstatic, he’s honest enough to admit some failures and even callousness. But that was then,

*“before I learned
that every act of ours shapes what we become”*

Columnist, book reviewer, teacher and poet, Hannah Main-van der Kamp lives on BC’s coast. Her most recent title is *ASlow Sunday on the Malaspina Strait*.

THIS DRAWN AND QUARTERED MOON

Steve Potter



This Drawn & Quartered Moon
klipschutz
128 pp | \$18

In much the way that a fine perfumer will add a pinch of a pungent scent which would be unpleasant alone to help accentuate the more plentiful sweet stuff in the mix, San Francisco poet klipschutz (AKA Kurt Lipschutz) doesn't leave out the ugly side in depictions of his picturesque city. The poems in his new collection, *This Drawn & Quartered Moon*, from Vancouver's Anvil Press, capture the beauty and grit to be found on the streets of his city juxtaposed side by side as in these opening lines from "In Memory of Myself":

*Renovate me like one of your Victorians, San Francisco—
deck me out in color-coordinated sashwork & trim
& plunk me down beside a looker
on a Sunday cable car
from the turnaround at Woolworth's
alongside Union Square
all the way to the top of Russian Hill—
(worlds away from the lunatic on Muni, picking nits
off his matted hair to swallow: postcard that)*

The perambulatory poem "(Leavenworth Street By Dusk)" opens with the poet receiving come-ons from two hookers, one female and one male, as he makes his way along that rough street which stretches from the waterfront near the Aquatic Park up north down through Nob Hill and the Tenderloin. The poem and walk continue into the section below featuring a drunk in a doorway, a crying child and the angry words of an unhappy couple:

...I pilot two painted-on feet

*meter to sick tree to meter,
by the steady stream*

*of floating red taillights
drawn along*

*ever so slightly uphill
through delicate charcoal degrees*

*of sky against which
a drunk in a doorway is dancing*

*as a woman instructs a small boy
This isn't the right place to cry*

*In the din lost almost forever,
a couple exchange their vows:*

—Fuck You

*—That's all you ever say—
You just say it, you don't do it*

Wingless Night, enshroud our exhibitions

Hasten, tarry

I love the way that "Wingless Night" in the second to last line alludes to Sigfried Sassoon's poem "Alone" connecting the present to the past to bring us a sense of the universal. The ambiguous, contradictory close of the poem, with those last two archaic words, "Hasten, tarry" seems possibly to allude to an Edwin Muir poem and perhaps takes us back further still to the Book of Habakkuk in the Hebrew Bible:

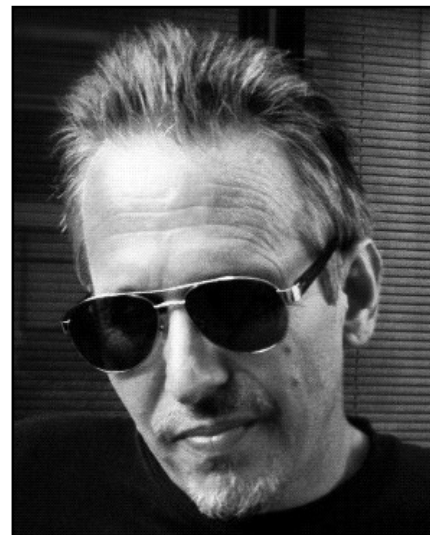
*For the vision is yet for the appointed time;
It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail.
Though it tarries, wait for it;
For it will certainly come, it will not delay.*

(New American Standard Bible)

Among the most memorable poems in this collection, are portraits of people klipschutz has met, such as the titular character of the prose poem "Oliver Othello King Jr." better known on the streets as "Double O King." A Viet Nam veteran begging at a bus stop before he and the poet board the N bus, Double O King describes how he contracted HIV to the narrator near the end:

"Heroin or hookers. Maybe both. I like drugs and women, so help me God." We come out of the East Portal tunnel, into sudden darkness, into pools of misted brilliant light. Brakes play their high-pitched solo as I press the fin onto his palm. He draws himself together, gives a comical salute, then strikes a ruined hero's pose, his coup de grace. "Airborne Rangers. Death from the sky. Just so you can stand here. All the way from Nam to Ocean Beach."

Another poem, "Lester Rogers," like "Oliver Othello King Jr." gives the subject center stage. For the most part, the poet lets Lester tell his own tale in his own words, interjecting only occasional description.



In "Jack Levine" however, klipschutz eschews all interjection and let's the cantankerous realist painter tell it all in his own words. Or at least that's how it reads. Only the poet can say how much of the poem is dictation and how much invention, for the poem's subject, who bucked against the artistic trends of his day and drew more inspiration from old masters than modern ones, has since died. "Jack Levine" reminded me somewhat of Ray Carver's poem, "You Don't Know What Love Is," in which Carver presents the experience of listening to Charles Bukowski talk to an audience gathered for a reading. In both one hears the voice of the subject of the poem far more so than the voice of the author of the poem.

There's a charming New York wise-ass quality that comes through in "Jack Levine" a world-weariness tempered by a fine sense of humor:

I was the same age as Motherwell. Still am. Can you be the same age as a corpse? And younger than de Kooning. And broad-minded. But punitive.

. . . more silos than I ever saw in my life. Out here jew is only a verb. How much farther to the airport?

At a time when the cost of living in San Francisco continues to rise driving out all traces of its bohemian past, it is encouraging to see that the city which was home to a great literary renaissance and the rise of the Beats, the city that was home to such legendary street poets as Bob Kaufman, Jack Micheline and Jack Hirschman, can still be home to a poet like klipschutz who is operating far outside the clutches of academia and telling it like it is.

Steve Potter's poems and stories have appeared in numerous print and online journals such as; Able Muse, Blazevox, Chrysanthemum, Drunken Boat, Knock, Marginalia, Runes and 3rd Bed. He lives in Seattle.

HOUSE OF THE UNEXPECTED

Neeli Cherkovski

This collection of work over three decades is a rhapsodic journey by a poet who has worked quietly, often in the woods, living on her own, pondering the elemental and taking from it the gift of words. The poet dwells on specifics with a sensibility that entices a listener to engage, yet there are no fire works. We discover a meditative soul in House of the Unexpected, one who has measured language across a vision that powerfully, and with the skill only a dedicated practitioner of the seen, can deliver: “I have thrown myself/into a corner of my heart/and force myself to feel/what you must endure...” Such writing is profoundly moving. Rogers is able to walk in the woods, as but is equally capable of awakening within herself. She is also capable of addressing human nature in poems on death and dying, politics, feminism, and family life. She captivates, drawing one in to her unique vision: “I can’t hide the burn/of my tongue twisting in barbs between us.” All of the above is from “The Lie,” one of the shorter poems in a book filled with such insight.

In a little over one hundred pages there are many memorable passages, and always a keen sense of language, as in “Last Call,” a kind of loud quietness one might encounter on an urban street at night — it’s damp, and a few lights burn:

*Hard night, the fog fogs up the windows.
A trench coat creeps up street
in the light/dark beneath the lampposts.
Black coat on a hunched back,
done down at the corner bar.*

Rogers has gone the distance, aware of the power in limitation, fascinated by how a few images might enlighten a much larger world. Her strength is in condensation. As she draws on the meditative mode, her concentration produces exquisite paeans to the natural world, not surprising to find in a poet who has spent many years on her own out there “in the wild.” In “Proof of Life” she truly soars:

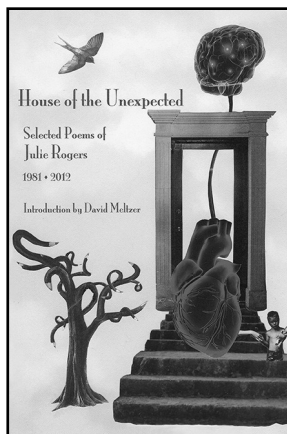
There is only this moment

*and memory.
Like a bird let go
in a cathedral
mind flies
every direction
searching for the nest...*

This is trimmed-down work, Zen-like, the image deftly nailed. This is where the poet is best. Her book is filled with such gems. One may think, not only of Zen, but of ancient Chinese poetry as it strives for harmony with the rhythms of nature. Like them, this American poet, now emerging to a wider audience with the publication of a selected poems, reflects with awesome precision. In this book are pieces that many would fit into the category of nature poetry. True enough, but they are actually writings of deep social consciousness, and if Rogers has communed amid the trees more than most in our urban age, she pays attention to the minute details. Her devotion is to seeing and to being here, present.

*The river, a dream drifting
in slow, green sleep,
shifts silently
below the bugs and dragonflies
that race above its murky bed.*

So, the “moment and memory” are talismanic signs. Read the words. Lean in on the



*House of the Unexpected:
Selected Poems of Julie Rogers 1981-2012*
Wild Ocean Press, 2012



Julie Rogers with David Meltzer

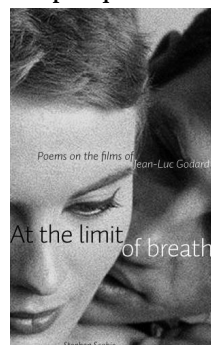
marvelous silence that this writer brings to her voice, measuring time, taking the pulse of how we merge with the life around us. As a special gift, go to her love poems. Seek out the deep passages that consume her — they will entice the reader. We’re invited, no punches pulled.

*Star streaks fire
burns thought
melts the ground
hollows out the body
fills it with unspeakably open
love rushing in
being undone
in a nest of heat
consuming the dark
days awaiting your touch
as you ignite me.*

Appreciation is the word. As Michael McClure writes of Julie’s work, “no extra words, just soul meanings...” Yes, here is the key to this emerging poet. In documenting her love for fellow poet David Meltzer, she tells us, “I choose to live in your eyes.” We might want to cherish that thought, as we all desire to live in the eyes of one whom we love. Come then with eyes open, with ears attuned to a poet who seeks nothing less than poetry’s true and endless heart-fulness.

Neeli Cherkovski is the author of biographies of Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Charles Bukowski. He is a widely published and prolific poet. He lives in San Francisco.

“I wanted this to be a narrative. So finally Jean-Luc went all the way: every line in the script a quotation from somewhere...” Stephen Scobie



At the limit of breath

POEMS ON THE FILMS OF JEAN-LUC GODARD
New Poems by Stephen Scobie

ISBN:9780888647405
\$19.95

University of Alberta Press
Ring House 2
Edmonton, AB
Canada T6G 2E1

WE ARE BORN WITH THE SONGS INSIDE US

Trysh Ashby-Rolls

The *Song of Hiawatha*, the 1855 epic poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow introduced me at age eight, or thereabouts, to First Nations' people. Loosely based on Native American legends and ethnography, Longfellow wrote *Hiawatha* as a modern writer might a Harlequin romance. Had it been a genuine story, it would have been passed down orally as a medicine or teaching. To further my burgeoning interest – and ignorance – of the 'noble savage', the father of twin girls at my posh private British school brought in a feathered, beaded head-dress a tribal chief had given him on a trip to Canada. I was hooked. Imagine then my confusion, after emigrating to this country in 1967, at seeing a down-at-heel indigenous couple begging outside a Toronto grocery store.

Evan Adams, the celebrated television and film actor, whose story Katherine Palmer Gordon includes in her sixth book, *We Are Born with the Songs Inside Us*, says, "Our people deserve to be portrayed truthfully, as the complex, sophisticated, modern-and-traditional people they are." Which means "portray[ing] real Aboriginal people leading real lives, not some strange fantasy image that the dominant culture has of Indians" or "easy stereotypes": wise peacemaking chief at one end of the spectrum; broken drunk Indian at the other. According to Adams, "That takes thoughtfulness and respect and real care," qualities that shine through the sixteen stories told in this book.

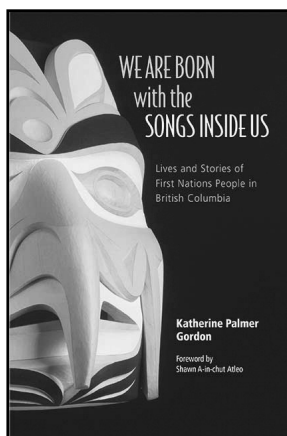
In his foreword, Shawn A-in-chut Atleo, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, writes that "no one stereotype or archetype... can be labelled as being First Nation or Indigenous." To do so only creates too simplistic a notion, and "has no place in reaching understanding and acceptance." We must meet one another as human beings; only in that way can we discover what we have in common "with different and shared cultures...as individuals and [italics in original] as nations with rights, responsibilities and a key role to play in mutual partnership with all of Canada."

This is the essence of Gordon's book: celebrating and sharing stories of a wide variety of voices "empowered to give expression to the songs inside them." All members of the "fastest-growing segment of Canada's population," who know only too well the terrible legacy of deliberate colonial strategies to stamp out their language, culture, their very existence, they are leading successful, inspirational lives, confident in their cultural and human identity. As Lisa Webster-Gibson, a Delaware Mohawk/Six Nations/Scottish Canadian, says, "You can be whatever Indian you want to be...you are who you are. If you can accept that, that's perfectly good for everyone else too."

This collection of stories shatters stereotypes as it gathers up the thoughts and hopes of young First Nations people living in twenty-first-century Canada. There is Evan Adams (Sliammon), a medical doctor and celebrated actor; John Marston (Qap'u'luq), an artist and storyteller from Chemainus; Gino Odjick (Algonquin), former NHL hockey star whose home is now in Vancouver; Kim Baird, former chief of the Tsawwassen First Nation. "Famous or otherwise," writes Gordon in her introduction, "all of them were born with their songs inside them, and all of them have shared their stories here with grace, simplicity and complete candour."

The book's title hails from a talk given by Salt Spring Island naturalist, John Neville, which Gordon attended several years ago. In his presentation, Neville said that birds are "born with a song inside them." But for the song to come forth is not necessarily a given. A baby bird that doesn't hear its father's song never learns its own, and grieves the loss of its inherent identity forever. Unable to take care of itself, communicate, relate or fly on its own two wings is "an apt analogy in the context of the many First Nations people in Canada who never had the chance to learn their songs from their parents."

Mike Willie, a thirty-six year old cultural preservation and revitalization co-ordinator at the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw K-7 School in Port Hardy, counts himself lucky to have grown up "hearing my language and singing the songs." Speaking his own language grounded him in a strong sense of identity so that when he was sent to Victoria to complete high school – a "huge culture shock" – he kept up his singing. This gave



We Are Born with the Songs Inside Us: Lives and Stories of First Nations Peoples in British Columbia
Katherine Palmer Gordon
Harbour Publishing
2013. \$24.95



Katherine Palmer Gordon

him the self-confidence he needed to get through school and university.

Kendra Underwood, director of the Saanich Adult Education Centre at the WSÁNEĆ School Board, says she doesn't think many people understand the importance of language in the lives of First Nations people. "We deserve to have our language be healthy and whole...we didn't [italics in original] let it go. It was taken from us."

Interrupting the cross generational transmission of Aboriginal languages by forcing children into the residential school system had the effect of murdering a culture in conflict with that of its colonizers, says Andrea Bear Nicholas. In a postscript entitled 'The Strength of Identity: Connections between Culture and Well-being', the former chair of native studies at St. Thomas University in Fredericton, New Brunswick, says it took "two or three generations for Indigenous people to stop speaking their own language," and divert their traditions and spiritual beliefs into those of the dominant culture. During the infamous Sixties Scoop, when child welfare services stole Aboriginal children from their families, sending over fifty per cent to Europe and the US, never to return, the loss of language intensified. The long-term effects were incalculable.

The authors of a 2007 study Aboriginal Language Knowledge and Youth Suicide found that where "there was little or no connection to language the suicide rate rose to six [italics in original] times higher than the national average." In communities where "at least half its members reported a conversational knowledge of their language, [suicide] rates dropped to zero." Lalonde, Chandler and Hallet "concluded, 'Loss of language is the canary in the coalmine of cultural distress.'" Gordon cites other sources with the same outcome.

This collection of stories educates as it inspires, celebrates and shares the cultural voices of First Nations people without skirting the issue of deliberate colonial strategies to stamp out language, culture and recognition as citizens of Canada. Gordon writes that a "vast cultural and social gulf still yawns between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities and individuals in Canada." Her book draws that gap a smidgeon closer. At no time does Gordon get in the way of her own writing as she faithfully records "the lives and stories" of the people she portrays in this often disturbing yet profoundly triumphant book. As Shawn A-in-chut Atleo writes: "There are thousands upon thousands of young First Nations people growing up today who, together with the kind of individuals whose stories are told in this book, represent a future for this country that is brighter than it has been for a long, long time."

We Are Born with the Songs Inside Us should be required reading for every high school student in Canada. end

Trysh Ashby-Rolls is an author and journalist who writes on challenging social issues. She is presently writing a collection of stories from around the world of resilience, courage and healing after major trauma. Her M.A., with Distinction, focussed on trauma and its aftermath.

THE MATATU

Linda Rogers

The *matatu* is a Kenyan bus, named for currency, giving a clue that the outcome will show how fair trumps fare. This picture book for young children is more about the journey than the destination, which is the narrative of all quest literature from *Beowulf* to *Cat's Table*. Most of us, from Ken Kesey to Eric Walters author of *The Matatu*, have had legendary bus experiences. It might be the infamous Number Fourteen filled with acrobats and actors, a Cuban humpbacked camel-bus overflowing with squashed humans, Turkish *dolmus* buses with passengers stuffed in like rolled grape leaves, funky Mexican buses where people sit side by side with livestock or the Kenyan *matatu*, where animals ride on top with the baggage.

Eric Walters, schoolteacher turned storyteller with over seventy child and young adult books to his credit, has focused his humanitarian vision on an organization serving orphans in Kikima, Kenya. This story came out of one of his yearly trips to visit the children in the East African community.

Proverb and storytelling are essential to the passing down of African culture from generation to generation. Civil war, the aftermath of colonization, and the AIDS epidemic have interrupted the natural flow of cautionary tales that bond parent to child in their overlapping cultures. Post-apocalyptic East Africa is rife with child-headed families.

This disconnect will affect generations to come as the songs, stories, games and recipes that bonded families and close-knit communities are lost. Elders who have buried their own children in the rice sacks that bring aid struggle to raise the orphans left behind, but there are not enough grandmothers and grandfathers to go round.

The Matatu is more than a picture book. It is a living artifact that informs children around the world about our most valuable legacies, the wisdom of our ancestors.

In this story, a young boy, Kioko, goes on a fifth birthday excursion with his grandfather. The destination is Machakos, the end of the line, but metaphorically it is the horizon where grandfather and grandson embrace mortality in the handing down of wisdom. As Grandfather relates a folk tale about a dog, a goat and a sheep who take a similar ride, Kioko assimilates his lesson in integrity and fairness.

By writing down a story from an oral tradition, Walters contributes to the ethical education of young people to whom he has become attached. These stories can be gathered and saved, and, so long as care is taken to respect the tradition, they will endure.

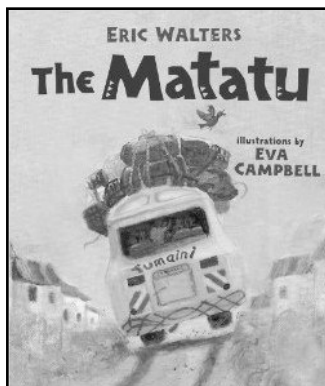
Victoria painter Eva Campbell was an appropriate choice to illustrate *The Matatu*.

Born into a family of Ghanaian artists and educators who raised her in Africa, Barbados and Jamaica, her imagination is infused with colour and light, the legacies of her equatorial origins. Her palette sings the colours of childhood.

A figure painter, particularly of women living past the traditional constraints of gender and ethnicity, Campbell is a storyteller herself, mainly of the experiences of the African Diaspora. A compassionate regard for loss informs her work, whether it is in gallery paintings, personal portraits or this story for children who learn by example.

It took the painter two years to complete the cycle of oils on canvas as she adjusted her technique to the needs of a younger audience. The almost quick sketch illustrations give a feeling of movement and immediacy, the inertia of a spirit bus moving through time, out of time. Kioko's grandfather, who is late for the bus, could be an angel whispering in the ear of the young passenger and the imagery reflects this ephemeral world.

Campbell made the bus yellow "Because children like primary colours." In psychological terms, yellow is a colour that inspires hunger. The child hungry to know where he came from discovers his history on a vehicle that could be a galaxy. Capturing images of family members, her mother who recently went to spirit and her young nephew, in the paintings, Campbell welcomes them on the bus as she introduces herself and the reader to the village raising a child. The familiarity of these characterizations has an intonation that matches the voice of the storyteller, one human family, just as he must have hoped.



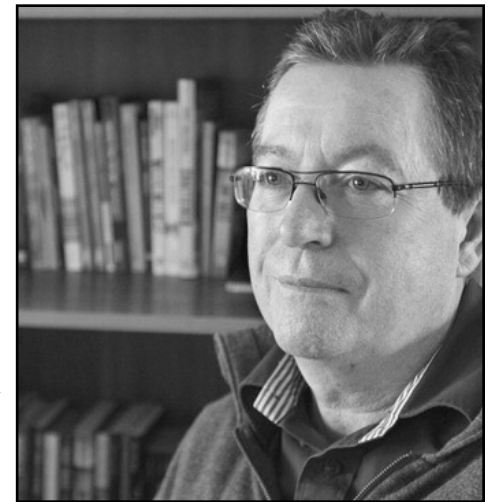
The Matatu
Eric Walters, illustrated by
Eva Campbell
Orca Books
Hardcover, 2012

As grandfather travels toward the city at the end of things and Kioko absorbs his inheritance, the folktale presents a mannerist gestalt, animals elongated in the East African tradition, their own spirit lives stretching toward the supernatural. This is what Campbell remembers from her own past, something she shares with us. The caricatured animals tell us, "We are disembodied voices bringing the gift of knowledge from our spirit world."

The *Matatu* is a delightful story and a valuable cultural artifact. It brings together the intention of the Canadian mosaic, the many in the one, an inclusive culture informed by multiplicity. When, at the end of the story, Kioko makes a good ethical choice based on what he has heard from his grandfather, the children who read *The Matatu* or have it read to them are similarly empowered with the ability to make righteous decisions. This is subtle teaching that shapes character.

Good books are always gifts, but in these times when valuable resources are squandered in producing outsourced toys they take on an even greater significance. This is the real value of globalism, sharing stories that transcend the garbage we create with the new imperialism choking our world environment and raising generations disconnected from their history. *The Matatu* is a bus that has wheels that carry its young audience to a better place.

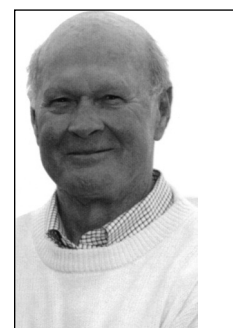
Linda Rogers is an advocate for the rights of children and an afficianada of Cuba. Her book *Friday Water, a Cuba-Canada love story*, is set in the time following the Special Period.



Eric Walters, photo by Nicki Thomas



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Stanley Evans has been a soldier, a seaman, a college instructor and an Open University tutor. His previous novels are *Outlaw Gold*, *Snow-Coming Moon*, and the first five books in the Silas Seaweed series: *Seaweed on the Street*, *Seaweed on Ice*, *Seaweed Under Water*, *Seaweed on the Rocks* and *Seaweed in the Soup*. He lives in Victoria, BC.

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NEW ORLEANS ROOTS

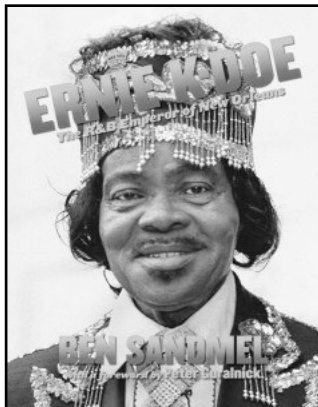
Joseph Blake

The roots of American music grow deep in the gumbo-like soil of southern Louisiana. These four books help music fans dig pretty far into that rich, dark motherlode. From Sunday celebrations in historic Congo Square to the hipster funk at Mother-In-Law Lounge, and from outdoor block parties and urban dancers bouncing their junk to New Orleans rap's Triggaman beat to Cajun two-steppin' at swampy, backwoods dance halls, it's all here. This is the real deal.

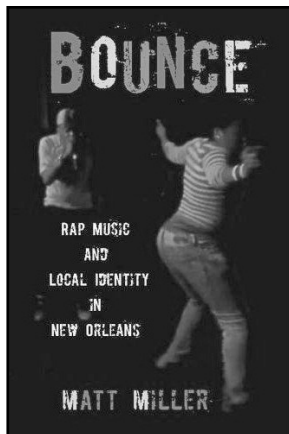
In a city defined by its complex, idiosyncratic characters, Ernie K-Doe was a celebrated eccentric who lived up to his "I'm cocky but I'm good" trademark...even in death.

Ben Sandmel's biography of K-Doe is a hero's tale of triumph, degradation and rebirth. It's a 90,000 word coffee table epic with 137 black and white and colour photos documenting a bizarre career that Sandmel writes, "personified the New Orleans tradition of flamboyance and street surrealism." K-Doe's 1961 national hit, "Mother-In-Law" launched a recording career of regional favourites like "A Certain Girl" and performances on almost 70 albums including one with Paul McCartney. Led Zeppelin and other British stars loved K-Doe, but rock's overseas invasion took the steam out of most New Orleans stars.

K-Doe landed under a Treme overpass, an alcoholic street person. His marriage to Antoinette Dorsey in 1996 is credited with rejuvenating the musician and his career, K-Doe's trademark flashy suits, cape and crown underlining his self-proclaimed Emperor of New Orleans R&B title. A popular New Orleans radio personality famous for his strange rants, singular vocabulary and sentence syntax, K-Doe's "burn K-Doe burn!" became a Big Easy chant. The couple's Mother-In-Law Lounge became an ironic, ghetto hipster shrine to all things K-Doe before the musician's 2001 death. Antoinette and a flashily dressed, life-sized K-Doe mannequin showed up all over town and kept his memory alive before Katrina and the federal flood washed most of the neighborhood away. Mrs. K.D. died on Mardi Gras 2009, and the Lounge is still closed and in disrepair. Sandmel's ten-year project



Ernie K-Doe: The R&B Emperor of New Orleans
Ben Sandmel
Historic New Orleans Collection, 285 p., \$39.95



Bounce: Rap Music and Local Identity in New Orleans
Matt Miller
Univ. Massachusetts Press, 214 p., \$24.95

brings it all back to life. It's outsized, ambitious reach is a perfect fit for the musician's funky grandeur. It gets to the essence of the man and the City Care Forgot.

Matt Miller's *Bounce* takes a musicologist and sociologist's eye and ear to black New Orleans' popular rap style. Miller draws on the form's historic influences in the city's Afro-American culture, linking brass band jazz, Mardi Gras Indian music, Zulu, Scull and Bones and Baby Doll parade crews to Bounce music's call and response hooks and chants of neighborhood call-outs.

Based on a sampled 1986 "Drag Rap" hit by New York City's Showboys, Bounce evolved from New Orleans neighborhood-celebrating dance and party music to hit national acts from local Cash Money and No Limit labels featuring Mystical, Juvenile, Hot Boys, Master P and Lil' Wayne during the form's commercial highpoint from 1995-2000. Sandmel describes Bounce's 2000-2005 fade from national prominence, cut-throat business, murder and drug busts scattering the style's avatars until a new ground-up, neighborhood twist revived the form, current sissy rap stars like the transvestite Katy Red embodying the city's historic sexual freedom. Bounce lives. Check out mattmillerbounce.blogspot.ca for the soundtrack.

Freddi Williams Evans' *Congo Square* is an even more thorough, scholarly work about the National Historic Landmark's years as a sacred space for the city's black population. Beginning in the early 18th century Congo Square was home to Sunday afternoon gatherings of enslaved Africans and free people of colour in New Orleans. Like similar sites in Haiti, Cuba and other West Indian black communities, Congo Square was home to African music, dance and the transmission of African culture in North America.

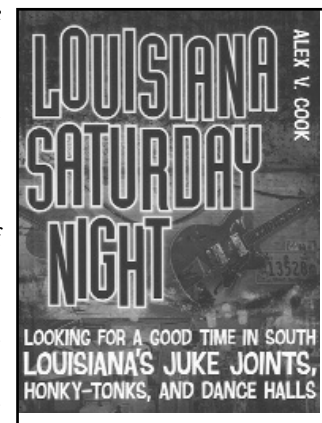
Songs, dance, musical instruments, voodoo and other African religious beliefs, food and marketing traditions were features of the gatherings. Evans uses timelines, maps, graphic images, and bibliographic references in her comprehensively researched telling of how the city's blacks created ways to survive slavery and racism in America while laying the groundwork for the cultural and musical developments that followed.

Alex V. Cook's *Louisiana Saturday Night* is an insightful travel journal throughout Louisiana's Cajun country, New Orleans and Baton Rouge. He visits offbeat and traditional music venues, festivals and record stores and provides breezy, snapshot profiles of what he finds. It's a useful travel guide for any music fan planning to visit the state and a vivid portrait of Louisiana's unique, indigenous cultures and vibrant music scenes.

Blues, Cajun country, R&B-inspired Zydeco, and an urban gumbo rich with all these influences plus jazz, rock, funk and folk are the featured forms, as Cook rambles on his lively, wide-eyed travels from far-flung bayou joints to big city bars and music halls. Pack it on your next trip down south as a travel guide. Every music fan needs to take this pilgrimage.



Congo Square: African Roots in New Orleans
Freddi Williams Evans.
Univ. Louisiana, Lafayette, Press, 209 p.
\$20



Louisiana Saturday Night
Alex V. Cook.
LSU Press
180 p. \$24.95



Ernie K-Doe



Memphis DJ Spanish Fly with The Showboys

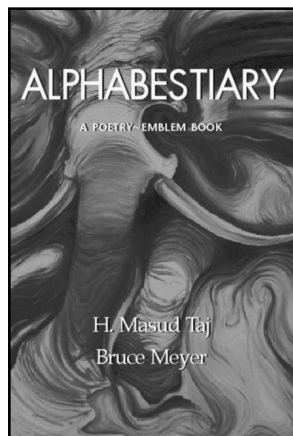


Drum circle, Congo Square Rhythms Festival

Joseph Blake is Music Editor for PRRB.

ALPHABESTIARY: A POETRY-EMBLEM BOOK

Christopher Levenson



Alphabestary: a poetry-emblem book

H. Masud Taj
& Bruce Meyer
Exile Editions
2011, 93 pages, paper

With H. Masud Taj and Bruce Meyer's *Alphabestary* I must begin by declaring an interest. Having read and admired his contributions to *Reasons for Attending*, a 2004 Bombay-based anthology of new poetry, I discovered that Taj was my fellow citizen in Ottawa. As we became friends I grew fascinated by the fact that Taj, an observant Muslim, who as a child had to learn the Koran by heart, had also memorized all his own poems. Like many others, I urged him to write them down lest anything happen to him or to his memory. This he has now finally done, among them his many poems about animals, some, but not enough of them, featured in the present volume. Having read over a hundred of Taj's animal poems in manuscript, many of them brilliant, I was looking forward to seeing the best of them in book form, but I must confess to being disappointed by the *Alphabestary*.

For starters, restricting it to one poem per letter of the alphabet means omitting some of his best poems that happen to be about animals whose names start with the same letter as those included. Moreover, attractive though the idea must have seemed at the time, the twinning of poems with prose passages to form 'emblems' in practice dilutes rather than complements the poems, which can stand on their own far better than most of the prose passages. It also misrepresents the original concept of the emblem, as exemplified by such 17th century English poets as Herbert, Marvell and Quarles, and in the Netherlands by Heinsius, Hooft and Luyken, where engravings of, for instance, animals, scriptural, or domestic scenes were accompanied by neat verses that explicated and moralized the pictures. Serious poetic moralizing died out in England in the 18th century. What we get instead in Bruce Meyer's prose pieces is a lot of heavy-handed socio-political commonplaces —

For all the efforts that late 20th century re-imaginings of elephants have brought about — the cute story of Dumbo or the cloying songs such as 'Baby Elephant Walk' — the truth is that the elephant is on the verge of extinction and must be preserved because it is the largest of all land mammals and its absence would create an enormous hole that our imaginations cannot fill. This is something to remember. This is something that one cannot forget.

This is alleviated by some attractive personal memories such as of the iguana that escaped from his grade five classroom into the heating vents or of his first horrifying encounter with a man of war jellyfish, and seasoned by the occasional witty aphorism and some interesting factoids: I had, for instance, forgotten that Ovid turns Tithonus into a grasshopper and never knew until Meyer's piece on rats, that the same gene that allowed a third of Europe's population to survive the Bubonic Plague also triggers Alzheimer's today. But often the personal anecdotes morph into a misplaced urge to sound profound or into banality — do we need to be told that 'Lions are the royalty of animals' or that 'kangaroos are the national symbol of Australia?' For what kind of reader is such information intended? Why nowadays would anyone read a bestiary? In terms of factual information about the animals concerned, a *National Geographic* programme would be preferable.

Everything depends then on the 'value added' element of the poet's attitude, his angle of vision. The first of this series that Taj composed, *Dragonfly*, remains one of his most brilliant and alerts us at once to the fact that Taj, an architect by profession, has an interesting mind: 'My head/ is a conference of eyes/ I hold too many points of view.' In this book it makes way for the *Dragon*, a more traditional, heraldic animal, and one that is treated with far less originality.

Although the poems are written in the persona of each animal, in a very direct, laconic style that verges on epigram, the structural pattern is similar throughout, a series of clipped, declarative sentences, often arranged as antitheses: Taj rarely allows himself any flow, any lyricism. Instead we have intellectual play: as the *Firefly* puts it "My light is cold,/ It is sheer intellect", an attitude that lends itself both to brilliant for-

mulations, such as the (omitted) *Termite's* dictum: 'Paper is wood without memory', or in the case of the *Snake* — 'I am line come alive;/ venom overcomes geometry./My skin is temporary./My mind is muscle-bound ' — and to sharp, even witty, pictures. *Horse* starts with very accurate, vivid evocation — 'My skin is a seismograph:/Shock-waves/ ripple beneath the sheen' —but ends with this rare excursion into mythology: 'At the twitch of my nostrils/ stars flicker away./ Each time I turn my head/ swirling my mane, spiralling off galaxies,/ I watch the universe change'.

If these self-portraits are mostly exhilarating, they are also at times excessive so that with *Newt* for instance the neatness of the epigram seems to substitute for real insight. Granted, with a few of these animals we get what Hopkins would have termed 'inscape', but mostly they are apprehended, conceptualized rather than felt, and instead of being well-rounded are limited to a single facet. This certainly prevents the possibility of sentimentality, even sentiment. The late Scottish poet Norman MacCaig, who wrote many fine poems about animals, talked of his 'affection' for the creatures concerned. Affection is not Taj's forte. Indeed, although his chosen beasts are very articulate and knowledgeable about themselves, his approach verges on the clinical. Thus the (omitted) *sloth* says of his kind: 'we are tubes;/ mouth to anus/ descending', while the (likewise omitted) *Snail's* first sentence — 'My address is my name/anywhere@home.com' — is downright cute. If in general this collaboration strikes me as a missed opportunity, I hope at least it will excite an interest in Taj's wider oeuvre.



H. Masud Taj



Bruce Meyer

Christopher Levenson's reviews have appeared in many journals. He has published several books of poetry and is the co-founder of Arc.



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COLLAGE

Sheila Martindale

The poetry of George Whipple never fails to delight the senses. Divided into six sections, and separated by whimsical sketches by the author, this collection is a welcome addition to the Whipple opus. This is a poet who is spiritual but at the same time accessible, reflective while being a tiny bit mischievous, and who ponders the human condition in a universal yet down-to-earth fashion.

Collage is enormous in its themes, yet particular in the minutest detail. The subjects range from childhood to old age and everything in between, all in a compact 95 pages! Small children in the playground are aware of “neither sky their origin/nor dust their destination,” while the aging poet “dawdle(s) away my day/in the sun.” The apparent simplicity of the language is a foil for the many layers and depths of meaning contained in these poems. The descriptions of the natural world contain profound but veiled comments on our life and death as human beings. Each time you read one of these poems it will tell you something you had not noticed the first time around.

Whipple’s love poems can be erotic or parental, can hint at the many delights of a woman’s body or can describe a beleaguered but happy father “stuccoed with children.” He talks about the dreams he missed fulfilling as he pursued the dollar, but one gets the impression that this has been a life well-lived, with ample time for contemplation of the universe.

Humour is very much present here, and a connection with the modern world. In the section titled Poetry and Painting, he notes how the written word had changed from petroglyphs to Kindles! Writers who tend to revise *ad infinitum* will relate to the metaphor about digging for the perfect image until one reaches China. On the flip side of this are some disturbing descriptions of insanity, as manifest in such tortured creative souls as Proust and van Gogh. And in the final pages of the book we see the juxtaposition of creation and crucifixion, of charm and ugliness. One of the most outstanding images (among so many!) is that of the cradle and the coffin being fashioned from the same wood.

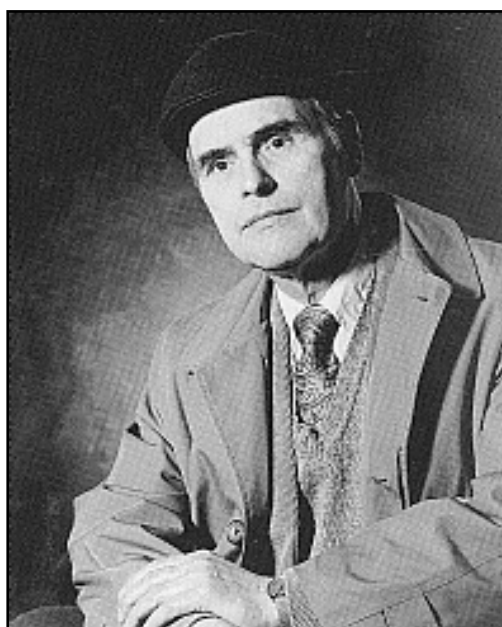
So, yes, there is a lot about the inevitability of death, but these poems are in no way depressing. There is no suggestion that we should feel sorry for an old man facing his final years. The whole atmosphere of the book is one of optimism and awe; of satisfaction in the knowledge that life goes on according to some great plan. We feel that, despite our frailties and stupidities, there is hope for mankind, and a continuity in the way the world unfolds.

George Whipple might be one of Canadian poetry’s best-kept secrets. He has never been a high-profile writer, does not engage in promotional readings or book tours, and appears to make no effort to be “on the scene.” But the simple strength of his words seeps into our collective consciousness, and will no doubt lodge there for a long time to come.

Sheila Martindale



Collage
George Whipple
Ekstasis Editions
2012. \$21.95



George Whipple

LIVING ARTFULLY: REFLECTIONS FROM THE FAR WEST COAST

Barbara Julian

Many a newcomer cresting the final hill of the Pat Bay Highway as it approaches Victoria, when glimpsing the bright, white Olympic Mountains in the distance and swathes of blue and tree-greens stretched between, utters a yelp of amazement. How long, they ask, has *this* been hiding here at the very edge of the country?

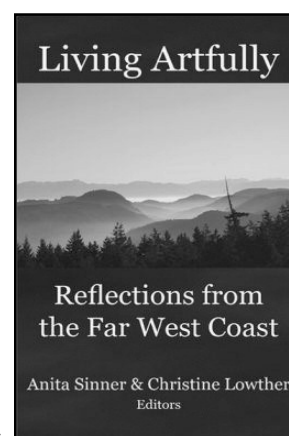
Somehow, the islands of the west coast draw the creative types, the painters, musicians and poets. Somehow too, they nurture an artistic bent in those born and raised here, encouraging a lifestyle that the compilers of this anthology call “living artfully.” Fulfilling the suggestion of the subtitle, each of the contributors reflects on the artist/writer’s life, and their works reflect something of the natural world around them. Nature is their muse, for in the forests, islands, meadows, snowy peaks and dramatic shorelines of these parts nature manifests herself with special beauty, power and drama.

For that reason editors Anita Sinner and Christine Lowther have chosen to divide the contributions into sections named for the four elements, although most of the stories could appear under most of the headings. There is much tremulous breathless appreciation of the landscape, and several of the artists describe how, exactly, the environment stimulates their artistic process. Others refer to the long wet grey winters and unnerving storms of the west coast. There is a feeling that artists earn their right to make paintings and stories about this region by enduring all its seasons and moods.

For Margaret Murphy, a storyteller in Nanaimo, it is the trees that count most. “The trees continue to inspire and thrill me. When asked how geography and place inspire artistic expression, I answer: in providing the stillness, the silence. The trees, old and young, listen brilliantly.”

Painter and printmaker Avis Rasmussen refers to the “west coast palette” that these artists and writers draw on. In an interesting pair of consecutive entries by herself and her son Roland Rasmussen (himself a poet and painter), we see how a child in these parts coming from an “ordinary” local family of talented but not wealthy members, picks up a paintbrush as a child and never puts it down. Like Emily Carr, this Sidney native leaves for Europe and the U.S. to find more subjects for her life-long study of light and colour, but finds even more inspiration by coming home. Anyone who has experienced it never forgets that rush of feeling for our place when, after travelling, we fly downwards and home among the sparkling seas, bays, islands and trees of BC’s southern coast, viewing the panorama from the air and thanking heaven that we live here.

This collection is not all about natural beauty however. Greg Blanchette tartly demands that artists stop painting postcards: “paint a picture that’s not scenery ... write a song that *isn’t* about love or surfing ...” he pleads. And Keith Harrison reminisces about what growing up in a logging town is really like: muddy clear-cuts around the “shacks” of housing, bad-mouthed loggers, endless turns of gravel roads in the bush in the rain,



*Living Artfully:
Reflections from the Far
West Coast*
ed. by Anita Sinner and
Christine Lowther
The Key Publishing
House, 2012. 236 pp,
illustrated, pbk.



Christine Lowther



Anita Sinner

(continued on page 44)

COMING HOME TO THE LOTUS SUTRA

Trevor Carolan

Recently I journeyed to India to gather an anthology of contemporary stories from South Asia for college readers. Unaccountably, I'd been wanting to visit Mother India again for a while and my wife could come too. The cue-cards slipped into place organically.

Oddly, as our departure neared reports of political instability throughout South Asia flashed on the news and I grew apprehensive. Our itinerary hit a few bumps. My wife Kwangshik brought a bag of fortune cookies home one evening though, and immediately we began receiving more positive signals: "You are Heading in the Right Direction", "You and Your Partner Will Soon Experience Great Happiness", "You Are Heading for a Land of Sunshine and Fun." Things were looking up.

Shortly before departing, an article incited my attention. Writing on Korean Buddhism, Robert Buswell reported that travel has always been "an integral part of Buddhism since its very inception." Devotion and missionary pilgrimage, he suggests, evolve directly from India's old indigenous *ramana* tradition of itinerant wandering. "Initiation into that ascetic life was termed a "going forth", he says. "We might today call this a "setting out" on a journey of personal discovery..."¹ That gave me heart. What had my anxieties been about? Suddenly, my upcoming journey had a higher purpose. Besides, I had old dharma business that needed settling.

Crossing the Pacific was uncomfortable. When Hong Kong's stupendous skyline loomed ahead it felt good to touch down again in Confucian lands. Outside, the old colony's Dragon Peaks sulked in dreary mist. While we transferred between flights I heard announcements for Siem Riep, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Singapore. Different geography, different environment here. Signs on escalators and moving stairways read: "Take Care of the Children and Elderly."

Ready for the onward leg to Kolkata, formerly Calcutta, I looked about. Expatriate businessmen leaned against walls talking on cellphones. Young Asian women lounged in jewelled footwear. When the boarding gate opened the predictable Oriental crush for seats erupted. Nobody checks in bags here. You cram everything you've got in the overheard bin or under your seat. Travel light.

During a stretch break at the rear of the plane I met an Englishman flying back to India from a sidebar visit to Vietnam. The number of huge, newly-built Christian churches he saw there was astonishing, he said. Now he was heading back to India for two months, having his teeth fixed at Goa for a fraction of the cost in London.

"I've noticed there seems to be rekindled interest in pilgrimages and long-stay journeys in India," he reckoned. "A reaction to mass tourism, I think" he continued. "Look at Thailand. It's over-run with backpackers nowadays. India still frightens 'em a bit. Depends what you're after, doesn't it?"

In Kolkata we headed for Ballygunge to stay with old friends. Outside our taxi window the eternal road-sweepers were hard at it, labouring in the dust. New office blocks already looked worn in the heat. Soon the first slum hovels appeared, propped against alley walls. Then came the ditches, the rooting pigs and tropical stinks, on and on. Back again to Mother India, *Welcome Babu!*

But we're on a sentimental journey this time. First, catch up with friends and talk and talk. Tomorrow there'll be the countryside beyond the temples at Dakineshwar and Belur Math, out to the old French colony at Chandernagore on the Hooghly River. What I wanted most to see in Kolkata was the little temple at Dakuria Lake where, nearly 40 years ago as a young trekker I'd first encountered Buddhism in a living way. Staying with the same Bengali friends we were visiting now, I'd set off wandering one morning and heard a voice from behind ask, 'Do you know the way to the Japan Temple?'

Turning, I'd seen a pilgrim monk clad in a simple umber robe, traveling on foot to the holy places of the Buddha Life—shaved-head, flip-flop sandals, thin shoulder-sack and a walking stick. He'd walked like this, he explained, all the way from southern Thailand, through Burma, and civil war-ravaged Bangladesh. I learned that he was originally German, had discovered the dharma from books where he'd worked mining opals in the Australian outback after WW II. He'd take vows at a Thai forest *wat*.

I didn't know the Japan temple, but said I'd enjoy helping him find it so we strolled together and were joined in turn by a retired scholar of Pali. I listened to them conversing in English—my first dharma teachers. At dusk the Pali *babu* bid fare-well; then we heard a booming from across a lake. The monk's ears picked up at the sound and we stepped lively, arriving upon a little white and red temple where the monk hoped to stay.

The monk whispered "Follow me." I copied what he did. We entered up the temple steps, bowed to a Buddha image on a small altar, and took places on the floor



Japan Temple with Master Asai

among a group of worshippers, mostly women, in fading light. The repetitive chanting came easily enough, *Na-Mu Myo-Ho Ren-Ge Kyo...* As my confidence grew, I fell into the *pūja* action with the swaying motion of those around me. The chant was completely absorbing, and over and over the thunder of a mighty dharma drum had the whole temple ringing. The Japanese monks took turns hammering at it like *taiko* masters. No one seemed to mind my being there, and little by little it was easy to merge with the devotees around me. It was humid and darkness fell long before I left with a silent nod to the wandering monk. I returned home with a ringing in my head and in my heart. Without looking for it, I think it was there that I first experienced, briefly, something like selflessness. Maybe the dharma had been looking for me.

At grad school later in northern California I read Alan Watts on Buddhism and a Mt. Shasta monk lectured on why "Zen Is Not Zen." Seeking more, I'd hitchhiked through the mountains to San Francisco and walked into the Zen Center on Page Street. That brought me some basic idea of form. Then came one encounter after another in Vancouver's Chinatown, but I never forgot the small Japan Temple.

Passing the roadside sweepers I recalled that Indian Buddhists these days are largely Ambedkarite, converts from the Dalit community long stigmatized through caste restrictions. Fed up with untouchability they became Buddhists in the millions under Dr. Ambedkar in the 1940s and '50s. The mass conversions breathed life into India's dormant Buddhism. There was plenty of confusion at the time and the new dharma followers were short of proper teachers. Tibetans lent a hand. So did Japanese Nichiren monks who had established a small Calcutta temple devoted to the Lotus Sutra—my first dharma home. The lake area has since been renamed Rabindra Sarovar.

At times, Kolkata feels like a city verging on eco-cide—unbreathable air, grinding traffic, poverty. Yet people find tranquility in their contained, neighborhood worlds. The blue-tiled address of our friends welcomed us to the shady alleys of Ballygunge. Stillness once more. Upstairs, in a dim interior hung a remarkable painting in Ellora Cave-style of the *Padma-pani* image, 'the Buddha Holds the Lotus in His Hand'. Large and gentle, it's a quintessentially Indian visualization. Our old friend, Uma, created this...*the Jewel in the Lotus*.

At dinner we caught up on old times. Retired banker and elder brother Sam talked about Guru-Chela, the archetypal Indian learning relationship between Master-Disciple. Sam offered what he feels is a better translation: *Guru-Shishya*. It's a new one to me. The Guru—in Chinese it's *Sifu/Shifu*—creates the stimulus to learn more, Sam says. It's an individualized condition for learning.

"We have cosmetic surgery for the exterior. Indian yogic practice is a way of remaking the interior, the mind. Yoga versus surgical intervention; that's the next level."

Almost immediately in my readings of Indian newspapers I notice Guru-Shishya crop up. There's no replacing local knowledge.

On the table sat a bottle of green salsa: "Druk Mustard Sauce—Product of

Bhutan.” I studied the label, reflecting that even the little Shangri-la of Gross National Happiness has export considerations nowadays. There’s globalization for you! And it tastes good, not fiery. Outside, distant *pujas* were underway—someone blew a conch, then the chants and metallic jangling of triangles rose from little Hindu temples. The alley below was empty, serene in moonlight.

Meanwhile, Calcutta has its history—the Armenian Ghats, Chandernagore and the ancient Portuguese settlement at Bandol Church, Victoria Memorial, and a new Mother Theresa mural at Kalighat Metro station near the city’s holiest Hindu temple. It all makes sense. What doesn’t is the nightmare traffic gridlock. Yet there are far fewer beggars now. Most days in Vancouver you’ll get hit on by panhandlers more often than here.

India, media mavens tell us constantly, is the next world superpower with a 150 million citizens of certifiable economic middle-class status, roughly 15% of the population. She has the atomic bomb and an educated and influential world-wide diaspora. Dalits comprise another 15% of the indigenous population, mostly at the bottom, but giddy Western reports seldom note this anymore. Apart from terrorism, it’s the Call-Centers and Outsource Operations in Bangalore—probably India’s one recognizably *with-it* city that most feature in attention. India is still a country of extremes, subject to the biases of other peoples’ measurements.

No suffering, no enlightenment. At last we set off for Japan Temple. It’s not as easy to find as it once was; tall buildings have sprung up all around, but we made it. My heart danced a little at the sight—an oasis in a crowded city, gleaming white and red-trimmed within a walled compound and a garden in front. After nearly 40 years I was back like the prodigal son. A monk sat having tea with visitors from Japan when we arrived and luckily he spoke some English. Master Asai smiled at my situation.

He led us to the prayer hall. I’d had a dread of this—wondering if what was unforgettable for so long might somehow now appear gaudy, too much of this or that. Lotus Sutra devotions receive a mixed welcome in North America anyway, often dismissed as a way for flakey L.A. types to chant for a new Mercedes, although I hear that Afro-Americans seem to find it a source of refuge, and Tina Turner is an enthusiastic proponent. I’ve wondered if returning to this original source of what’s been a repaying, worthwhile life might not lead to disappointment—they say you can’t go back again.

But the sense of grace was still all there: the same cool temple interior redolent of incense, the altar and simple Buddha image as unchanged as I remembered them. The great, weathered drum was there with its lettering like a magical incantation.



Japanese Temple Drum

Everything felt, well, perfect. I looked at my wife and could see that she felt it too, the real deal. We walked about the altar slowly, like *kinhin*, then made our bows, rang the singing bowl three times, burned incense, made our offering.

We heard the mantra then, *Na-Mu Myo-Ho Ren-Ge Kyo*... Master Asai chanting. We joined him in the prayer and the chant grew louder with three voices now. Soon, a new wave of devotees behind us took up and I saw the Japanese visitors had joined us. Six voices and we chanted in unison, over and over, *Na-Mu Myo-Ho Ren-Ge Kyo*...

Master Asai deepened and threw his voice like a sounding whale. It brought us strength and we continued. The gardener, a sun-darkened man entered and took his seat at the drum, balancing his wooden tipper-sticks in hand... *Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo, Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo*... Then the dharma drum began its thunder. For decades I’ve carried its heavy rhythm in my head and again it all came surging back as

the drum-strokes grew in power and our chanting rolled in, wave on wave. *Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo, Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo*... More incense filled the hall, the temple dome became a bell and we were ourselves were ringing within it... *NA MU MYO HO REN GE KYO*...

Two high-school girls in uniform appeared from the shadows near the incense altar, joining the chant, perhaps drawn by the echo of the drum. They looked a little like the local sweepers too, and we saw that a crowd from the neighbourhood had grown around us now, everyone chanting like the first time I’d visited long ago. *Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo, Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo*... We chanted and our bodies swayed with these new dharma friends, mostly Dalit and once Untouchable, as over and over the mighty drum kept pealing out the dharma, *NA-MU-MYO-HO-REN-GE-KYO*... *NA-MU-MYO-HO-REN-GE-KYO*... The tears began then and I saw them rolling down Master Asai as well; he’d taken up a small drum himself and was striking it with tremendous spirit. We were all in it together deep in the heart of the Lotus Sutra, like a jewel arising from the dust of the world.

It was a tranquil morning but the temple kept resonating *NA-MU-MYO-HO-REN-GE-KYO*... *NA-MU-MYO-HO-REN-GE-KYO*...

Joseph Campbell says our sacred space is where we can find ourselves again and again. India is always a tough journey, but I returned to something important in struggling Kolkata and I’ve always been thankful to my unknown monk-guide there for getting it all started. My wife and I came away with a renewed love for the Lotus Sutra, every bit as cleansing, inspiring and gratitude-inducing as the very first time I’d heard it.

In the end, *The Lotus Singers*, my book got done. Back home, it took a while to process things. In a letter to a friend I wrote, “One morning where we stayed for a bit, it was stupendously hot. Unaccountably, in a market street near an old Portuguese church, a band of weathered, barefoot women walked our way, dressed in dazzling colors—radiant yellow and orange saris, golden ornaments hanging from ears and nose, bangles and anklets jingling...like gypsies from a medieval caravan. They gave us a look as in a dream, and passed by like a vivid piece of weather. Then stillness once more. This Lotus World...”

ⁱ “Korean Buddhist Journeys to Lands Worldly and Otherworldly”, by Robert Buswell, Jr., appears in *Journal of Asian Studies*, V.68, No. 4.

Trevor Carolan is the international editor of the PRRB.

LIVING ARTFULLY (continued from page 42)

and small boys using loaded guns to shoot tin cans off stumps. It is a different west coast than the dreamy place the newly arriving poets and painters swoon over.

Humour provides variety as well, especially in Michael Scott Curnes’s droll account of leaving Vancouver’s hyper-urban trendy West End lifestyle to manage a muddy “resort” with bad plumbing in Tofino. Photographer-carver Adrian Dorst points out that in that area of Vancouver Island: “one was never far from other artists, but a million miles removed from the art world.” It makes for a certain “DIY” eccentricity well known in those parts.

Both Anita Sinner and Christine Lowther have themselves made art in this environment, and sought out others doing the same. For readers living on the west coast it is intriguing to see their home reflected in painting, prose, poetry and photography. For creative nature-loving readers from elsewhere this collection may well act as a lure, drawing new artists in the footsteps of those who have gravitated westward before them.

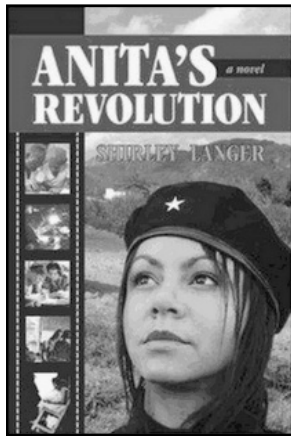
Implicit in an anthology about the treasures of landscape and wildlife and how artists draw upon them, is the knowledge that these things are not eternal or immune from threat. The “west coast palette” of greens and golds, flower-bright tones and lichen-soft textures, could all turn to grey and black should ongoing clear-cutting and paving prove unstoppable, and should the dreaded oil spill become the reality that people fear as tanker traffic increases along the coast. There is a thread of prefatory grief running through this collection.

An anthology is often stylistically uneven, and most of these contributors speak not formally but as they would in conversation with a friend: casually and confidently. The hallmark of a worthwhile book is that it stimulates further cogitation. This one prompts thought about the demarcations of regions, provinces and countries. There are national borders, and then there are the more subtle, natural and porous borders between bio-regions, the ones which climate and geology themselves impose on life forms. The far west Canadian islands are not a political zone, but to those who live here they comprise a special kingdom, an un-urban, nature-soaked, freedom-loving ecological wonderland that provokes continual mirroring in words, images, carvings, dance and music.

Barbara Julian writes creative nonfiction in Victoria; her recent book is Childhood Pastorale: Children, Nature and the Preservation of Landscape.

ANITA'S REVOLUTION

Linda Rogers



Anita's Revolution
Shirley Langer
Shirleez Books, 2012

In these days of economic and cultural uncertainty and social media prevalence, the book industry is dictated by caution. Is it sexy, will it sell, is the author's face advertising friendly is a too common editorial litany.

Some books are too important to ignore and they require special dedication (the wings of angels) if they are going to find their moment.

In the case of *Anita's Revolution*, a narrative which should resonate with many young men and women approaching their wandering years, Shirley Langer, who does have a blurb from Anne Millyard, Co-Founder and Publisher (retired) of Annick Press, which publishes a lot of industry friendly picture books for children, is her own angel. This is the new reality for authors of good books that don't make the cut in a culture dominated by super pacs and super-sizing.

We can pause now to remember that many books in our literary pantheon would never have seen the light of day were it not for self-publishing, new growth pushing through suffocating roots. These worthy books are a parallel story to innocent men and women on death row. They deserve a life.

Langer lived and worked in Cuba for five years in the Sixties, just after the revolution that freed the island nation from colonialism and despotism, the exploitation of the pearl of the Antilles by the Spanish and American governments and organized crime. We don't need to remind ourselves that freedom is fragile. The new regime began with the nationalization of property and elimination of racial discrimination. The first step in strengthening the oppressed *campesinos* of Cuba, many of them descendents of slaves brought to harvest the sugar cane, was literacy. Literacy is power, the power to learn and the opportunity to make critical life choices. This was and is a top priority in Cuba, whose children enjoy one of the finest educational systems in the world, no child left behind.

In 1961, two years after the revolution, the new government declared their intention to create a *territorio libre de analfabetismo* and organized an army of volunteers to eliminate illiteracy. In an unprecedented rite of passage, thousands of teens and pre-teens left the comfort of their homes and schools to reverse the plague of illiteracy, while nearly one million Cubans of all ages, the eldest 106, waited for the power of language to lift them out of poverty and despair.

Adolescence is a time of extremes. As they lurch into the gap years between dependence and independence, young adults identify with their peers and with ideals their parents have compromised. Fidel and his *compadres* chose an ideal teacher group, as this army of friends got their first taste of personal freedom and developed their self-worth in a tribal culture.

Anita is a part of the privileged upper middle class of Old Havana. Her father is a liberal newspaper editor, an enlightened friend of the revolution, but still, in the days before total US embargo, Russian intervention and the Special Period after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the great drought when everyone shared deprivation, the

family was still enjoying a standard of living completely foreign to many Cubans. In spite of these privileges, idealism is Anita's birthright and her prevailing social environment. She and her brother are determined to become *brigadistas*, volunteers in the army of literacy teachers in spite of the counter-revolution and their parents' understandable fear for their safety.

Like many of her peers, Anita chooses to rebel and help at the same time, strengthening



Che and Fidel



Shirley Langer

not only herself but also the future of Cuba, which has had to be resolute in the face of unending adversity.

Langer, who knew Cuba intimately during this unique time when the forces of change and resistance led to (un)civil war when even the army of children were persecuted by those who feared social change, has written Anita's narrative with the authenticity it requires. She knows the back-story, has absorbed the empirical setting and interviewed the real characters in her documentary novel. This book feels like Cuba, its intonation and tensions, its exhausted but resolute idealism.

Others have written about Cuba, a country which captures the heart and the imagination with its lush diversities of culture and potential and its heartbreaking persecution by colonial powers, but this is a special book because it is written for an audience that needs to hear that it has permission to heal a broken world.

Anita, who is candid about her weaknesses, is resolute. She opposes her parents to do what is right even when it involves risking her personal safety. Her journey is dangerous but ultimately rewarding as she engages the true meaning of family.

Would that all adolescents had similar opportunities in the wandering time. A recent study shows that children who question parental authority show more strength of character in making appropriate personal decisions. Anita's story supports the notion that the greatest privilege we can afford young men and women is the opportunity to risk doing good and learning their own potential.

Anita lost nothing by taking a year out of her studies, and she gained the world. Now, half a century later, she and the hundreds of thousands can look back and say they made the revolution a reality that changed the lives of millions.

UNESCO has designated Cuba, a country with a poet as one of its great national heroes, almost 100% literate.

I recently told an audience of young Cubans at the University of Havana that, contrary to what they might hear in the American media, *they* were the advantaged youth generation because they already knew how to deal with adversity, how to live with less and without contamination of their environment. This is the legacy of the *brigadistas*.

Within and without Cuba, there is dissent about the great social experiment. No system is perfect, especially one that labours under the boot of American imperialism directed by wealthy Cuban expatriates, the former ruling class. There is no argument though about the educational system which produces exemplary standards. This is a basic human right, one that the children of Cuba earned and one that they continue to cherish. It is the backbone of this slender island.

Anita's story is the story of *Cuba libre* and a cautionary tale for all who mistake dissent for disrespect. Even though its target audience is young people, perhaps some adults, that would be *all* parents and teachers, should read *Anita's Revolution* as well.

Linda Rogers is an advocate for the rights of children and an afficianada of Cuba. Her book *Friday Water, a Cuba-Canada love story*, is set in the time following the Special Period.

THE THIRD POETRY

Len Gasparini

Consider these Japanese lyric forms:

*Disturbed, the cat
Lifts its belly
On to its back.*

Karai Hachiemon

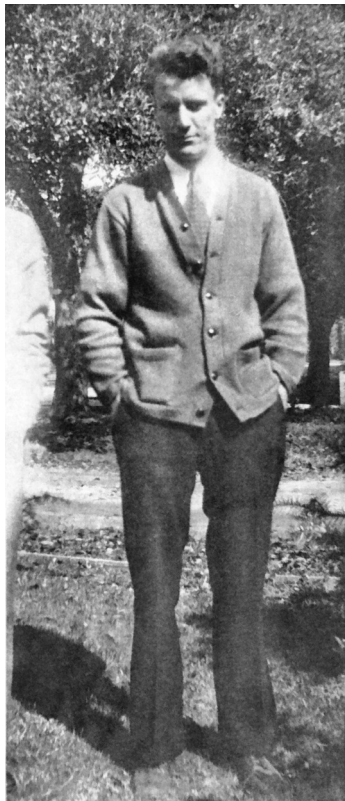
*A cicada shell.
It sang itself utterly away.*

Bashō

*So sweet the plum trees smell!
Would that the brush that paints the flower
Could paint the scent as well.*

Rankō

All three are vividly concise in their perception and expression of natural imagery. They exemplify responsible vision, objective reality, intuitive insight, especially with regard to nature in poetry. Influenced by Ezra Pound and Amy Lowell, the Imagists were fascinated with Japanese poetry. Their experimentation with image and metaphor laid the groundwork for modern poetry. In the 1950s the Beat poets (Ginsberg, Corso, Kerouac, etc.) contributed to the haiku's popularity. Prison poet Etheridge Knight nailed it down: "Making jazz swing in / Seventeen syllables AIN'T/ No square poet's job."



Walter Anderson

But how far did modern poetry go? From all the poetry I've read, I think poets spend more time looking at themselves than observing the natural world around them.

To deal with nature in poetry is to deal with nearly the whole task of poetry; for poetry is, to paraphrase John Dryden, the "image of nature." Yet there are poets writing today who still make the egregious error of attributing human feelings to birds, trees, and other natural objects. It seems poetry has always lived on this anthropomorphism. The so-called universal analogy stems from it. Even John Ruskin who coined the phrase, "pathetic fallacy" sometimes made a pathetic slip. So ingrained is pathetic fallacy in the psyche, that Linnaeus misnamed the genus of the chickadee — *penthestes*, which means grief, sorrow — and of which *Parus* is a synonym — because of the chickadee's black cap.

The reasons for the morbid use of pathetic fallacy are manifold: urbanization, semantics, the mind-body split codified by Christianity, the onslaught of technology, romantic doubts about nature; that "nature" is usually thought of by modern writers as an ambiguous word. There is another reason too — a pernicious one — which I will pinpoint later.

It was Thoreau who said: "How much is written about Nature as somebody has portrayed her; how little about Nature as she is." Which brings me to my theme: "the third poetry" — a term coined by Walter Anderson (1903-1965), a reclusive Mississippi artist, mystic, and naturalist who spent most of his life painting and writing about the flora and fauna on the Mississippi Gulf Coast and its barrier islands. He accomplished that third poetry of which he wrote: "The first poetry is written against the wind by sailors and farmers who sing with the wind in their teeth. The second poetry is written by scholars and students and wine drinkers who have learned to know a good thing. The third poetry is sometimes never written but when it is, it's by those who have brought nature and art together into one thing."

The dominant note in Anderson's "third poetry" is the judgment of egocentricity, indeed of anthropocentrism. He believed that what wastes the beauty of nature is the deflected eye of human subjectivity. In this era of high-tech gadgetry, few will

understand Anderson's homage to natural objects as few have any experience of objectivity, and most deny the very possibility because of their indifference to the natural world or their scant knowledge of it.

Several books of Walter Anderson's writings and artwork were published after his death. His *Horn Island Logs* (1973, 1985) is a worthy match for *Walden* — but with one difference; he went beyond Thoreau in the relationship with nature, accepting its terms more completely. He was nearly fatally snakebitten in May 1962. And he once lashed himself to a pine tree in order to experience the full effects of a hurricane. (The only poet I can imagine doing that is Hart Crane.) Anderson's logs help us to see things with a new perspective, above all to realize that we humans are just one species among many.

I read somewhere that American and Canadian poets tend to center their writings on themselves. Could it be that this tendency is not so strong in Europe, because there it is counterbalanced by historical experiences. Robinson Jeffers said: "We must uncenter our minds from ourselves." He also said, I'd sooner accept the penalties, kill a man than a hawk." A prepositional phrase neutralizes the remark. I was once criticized by a book reviewer for "depicting the seedy side of life in a painfully literal manner."

Some years ago Canadian poet Salvatore Ala wrote a blank sonnet titled "Pathetic Fallacy," in which he announces: "Due to toxic levels of pathetic fallacy / Bookstores have been closed by the Board of Health." Would that it were true. Depending on how words are used or misused, the most noxious landfill can be language itself. Of course a child can be excused for saying a bird is *sad* or a flower looks *happy*; but an adult poet — Never! As a figure of speech, it's pathetic. An Eisteddfod ought to revoke his/her poetic license. I'm also aware that Samuel Johnson, ever the ironist, advised against numbering the streaks of the tulip. Granted; but if you're hunting for old Indian arrowheads, you must look for a stone that wanted to fly.

Poetry imposes a certain order on thinking. Form is responsible for that, as well as cadence. I must write a little poem about the white cat that sits on the windowsill and looks out at the falling snow. Synecdoche makes possible intense condensation, as art and nature are enjambed. Verlaine took rhetoric and wrung its neck. As regards pathetic fallacy, I can't recall Homer, Dante, Shakespeare stooping to such falseness. Yet Burns, Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats delighted in it. Dylan Thomas used it with surrealistic effectiveness. Rimbaud colored the vowels; declared "Everything we are taught is false"; and became a gunrunner in Abyssinia. So, where does that leave "poetic truth"?

Poets have their own versions of "truth"; but it would take an undaunted and discerning reader to explore the relation of these truths to the truth of actual reality. Which is why science and poetry since the time of Plato have been at loggerheads over the problem of knowledge. The error of poetry is one that involves nature. It is analogous to the necessity of hypothesis in science. Perhaps the only basis for a mutual understanding can be found in the very substance of poetry: metaphor, which is a bridge from the minor truth of the seen to the major truth of the unseen. And, as I've already said, the haiku and the urban pastoral might be examples. Nature is its own metaphor. "Seek those images that constitute the wild," sang Yeats.

Hart Crane

Like the mind-body split that defines Western culture, the dualism between science and poetry, man and nature, happened because of religion. And it originated in *Genesis 1:26* of the Old Testament: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." What arrogance! What anthropocentrism! Small wonder that sea, earth, and sky are polluted, and that so many wildlife species are extinct or in danger of becoming extinct. Perhaps the root of the problem lies in our Latinized binomial nomenclature: *Homo sapiens*. (More arrogance.) What if the epithet *sapiens*, which means wise, consisted of only the first three letters: *Homo sap*. Would that difference have changed our nature? We have a tendency to form our beliefs first and then go looking for evidence to support them, rather than the other way around. How else can you explain the fact, which I read recently, that more people believe in angels than in Darwin's theory of evolution? Evil, after all,

(continued on page 51)

A GARDEN IN THE WILDERNESS

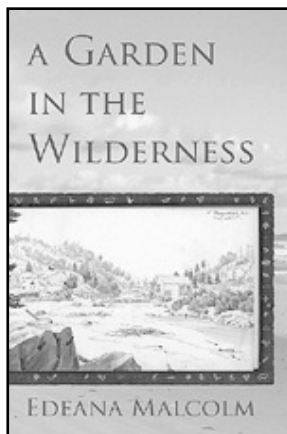
Sheila Martindale

In 1795 John and Susan Dean, with their eight children, were en route to New York to start a new life, when the American ship they were on was boarded and commandeered by the British, and diverted to Halifax, Nova Scotia.

For Susan this was a disaster; the daughter of an English gentleman, used to a refined life with servants, she was ill-equipped for the rough life of a pioneer. Because of the war, getting to New York was an impossibility, even if they had the means to do it. For her husband, it was an opportunity to acquire land and become master of his own destiny. But first, there was the bush to conquer

This fictionalized tale of Malcolm's ancestors is a wonderful description of the family's difficult beginnings in the hostile territory that was eastern Canada in the eighteenth century. Surviving the weather, the wild animals, and the ever-present threat of the native population are enough to make modern-day Canadians shudder. From Susan's pampered childhood, and even compared with the family's different circumstances following her romantic but ill-considered elopement, this was a rough life.

Susan fails to cope with such basics as cooking and laundry in primitive conditions, to say nothing of making her own soap and spinning flax, which then must be woven before it can become clothing. Her older children, however, are equal to the challenge, and begin to grow and thrive as they learn to wrestle a livelihood out of the



A Garden in the Wilderness
Edeana Malcolm
Borealis Press
2012. \$19.95

untamed land.

Aside from the history, this book provides an interesting glance at the social mores of the time – which emphasised the superiority of the male in all matters, and the harsh disciplining of children. We also get a look at the restrictions of an inflexible religion – despite a desperate race against time to accomplish tasks such as clearing the land and building a dwelling, no work can be done on the Sabbath.

Malcolm has woven fact and fiction into an extremely readable story. She has used some of the language of the period in her dialogue, which works well for the most part; although some things, assumed as understood, could be confusing – for example the use of the word “impressed” meaning coerced. But her meticulous research into all aspects of pioneer life has resulted in an authentic and riveting historical novel.

Edeana (her given name is derived from her Dean ancestry) Malcolm currently lives in Victoria.



Edeana Malcolm

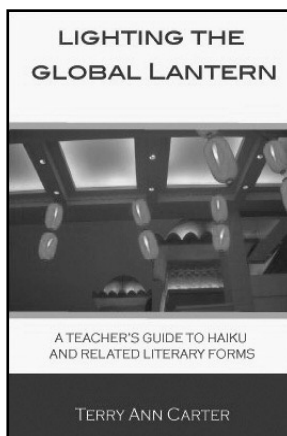
Sheila Martindale is a poet and reviewer. She lives in Victoria.

LIGHTING THE GLOBAL LANTERN

Richard Stevenson

I don't often totally agree with the back cover promotional puffs publishers use to promote their books, but I do this time: Marco Fraticelli, Canadian haiku poet, musician, editor, educator; Shelly Smith-Dale, professor, Taylor's College, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; and Raffael de Gruttola, American haiku poet, educator, musician, editor are spot on: this book really *is* a fine resource that belongs in every educational library worldwide, written by a leading voice in contemporary haiku education. Indeed, for any haiku poet or English educator out there who has bemoaned the 5-7-5 syllable veg-o-matic descriptive prose that passes for haiku in elementary – and some senior secondary – schools out there, this *is* the book you wish the teacher had consulted before generalizing on the much misunderstood genre of English language haiku. It gets the history of the form correct; it explains the adjunct genres of *senryu*, *tanka*, *kyoka*, *haiga*, *haibun*, *zappai*, *renku/renga*, etc., and their variations, accurately and succinctly; it provides excellent examples of all the forms of both Japanese translations of traditional and contemporary English language models; and it provides student examples and exercises that will keep teachers and their students delightfully engaged long past the time span of any English class unit or lessons on the subject. It also supplies a working bibliography of journals, web sites, scholarly tomes, and historical/instructional laymen's books sufficient to attract both the teachers' young charges and practicing, published poets to this most popular of poetry genres.

I wish I had this book *before* I went searching for all the others, let alone started



Lighting the Global Lantern: A Teacher's Guide to Writing Haiku and Related Literary Forms
Terry Ann Carter
Wintergreen Studios Press,
178 pages, paper

sending out poems and compiling collections of my own work. In a word, this book is *essential*. I mean that in both senses of the word too: absolutely necessary, and speaking quintessentially to the *essence* of the craft, certainly, but the art too. If you are a practicing *haijin* yourself and always wondered how the *waka* became the *tanka* or the *hokku* became the decapitated, standalone *haiku*, or what the difference between a *tan renga* and a *ren-gay* is, let alone what the terms *renga* and *renku* refer to exactly, you need look no further. You can find out in a matter of minutes. If you're troubled by all the traditional Japanese nomenclature of the *kigo* (seasonal word), the *kireji* (cutting word), and tonal variations of *wabi* (sense of beauty), *sabi* (), *yugen* (sense of mystery, depth) and what they refer to exactly, and how to achieve these subtle distinctions; if you want to know seven different techniques for composing English language haiku without all the malarkey or gobbledygook, Ms. Carter is your woman.

Not that Ms. Carter is taking centre stage, walking the walk with the chalk here either. The author functions as both author and editor, assembling lessons and practical advice contributing essays from the likes of some of the best *haijin* currently writing in English and other languages, including Roberta Beary, Randy Brooks, Garry

(continued on page 51)



Terry Ann Carter

FROM THE PALESTINIAN HEART

Gary Lawless

Sharif Elmusa takes us on a journey, a journey of many borders, a journey with no borders. He says in the poem “Moons and Donkeys”

*I want to cross borders
unseen
like salmon
like contaminated wind*

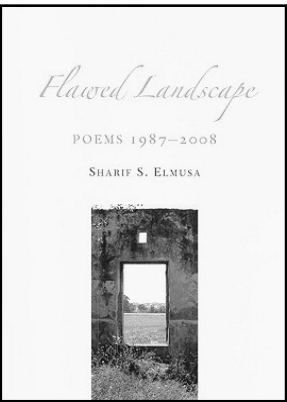
His personal journey as a “father, poet, scholar, university professor, political activist, airport regular” begins with a childhood spent in a refugee camp, Al-Nuwayna, in Jericho. He sees living in the camp as the “quintessential Palestinian experience, both actual and symbolic”, and the first section of his collection of poems reflects that idea. The title poem, “Flawed Landscapes”, begins:

*And it came to pass
we lost the war, and became a nation of refugees.*

If you spend your youth in a camp, where you are seen as a refugee, what is home? Where is home? This question lingers in the poems in this book. The camp was not a place where one had any desire to stay, or to acknowledge as home. Home was Palestine. The poet says that even now “the refugee camp ambushes me anywhere, any moment.” He says that a Palestinian exile lingers in a state of suspense, floats...

To begin the poem “Roots”, Sharif quotes Attila Jozsef “Home is where people can read your poem correctly on your tombstone.” The poem then follows the evolution of his names, as he crosses borders, from Sharif Said Hussein Elmusa through the gatekeepers of various borders: Washington, Damascus, Rabat, Cairo, Amman, to the gatekeepers of Israel. The poem ends

“Call me Sharif.” Sharif, who has traveled from the refugee camp to Cairo University (where in 1967 he became a “displaced person”) to MIT, to teaching jobs



*Flawed Landscapes:
Poems 1987-2008*
Sharif S. Elmusa
Interlink, 2012

including the American University in Cairo. There is even a poem called “With New Englanders”, which finds him missing his Boston dentist who “paused,/and asked where I was from./From Palestine, I answered./”How is the weather in Palestine?”/ he wanted to know.”

The town of his birth, “The village, Abbasiyya (not Abbyssinia)/lay far enough from the sea/ not to spawn sailors/close enough to have horizon.” He has returned several times to Palestine: to Gaza, Jerusalem, Nablus, Ramallah. Elmusa is Palestinian by birth, American by citizenship, with a wife and family of his own now. The second section of the book deals with family, with love. The poem “Dream on the Same Mattress” begins “Welcome/ to the tribe of the wed” and ends “Drink from the same cup, I say, and dream on the same mattress.”

This love and family brings some balance to the journey. In “Soliloquy” he says, “Alas, there are always reasons for living. / I have now causes that lose/poems I’ve failed to write/ a wife and children - a counterweight.”

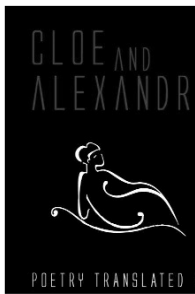
He suggests that poetry can be a form of exile, saying that “reading and writing poetry became my means to remember...to explore my estrangement.” He chooses to write his poem, believing “a new language is a home that is not a home”—a place where they know how to say your name.

He says that writing in English relieved him of the burden of being a spokesman



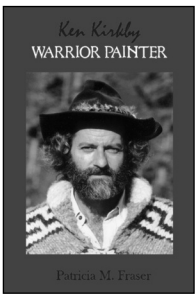
Sharif S. Elmusa

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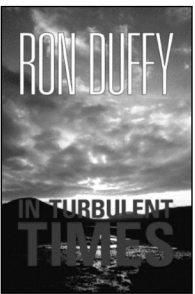
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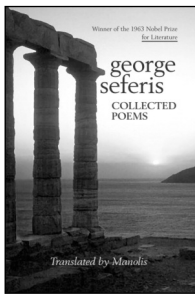
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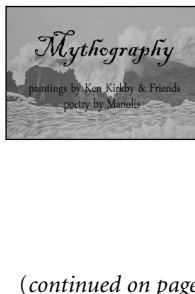
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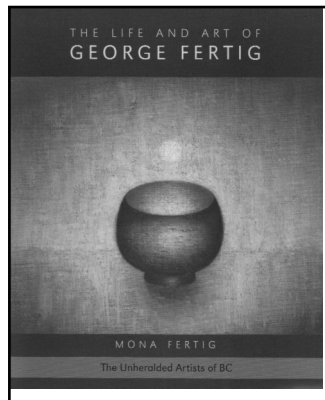
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LOOKING AT THE MOON MAN

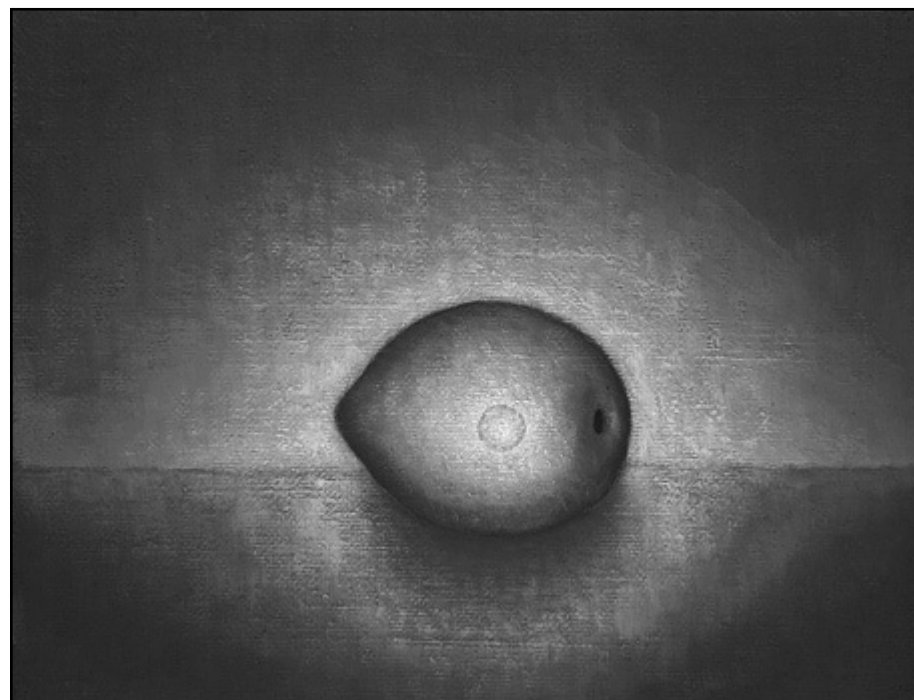
Marina Parapini

The litmus test of the artist has always been his ability to ignore the societal pressures and trendiness of his time and stay true to his own vision, for art loses its value without integrity and authenticity. The role of artists is to question convention, to challenge the status quo and not follow blindly in the steps of their predecessors. As Yevgeny Zamyatin argues, “Every artist of importance creates his own world, with its own laws – creates and shapes it in his own shape and image, and no one else’s. This is why it is difficult to fit the artist into a world that has already been created, a seven-day, fixed and solidified world: he will inevitably slip out of the set of laws and paragraphs.” In this respect, B.C. artist George Fertig, who laboured life-long at his craft without much public notice or any financial support, yet who never compromised his beliefs in himself or his art, was paid the highest compliment by peer Leonard Woods. Woods, a sculptor and teacher at the Vancouver School of Arts, describes Fertig as having “a unique sense of form...he handled colour in a highly individual way; in fact, his painting[s] reminds one of nothing but his own paintings.” Now, finally, in *The Life and Art of George Fertig*, this unwavering individualist has a comprehensive collection and interpretation of his art made accessible to the public. Lovingly compiled and chronicled by his eldest daughter, Mona Fertig, the work initiates The Unheralded Artists of BC series from Mother Tongue Publishing. The result of fourteen years of research, interviews and correspondence, the book is a beautiful tribute to Fertig’s life not only in respect to his journey as an artist, but also as a husband and father.

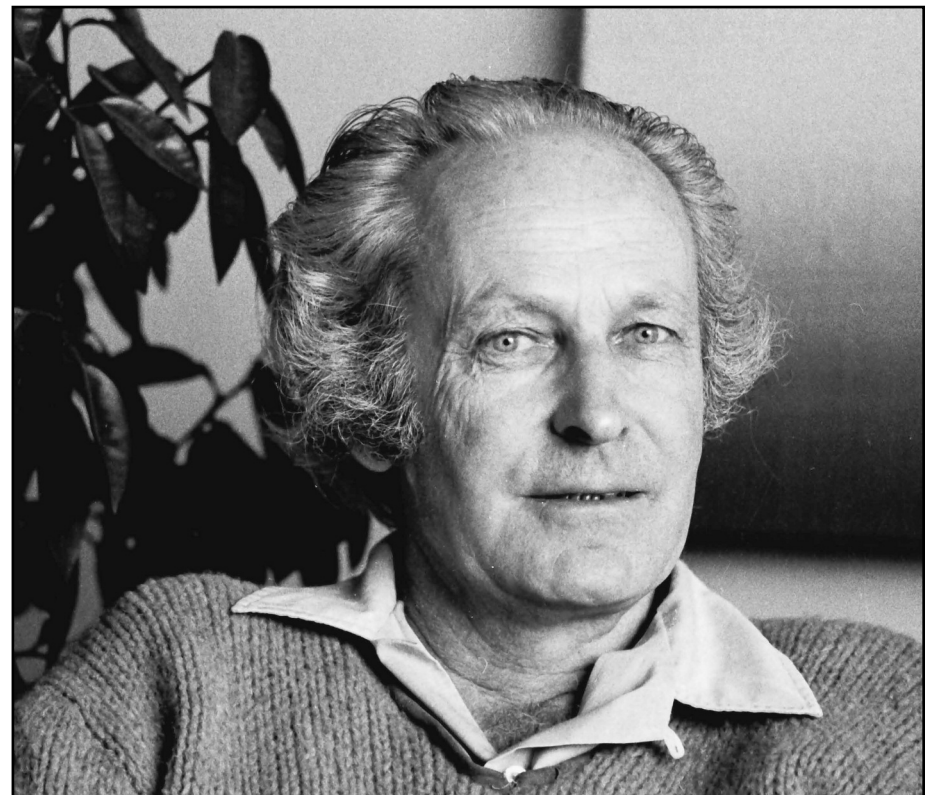


The Life and Art of George Fertig
Mona Fertig
Mother Tongue
2010

Often, artists are heralded for originality in their time with respect to history, having challenged classical rules and notions of art. Art history is dedicated to detailing linear trends of art and pinpointing when and who swayed the trends; it immortalizes and re-establishes the greats that are widely accepted as the standards of their times. The more subtle struggle of the genuinely original artist, however, is to resist the pressure of peers and contemporary critics, those with whom one must compete for attention, funding and gallery space. Critic Ian Wallace wrote of Fertig in a review cited from the *Vancouver Sun* that, “The most difficult artist about whom to form any kind of valid and meaningful critical opinion is the individual who chooses to work outside the current styles and apart from the main artistic community... Fertig is a minor artist who scarcely receives critical attention in the highly competitive market that exists today.” This topic is handled by his daughter with tact and without bitter-



Pearl in the Fruit, 1977, oil on board, George Fertig



George Fertig in 1975, photo by Marj Trim

ness, despite her father’s art having suffered from not being consonant with the prevailing trends of the Vancouver art scene and from his avoidance of extravagant self-promotion. This is detailed most clearly in the chapter “The Business and Beauty of Art,” where the author speaks of the competitiveness of the art scene in Vancouver, of the cliquey dynamics that inevitably control the politics of smaller communities. There are references to the struggle her family faced in making ends meet: with the sacrifices her mother made working to support the family, and her father’s day jobs.

Fertig’s simple, reminiscent authorial style is perfectly suited to the part-memoir, part-biography format. It’s a tribute to Fertig *père*, both as an artist and as a person who has clearly inspired his daughter. The first person narration of certain events is written simply but eloquently, infused with the insight of retrospection and of research while neatly sidestepping nostalgia. The tone and admiration present in every recollection reminds one of how Scout narrates the story of her father’s integrity in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Fertig’s prose blends events and opinions smoothly, and the many interviews and excerpts of letters about her father lend an intimate, conversational feel that is appropriate for a man often described as quiet and contemplative, not unlike the peacefulness that prefigures much of his art.

Of his painting, Fertig’s moon phase is fascinating. Living in the bigger, brighter sun’s shadows, the moon is underrated. You can stare at and it looks gently back at you. The sun scorches and blinds, whereas the moon softens, absorbs, reflects it and redirects. Then every once in awhile, someone like George Fertig—the “Moon Man”—comes along and we are reminded of the beauty of the things we once knew. True visionaries transform what others take for granted, shaping into something more.

Woods says of Fertig’s art that “it is born of the contemplation that goes with quietude.” Still, there is something unsettling about the painter’s hard-shaped black moonscapes. Pink Moon and Green Moon have their eye shaded in unthreatening colours, but several untitled paintings from this series with their tentacle appendages that reach up to a large glowing orb are reminiscent of HP Lovecraft’s cosmic horror. Their stark stillness is frightening; they seem to represent eerie, broken worlds unaffected by time. Even when reduced to book page size, they make one feel smaller. Paul Wolf, a dealer who sold several of Fertig’s paintings, describes how one especially, a black-and-white flower-like painting with the tell-tale glowing orb, was “so powerful that [Wolf] would turn his back to it when he was alone with it in the basement and run up the stairs when he turned out the light.” Wolf watched how the painting had a

(continued on page 50)

THEATRE BETWEEN TWO LANGUAGES

Eric Spalding

D*ramatic Licence* by Louise Ladouceur is the translation of a book originally published in French with the English title *Making the Scene*. From my perspective, being bilingual would be an asset to reading either version, as there's so much of both languages in them. The book compares six English-Canadian plays with their translations into French and six French-Canadian plays with their translations into English. As a consequence, Ladouceur includes many excerpts from the plays in each language to show the reader what the translator has done. Moreover, she often quotes from English-language sources and these quotations appear untranslated in the French book.

From this perspective, one could argue that a translation of the book into English is redundant, especially since being bilingual would be similarly helpful towards understanding the many excerpts and quotations that appear in French only in the latter version. However, in defense of *Dramatic Licence*, I should note that unilingual readers can skip the French-only passages and still be able to follow what the author is saying.

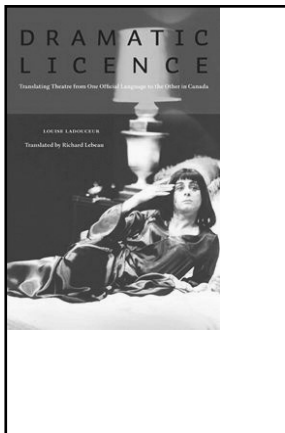
Moreover, the translation draws renewed attention to a work that, in its original form, won the Prix Gabrielle-Roy in Canadian and Québec literary criticism and the Ann Saddlemeyer Book Award for theatre research in Canada. These awards are deserved thanks to Ladouceur's careful prose and thorough research. In this regard, I was impressed by some of the obscure references that she found, including decades-old theatre reviews from Canadian dailies and weeklies. Moreover, Ladouceur's comparisons between plays and their translations are meticulous. I can picture her placing the English and French counterparts side by side and poring over them to observe their resemblances and differences.

I must also mention the translator's work. Ladouceur rightfully observes that theatre critics and others often overlook the person whose task is to convey an author's vision in a different language. Richard Lebeau has painstakingly reproduced Ladouceur's prose in precise English. It helps that the author was able to collaborate closely with him. In her acknowledgements, she writes, "The English translation remains very faithful to the original despite my numerous attempts at revision" (xv).

A central fact about translating for the theatre that often comes up in Ladouceur's analysis is that you cannot simply translate a play word for word (hence the title, *Dramatic Licence*). For instance, there are cultural allusions in the source language that the audience just won't get in the target language. Hence, a reference to actor Glenn Ford in an English play is replaced by one to Jean Gabin in the French adaptation (152). At issue is the fact that you cannot interrupt a performance to explain a passing cultural reference, although you can provide a few introductory comments about the play and its translation in the playbill.

More substantial aspects of plays are harder to change. For instance, Ladouceur mentions the florid style of Jovette Marchessault in her 1981 work *La Terre est trop courte*, *Violette Leduc* (*The Edge of Earth Is Too Near*, *Violette Leduc*). Québec audiences appreciated the play and made it a success. In Ontario, however, the audience was less receptive. A critic for *The Globe and Mail* claimed that the translation was "overwrought," with "a French lyrical verbosity that does not work in English" (99). But how much of the original's lyricism can a translator omit without betraying the author's intentions?

Ladouceur makes a similar observation in analyzing Michel Tremblay's break-



Dramatic Licence: Translating Theatre from One Official Language to the Other in Canada

Louise Ladouceur
Richard Lebeau,
translator
The University of
Alberta Press
2012, 279 pages



Making the Scene: La traduction du théâtre d'une langue officielle à l'autre au Canada

Louise Ladouceur
Éditions Nota bene
2005, 284 pages.

through play from 1968, *Les Belles-Soeurs* ("the sisters-in-law"). A path-breaking element of this work was its pioneering use of *joual*, the populist Québécois dialect that incorporates many English words. A translator can hint at Tremblay's style through the use of slang and coarse language, but the effect is not the same: "Divested of *joual*, a critical component of the shock induced by Tremblay's writing, the play's subject matter is stripped of its subversive content" (89). In sum, an important aspect of what made *Les Belles-Soeurs* so influential in Quebec is lost in translation.

In her book, Ladouceur focusses on the varied challenges related to translating theatre in Canada. In the process, she explores how to make a play connect with its audience. As a consequence, anyone with a general interest in theatre could benefit from reading *Dramatic Licence*. The author offers a unique perspective on efforts at building bridges between the country's two charter groups – however rickety these bridges sometimes turn out to be (131).

Eric Spalding is a certified member of the Society of Translators and Interpreters of British Columbia.



Louise Ladouceur

GEORGE FERTIG (*continued from page 49*)



similar effect over his customers, noting that "it hit some kind of zone and made people feel very uncomfortable."

The author recounts a friend of Fertig, Alan Hawthorn, who explains "[George] was an artist of life who was extremely interested in the ultimate questions such as when and how the universe was created ... [he] didn't use mathematics to explore the universe. Instead he used his intuition to paint the vastness, the profundity, the complexity of the cosmos." I would argue that in their obsession with form some of Fertig's paintings do have a feel of mathematics, especially the ellipsis that slips into almost everything whether in the foreground or in the shadow. Maths sometimes get a bad rap, seemingly being synonymous only with formulas, predictability and the lack of creativity or originality; but mathe-

matics is beautiful when it expands and collapses, folds in and out and simplifies. Art and science are both different representations of the world of experience and the author focuses this point in quoting Einstein how "The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science."

How do we deal with the mysterious? Leonard Woods remembers a conversation with Fertig when the artist said of himself, "...If my wife didn't take the broom to me, you know what I would do, don't you. I would just soar up there and live a spiritual life." Great artists embrace and are inspired by the mysterious. The idea of science and art being born in the mysterious leads well to another other famous maxim of Einstein that, "The most incomprehensible thing about the world is that it is comprehensible. The fact that it is comprehensible is a miracle." Whereas science naturally leads to explanations and a focus on the comprehensible, which can be defined as efficiently using mathematics and physics to predict the future (however small a component of it), art by contrast is used to probe the questions themselves and to explore the incomprehensibility of this ability to interact with and make sense of our world. In his preface, Peter Such describes this gift of George Fertig's as being 'shamanistic' and his work as being "a membrane, a thin veil between the physical and spiritual worlds." The more one looks at the art of this singular painter, the more questions one has, but strangely, the more one is also satisfied with where they lead us.

Recently returned from volunteering in Africa, Marina Parapini is a pre-med student at the University of British Columbia.

THIRD POETRY (continued from page 46)

is only human. We've been shackled by the bible and by those who use it as a tool of power. "How can I trust them," wrote poet Gregory Corso, "who pollute the sky/with heavens/the below with hells."

Hart Crane has a fragile lyric, "A Name for All," that epitomizes the fragmentation of the natural and human world:

*Moonmoth and grasshopper that flee our page
And still wing on, untarnished of the name
We pinion to your bodies to assuage
Our envy of your freedom - we must maim*

*Because we are usurpers, and chagrined —
And take the wing and scar it in the hand.
Names we have, even, to clap on the wind;
But we must die, as you, to understand.*

*I dreamed that all men dropped their names, and sang
As only they can praise, who build their days
With fin and hoof, with wing and sweetened fang
Struck free and holy in one Name always.*

Ecology has become a crucial eclogue. Ecologically, our feet are already stuck in the lethal muck of our own making. As Farely Mowat said: "Not only are we a bad animal; but we're most inevitably a doomed animal." Although hope lives in doubt, there might be some hope. In 2009, Wilfred Laurier University Press published *Open Wide a Wilderness* — the first anthology to focus on Canadian nature poetry in English.

Ah, the natural world of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians, fish, invertebrates, insects, trees and shrubs, wildflowers, nonflowering plants, and mushrooms. Let us see them in the wild, not from our point of view, but from theirs.

Len Gasparini is the author of numerous books of poetry and five short-story collections, including *When Does a Kiss Become a Bite? (Ekstasis)* and *The Snows of Yesteryear (Guernica)*.

WRITING HAIKU (continued from page 46)

Gay, Amelia Fielden, Penny Harter, LeRoy Gorman, Jim Kacian, Michael McClintock, Naia, Cor van den Heuvel, Michael Dylan Walsh, Robert d. Wilson, and others whose names will crop up the minute anyone checks out a web zine or a standard resource or web site. All provide succinct, highly readable, useful, functional data. Then there are all the delightful informed efforts of the students, in the event anyone is getting ready to get intimidated here. And let's be clear: it isn't just the adult haijin or teacher who is going to be able to read and mine this book; the information is presented in succinct chapters most students are going to be able to follow with ease. Better yet: the translations from the Japanese masters are good, readable, immediately accessible English language poems. The reader will smile a lot and even chortle and guffaw occasionally while reading this book.

When is the last time you had fun reading a book *about* imagist poetry, let alone all the arcane byways of the haiku?

And were that not enough, the author provides advice on how to run a haiku slam; what to do with a bilingual or ESL classroom of students; how to make fold and flutter books; and offers techniques of writing a haibun, where students get to mix journal text and haiku in an integrated work.

In short, there probably isn't a teacher from grades K -12 and beyond who wouldn't benefit hugely from even a partial gander at this book. My only quibble is the lack of an index, but, really, the chapters are so short and the Table of Contents so detailed, you won't find you really need it.

Read this book, then seek out the author's own haiku collections. Better yet, book her through the Canada Council or League of Canadian poets, or, if you live in Victoria and have a Facebook account, write her and ask her to show your students how to make a flutter book. She's one of Canada's best haiku poets and will charm the socks off you.

Richard Stevenson's latest book, *A Dog Named Normal*, is now available from Ekstasis Editions. He teaches – only p/t for two more years, mind you – at Lethbridge College in southern Alberta.

REISS (continued from page 33)

greatly demand, since what is dead is past. You excuse yourself with your disbelief in the immortality of the soul. Do you think that the dead do not exist because you have devised the possibility of immortality?

And, as he further exclaims from the depths of his encounter with the Underworld, "the dead produce effects, that is sufficient. In the inner world there is no explaining away, as little as you can explain away the sea in the outer world." In "Survival Rate", Reiss offers us such soul work. This seems exactly the news that Williams was referring to when he wrote in *Asphodel, That Greeny Flower*, "It is difficult/to get the news from poems/yet men die miserably every day/for lack/of what is found there." The book is haunted throughout by central riddles of life and death in an age of terror. How is it that each of us survives? Where do the dead live? Are we willing to carry them, and if so, how might we do that?

With their often laconic clarity, each poem might be experienced as an invitation to such an inquiry. I wish that in this review there were space to quote some of these poems at length. But let me close with a poem addressed to the father of the poet, "Second Hand Smoke":

*My father fell victim to second hand smoke
Decades before his condition had a name.*

*His distance from the chimneys didn't spare him.
His distance from those smokestacks was his disease.*

Bringing us into this smoke's proximity, in this work, Murray Reiss, has given us one hell of a luminous book!

Scott Lawrance has written several books of poetry. He lives in Victoria.

PALESTINIAN HEART (continued from page 48)

for his nation—perhaps an unavoidable tendency among Palestinian poets. He says that it is a "political oxymoron, even if a privilege, to be from a tiny, colonized country struggling to rid itself of Israeli domination and, at the same time, to be a citizen of an empire that is the principle keeper of Israel". A journey of contradictions, inner struggle and the work of poetry. In the third and final section of the collection, the titles of the poems tell us the story: "Roots", "Expatriates", "How Things Migrate", "Aren't We All Brothers", "A Little Piece of Sky", "Yearning", and the final poem "Homeward Bound."

I come to poems for news of the world, to learn about other peoples' lives, their histories and cultures, their ways of being in the world, and the paths their journeys take. Sharif gives us many insights into his life, sometimes broad views, sometimes intimate details—here again from "Moons and Donkeys"

*The ash colored donkey
was pregnant and flaunting it-
belly full, hanging low
like the night's moon.
She stepped into the road
slowly, deliberately,
then balked. Turned
her head this way and that.
All the honking fell on deaf ears.
I watched from my stopped car
this mock checkpoint
this street theater.*

In the same poem, Sharif says that

*I go around
like an ancient Chinese poet
watching moons and donkeys...*

It is a pleasure to read these poems, to follow Sharif as he travels a flawed landscape, writing out the journeys of his heart, in a world of borders, refugees, lovers and poets, of people who would try to erase the history, the names, the existence of others, and of those who carry the songs, and keep on singing.

A poet and bookseller, Gary Lawless writes from Nobleboro, Maine. His titles include the collection *Caribouddhism (Blackberry Books)*.

TO THE PAINFUL HEART OF AFRICA

Ralph Maud

This book represents an earnest attempt to get to the painful heart of Africa, the hurt of its many civil wars and their chief product, the refugee. Geddes takes with him his own sensibilities:

When my mother died, I felt I had been orphaned. My father lived thousands of miles away, married to another woman. There was talk of family friends adopting me, but my father showed up soon after with the intention of taking my brother and me to live with him. I sat at the piano, having had only twelve lessons, but desperate to play well so my father would not change his mind. At the time, I felt I was playing for my life. (p. 166)

It is with such sensibilities that, descending on central Africa by jet plane, one tries to escape the accusation of “voyeurism”. This is the word used by Emmanuelle from Lyon, a child protection officer of “Save the Children,” working in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo, after years in Chad, Yemen and Darfur. Gary Geddes does not say how he countered her, but he makes clear to us his readers that his answer was there in his laptop computer: the image of the bludgeoned face of Shidone Arone, the boy who had slipped into a Canadian camp in Somalia, and after hours of brutal torture died, “the perfect symbol of what the west had been doing to Africa for almost two centuries.” Geddes had deliberately brought that image with him to “help clarify my purpose and steel my resolve” (p. 7). As a Canadian he felt tainted, and his trip was to be a cleansing of sorts.

What astonishes me is that one man in our time can feel that he could and should—like Herodotus of old—go and find out for himself, not really to experience a war—not that kind of frontline journalism—but to hear firsthand from those who had, and then to write it up for us. I’m not saying that Gary Geddes is the only one to have done this, but he is ‘our’ Herodotus. And who else has begun such a trip with a week in The Hague, visiting the International Criminal Court? It’s that kind of move at depth that clinches the moral point.

Geddes gets to his heart of darkness soon after leaving Emmanuelle and meeting thirty-two-year-old Mbede, “slumped onto the couch, arms wrapped around her in a self-protective embrace”:

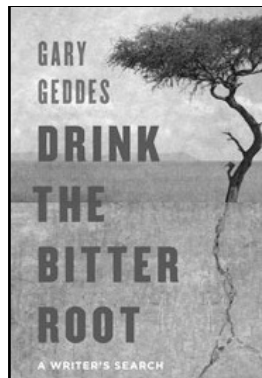
“There was a knock on the door,” Mbede said slowly, each word hauled reluctantly into the light. “Who are you?” my husband demanded. When he opened the door, eight soldiers burst into the room.” She hesitated, as if the effort to recall was more than she could manage. They killed my husband. All but one of them raped me.” I asked if she recognized the soldiers or knew what faction they represented, but she was no finished recounting her story.

“I lost my whole family. The rest fled into the forest and my parents died there. I don’t know what happened to my brothers. I had to take care of their six children, but I had no home, no work, no food. How could I keep them from stealing to stay alive? I tried to have strength. One of my nieces went away to be a soldier ... A woman in the village had a room she let me use and a sewing machine. Seven of us in one room. I could not imagine this kind of thing happening to me. Then it happened again. Two more soldiers raped me ... They were Rwandan soldiers, CNDP, FDLR, what does it matter? I suffer high blood pressure, headaches. I’m afraid all the time.” (p. 117)

Geddes is left to wonder what difference it would make to Mbede if the Congo and Rwanda war criminals were convicted at The Hague with life sentences, “eating three good meals a day, sleeping in a warm bed, watching a twenty-seven inch television screen and playing Ping-Pong with Radovan Karadzic.” All he could finally do was to make sure that a sewing machine would be given to Mbede when she left the hospital. What else could a visitor from British Columbia do?

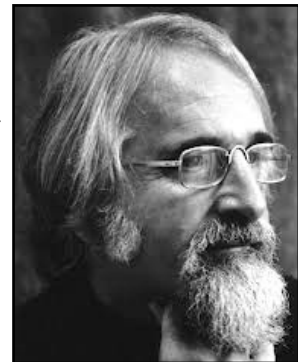
Drink the Bitter Root ends with a sense of limited accomplishment:

From my third-floor balcony at the National Hotel (in Addis Ababa) I watched the last rays of sunlight gild the tops of distant buildings. Near at hand, everything was in shadow. All week, I’d felt swamped by a tsunami of need; the stories I’d lis-



Drink the Bitter Root
Gary Geddes
Counterpoint
304 Pages, \$34.95

tened to were red-hot branding irons searing my conscience. Yet when I was confronted by the belief, the gratitude and, yes, the hope in some of those faces, a strange peace had settled on me. I’d come away laden not with guilt, but with the sense of having been blessed and challenged. Maybe I’d learned something, too; that there are moments when it’s more important to tend the wounded than to report the casualties (p. 168).

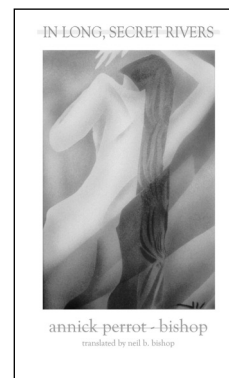


Gary Geddes

But it is something, too, to report the casualties. Writing an important book is something, and Gary Geddes has done that.

A world-renowned expert on the work of Dylan Thomas, Charles Olson, and the ethnographers of the Pacific Northwest, Ralph Maud is professor emeritus at Simon Fraser University and founder of the Charles Olson Literary Society.

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MUSE

Linda Rogers

Time traveler Mary Novik has the gift of overlay, layering the transparencies of moments captured by light and creating living, breathing history. Her second novel, *Muse*, linked with the first in its acknowledgement of narrative as metaphor or metaphorical device, reinforces the notion that we are all conceit, creations or recreations of the one human story. Novik is a magnificent storyteller, her tongue rich with the savory and unsavory details that make history compelling as analogue for the lives we continue to pattern after flawed examples.

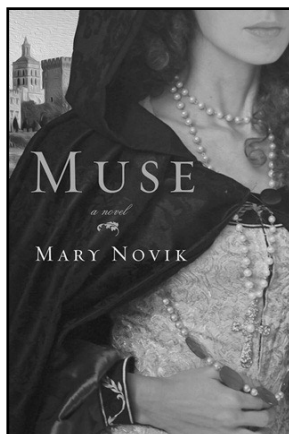
Muse, the second single word title an anonymous, invisible noun, tells us as much about the story of the visionary Solange le Blanc, and we won't say alleged Mistress to Petrarch and Pope Clement V because she was so much more than that, as all the words within her compelling text.

Solange, the first person narrator of this story of the Avignon Papacy with its sycophantic poets and sybaritic clergy, is as heroic a character as Joan of Arc, the feminist warrior who was burned at the stake. Ironically Novik has chosen the great poets Donne and Petrarch and their satellite women to describe the narcissism of ambitious men. Perhaps "muse" is a word Novik wishes to erase from history, because her heroic women, anything but the romantic embodiment of female inspiration, are engaged in the rapture that transcends Adam's rib.

Solange, illegitimate daughter of one pope and mistress to another, is a scholarly scribe and prophet whose great intelligence is almost eclipsed by the men she mentored, but not by Novik, who makes her betrayal by Petrarch, the courtly lover, painfully immediate and his succinct circumscription by his female issue immensely satisfying.

I first heard my mother's heartbeat from inside her dark, surrounding womb. It mingled with my own heart's rhythm, then changed to a harsher, more strident beat. It was then that I had my first and most famous vision of a man kneeling in a purple cassock and biretta. I could see him as if I were looking out a window made of glass.

Like Lady Murasaki, Heian courtesan and first novelist, Solange survives in a world of intrigue and cruelty because of her superior intelligence and the comfort and aid of like-minded women. Even Laura, Solange's aristocratic rival and Petrarch's fair



Muse
Mary Novik
Doubleday Canada
\$22.95

lady, is more than the cartoon the poet drafted in the cruel expectation of Solange's transcription is transformed into a vehicle of redemption. But *Muse* is not a polemic. Novik makes all her characters understandable and most of them, male and female, sympathetic. They are momentary illuminations in ephemeral, almost uncompromising frames in the ongoing film of life.

Novik manages to write with light even in her novel's darkest moments. The Avignon papacy was dictated by politics, as French prelates lived like princes in direct rivalry with Rome, which had outlived its greatest power. Moving backward, or forward, to Novik's recreation of Seventeenth Century London in her first novel, narrated by Pegge the daughter of the powerful poet and cleric, rector of St. Paul's where the current Prince of Wales married his doomed bride, the novelist draws the broader map of a power shift from Rome to Paris and London. Even today, the Catholic Church, making its desperate bid for the Third World, is a Medieval Morality Tale, light, currently abetted by tabloid journalism, wrestling with darkness, the corruptibility of men, especially men whose dogma is hypocrisy.

Francesco had claimed his love for Laura was only spiritual. Why had I believed every word he uttered while we lay in one another's arms? He had deceived himself most of all, believing the lies of his own poems.

The script for political power is still all about sex and death, which Novik illuminates in colours saturated with sensory detail. Her reds rhyme with blood, her golds with appetite. Her liturgy is a five-part harmony where the sounds of the street and childbirth harmonize with the unholy descant of neutered men and abused children and the death cries of the plague that precipitated the scientific, social and artistic exploration of the Renaissance and Reformation.

The fertile bed of the age of discovery is made in the pages of *Muse*. We are privileged to lie between the covers with a woman of spirit.

Linda Rogers, recently awarded the Gwendolyn MacEwen Prize for Poetry, is the author of *Homing*, poetry, and *The Empress Trilogy*, the story of three generations of women living in the opium triangle.



Mary Novik

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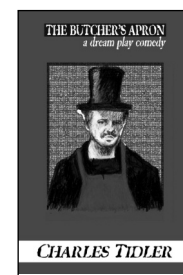
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Charles Tidler – The Butcher's Apron

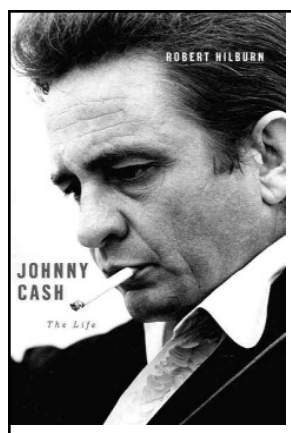
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MAN IN BLACK AGAIN

Richard Wirick



Johnny Cash: The Life
Robert Hilburn
Little Brown
469 Pages\$34.95

Lucian Freud, whose sensibility was as far from an Arkansas country singer's as could be imagined, was obsessed with the Johnny Cash song "Chicken In Black." It was one of the singer's most forgettable creations, embarrassing him so much in later life that he tried to get Columbia Records to pull the recording. But Freud saw in it [at least according to Greig's new bio, *Breakfast With Lucian Freud*] a sort of comic montage of our deepest fears: death, abandonment, physical deterioration, loss and interposition of others' personalities. To Freud, Cash's chicken was the Chaplin Animal, scaring us into titters as it twirled its head like a cane, walking the high wire of identity shifts above the abyss.

Cash was the sun at the center of many orbits. ['Johnny was the North Star—you could set your compass by him,' said Bob Dylan.] Freud may have been the Pluto of that lot, the cold, outer periphery. As one moved toward the singer, the influences made more sense and fell into place. All of country-western appeared to be infused with his dark, gritty testaments to restraint, to temptation resisted and succumbed to. 'I Walk The Line'

topped the charts in 1956, a hymn to fidelity that could only have been penned by a philanderer. Cash created duets and foursomes as fast as a square dance caller, and the ballroom floor was the very laboratory of 50s and 60s popular music and talking-blues storytelling. It had the diversity that stunned Greil Marcus when he heard Dylan's 'Basement Tapes' or Nash's Smithsonian Archive—it was that 'Old, Weird America,' an 'Invisible Republic' populated by the (always singing) drowned and saved.



Cash's first collaboration—collaboration! From that most isolated self-portraitist!—was that of his family back in cotton country Arkansas. Daddy sang bass, Mama sang tenor, and all "the children would join right in there." But he saw a largeness to his life, a feeling it belonged to the world, and so he moved to Nashville and L.A., past crossroads as divergent as gospel, country, folk and rockabilly. The first family of Christian music, the Reverend and Mother Maybelle Carter, would eventually take him in by way of a daughter to be his

second wife. But he first had to weather the Hercules tasks of a serviceman's ennui, Tin Pan Alley's gatekeepers, and amphetamine addiction that made him feel 'like the wad of powder wrapped around a cannonball.'

Collaboration by happenstance, by accident, was one of the Man in Black's specialties. Probably the best known was the 1956 evening in (his first producer) Sam Phillips's Sun Studios in Memphis, when Phillips's other artists and recording aspirants wandered in and strapped on instruments: Carl Perkins of 'Blue Suede Shoes' fame, Elvis Presley, and Jerry Lee Lewis, a contentious young bird-dogger with a head of blond curls like Shirley Temple's. It was called the Million Dollar Quartet, and while bootlegs of it circulated for years, it was Floyd Mutrux (full disclosure: my friend and client) who made it all cohere in his stage play of that name, now running in nearly every theater district in the world.

Cash saw collaboration's two poles in the cesspool of captivity (fox holes, prisoners) and the bright nimbus of the newly blessed (he was baptized perhaps three times). He was fascinated by incarcerated populations, and in his legendary 60s prison shows both took song fragments inmates had scratched out on napkins, and brought them numbers he'd especially written for the occasion. ['16 Minutes To Go' was a Villonesque gallows ballad, and 'Wanted Man,' one of many collaborations with Dylan, were standouts from the San Quentin concert.] His voice carried a deep, somnolent anger, and burglars and murderers saw him as their twang-tongued Orpheus. The night before Utah's Gary Gilmore was the first man to be executed in decades in the U.S., back channels arranged a phone call between the condemned man and his idol. 'Is this the real Johnny Cash,' the prisoner asked. When the great voice assented, the murderer, only hours from the firing squad, replied 'Well, this is the real Gary Gilmore.'



Johnny Cash

I first saw Cash, in the flesh, in the presence of his almost-in-laws, the evangelical caliphate of Border Radio's Carter Family. I was high up in the bleachers at the Ohio State Fair. The stage lights were dim, and the figures they were trained on melded into a yellowish, pulsing ball. Dust from the cattle barns drifted over us: church people having seen him at Billy Graham crusades, fans waiting for Bob Hope's show, pimpled hippies like me in green velvet pants and tennis shoes.

Now *this* was collaboration, with the man in black walking around like a demon among angels. Mother Maybelle, June and Carolyn sang in steady trios, hovering over the flow of the old woman's autoharp. Johnny's voice was the anchor that kept the ship from drifting off. His baritone throbbed through 'Keep On The Sunny Side,' 'Pickin' Time,' 'Wreck of the Old 97,' and 'Five Feet High And Rising.' Thinking back on my father's vinyl collection, I remembered Cash would do a few of these in rounds or echoey step-downs with the sisters backing him. He sang 'Were You There (When They Crucified My Lord?),' and when he recited the last verse-line of 'SOME-times it causes me to tremble,' each of the sisters would take it into the bridge with pair-notes calling out '[T]remble, tremble tremble.' Then he would come back with a final, authoritative 'TREM-BLE,' and their voices closed around his like a winding shroud.

But there was rocking to be done that August night in '71. We youngsters demanded he step out with 'Mystery Train,' 'Get Rhythm,' or 'The Rebel (Johnny Yuma).' Only he and his shadow filled the spotlight then, the boom-chicka-boom of the Tennessee Two replaced now by the harmonies of his sisters-in-law. He sang 'Giving Good Weight,' where the truck-driving narrator fools the truck scales reader with an inventory of low-tariff goods like eggs and livestock, plastic and beans. When he drives off the scales he leans out the window and strums louder and faster and confesses his true cargo of 'pig iron, pig iron, I got aaallllll pig iron.' 'Thou shalt not lie' was not a commandment, and the narrator was an addled man trying to feed his family, so the women behind him just giggled, swaying and snapping their fingers. The final flourish had to have no holiness whatever, invoking just a single sinner, male type. It was 'Big River,' which Bob Weir of the Grateful Dead would later cover in over 1,500 performances. The narrator chases the same skirt from St. Paul to the Louisiana Delta, coaxed southward through the maze of waters by her 'long Southern drawl.'

After the demise of his ABC television show [featuring first TV performances by recluses like Dylan and Joni Mitchell], and through numerous bouts of addiction in the 70s and 80, Cash's chances for pairing up with other musicians seemed to evaporate. By 1982, The Blasters and the Stray Cats, along with a host of British bands from Birmingham, gave listeners all the hillbilly rock it wanted. JC was beginning to take on the weathered patina of a relic. There were tours with Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson and Kris Kristofferson, under the banner of The Highwaymen. They were a potent four-



Johnny Cash at the Mike

some, with especially effective duets by Cash and Jennings, a musician who, like Merle Haggard (among the *inmates* at the San Quentin shows), probably never would have existed except in the penumbra of the man who stood behind him.

But as time wore on and a new generation of country-rock performers—one being his daughter Roseanne—were on the ascent, Cash seemed lost. His managers and agents fished for large venues. But he traveled in lesser domains, mainly in the Upper South and Sunbelt. They were small clubs, dinner theater, obscure festivals that let him rest on his laurels for 50-something nostalgics. Columbia dropped him. His wife fought off increasing bouts of illness, and so did he. Cash couldn't sell out even the most modest of auditoriums, and not even forty miles from his home in Nashville.

Then came Rick Rubin, the rock producer who looked like a cross between Zeus and ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons. Against all advice, Rubin hatched a plan to commit Cash to a series of studio dates that would consolidate into a smorgasbord of new songs and covers. Against all advice, Rubin wanted to do it in his home studio outside Los Angeles. Rubin proffered the idea in a tremulous call to Tennessee, wondering if Cash would even take it or know who Rubin was. Cash's wife June was making movies by then, and the singer had shaken off his years of resentment at how badly he had been treated when he lived in the San Fernando Valley in the late 50s and, like Elvis, was trying to break into film himself. As T.S. Eliot said, 'You only abandon yourself to a new faith when you've got nothing else to lose.' Cash was not objectively at that point yet, but he felt the industry to which he'd given his talent was so pre-occupied with new acts that he may never again have the chance Rubin offered with his ingenious archive-new work hybrid.

Early meetings were promising, and as Robert Hilburn notes in his new biography, *Cash: The Life*, Cash drew a parallel between Rubin's patient manner and Sam Phillips's easygoing approach in the tiny Sun Studios a generation before. Rubin wanted to go back and mine Cash's more sinister side, the messenger of dark forces that made him so attractive to criminals, exiles, and young rockers. 'Delia's Gone,' a song this writer heard on his father's Sears hi-fi hundreds of times, was an old standard re-written by Cash in the 60s, a somber, Dostoyevskian study of violence and remorse. This was the hook Rubin wanted, the vehicle that would return Cash to the shadowy place he occupied before he became a symbol of goodness and family in the 70s.

It's opening has the prisoner singing to his block guard:

*Delia, oh Delia, Delia all my life
If I hadn't have shot poor Delia
I'd have had her for my wife
Delia's gone one more round, Delia's gone.*

*First time I shot her
I shot her in the side
Hard to watch her suffer
But with the second shot she died*

*But jailer, oh jailer
Jailer, I can't sleep
'Cause all around my bedside
I hear the patter of Delia's feet
Delia's gone, one more round, Delia's gone.*

As Hilburn has it, the song had all the zest and confidence that allowed Cash to push musical and cultural boundaries for decades, the "maverick tradition of his best fifties and sixties recordings." Cash brought out songs he had written during his post-Columbia, Mercury records days that he had kept hidden until he could get them into the right hands. Rubin said "I wasn't looking for songs that would 'connect' Cash to a younger audience. I was just trying to find songs that really made sense for his voice. By that I don't mean baritone; I mean resonate with his character so he could sing the words and have them feel like he wrote them." Over several days, Rubin and Cash had nearly three dozen songs, and the producer felt he'd gotten just what he wanted. Cash left for a Branson, Missouri concert series with Wayne Newton, despondent at having to open for Newton before an audience of unappreciative blue-haired retirees.

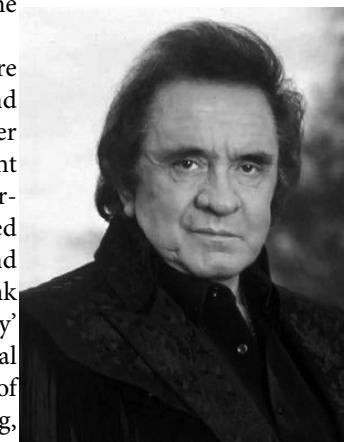
The American Recording series of CDs turned out to be one of, if not *the* great Second Act of an American musical giant. Rubin had Cash lay down primitive treatments of new and earlier penned compositions, revival numbers he had sung on Graham crusades, and, most ingeniously and importantly, somber tunes from rockers than Cash could cover as if his own. He sang Leonard Cohen's 'Bird On A Wire,' and Neil Young's bittersweet 'Heart of Gold.' When Rubin suggested Steve Earle's 'Devil's Right Hand,' Cash became ecstatic at the first few bars. Earle was one of dozens of young acolytes who saw Cash's TV show as the high water mark of the early 70s. Again, the prison angle presented itself: when Earle spent time on the inside for cocaine and weapons possession in the mid-90s, Cash had been—along with Emmylou Harris and Waylon Jennings—one of the few people who had written to him.

On and on the sessions went. The albums were described by Rubin as '[S]tarting from scratch and introducing a new recording artist.' As Cash's daughter Roseanne said, "Rick came along at exactly the right time, because before him, Dad was depressed, discouraged, and it was a powerful thing that happened between them, and Dad was completely revitalized and back to his old enthusiastic self." She went on: "I think Rick saved his life at that moment." 'Endless Highway' and 'The Man Comes Around,' along with the final 'Cash,' emblazoned with a shadowy toddler picture of Johnny from the thirties, were immensely surprising, gratefully received masterpieces. Indeed, packaging was

part of Rubin's brilliance. 'American Recordings' cover was a black and white image of a prophet, shot by the Dutch photographer Anton Corbin, who did U2's 'Joshua Tree' album. Cash stands in a high desert landscape in a ragged funeral coat and cane, two dogs on leashes beside him. Randy Lewis wrote in the L.A. Times that '[C]ash has collected 13 songs that peer into the dark corners of the American soul. In that respect, it's akin to Clint Eastwood's 'Unforgiven,' both in its valedictory, folklore-rich tone and its wealth of characters who embody good and evil in varying proportions."

These "aery populations" that had filtered out of Cash's early records, into those of Jennings, Ry Cooder, Dylan, Dave Alvin and others, had come full circle back to the master who had conjured them. As Cash's painful ailments increased, the final 'Ain't No Grave' CD is filled with eerie, spectral short pieces like the Hawaiian dirge 'Aloha Oe,' much of it sung a cappella. It is the voice and shifting register of a man looking to cross the bar, to return to the Great Artist who had sent him. When that happened, he gave new meaning, crippled as he was, to "finishing strong." He finished mightily, beautifully, in songs that will be listened to, like Stephen Foster's, a hundred years from now.

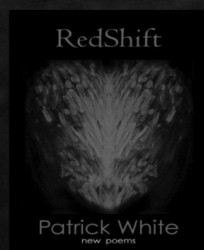
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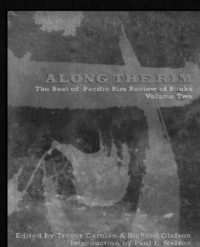


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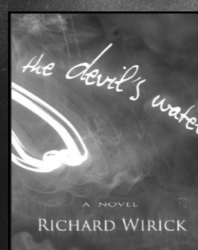


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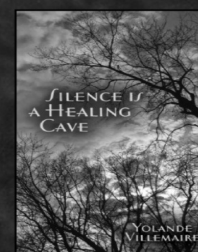


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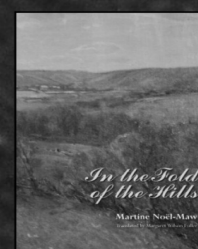


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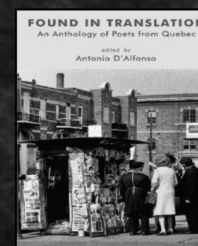
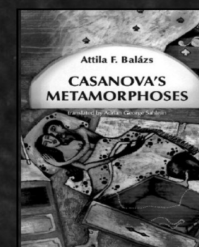


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