PRRB

the Pacific Rim Review of Books

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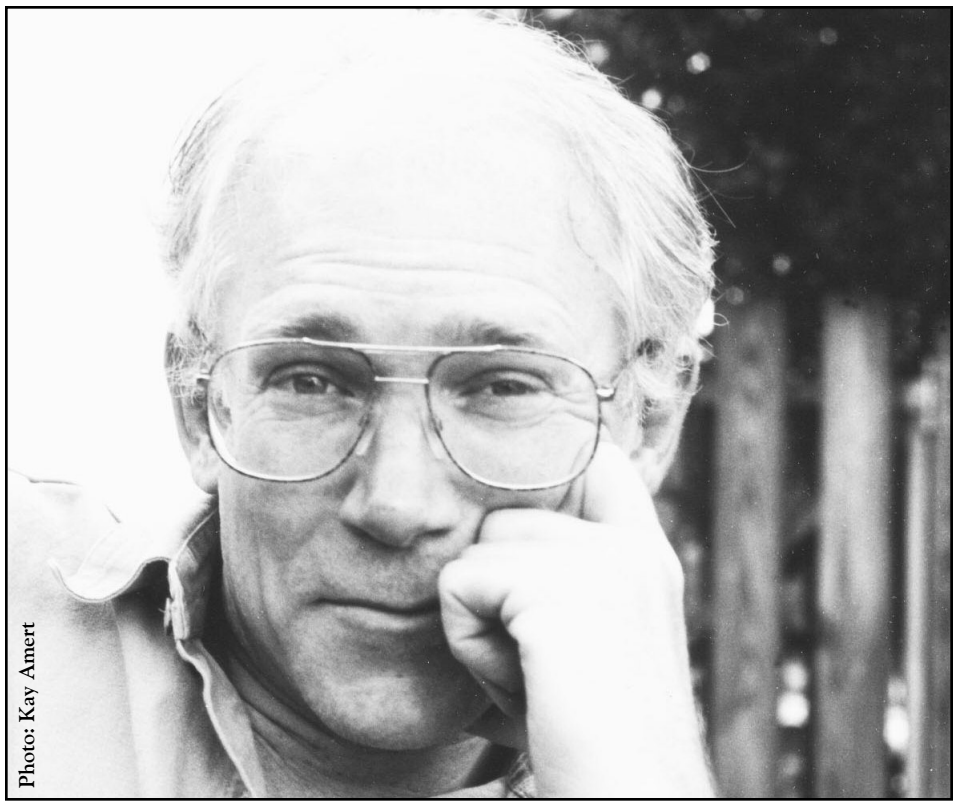
Photo: Kay Amert

Robert Bringhurst

THE DANCE OF LANGUAGE

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT BRINGHURST BY SERGIO COHN

"FAREWELL FRIENDS..." BY GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ

REX WEYLER'S EXPLORATION OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS REVIEWED BY STEVE BLACK

JAMIE REID ON THE LIFE AND POETRY OF JOHN NEWLOVE

WITH FRANKIE SIONIL JOSE IN MANILA, BY FRANCES CABAHUG

SUSAN MCCASLIN: WHY BLAKE STILL MATTERS

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LEGACY OF ASHES: THE HISTORY OF THE CIA REVIEWED BY REG LITTLE

PLUS:

NEW WRITING FROM AUSTRALIA, JAPAN, KOREA, AND ASIAN NORTH AMERICA; STAN PERSKY'S *TOPIC SENTENCE*; ASSESSING *PICABIA*; KIT PEARSON'S LATEST; FATS DOMINO; AND JIM CHRISTY

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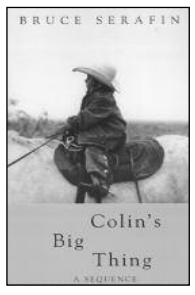
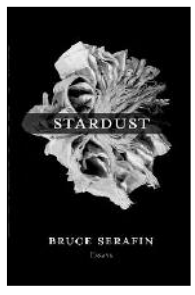
This issue of the
Pacific Rim Review of Books
is dedicated to the memory of
Bruce Serafin
1950-2007
Author, editor, essayist,
thinker and friend,
he will be missed.



Colin's Big Thing
Memoir
Ekstasis Editions
2004
280 pages
$21.95



Stardust
Essays
New Star Books
2007
240 pages
$19.00

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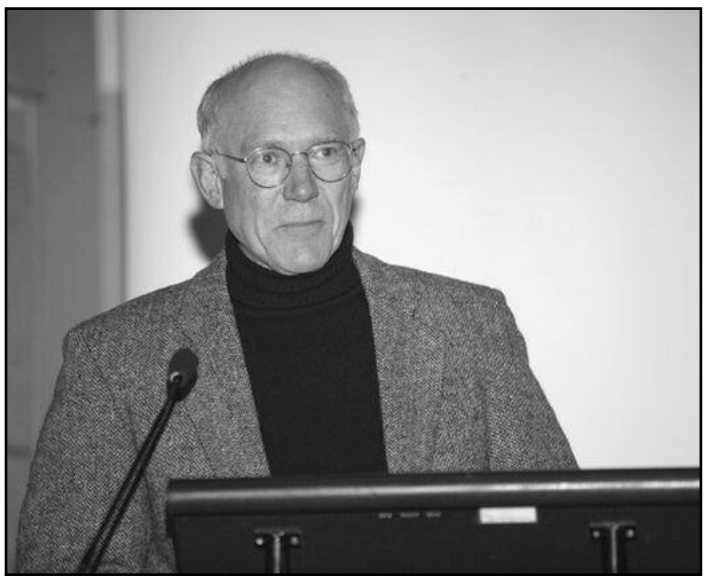
Approaches to Language, Literature & Insight Practice

An Interview with Robert Bringhurst by Sergio Cohn

Pacific Rim Review of Books ***is delighted to acknowledge a new pan-American working association with*** **Azougue** ***journal from Rio de Janeiro, Brasil. Azougue is a socially-engaged Creative Commons magazine, and it is also a publishing house specializing in poetry. In conjunction with the North American publication of acclaimed Canadian poet, essayist and typographical scholar Robert Bringhurst's new non-fiction collection,*** **Everywhere Being Is Dancing** ***(Gasperau, NB; Counterpoint, USA), we are pleased to bring you this searching interview with him conducted by Azougue's Sergio Cohn, with questions from his co-editors Pedro Cesarino and Renato Rezende. To our rainforest neighbours we say,*** **Obrigado!**

SC: *The Pacific Northwest coast has long witnessed an intense interchange among peoples such as the Haida, Tsimshian, Tlingit, Kwakiutl, and others. Claude Lévi-Strauss, the anthropologist, also perceived striking homologies between Haida and Chinese aesthetics, for example, whose visual representations exhibit a familiar feeling in their symmetries, parallelisms and schematizations. Certain Greek-European philosophical discourse has insisted, however, that a truly cosmopolitan culture can only be a prerogative of Western civilization, supplied by writing and criticism. Within the mandala of approaches to language, literature, and insight practice that you've been constructing through your publications, have you any thoughts on the complex nature of ethnocentricity?*



Robert Bringhurst

RB: There's a very distinctive visual language, known as "formline art," that has flourished for centuries among the Haida, Tlingit, Tsimshian and Nisgha peoples on the Northwest Coast of North America. People call it a "style," but I think it makes more sense to call it a visual language. It isn't a fully three-dimensional language, but it isn't confined to two dimensions either. You find it in sculpture as well as painting. There are some very compelling resemblances between this kind of visual art and some of the visual art of early China, the art of the Ainu in northern Japan, Maori art from New Zealand, a lot of Melanesian art, and some early work from sites on the west coast of South America. In other words, this visual language, native to coastal British Columbia and Alaska, seems to belong to a family of visual languages that reaches around and across the Pacific Ocean. At the same time, there are some close and compelling resemblances between certain stories told in the Haida language on the British Columbia coast about a century ago and stories told around the same time, in very different languages, on the north coast of Siberia. In visual art, the resemblances reach one way; in literature, another.

I'm not much interested, myself, in constructing a grand theory to explain all these resemblances. But it is good to be reminded in this way that cultural history is wonderfully deep and complex. The story of human literature and art is much thicker and more widespread than the story of Europe and its colonies, or China and its dynasties, or the Middle East and its monomaniacal religions. The history of the human mind, and the histories of art and literature, are very different from the histories of empires, which preach their own importance through their schools. Art is made by individuals, not by political or commercial or religious institutions, and great art can be made in little villages as well as in big cities. It's true, as you suggest, that an intensely ethnocentric bias is present in a lot of European thinking. You find it in Plato, Aristotle and Kant as well as in Hegel and Heidegger. You can fight it or you can ignore it; what you mustn't do is believe it. If you simply ignore Plato's claims that the Greeks are better and smarter and more human than everyone else, then Plato's brilliance as a writer of philosophy remains. His racism is actually irrelevant to ninety or ninety-five per cent of his thinking, so you can just set it aside if you're willing to do so. The problem is that we often don't. It seems that people really like to be ethnocentric, the way children like to dress up and pretend they're important. The problem may not be universal, but it is very widespread. There are some viciously ethnocentric Haida and Tsimshian people too! But a little genuine, heart-to-heart experience of other human cultures goes a long way toward countering this petty self-importance.

SC: *What are the translation difficulties with an oral tradition like, say, Haida or Navajo? For instance, if we consider the role of authorship and creation in the case of Haida literature, might this by implication suggest the establishment of a canon?*

RB: Oral literature is different from written literature. There is no fixed text. If you reread a printed book, you will find things that you didn't see before, because you, the reader, have changed, though the book has probably not. In an oral culture, the teller changes as well as the listener, so the story itself is constantly being revised. When an oral work is transposed to the written domain, its dynamism decreases but doesn't altogether disappear. In other respects, print cultures tend to be more dynamic than oral cultures, precisely because in print cultures writing is stored and saved. New writers come to feel imprisoned as well as empowered by this ever-increasing store, and then they go in search of innovation – " originality," as it is called. Print also becomes a commodity, which accelerates the search for selfish novelty. In an oral culture, innovation is inescapable, but "originality" is real: the moral pressure runs toward the retention of tradition. Oral and literate cultures also have plenty in common. Greek, Latin, French, German, Spanish, and English written literatures all rest on oral roots; they begin with texts that were transposed from the oral to the written mode. The oral and the written can nourish each other, in fact. Neither is necessarily pure. And one oral culture is not like another. The structures you find in works of oral literature from the west coast of North America, for example, tend to be different from the structures you'll encounter in European writing, and different from the structures of European oral epic and saga as well. Whether you listen to Native American literature in oral form or read it in transcription or translation, if your preconceptions are European, you have some learning to do. You have to learn a new way of reading. I as a translator cannot do this learning for you. The best I can do is help you see that learning to read another kind of literature might be worth your while.

The question of oral authorship has troubled a lot of people, but I don' t think it's so difficult. We just have to abandon the silly assumption that works from oral cultures have no authors, or that they are authored by the community as a whole instead of by individuals. In every culture, the artist or storyteller shares a language, a fund of ideas, and a common store of phrases and images. He shares these things with other artists, and he shares them with the community as a whole. Otherwise, no communication is possible. But every individual artist or storyteller employs these shared resources in an individual way. This is true for a Haida mythteller like Skaay or a Navajo mythteller like Cháálatsoh, just as it is for Shakespeare or Camões, or for Beethoven or Rembrandt.

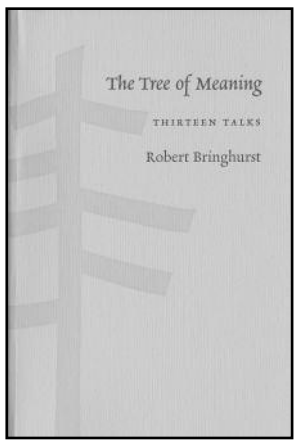
SC: *Non-Western cultures served as inspiration for numerous avant-garde trailblazers, such as Artaud, Tzara, Picasso or Oswald de Andrade. How can a Western reader today usefully approach Indigenous North American aesthetics and poetics?*

Perhaps the work of Picasso and Brancusi and other Europeans who were impressed by Native American and African art has made it easier for us, who are their grandchildren, to see that art for ourselves. Or perhaps it has made it more difficult. The importance of non-western art can't be measured by its impact on western art and

(*continued on page 34)*

Branches on the Tree of Being:
Views of Robert Bringhurst

Trevor Carolan

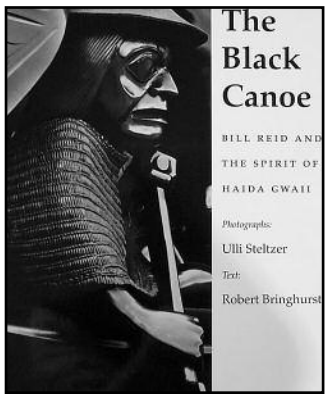


The Tree of Meaning
Robert Bringhurst
Gaspereau Press
334 pages, $31.95

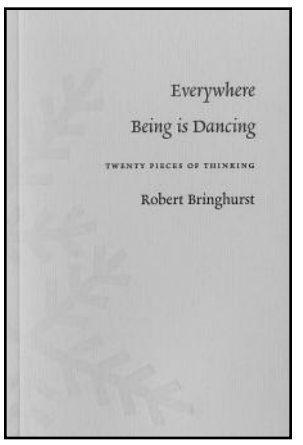
Reading these two collections of Robert Bringhurst's essays and talks, one realizes how clearly the function of the arts and letters is to testify. In the Celtic world, bards of a certain mastery are themselves an order of Druid, so it should come as no surprise, that arriving from the hands of a poet as formidable as Bringhurst, these masterworks have shamanic heft, spirit and feeling. Moving between accounts and glosses on a broad horizon of subjects ranging from pre-Socratic Greek ideas to Haida and Navajo myths and culture, Italian painting, Taoist cosmology, and the origins of Mind, these are essays that demand sustained, close attention from the reader. It's a repaying exercise. The depth of knowledge and instruction they impart can seem a couple of light years beyond the usual literary nonfiction tosh nowadays, but that's part of entering the dance in Bringhurst's latest work. Indeed, while claiming no portion of it, he relates how the shamanic voice functions as a way of "learning how to think", not deciding for us "what to believe."

Cumulatively, Bringhurst's prose is dense as a wall, a kind of *gallus murus*, dry-stacked with recondite backfill that inches through every crack, creating its own mortar. That backfill can be intimidating—a stew of Greek, Latin, Indigenous North American, Chinese and modern European language and poetic references. But patient readers will learn this man advances a thesis the way another will stalk a deer. His sidebar discussion of classical Chinese lexicography in an essay like "Everywhere Being Is Dancing" might provoke some wondering, but it serves his point: if etymology cannot tell us with precision what say, poetry *is*, then stories about language may help shape useful *patterns* of understanding for us—what he calls "stepping in time with being." It makes good sense, for as Zen master Hakuin's instruction still resonates from the dojo, "even singing and dancing are voices of the Dao."

Someone else may want to grapple with the myriad scholarly and linguistic particulars these books incite to attention, but it's more rewarding to simply bow to the erudition here and engage these essays as a continuum of exquisitely-crafted, frequently cross-referential stories. The works in *Tree,* he says, were intended to be spoken, whereas the *Being* essays were all intended to be read. Fair enough. As a reader and enthusiast, I headed straight in *The Tree of Meaning* to its engrossing essay "Finding Home: The Legacy of Bill Reid." You will hear contending views about Bringhurst's sinewy relationship with Haida cultural expression, some of them miserly and envious, but on the basis of a modest acquaintance with Reid myself, my sense is that this essay is a brilliant portrait of this man with whom Bringhurst was privileged to work on close terms, and whose head, he notes, "was full of poems" and who understood not one, but two cultural varieties of joy and pain. Brilliant is not a descriptive to assign lightly, but with this as a standard of measurement one can look upon the rest of the material—works including "The Tree of Meaning and the Work of Ecological Linguistics", "The Polyhistorical Mind", "Native American Oral Literatures and the Unity of the Humanities", and a mind-expanding original translation from the Navajo entitled "*Cháálatsoh*—The Origin of Horses" among others, and take Bringhurst himself to be a storyteller—one conversant in the practicalities of myth and mythmaking, poetry, translation, a little music, linguistics, and of working with type, as well as in the art of listening to and studying other good storytellers. In short, a reporter with an imagination capable of encompassing and synthesizing these often unruly disciplines.



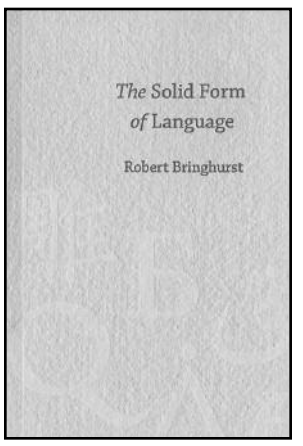
Innerconnectivity is much at the heart of both these books. A modern scientific approximation of what the Chinese understand as *Dao,* a term that serves as both noun and verb, innerconnectivity is emerging as the new paradigm for understanding *how it all works* in the 21st century. But if the knowledge is as old as the hills, literally, in aboriginal and in many Asian cultures, it doesn't hurt anyone to see it made new; heaven knows North America needs every lick from the bucket of common sense it can get. And so at the end of a fascinating discourse on poetry in "Everywhere Being Is Dancing", we encounter a line noting how Lao Zi, the wily Daoist seer and poet, "listened to *what-is* instead of *what-is-made*, and moved in time with what he heard". That's precisely how becoming attuned to the mind of nature works, of course; and in the face of deepening ecological insecurity, cultivating mindfulness is becoming an essential element in ensuring our survival as a species. Perhaps poets and storytellers have something to teach us after all? Certainly as a scholar of Pacific Northwest coastal cultures, Bringhurst understands that stories and poems are often of both great artistic and practical value—most acutely as "the legacy of peoples who knew how to live in this land for thousands of years without wrecking it." Alas, as any open-eyed traveller up and down this coastal region cannot miss observing, and as Bringhurst has been telling us in various written forms and interviews for long years now, "the trees, the rivers and the sea-run fish are going the way of the buffalo."



Everywhere Being Is Dancing: Twenty Pieces of Thinking
Robert Bringhurst.
Gaspereau Press.
334 pages, $31.95

Is there an irony in all this? As Bringhurst relates in "It Used To Be I Sang Them…", in the mythworld that's the kind of question stories ask, not the kind they answer." But given the current liberal Canadian fetish for import multiculturalism, it's a lousy end that so many indigenous tongues are vanishing before our eyes—languages, he prompts, that themselves have been lifeforms *of this place*; and that when lost represent a diminishment of our intellectual gene pool. A formula for ecological dystopia? It's rare that a literary mind can still sound *oracular.*

Among the most compassionate observations found in these essays is Bringhurst's view in "Jumping From The Train" that the transmission of stories from indigenous mythtellers to colonial-era ethnologists like Edward Sapir, Franz Boas, or John Swanton who journeyed to Haida Gwaii, was a reciprocity, part of that shadow economy which poets, translators, mythtellers, and fellow travellers have traded in for eons. When Ghandl, an oral poet whose sharing with Swanton a hundred and eight years ago of the Haida myth tales that Bringhurst has renewed for our time through his English translations, was willing to share with the visitor, along with other aboriginal storytellers, he did so, Bringhurst informs us, for his own purposes: they "*[put] Swanton to use by telling him their stories.*" Seen in terms of the post-apocalyptic period following European contact when "some ninety-five per cent of the Haida-speaking population died," writing things down wasn't a bad idea at all. Strikingly, for the blind Ghandl, Bringhurst adds, "storytelling was his favourite way of thinking." Mull that around for a moment or two. Storytelling is important, so much so that Bringhurst explains in "The Polyhistorical Mind", how it may represent "a coherent system…like…science or mathematics. And like a forest, it is more than the sum of its parts."



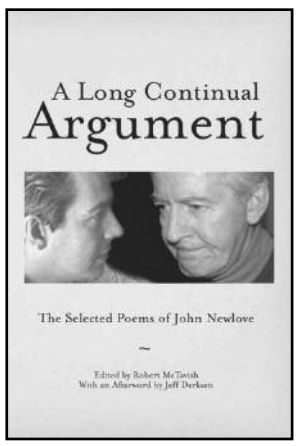
At times these essays from a nature literate polymath working at the top of his form may echo a little of this or that stylist—Wendell Berry and Guy Davenport come to mind—but Robert Bringhurst is really out there on his own now, one of a band for whom Jerome Rothenberg coined the term "Technicians of the Sacred". Written at the zenith of his powers for a growing international audience which recognizes this fellow knows what it's all about, these are books one senses that are going to be in circulation for a long time.

Trevor Carolan is the international editor of PRRB.

A Night of Newlove

Jamie Reid

The Western Front Lodge, the now venerable home of the Vancouver avant-garde art and literary movement of the 1960s and afterwards, was the fitting venu on February 8th for the launch of a new posthumous selection of the poetry of John Newlove. The launch of this new and definitive selection of his work was accompanied by a remarkable documentary biography of the poet by novice filmmaker Robert McTavish. Newlove was an active presence in the 1960s during the first surge of this first indigenous movement of Vancouver art and poetry, along with his now famous and celebrated contemporaries, George Bowering, bill bissett and many others, some of whom appear in the film.

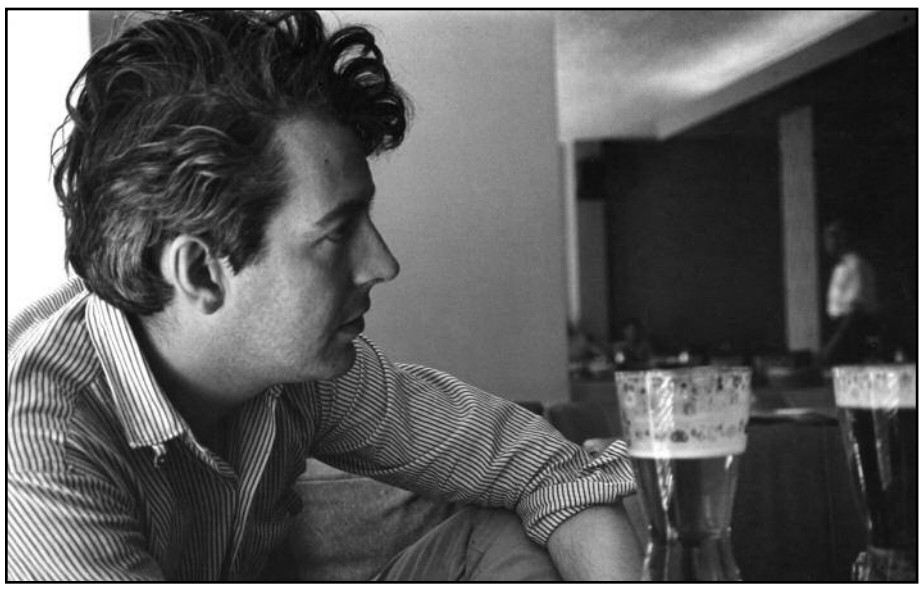


A Long Continual Argument: The Selected Poems of John Newlove
ed. Robert McTavish
Chaudiere Books
251 pages $22.00

Newlove may not have been positioned exactly in the centre of that fresh and bumptious community, but he was a powerfully influential presence in the near background, along with his circle of friends, the artists Roy Kiyooka, Kurt Lang and Fred Douglas, artist-musician Al Neil and others. Newlove's widow, Susan, is seen remarking in the film about those sometimes disturbing but also exciting times, as poets struggled for their personal and social identities in a new way in new times. Newlove was widely admired by the Vancouver poets and by other poets across the country as the finest poet of his generation.

It would not be quite accurate to say that Newlove was loved by his peers, but he was much admired for his work. People also actually liked him and sought him out for the wit and conversation of his giving moods as much as they feared and avoided his darker moods and unpredictable behaviour. His virtues as a poet and a human being as well as his more than occasional personal charm far outweighed his faults, and people sought him out regardless.

Robert McTavish's insightfully plain and modest film contains a voice-over remark by Shelagh Rogers that by the late 1990s, Newlove was "mainly off the literary map," as he retreated into "alcoholism and solitude." Yet the quality of his work endures through the changes of literary fashion because it speaks to something permanent not only in the Canadian soul, clearly emerging out of Canadian history and experience.

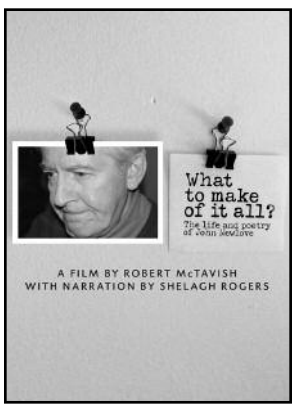


John Newlove photographed by Fred Douglas in Vancouver in the early 60's

The event at the Western Front was probably the sign of a deep revival of his lasting reputation. The event was especially remarkable for the quality of its audience, drawn from two generations and from the various notoriously contentious schools of the ongoing Vancouver literary enterprise, people rarely seen together all in one place, including representatives from the highly intellectual postmodernist group of the Kootenay School of Writing and from the more populist performance poets. The variety and difference in the character and style of the attending poets was a sure and complete reflection of the scope of his enduring influence.

Now four years after his death, Newlove's reputation as one of the finest English-language poets of his generation is undergoing a serious revival, obviously because his voice continues to speak meaningfully across the generations. Evidence of this burgeoning and welcome revival is seen not only in the varied turnout at the event, as well as by the afterword to the new selection, written by Jeff Derksen, a poet and critic of a younger generation. Derksen also made illuminating remarks at the Western Front event.

Robert McTavish's film, *What to Make of it All*, was the unquestionable highlight and delight of the evening. Because of Newlove's actual participation in the film, there can never be a better evocation of his life and work than this remarkable documentary record. This is all the more true because of McTavish's profoundly simple, unpretentious and relatively unvarnished presentation of the life, the poetry and the man. McTavish, a native of Saskatchewan like Newlove, was intrigued by Newlove's work as a student at Simon Fraser University, and the film is the result of his curiosity and deeply sincere concern.



What to Make of it All? The Life and Poetry of John Newlove
a film directed by
Robert McTavish
Non-Inferno Media Productions
48:00 minutes • 2006
Moving Images Distribution

McTavish doesn't shrink in any way from the presentation of Newlove's faults and warts. Simply, but artfully he places the imperfections of the man alongside the shining perfections of the work and succeeds in creating an all-sided and often touching portrait of the poet and his life. There is a special moment when Newlove angrily turns upon and shouts down his applauding and appreciative audience at one of his final readings in Vancouver. McTavish's artful contribution is to provide in the sound track a repeated diminishing echo of Newlove's own bellowing "Shut UP!"

As a social personality, Newlove could sometimes be uncommonly gracious and generous, but he was also often shy and defensive. Often enough, he was moody, unpredictably ornery and difficult… "the glib, obnoxious insulter" as he once described himself. His social manner, as he himself pretends in the film, more than anything else, was a way of seeking attention, or, later, self-contradictorily, a way of keeping people away from him, a reflection of his own self-perceived unlovability.

John Newlove in 1998 (photo by Robert McTavish)

According to his friend, the writer John Metcalf, Newlove was more at home with the "ghostly community of dead poets" than with his living contemporaries. All these factors are gracefully brought out in the film. Part of the grace of the film as that it also allows Newlove's great virtues as a poet to stand for themselves, as Newlove himself would have preferred. Nor does the film suppress the sometimes dark and difficult side of his personality. The dark side in itself is one of the endearing features of his legend in the memory of his friends, cause for head-shaking and the mood of forgiveness and forebearance for his social sins, as gruffly noted by Joe Rosenblatt in his appearance in the film.

Casual and charming, revealing cameo appearances by several contemporaries provide appreciative commentary about the importance of Newlove's work, along with memories of bad and sometimes frightening moments in their personal dealings with Newlove, so often consumed with his own self-doubt and even self-contempt.

Douglas Barbour nevertheless remarks that Newlove's work is "something that will stand against that fragmentation." As much as any other Canadian poet of his own post-depression and post-war generation, Newlove lyrically and with understated inner drama, recorded the mood of alienation and fragmentation, of lonesome unbe-

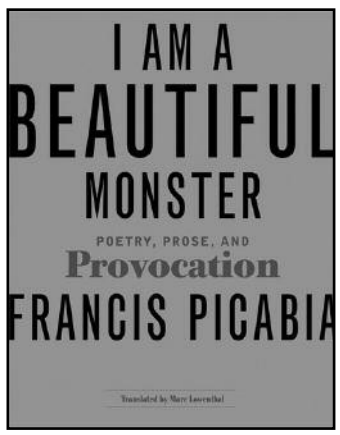
(*continued on page 24)*

I Am a Beautiful Monster

Allan Graubard

Mention the name Francis Picabia today and what do you find? A man from a particularly redolent time blasted with war and mayhem; or, by his own moniker: a painter, poet, pick pocket, alcoholic, imbecile, comedian, failure, provocateur; a fellow whose hand, whether by brush or pen, gave back, and rarely failed to give back, an irreverence derived from the richest wit: a wit, more than not, rooted in disinterest; the kind we have little feel for today as causes burst over us one at a time.

In these circumstances, how to approach Picabia free of the mannerisms he hated but which fill our cultural ghettoes – all this marketing, buying and selling — which, in the end, is little more than a defanging mechanism? Well, the question remains.



I Am a Beautiful Monster: Poetry, Prose and Provocation
Francis Picabia
Translated by Marc Lowenthal
MIT Press, 2007

Or is it best to leave that where it lays and talk, talk till talk fills the air, drowning out much else, save how to grasp what's available and, better yet, how to keep it. Are the horizons you felt or might have felt, glimmering there because they were yours and yours alone, simply passé? And culture, the kind of culture we conflate with sophistication (*these* films, *that* art, *this* music, *those* dances, and so on; an endless parade paid for the price of a ticket): Is all that so different from when Picabia ignited a nascent Dada with mechanical drawings done to perfect a state of boredom? Or is boredom also passé because there's too much of it; boredom, that is, not what it reveals?

And is it enough to say that finally we have Picabia in English: the poems, aphorisms, manifestos, letters, screenplays, asides, and all the rest he wrote to sustain a sensibility, as his friend, Andre Breton, put it in 1922: "at the highest rung on the ladder of creation."

Picabia, without whom Dada never could have evolved as it did, stands alone. He is Picabia; "a desperate case," as Jean Arp described him, with that scent of *umor* that burns when you touch it. And what of Appollinaire, so much in Picabia's debt "for having been the first to wind up the mechanism which set in motion that power of surprise which…dashes all expectation," as Breton relates. Duchamp played with equal finesse, of course. Aragon and Tzara, before their politics led them astray, sheep to the moral slaughterhouse, also found in Picabia an exceptional presence, with enough trumps to evade consecration. Closer to us there's Guy Debord, who certainly put Picabia to use. And someone yet unknown who'll take a cue from the words Picabia left, witness to the world he faced.


Francis Picabia

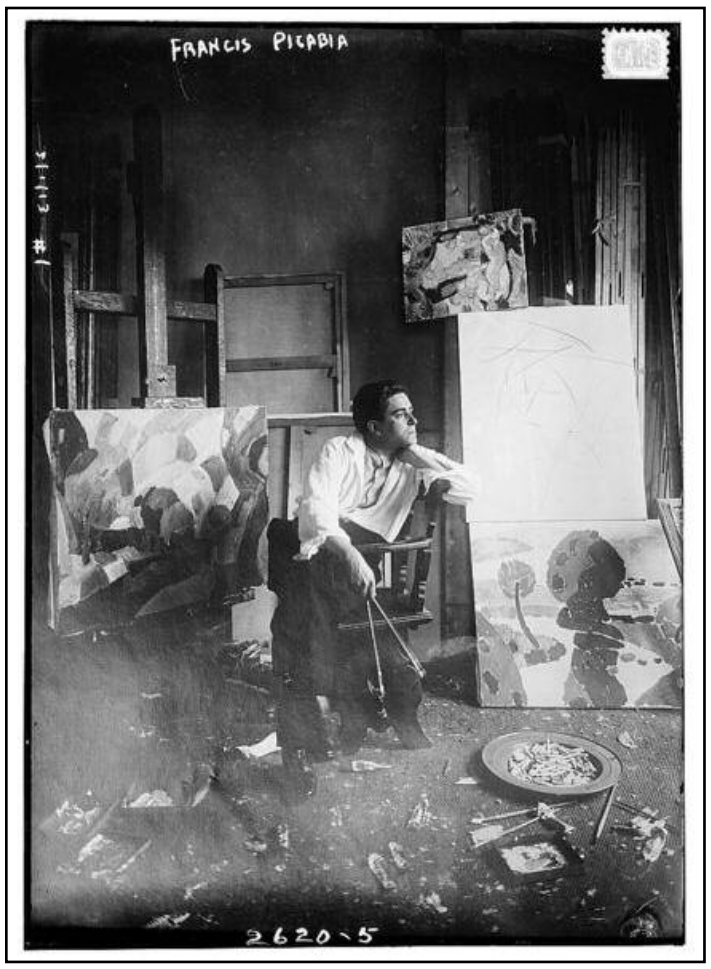
"I disguise myself
as a man
in order to be nothing."

"A man's mouth is an unconscious sexual organ."

"A dangerous and enticing wind of nihilism
pursued us with incredible exhilaration."

Even automatic writing, commonly cited as Breton and Souppault's triumph in *Magnetic Fields*, becomes for Picabia a vehement means of avoiding poetic values some time prior. There is little doubt that the surrealist use of automatism is also a response to, and refusal of, its Dada face, which Picabia did so much to mold.

What happens to Picabia as Dada deflates, and he waves good-bye with surrealism in the wings, is another aspect of the man. That he sustains through the cinema, with Hans Richter, in *Entr'acte,* and all but publicly drops poetry for a decade and more while producing paintings that seduce, then as now, is all the more reason to read him.



Picabia in his studio

Picabia's first writings find their public in *391,* the magazine he publishes in Barcelona, Zurich, New York and Paris, before and through Dada. His initial collection of poems, *Fifty-Two Mirrors,* appears in 1917; the title derived from Nietzsche, a perennial source till Picabia dies in 1953. Effervescence, eroticism, cubism, attack, and more, collide here with exuberance. In the poem, "Smile," he tells us this:

"to try to reflect
On my indecent gibberish
Is not a monk's duty
Genitals in hand"

And in "Feet" there's a glimpse of what's to come:

"I'm afraid
Your fingers tremble
And the smell of broken glass
Near the table the obese pipe
Smokes
Like a crack in the
Superterrestrial brain"

Poems and Drawings of a Daughter Born without a Mother follows in 1918; the title referring to a machine drawing of Picabia's three years earlier. Several events interweave here: an affair with Germaine Everling, his recovery from opium addiction, a neurasthenic crisis, WWI, and fascination with sexual scandal. Perhaps the translator, Marc Lowenthal, is correct in assuming that the meta-metaphor here, in mechanico-sexual terms, is an "Immaculate Copulation" – the woman who can copulate without conceiving, and does so to repletion. Wherever such reflections may lead, this is poetry on the cusp of revelation — an irreducible distillate of present life. The machine drawings that accompany the poems also carry a similar sense: *Current Views*

in Love Machine, Dragonfly, Hermaphroditism, Impatience Art, Pointless Machines, Narcotic.

From Picabia's next book, *The Mortician's Athlete* (November 1918), composed of poems joined together into five Cantos, the stage unfolds, contorts, spurts wings and wild weeds, as he writes:

> "Music reflects the external
> reality of the guide hungry for horror."
>
> "in one of my invisible
> and unique daydreams"
>
> "The eyes of sleepwalkers
> are scented
> with the madness
> of centrifugal
> magnetization"

Other books and poems in Dada magazines foliate. "American Spit," (in *Dada No. 3,* Zurich), whispers that the "The mechanical domino stomach of fog potbellies/gossips at a dust run…"

Purring Poetry, at 843 lines, also from 1918, combusts a vertiginous meander through patinas of excusable boredom and daring insouciance, styled with fables of sexual conquest. In the end, it makes mince meat of the poem as a fulcrum for subjective transmutation and raises another, "Isotropic" possibility: A poem without beginning or end, which presents equal to any angle of reading, and for which signification, by losing its habitual logic, gains an irrepressible farcical liberty, there at the edge of the world.

Between 1919-1921 Dada launches itself against the cultural bulwarks and *Thoughts Without Language* appears. This is not a book without words but rather a book whose author has left literary culture behind, or believes he has, which is almost as good. He writes what he wishes when he wishes on "a whirling stage/for scenery" where "beautiful courtesans under the avalanche/of ambitions" seek "astonished love." Nor does Picabia forgo what he finds in the street, evoking Daumier strewn with car dust:

> "a poor wretch released from prison
> walks in silence along the ditch
> of bohemian pipe dreams"

Picabia behind the wheel

The books, manifestations, manifestos, broadsides, scandals and performances proliferate: Paris Dada in its heyday, with *beauty* on the chopping block along with political revolutionaries, gallery owners, stock market traders, military goons, mothers, marriage – the lot.

Then, in 1920, it's *Jesus Christ Rastaquouere,* Picabia's most important text in eight brief chapters. I cannot recommend this novel "novel" more, and will refer to it in years to come in the same way I refer to Lautremont and Rimbaud; for the spice of inspiration, laughter, mystification and adventure: the roads blown wide open for anyone wanting to leap; a true marvel and, in its way, the Dada equivalent to the surrealist *Paysan Paris,* that will follow in several years, but with Paris transformed into an inscape of touché ripostes to stupidity, manners, morals, hyperbole and political amnesia.

Where else does Picabia tell us that, as far as religion is concerned: "One should take communion with chewing gum. That way God will strengthen the jaws."

Or, as far as artists are concerned: "The world is divided into two categories…failures and those unknown."

Or that masturbation is pleasure, pure and simple.

Or that "Politicians grow on the human dunghill"

Or that "The Five-Minute Interval" is a premiere text on mad love, with its Sadean glee still shunting through me...

By 1923 everything is in flux, with Dada a memory first framed by Picabia the previous year. In *Litterature,* the last magazine edited by Breton prior to the surrealist manifesto, Picabia illustrates covers and publishes poems. When he "lights his cigarette," it is chance that makes him hungry, waiting, as he does, at a "door" to the "bottom of the earth." From general to attendant, Picabia has kept his ear to the ground, charting hoof prints of the approaching storm, which carries within it marvelous lightning strikes. But by 1924, he wishes Breton luck and then, some time later, leaves Paris. The collective experiment is over.

In1939-1940, Picabia re-emerges with two collections: *Poems of Dingalari* and *Thalassa in the Desert.* The former is poignant enough, at least in terms of the kind of "melancholy lyricism" Picabia so much disrupted as Dada flourished, but which now has become his. From the latter comes the title to the present book of translations: "I am a beautiful monster/ who shares his secrets with the wind." The accent is lighter here, as images of love and desire tip the scales in favor of hope as war advances to crush it.

Chi-Lo-Sa, which translates from the Italian as "Who knows?" is Picabia's last major work, published in an edition of 100 copies in 1950. This lengthy collage of passages from Nietzsche's *The Gay Science,* subtly or clearly detourned, is spliced with Picabia's own poems, some quite charming and erotic, others more contestive. More intriguing is the author's assumption of a mask, whether speaking through an echo of Nietzsche or as a woman in love. The theatrical device carries the point quite well and makes of this book something unique.

Here, then, is Francis Picabia, in his own texts for his own time. It is not our time but times have a way of shadowing each other and, now and then, of picking up the pace, locking arms and dancing.

But remember: "All beliefs are bald ideas."

I can hear that music…

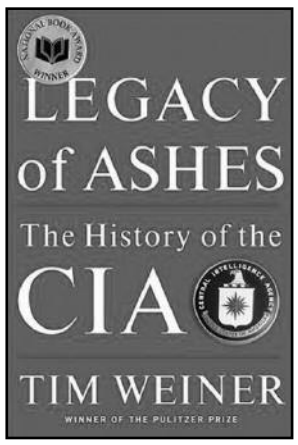
Can you?

Allan Graubard is a poet, playwright and critic. His play,* For Alejandra*, premiered in New York, Washington, DC, and Dubrovnik, Croatia, summer 2002.

Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA

Reg Little

Robert Gates and Vladimir Putin are the outstanding personal successes produced respectively by the intelligence services of America and Russia over the second half of the 20th Century. Tim Weiner's *Legacy of Ashes: A History of the CIA* offers many insights into the culture from which Gates emerged and raises even more questions about the culture that produced Putin.



Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA,
Tim Weiner
Doubleday
702 pages

Legacy of Ashes documents much of the dissipation of resources and goodwill caused by American preoccupation with the Cold War in the second half of the 20th Century. It illuminates also the need for a War on Terror to provide a focus and rationale that was lost with the end of the Cold War. The powerlessness to find any more viable and less perilous purpose is one of the central issues raised by the book. Weiner leaves aside the theme of his earlier book *Blank Check: The Pentagon's Black Budget,* namely the massive waste of resources by the American Department of Defence. In passing, *Legacy of Ashes* highlights the achievement of Robert Gates as the only officer to rise through the ranks to become Director of the CIA.

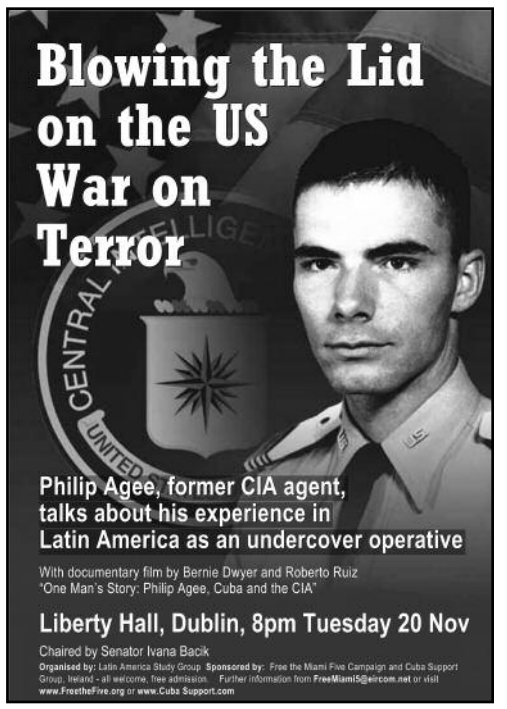
> The achievement of Gates is, of course, magnified by his subsequent progress to an even more demanding role. As the Secretary of Defence at a time when America is posed with multiplying challenges abroad and increasing divisions at home he is likely to need to draw deeply on knowledge derived from his exposure to the hidden realities of the world's political contests. He will, however, have to contend with an American defence system that has been shown by archives from the KGB to be easily penetrated by foreign interests through its dependence on private contractors, a painful reflection on the peculiar limitations and inadequacies of the CIA.

Above all else, *Legacy of Ashes* makes vividly clear the realities of great power and the messy business of maintaining and managing it. Clearly, there are many problems in reconciling the realities of that power with the ideals espoused by modern democratic states. *Legacy of Ashes* offers a timely and troubling account of these problems and clarifies the forces that obstruct any easy resolution of deep-seated contradictions between idealistic and practical imperatives.

Dick Cheney swears in Robert Gates as Secretary of Defense

Legacy of Ashes is a flawed but immensely readable and instructive book. It is flawed in revealing the profound failings and deficiencies of the CIA without explaining or evaluating in sufficient depth the imperatives that shaped the course of its development. Even so, it illuminates sixty years of American history in a manner that makes George W. Bush look like a victim of historical and cultural forces that had long preordained the misadventures of his Presidency. This is achieved through a detailed account of aspects of many decisive events since 1945.

It is a tragic story. Moreover, it is hard to escape the sense that the book has been inspired by a concern to address failings in America's approach to the world that have become agonizingly transparent in the first years of the 21st Century. It is equally hard to escape the conclusion that the Central Intelligence Agency reflected accurately the character of the community it sought to serve. The neglect of considered personnel, training, language and control policies by an ever-changing and uncertain parade of Agency Directors, in favour of a spirit of camaraderie, adventure, privilege and conviction makes a statement about the character of 20th Century America.



Philip Agee, CIA whistle blower, died January 7

Accounts of the CIA's activities suggest that many of its apparent successes had the backing of little serious policy consideration and often came to do as much harm as good to American interests. A chapter headed 'CIA's Greatest Single Triumph' recounts the almost comic accidents that led to success in engineering the coup against the democratically elected Prime Minister of Iran, Mohammad Mossadeq, in 1953. This responded to the wishes of Winston Churchill after the British failed in a coup attempt and stood to lose their oil interests in Iran. It was, however, in conflict with official American policy to support Mossadeq. It was the product of exchanges between the British and American intelligence services that did not involve a White House focused on the transition between Presidents Truman and Eisenhower and reflected a sense that the 'CIA makes policy by default'. With other more recent activities, it contributes to widespread popular suspicion and hostility in the Middle East. This now leaves American interest in the region's energy reserves increasingly dependent on the exercise of military might and financial persuasion at a time of declining capacity on both fronts.

Perhaps even more anomalous was the success of the CIA in Japan, the first place where it picked the future leader of a world power. Nobusuke Kishi, who had been charged as a war criminal and imprisoned for three years in Japan after the defeat and occupation of that country in 1945, moved quickly after his release. By August 1955 he had reached agreement in a meeting with the American Secretary of State, Foster Dulles, to help the United States fight communism. Weiner details the background:

> *Kishi told the Americans that his strategy was to wreck the ruling Liberal Party, rename it, rebuild it and run it. The new Liberal Democratic Party under his command would be neither liberal nor democratic, but a right-wing club of feudal leaders rising from the ashes of imperial Japan. He would first work behind the scenes while more senior statesmen preceded him as Prime Minister, and then take charge. He pledged to change the foreign policies of Japan to fit American desires. The United States could keep its military bases in Japan and store nuclear weapons there, a matter of some sensitivity in Japan. All he asked for in return was secret political support from America.*

At first glance, this appears to be a much more substantial achievement than the messy removal of Mossadeq in Iran. There can be no doubt that both sides have honoured their commitments and that both parties still publicly honour one-another as leading members of what is still the world's most powerful political alliance. Yet its long-run consequences have hardly benefited America.

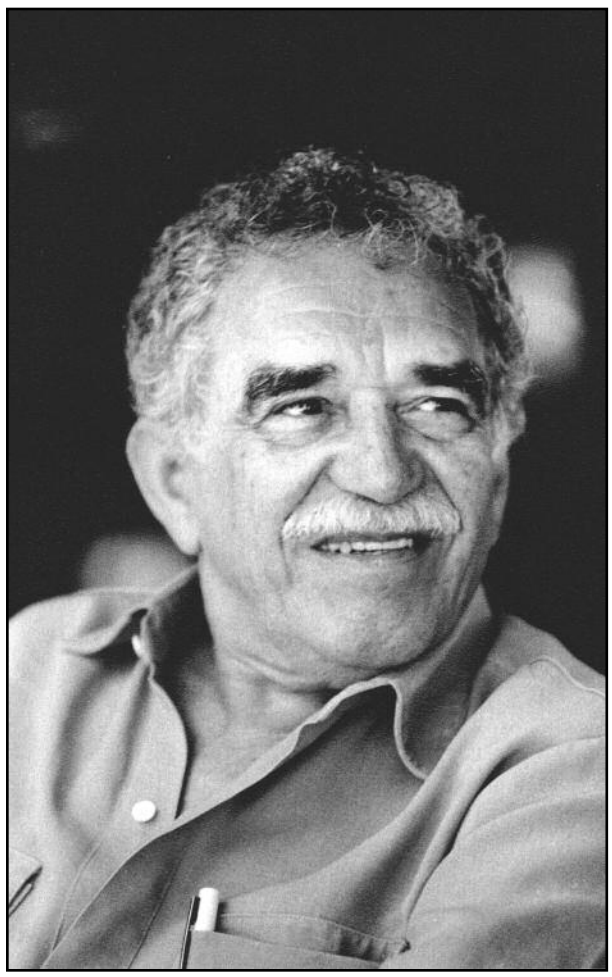
In reality, the American-Japanese alliance highlights the fundamental failings not only of America's Central Intelligence Agency but also of the whole American leadership class since 1945. To his credit and America's shame, Kishi's 'right-wing club

(*continued on page 16)*

Farewell Letter

Gabriel Garcia Marquez

For reasons of health, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Colombia's illustrious Nobel Laureate for literature, has declared his retirement from public life. He has terminal cancer and sends this letter of farewell to friends and lovers of literature.



If God, for a second, forgot what I have become and granted me a little bit more of life, I would use it to the best of my ability.

I wouldn't, possibly, say everything that is in my mind, but I would be more thoughtful l of all I say.

I would give merit to things not for what they are worth, but for what they mean to express.

I would sleep little, I would dream more, because I know that for every minute that we close our eyes, we waste 60 seconds of light.

I would walk while others stop; I would awake while others sleep.

If God would give me a little bit more of life, I would dress in a simple manner, I would place myself in front of the sun, leaving not only my body, but my soul naked at its mercy.

To all men, I would say how mistaken they are when they think that they stop falling in love when they grow old, without knowing that they grow old when they stop falling in love.

I would give wings to children, but I would leave it to them to learn how to fly by themselves.

To old people I would say that death doesn't arrive when they grow old, but with forgetfulness.

I have learned so much with you all, I have learned that everybody wants to live on top of the mountain, without knowing that true happiness is obtained in the journey taken & the form used to reach the top of the
hill.

I have learned that when a newborn baby holds, with its little hand, his father's finger, it has trapped him for the rest of his life.

I have learned that a man has the right and obligation to look down at another man, only when that man needs help to get up from the ground.

Say always what you feel, not what you think. If I knew that today is the last time that that I am going to see you asleep, I would hug you with all my strength and I would pray to the Lord to let me be the guardian angel of your soul.

If I knew that these are the last moments to see you, I would say "I love you."

There is always tomorrow, and life gives us another opportunity to do things right, but in case I am wrong, and today is all that is left to me, I would love to tell you how much I love you & that I will never forget you.

Tomorrow is never guaranteed to anyone, young or old. Today could be the last time to see your loved ones, which is why you mustn't wait; do it today, in case tomorrow never arrives. I am sure you will be sorry you wasted the opportunity today to give a smile, a hug, a kiss, and that you were too busy to grant them their last wish.

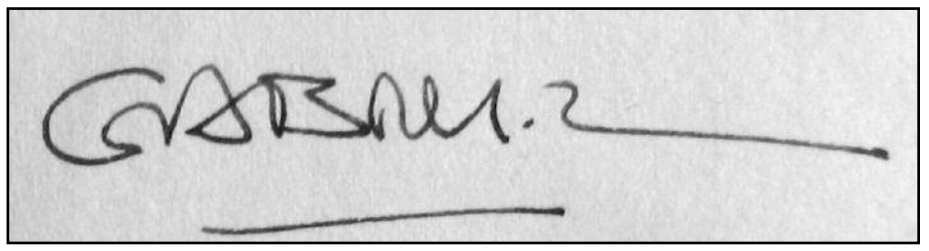
Keep your loved ones near you; tell them in their ears and to their faces how much you need them and love them. Love them and treat them well; take your time to tell them "I am sorry," "forgive me, "please," "thank you," and all those loving words you know.

Nobody will know you for your secret thought. Ask the Lord for wisdom and strength to express them.

Show your friends and loved ones how important they are to you.

Send this letter to those you love. If you don't do it today…tomorrow will be like yesterday, and if you never do it, it doesn't matter either, the moment to do it is now.

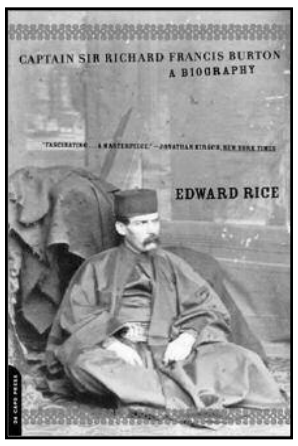
For you, with much love,



Your Friend,
Gabriel Garcia Marquez

Sir Richard Francis Burton

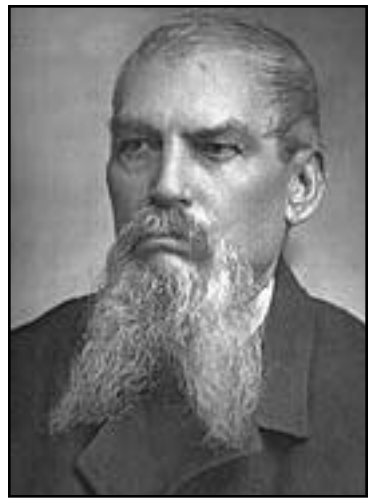
Jim Christy



Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton: A biography
Edward Rice
De Capo Press
688 pages, 2001

I'm in Mexico and have just finished reading Edward Rice´s biography of Sir Richard Francis Burton, the nineteenth century adventurer, polymath, spy, all-around genius, and hard luck guy. It is entirely fitting that I found the book in the lending library of an obscure beach town, having searched bookstores for it prior to leaving Canada. I've been dealing with Burton for decades so he seems like an old friend but a friend one doesn't get used to. He refuses to be pinned down and you can never get to the bottom of him. You can't outlast him, out drink him or outgrow him: he'll still be there when the dawn comes up on the third bottle of brandy, fingering the lance scar on the left side of his face and telling stories.

Nearly forty years ago, I had the opportunity, thanks to a letter of introduction from another Burton biographer, Fawn Brodie, to poke around in his private library, housed at the Royal Geographical Society in London. There were his marginal notes in the books of his friend-turned-rival John Hanning Speke. He visited the holy cities of Meccah, Medina and El Harrar, To do so it was necessary on numerous occasions to change his costume, his language and his looks. He told Speke where to find the source of the Nile, thereby missing out on the greatest prize in exploration. He explored remote areas of Africa, South America and the Middle East. He was by turns a Catholic, a Hindu and a Moslem. He was a Shia, a Sunni and a Sufi Master. He translated the Kama Sutra, the Kama Shastra, the Perfumed Garden, the twelve volumes of the Thousand and One Nights, and four volumes of Camoes, including the Lusiads. There are other translations from other languages. Burton spoke 29 of them, plus a dozen dialects. He was considered the best horseman and fencer of his day. But he never advanced beyond the rank of Captain. He didn't suffer fools and paid the price. His government offered him consular posts at pestilential holes like Santos and Fernando Po with the object of killing him off: Fernando Po, for instance, and Damascus. He survived them as well as just about every disease that had been named. When his body was being prepared for burial, it was found to be covered with dozens of scars from whip and knife wounds.


Sir Richard Francis Burton

Much of this is well known to anyone who has read Burton or read about him, although there are not as many as there should be. By rights he should be in that pantheon of genius that includes Da Vinci and Picasso. But they were born that way; there is no explanation for Burton.

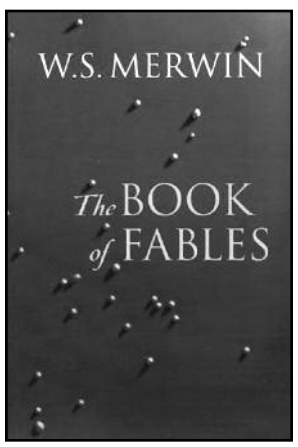
He kept on wandering until he was no longer capable of getting out the front door. No sooner did he breath his last than his wife, the evil Isabel, got out the matches and burned nearly sixty years of journals, diaries, intelligence reports and any material she thought to be risqué or politically sensitive. What I didn't realize previously is that there were twenty-four completed books that escaped her bonfire. These she bequeathed to her sister, a Miss Fitzgerald who must have thought Isabel was too liberal because she started her own fire. Among the manuscripts that went up in flame were four books on South America, a work on the gypsies and a study of the eunuch trade.

What intrigues me on this go around are the mysterious trips he did not write about. Here was a man who had a mania for scribbling but there are three journeys

(*continued on page 11)*

The Book of Fables

Richard Stevenson

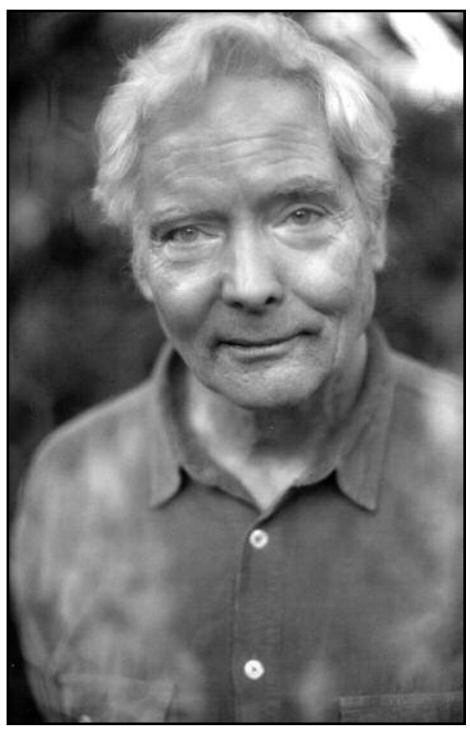


The Book of Fables,
W.S. Merwin,
Port Townsend, WA:
Copper Canyon Press,
2007, 349 pp,
$20 paper U.S.

Let's not mince words. Poet, memoirist, fabulist fiction author, translator, anthologist W.S. Merwin is an artist of the highest order: one of a handful of contemporary masters to whose work we continually turn to understand the troubled, terrifying zeitgeist of our times. His poetry is amongst the deepest, most inventive of any currently being written in English; his emotional, spiritual, and cognitive reach stands comparison with any of the great Modernists and Post-Modernists who will continue to be read next century; and he's still quietly, consistently finding new ways of pressing language to the service of an amazingly capacious and questing intelligence in his eighth decade.

Though one could point to peaks and troughs in his oeuvre, as indeed one can with any poet as prolific as Merwin (He has more than 50 books to his credit!), it wouldn't be unfair to say that the troughs are consistently higher than most poets' peaks. To say his poetry is essential would be an understatement.

The same is true of his prose. He's a magisterial stylist, a master of tone, and an absolute gazelle with surreal obliquity and wit. Indeed, he has perfected and explored more byways, more sub-genres of the short tale and prose poem than most of the "leaping poets" of the sixties and seventies—Bly, Strand, Simic, and the others who followed the example of politically engaged neo-surrealists like Neruda, Vallejo,


W. S. Merwin

Transomer, Cortazar and others from post-war Europe and South America. He's subverted, re-invented, even invented a few hybrids. Thus, if you missed his two essential volumes, *The Miner's Pale Children*, 1970, and *Houses and Travellers*, 1977, you'll want to pick up this reprint of the two volumes.

Fables is a bit of a misnomer, if you understand by that term Aesop animal stories with a pat moral. No, collected here are surreal parables, prose poems, Borgesian ficciones, even appropriated, subverted forms like the scientific taste test, where the dry, detached tone of reportage is used to leap from the quotidian to the absurd and back again in unpredictable and delightful ways. Often the premises are surreal and absurd, but more often than not the leaps of logic connect the surreal images into frightening cautionary moral tales. Themes include destruction of the environment by capitalist misadventure, obsessive

(*continued on page 11)*

BURTON (*continued from page 10)*

Burton sketched c1857 in traveller's garb

lasting six months each, in South America in the 1870s, the American South in the year prior to the Civil War, and in Africa in the Eighties, about which he wrote nothing. What was he up too?

If one has great admiration for someone or looks up to that person, one can be expected to try to measure up, if only in one's fantasies. This, in most cases, is probably healthy. But not where Burton is concerned. You'll just wind up looking ridiculous, as have one American movie director and a Canadian author with a more well-known literary brother. Should one even for a moment consider oneself his equal, one should immediately apologize to his spirit. Not only were his accomplishments so vast as to be almost inconceivable, he did not give a damn what anyone thought. Almost all your heroes let you down in the end. Burton never does. He was the man.

Jim Christy is a poet, novelist, essayist, world traveller and raconteur. He has published numerous essays, novels, collections of poetry and has released several Compact Discs of his poetry set to music.

MERWIN (*continued from page 10)*

fetishism, existential angst, diabolically misdirected religious fervor, the cul de sacs of daytime consciousness, claustrophobic nightmare endgames, etc.

Typically, Merwin will start with a surreal metaphor—a Magritte boulder in the middle of a room, a shadow that spreads like a phagocytic ink stain, islands that disappear, a drink which only the old ever taste—and push the analogy along the lines of a nightmarish vision until that image has gathered metaphysical and ideational moss, as it were. Or he'll invert some biblical-sounding adage or observation, retaining the prophetic tone, and allegorical structure, without ever naming the object of his investigations, so the reader has to supply the connections: " a pebble is rolling along a road. It cannot see anyone. There is no one there to see it. So it rolls on. It cannot hear anyone." … etc. ("The First Moon"). The fun is in surrendering to the premise, following the prophetic, stentorian tone like a pilgrim across arid deserts into the dark woods. We recognize archetypal images and inverted fairy tale-like story structures and motifs, but the landscapes are the landscapes of Orwellian nightmare.

It's ultimately the voice that is our guide, the sheer mastery of syntax and metaphor; we surrender to the proffered hand of the conjurer. For my money, these are two of Merwin's finest books; to have them together again in one volume is as sweet as it gets.

If one is interested in where the fairy tale, the fable, the parable got to before the materiality of language disappeared in a puff of post-modern smoke, this is as good a place to start as any.

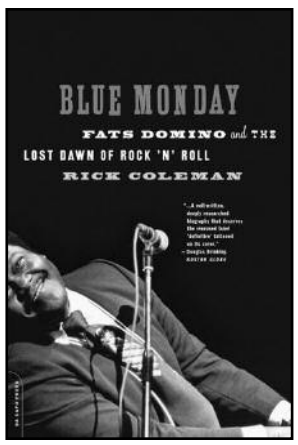
Richard Stevenson lives and teaches in Lethbridge, Alberta. He has three new books forthcoming in 2008:* Wiser Pills *(from Frontenac House),* A Tidings of Magpies *(from Spotted Cow Press), and* The Emerald Hour *(from Ekstasis Editions).

Red Beans and Rice

Joseph Blake

Music and food are the twin pillars of New Orleans culture, a culture that has had a dramatic impact internationally. Two recently published books, a biography of Fats Domino and a cookbook by Susan Spicer offer soulful insights into the heart of the unique Crescent City culture.

Rick Coleman's *Blue Monday: Fats Domino and the Lost Dawn of Rock and Roll* is a definitive biography of the seminal, New Orleans-bred musician. Coleman's richly detailed, deeply researched work frames the story of the rock and roll trailblazer in the context of the now-infamous Ninth Ward, where Domino has always made his home. His story also makes a strong case for New Orleans, as not only the birthplace of jazz, but of its scruffy offspring, rock as well.



Blue Monday: Fats Domino and the Lost Dawn of Rock and Roll
Rick Coleman
(DaCapo Press)
364 pages, $19.50 Cdn

Ripe with insightful anecdotes and vivid details of music business chicanery and white on black business crimes, *Blue Monday* also establishes Domino's place in the political and racial history of the American and international cultural landscape. It's a well-rounded, warts-and-all portrait of the folksy, often-overlooked musical pioneer.

One of the stories that sets the tone for the book is the tale of the 77-year old Domino's boat rescue from Hurricane Katrina's floodwaters swamping his family's Ninth Ward home. As Coleman writes in the book's prologue, "Though he had rarely sought publicity, the Katrina story was the most national attention that Fats had received in years, shocking even old fans who didn't even know he was still alive. Though he had been the best-selling early rock 'n' roll star after Elvis Presley (whose continuous publicity beggared infinity), Domino had been all but forgotten."

In the mid-50's when rock and roll first topped the pop charts, Antoine 'Fats' Domino had been playing rhythm and blues in New Orleans for 15 years. In 1949 he recorded "The Fat Man", a pounding rocker that arguably spawned what fans later called rock and roll. Fat's 1956 pop hit, "Ain't That A Shame" was an even more profound moment in cultural history, as Coleman reflects "At a time when the few blacks on pop radio sang sweet ballads and novelties, "Ain't That A Shame" landed with the sonic impact of a piano falling from the sky, as decades before today's gangsta rappers were born, Domino shouted out ghetto-accented staccato accusations about sad separations ringing like cannonades across a country divided by segregation—"You made… Boom! Boom!… me cry… Boom! Boom!…when you said… Boom! Boom!… good-bye!"


Fats Domino in concert in France in 1992.

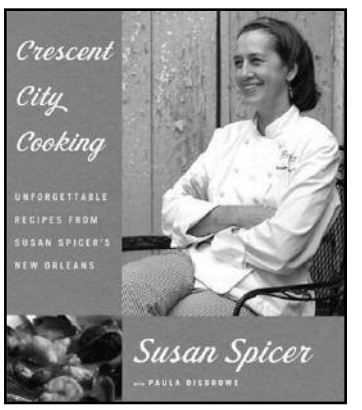
This is a far cry from Domino's depiction in the post 1960's rock press as "harmless", "non-threatening", and "a benign minstrel." Coleman cites similar racial slurs directed at Fats' fellow Crescent City icon, Louis Armstrong, and makes a strong case for Domino's early shows as "ground zero for racial integration" and "scenes of several rock and roll riots."

Although his fame eclipsed his black music-inspired roots, Elvis Presley knew that Domino was the greater talent, saying in 1957, "Let's face it. I can't sing like Fats Domino can. I know that."

Other famous fans quoted in *Blue Monday* include Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly, John Lennon, Paul McCartney, Van Morrison, John Fogerty, Bob Marley, and Bruce Springsteen in addition to white copycats like Pat Boone and Ricky Nelson, who made millions remaking Domino's tunes.

By the time you finish this insightful biography, you'll know why those famous rockers loved Fats. Here's hoping you can find your old Domino records. You'll definitely want to replay them.

Chef Susan Spicer's roots don't run as deeply as Domino's, but she has been a force on the New Orleans culinary scene since 1979 when she landed her first cooking job in Daniel Bonnot's classical French kitchen at Louis XVI Restaurant in the French Quarter. A navy brat, Spicer first moved to New Orleans at age seven. A Paris apprenticeship with Roland Durand at Hotel Sofiter introduced the young cook to an early version of nouvelle cuisine, an inspiration that flowered when she returned to New Orleans to create a bistro menu at Savoir Faire in Uptown New Orleans' St. Charles Hotel. After further travels in Europe and California, Spicer developed more signature dishes at the 40-seat Bistro at Maison de Ville before opening her own restaurant, Bayona in 1990. She has been cooking at the remade 200-year old Creole cottage on the French Quarter's rue Dauphine for the last 18 years including a couple of years sharing a kitchen with Donald Link at Herbsaint in the city's Warehouse District and brief forays cooking at the Oriental Hotel in Bankok, Lanesborough Hotel in London, and on Cunard and Crystal cruise ships. Her Crayfish Croque Monsiers is always a crowd favourite at the annual Jazz and Heritage Festival in April, and that recipe is among those featured in her first cookbook, *Crescent City Cooking: Unforgettable Recipes from Susan Spicer's New Orleans.*



Crescent City Cooking: Unforgettable Recipes from Susan Spicer's New Orleans
Susan Spicer with
Paula Disbrowe
(Alfred A. Knopf)
405 pages, $44 Cdn

"In New Orleans, any time you get three or more people together it's a party," Spicer writes in the introduction to the book's chapter of appetizer and small plate recipes including two of my personal favourites, Crabmeat Gratin with Mushrooms and Artichokes and Gumbo z' Herbes (Green Gumbo with Oysters).

Spicer's recipes are directed at "all tastes and skill levels", and her down-home approach is underlined by her minimalist use of kitchen tools. Spicer suggests "a paring knife and eight-inch kitchen knife, coffee grinder for fresh spices, blender, food processor, and heavy-duty mixer", adding "There's not much you can't do with that line-up."


Susan Spicer

Spicer believes in using your "powers of observation and your senses (including common sense)" and stresses that cooks should "think more about technique than about recipes."

A section on "Sensational Spices and Creamy Bread Spreads" includes another personal favourite, her Smoky Salmon Spread with lemon and herbs, while the chapter on fish features such Crescent City stapels as crayfish, Blue crabs, oysters, shrimp, Pompano, and Mahi Mahi. Spicer's advice on how to show for fish is as relevant to our Pacific species as for her Gulf favourites.

"Look for bright, convex eyes (never sunken or dull), red gills, and firm flesh," Spicer writes, while also singing the praises of Pacific salmon and halibut frozen at sea. Her recipes for Shrimp Clemenceau and Cornmeal-crusted Catfish with Silky Red Bean Sauce are my favourites (so far) from a large collection of fish recipes.

Her advice about meat is straight-forward. "Whether you roast, sauté, braise, grill, or boil, it's all in the handling, timing, and seasoning- done before, during, and after cooking."

A big chapter on side dishes includes mouthwatering recipes for Stuffed Artichoke-Italian Style, Eggplant Roulades with Garlic Goat Cheese and Roast Tomatoes, Brown Butter Cauliflower, and Wild & Dirty Rice. Her trademark Epiphany Lemon Tart is among the dessert offerings, and the book concludes with a valuable lesson in cocktail mixology from a city that takes its drinking seriously.

Put on a collection of Fats Domino's greatest hits and crack open Spicer's cookbook to any page. Now, that's a recipe for an evening of big fun. *Bon tons roulette*!

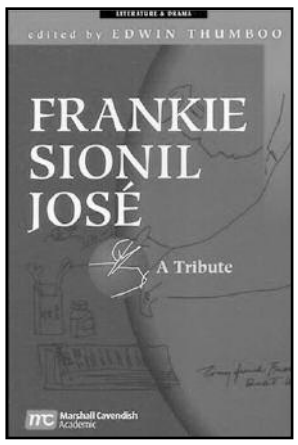
Joseph Blake is PRRB's music correspondent extraordinaire.

The Lion of Ermita

An Afternoon with Frankie Sionil Jose

Frances Cabahug

The Solidarity Bookstore in Manila's Ermita district, a well-known red-light area, has the requisite glass display of books; but this display is juxtaposed by an unexpected tableau: under the awnings of the bookstore, a mother and child nap on mats while a man holds out his hand, asking for spare change from passers-by. A trip to the Solidarity Bookstore—owned by writer Francisco Sionil Jose—involves the passing acknowledgment of the poorest levels in Philippine society. It is not the display of poverty which is surprising in Ermita; instead, what's surprising is the presence of Solidarity Bookstore itself, which certainly stands out from the prostitution and nightlife businesses in the area.



Frankie Sionil Jose tribute published by Times Academic Press, Singapore

At 84, Frankie Sionil Jose is recognized internationally as the grand old man of Filipino letters. His contributions to the literature and artistic culture of the Philippines have been enormous, and for his labours he been accorded many fellowships and awards, including the 1980 Ramon Magsaysay Award for Literature and Journalism, the most prestigious of its kind in Asia. In June 2001, Jose was recognized and awarded with the Philippine's National Artist for Literature Award.

Regardless of the acclaim he has received, Jose has resolutely stayed in the gritty heart of this developing nation's capital. Resolution seems a key attribute for Filipino writers.

"Because we do not want to be reminded of our social conditions, Filipinos do not read Philippine literature" explains Jose. "Why would we want to read about poverty and injustice when it is staring at us in the face every day? Filipinos are not readers because we do not want to face the reality around us."

Despite Jose's bleak outlook on the state of Philippine readership, Jose's novels, short stories, poems, essays, and speeches stand as his unfaltering act of faith in literature's role in the formation of social awareness. Jose has followed in the footsteps of his role model, the Philippine national hero Jose Rizal, a novelist who was executed for writing about colonial injustices. In the same socially conscious manner, the most prominent of Jose's works is the five-volume Rosales saga, which narrates the lives of generations of a family whose personal lives intertwine with the social struggles of the Filipino nation throughout its colonial past and present society.

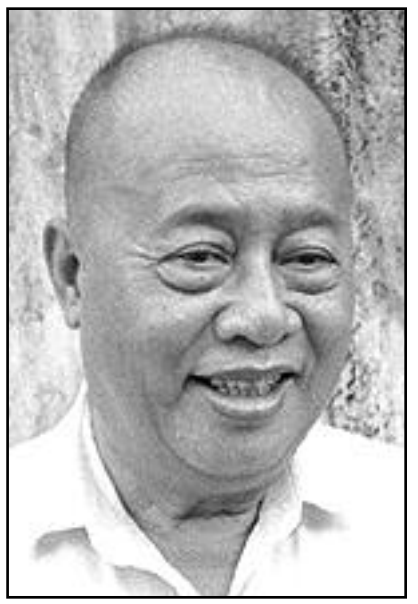
Yet Frankie Sionil Jose is known to be a writer whose works are read more by an international audience than the readers within his country. When Random House recently decided to publish Jose's *Three Filipino Women*, *Sins, Dusk (Po-on),* and *Don Vincente* in North America, they asked Jose for estimates regarding readership numbers.

"The publishers figured out that since there are about four million Filipino immigrants in North America as an instant market right now, then they could proceed to print out ten percent of that figure. What an optimistic assumption." Jose jokes. "I told the publishers that Filipinos are not readers, and that it's their risk to take. I don't know how many books they decided to print in the end."

Jose is familiar with the difficulties of writing in the midst of economic and political turmoil. In the late 1950s he founded the Philippine branch of PEN, an international organization of poets, playwrights, and novelists. In 1965, he started his own publishing house, Solidaridad, and a year later he began publishing *Solidarity*, a journal circulating the current state of affairs, ideas, and arts within Asia, which Jose still publishes to this day.

As he recalls, those were trying times. Under the twenty years of the Marcos dictatorship, Jose got into heavy debt when he himself had to fund for the *Solidarity* magazine, while the government cut its arts subsidies. The economic hardship was added on to the constant fear and threat coming from the martial law police and military.

"The bookstore has been broken into, and they ransacked my office and the printing press." Yet in humble reflection of the injustices that had been wrought under martial law, he counters, "I was lucky. The only thing that was destroyed was a fountain pen, which shows that they were there mostly to make a point. There were many other writers who were not so lucky. I survived when others were detained, killed, or disappeared."



Frankie Sionil Jose

Jose has been hailed for his courage in remaining to write and publish in the Philippines throughout the Marcos years, when so many other writers chose to leave of the country. But even though martial law was lifted twenty-two years ago, the legacy of poverty remains in its wake, an economic reality which has resulted in Filipino mass emigration.

"This country starves its writers and artists," he maintains. "You cannot survive through writing alone; many writers survive as teachers and journalists. And many simply leave the country. My advice is to never leave your hometown when you write."

Jose concedes that there are many economic considerations which continue to force Filipino writers to leave the country. At times, he himself has worked in Sri Lanka and has spent some time in the United States. Sometimes, he confides, he even goes to Japan so he can write in peace. But he always ends up at home in Ermita or in the countryside of Pangasinan, and Jose explains that his "hometown" is more imaginative than literal.

As if to address the tableau of beggars outside of the Solidarity Bookstore in Ermita, Jose reminds, "Never forget what makes you write, never forget the places from where you write, never be comforted into complacency. A good friend, the writer Eric Gamalinda, is currently in New York. I asked him, 'But are you writing [there]?' If he isn't writing, he should be here."

Jose remains active in encouraging the younger generation of writers. One of Jose's greatest contributions to the growth of the Philippine literary community is the Solidarity Bookstore itself. The bookshop offers many rare books and Filipino reading materials, and differs from chain bookstores by prominently showcasing local authors. More importantly, his bookstore is one of the favorite haunts of many writers who often drop by to talk with Jose in his office. Young writers especially view Jose as an avuncular mentor who has invaluable advice and experience to share.

In a recent article for his column in the *Philippine Star* newspaper, Jose wrote a valedictory. He addresses writers young and old:

> *I would ask the older writers to reach out to the very young, to do this without condescension, without flaunting your achievements, your Ph.D.s. And for the young, I would ask you to venture out of your brave, new world and know your elders, to learn of their demons, the mountains of rubble they had to scale. Do this to form that granite continuum, that community, the shared purpose with which we build the future.*

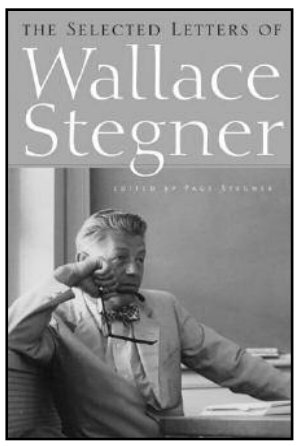
In his faithfulness to history and his dedication to the masses, Frankie Sionil Jose has served as a bridge which connects the Philippines to its past as it trudges along into an uncertain future. The work that he has done to advocate for social change is invaluable to the formation of the nation, as well as invaluable for the young generation who someday will be leaders of the country. It is not only through his literary works that he has contributed to the growth of literature, but also through his example of unwavering courage and integrity throughout the bleakest times in Philippine history.

A regular contributor to PRRB, Frances Cabahug lives and writes in Vancouver, where she studies English Literature and Social Work at the University of British Columbia.

The Selected Letters of Wallace Stegner

Martin Van Woudenberg

Known as the "dean of western letters," a title he received from *The New York Times,* Wallace Stegner was far better known among his readers than his critics. *The Times* completely ignored both the Pulitzer-prize winning *Angle of Repose*, and *The Spectator Bird* which received the National Book Award. Though given numerous awards and decorations, Stegner remained virtually invisible in the East for most of his life. This sprang partly from his body of work and its focus, and partly from the seeming banality of the man himself. He was conservative, monogamous, guarded, and quietly persevering. Perhaps if he had been a roaring drunk or a flamboyant gender-bender he may have garnered more attention from the mainstream press. Stegner, however, poured his soul and passion into his work, his environmental efforts, and his teaching. In these areas, he is not without considerable influence and impact, both notable and lasting.



The Selected Letters of Wallace Stegner
Edited by Page Stegner
Shoemaker & Hoard,
420 Pages. $30.00

Working with close friend and artist Ansel Adams within the Kennedy administration, Stegner's contribution as part of the board of the Sierra Club was an early and key component leading to the 1964 Wilderness Act, as well as the saving of Echo Park from a series of federal dams. There was a gentle courage to the man, the kind that moved both his heart and those who steadily followed his work. Now, with *The Selected Letters of Wallace Stegner,* we get a welcome glimpse into the private and personal life of the man himself, in his own words.

The book is arranged thematically, rather than chronologically. Although this hinders a careful study of Stegner's change in technique and style over the years, it does provide a far clearer series of snapshots around the various aspects of his life. The first section, titled "Origins," is possibly one of the best in the collection. This is Stegner's personal side, his relationships, loves, and fears. In the animosity between his father and himself, we catch a glimpse of the indecision and torment the situation put him though. As he writes to long-time friend Mary Page, "…and I hate him just the same with a fury that scares me," and within the same few lines, "I wish to God there wasn't so much of a moping, sick, gnawing Hamletism in me, so that I could hate him whole-heartedly and be done with it." Within his letters he confesses to equal parts of pity and hatred, being moved even to send his father money and encourage him to get a job. Shortly after, however, Stegner's father took his own life and the life of the woman he was living with. Later within the collection, we see a father at work with the building of a lasting and respectful relationship with his son and his wife. There is a tenderness and care for the small details resting between the lines that reveal the soul of the man behind the movements he spearheaded.

Creating and running one of the finest graduate programs within [Stanford's] halls, [Stegner] lectured and taught writers such as Edward Abbey, Wendell Berry, John Daniel, Ken Kesey, Bill Kittredge, Thomas McGuane, Scott Momaday, Tillie Olson, Scott Turow, and others.

The letters, especially in this early section, form a narrative as interesting and engrossing as many novels. This is particularly evident in his letters to Sara Barnard, who seemed to dote on him and care about him fiercely. As Stegner communicates with her, he drops hints about his poor worth as a potential husband, going so far as to tell her on March 29, 1934 that he cannot marry her, or any other woman. We are unfortunately denied Barnard's response to this letdown, or the emotions she may have felt when barely three months later he tells her about falling in love with Mary Page and his plans to wed. Nevertheless, herein lays another window into a personal part of his life that we have not been able to look into before, and as such it is both revealing and welcome.

His more professional side, if we may call it that, comes through in sections of writing to his critics, in his environmental work, and in his efforts for literature at Stanford University. Creating and running one of the finest graduate programs within its halls, he lectured and taught writers such as Edward Abbey, Wendell Berry, John Daniel, Ken Kesey, Bill Kittredge, Thomas McGuane, Scott Momaday, Tillie Olson, Scott Turow, and others. If *The Times* was blind to his influence, those eager to pitch their tents within the world of words certainly were not. The collection reveals much about the work he did at Stanford from an insider's perspective, and highlights things that few would otherwise know. How many were aware that Stegner gave up teaching because he could no longer deal with the kids in the classroom environment? To what extent did we know of his involvement with big business and the Department of Defence in the Nixon government?


Wallace Stegner

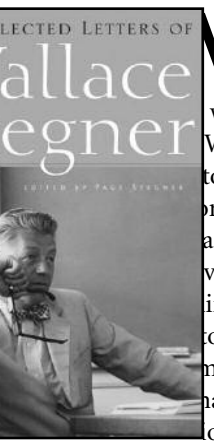
Because Stegner was so forceful and convincing, a fact we see clearly within this collection, it is refreshing to also see the side of indecision and self-doubt. Searching through the threads of narrative the letters provide, we discover a man who waffled on important issues at times, and made a complete 180 degree turn when persuaded by the arguments of others. Though his core values never come into question, the journey does not travel in a straight line. In a letter to poet and Editor Jim Hepworth, Stegner states, "Conduct is what really matters to me: I'm a moral writer, if not a religious one. I don't mean behaviour, I mean conduct." It is with a the goal of providing evidence of this, that his son Page Stegner has put together this collection – a glimpse into the life of a man who wanted no biography. It is also, however, where some problems arise.

By its very title, *The Selected Letters of Wallace Stegner,* we know the hand of the editor is at work. Granted, not everything this prolific writer put to paper can be included, but one has to wonder about some gaps and seeming omissions within the collections. Not all threads are followed through to the extent they should be, though Page Stegner makes a solid effort at keeping similar conversations grouped. We do not know whether Wallace Stegner ever wrote a further reply on an issue, whether the letter was lost, or whether it never made it past the editing process due to some of its content. One is not searching for scandal, in fact far from it, but occasional judgements made in the footnotes by the son show this is a collection with a purpose. For example, a controversy around "Angle of Repose," reveals an assertion of plagiarism by professor Mary Ellen Williams Walsh. She claimed Stegner had stolen large sections from Foote's work and taken liberties with the facts of her life, causing significant damage in the process. Though the accusations may be entirely off the mark, the younger Stegner cannot resist calling Williams Walsh's comments, "a particularly asinine bit of academic twaddle." Editorializing such as this does not instill a sense of confidence that the letters are being left to stand on their own merits and within their own context.

Nevertheless, the collection we do have is gold for writers and followers of Stegner's work. We receive an intimate glimpse into the writing process and labour of a man who published some 35 books, 57 short stories, and 242 articles. If anything comes through, it is Stegner's two great loves. Clearly, he loved the west and its westerners, giving both a voice when neither had one. Equally evident is his love for people with whom he shared the world. As the younger Stegner says in his introduction, "…he was a serious epistler with an extraordinary range of correspondents… no admiring reader penning an appreciative letter ever went without a reply; Stegner would have found it unthinkable to ignore someone who had been touched by his work." Undoubtedly, there were many deeply touched by what he wrote and what he did. In this collection and intimate look at the man himself, in his own words, we see that Wallace Stegner retains his power to touch lives and to teach. These are letters well worth pulling from their dusty envelopes, spreading out on the kitchen table, and pouring over slowly and carefully. Whatever the collection's shortcomings or faults, we owe Page Stegner a great deal of thanks for recognizing the value in this correspondence and sharing it with the world.

Martin Van Woudenberg resides in Langley, B.C. and writes regularly for PRRB.

TTERS OF WALLACE STEGNER NG: NEW BOOKS FROM JAPAN



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me of the most intriguing and compelling pages of the novel – pages most read- ill be unable to stop reading. Kamata, who has won awards for short fiction and ve times been nominated for the Pushcart Prize of Best American Short Stories, dmirably succeeded in expanding a previously published short story into a page- r of a novel. By alternating chapters pre- and post-the kidnapping, she manages ve the action rapidly along without revealing too much or disclosing too little, o keep the reader anticipating the next unexpected turn of events.

Although my own experience in Japan leads me to question a few of her descrip- – at one point she has Kei in kindergarten and a few pages later in nursery school is by and large a very reliable narrator, and readers unfamiliar with Japan and its e, not to mention xenophobic cultural practices, will be abundantly informed.

In her soon-to-be-published next book, *Love You to Pieces: Creative Writers on g a Child with Special Needs*, Kamata once again dons her editor's hat, and also ibutes an essay about her own experiences with such a child. Now that that proj- completed, one hopes to see her return to writing fiction and this reviewer looks rd to reading another novel by a very talented and courageous writer.

oodbye Madame Butterfly is a collection of eleven interviews by Tokyo-based journalist Sumie Kawakami, a single mother whose career began terviewing victims of crime for a leading Japanese paper. Ten of the eleven interviewees are women – , married and divorced – and the one man is a mar- sex volunteer". The interviews took place between 2007.

In her Preface, Kawakami debunks Japan's reputa- s a sexual wonderland where, despite a plethora of rtainment and amusement' services" – soaplands job parlors), fashion health clubs (jerk-off empori- and image clubs (costume play) – Japan ranks at the bottom of forty-one cou ge 45 sex acts per adult pe l average of 103. She also r e" phenomenon – more th ese have virtually sexless r is one major reason for t These other reasons are o views. The interviewees t en I like and respect" wh n ways, also severely limits he survey. Nevertheless, by tails of each inform- nt, the book has con- ble literary, if not socio-sci

Suzanne Kamata

The first interview, with d bar owner called mi's bar is located in kicho, Tokyo's premier red-light district. Chami herself is described as a boister- arty-girl with spiked, dyed hair, extreme make-up and (in typical Japanese fash- love of hip hop music and Disney characters.

Appearances aside, Chami is rather soft-hearted and sentimental, mourning her eal lover who died in a motorcycle crash some years back, and the fetus she red at the insistence of her next lover. At the time of the interview she was dating ried man, but was starting to get bored with him. "'Life is like a *matsuri* [festi- Chami explains: "'It's a cycle – festive one moment, then all gone the next.'"

Most of the remaining subjects are married and most of the marriages are seri- flawed. And while divorce may be the preferred way out of a bad relationship in est, because of Japan's intricate and long-established system of familial obliga- and its utter lack of support for single mothers, this is not an option for all but ost determined of the nation's women.

Stylish Emi Nagaya, age 42, from a wealthy land-owning family, tolerates her nd's mistress but plans to divorce him once her two children are grown. "'If I die, agaya family's property will become his. And if he remarries, what'll happen to

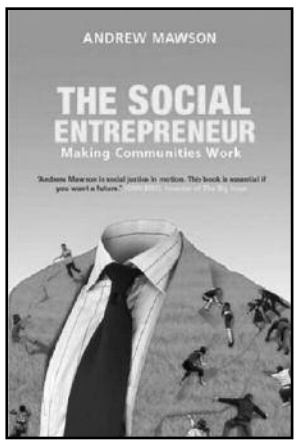
(*continued on page 39*)

The Social Entrepreneur
Making Communities Work

Mark Cranmer

The term "social entrepreneur" began to have currency on British shores in the late 1990s and appeared along with the advent of Tony Blair's New Labour government. Certainly, the idea of social enterprise did seem to dovetail neatly with Blair and New Labour's picture of a third way for politics, where social justice walked hand in hand with capital and business.

Indeed, in 1984, when Andrew Mawson, a simple Methodist Minister, took on a new job in the unfamiliar parish of Bromley by Bow in the heat of London's deprived East End, preaching to his congregation was to become the least of his worries. Mawson's experience of Bromley by Bow was to unwittingly turn him into one of New Britain's most progressive social and urban thinkers.



The Social Entrepreneur: Making Communities Work.
Andrew Mawson,
Atlantic Books,
192 p. 2008

As he relates in this provocative account, Mawson's eyes were opened to the nature of genuine community and social regeneration, as the reality of the areas' social, physical and economic downward spiral began to unfold before his eyes. What he observed was a bureaucratic, albeit well-meaning system of local and national government which was incapable of providing people with the opportunities they needed to claw their way out of poverty and into independent living. Mawson drew the conclusion that the system promoted dependence on welfare benefits. He attacked the liberal-socialist establishment which he believed propagated and prolonged people's misery by making them dependent on scarce resources.

Mawson argues that there is no effective leadership amongst the agencies who have the responsibility for tackling social issues. His book describes a constipated system of local governance more concerned with being inclusive of all minorities rather than being pragmatic and simply acting on intransigent social issues. Mawson makes no apologies for this stance, he maintains that leadership, vision and a propensity to take risks are much more effective in tackling social problems than well meaning, liberal-minded programmes designed by committee, which too frequently serve no-one. Effectively, the objectives end up diluted and directionless.

One could get the wrong impression at this point. Mawson's criticism of the liberal-socialist approach to community regeneration could be construed as more Charles Murray oriented neo-liberalism. But to assume this would be an injustice to Mawson, who whilst understanding the issues facing people at the wrong end of the economic scale, is still able to come across as passionate and focused in his vision. Rather than advocating the withdrawal of welfare benefits from the poor as espoused by neo-liberals, Mawson advocates the building of dignity by involving people and providing them with opportunities to develop their skills in contributing to the regeneration of their own community. Indeed, in the penultimate chapter of the book, Mawson provides a twelve-step plan for an entrepreneurial future.

Mawson concedes that his book is a polemic. Few prisoners are taken and the liberal consensus of the charitable sector, church, academia, and the public sector is scorched by his vitriol. Mawson illustrates how local charities in Bromley by Bow (who are also dependent on public sector grants to survive) opposed a dancing school which was set up in a local church hall. The reason was that people using the service had to pay a small fee. Yet, this dancing school was over-subscribed; it provided a sustainable income. This in turn could be used to help realise the ambition of developing an independent community centre; then the centre itself could deliver to and be delivered by the local community without the interference of the strings attached by bureaucracy.


Lord Andrew Mawson

The Social Entrepreneur comes from a genuine "third way" viewpoint, it is a compulsive read for anyone concerned with community regeneration initiatives and social governance. It offers a unique introduction to the art of social enterprise and charts the progress of one of Britain's pioneers in the field. Mawson fondly recalls the characters he met on his journey and provides a picture of a deprived community inhabited by good, albeit poor people—very unlike the stereotypical tabloid views of drug-ridden social security scroungers who drag the community down. This book cuts the crap and takes the straight-line view; agree with him or not, his approach is admirable and refreshing.

If I have any criticism of *The Social Entrepreneur,* it would be that whilst leadership, vision and action can be great, it does not speak of the dark side of social enterprise, where surpluses are swallowed up by the inflated salaries of self-appointed executives who in turn employ their friends and family on a whim. Such nepotism can be counter-productive. Certainly, Mawson is not one of those people, as his vision bore fruit and established a benchmark for the rest of us in the community regeneration field. Indeed, it must be good to criticise: Mawson was rewarded with a lifetime peerage for the House of Lords in 2007.

Mark Cranmer lives in Bradford, West Yorkshire in the UK and has worked in community regeneration and voluntary sector development for over 15 years.

LEGACY OF ASHES (*continued from page 8*)

of feudal leaders rising from the ashes of imperial Japan' have been unbelievably successful in regaining much of what Japan lost in the Second World War. They have also, and this has been less beneficial to Japan, developed a model that has enabled successive Asian states to follow Japan and relocate American industry, skills, technology and productivity to Asia.

Today's hollowed out, bankrupt American economy, living on the illusion of its superior innovation but increasingly dependent on tottering industries like pharmaceuticals, finance and defence technology, is the end result of the deal with Kishi. Japan's 'feudal leaders' were able to utilise ancient Chinese strategic thinking that enables the weak to conquer the strong through service and the cultivation of dependency and self-indulgence. America's Central Intelligence Agency, which recruited Kishi, has been no more successful than the rest of America in figuring out what has gone wrong.

Such reflections can only lead one back to the central question posed by Weiner's book, by Kishi's success and by the achievements of Vladimir Putin. How does a democracy built somewhat innocently on lofty ideals and aspirations, like America, come to terms with both the subtlety and harshness of political power — whether internal or external? The CIA's most successful recruit, Robert Gates, is now in a position that carries great responsibility in addressing that question.

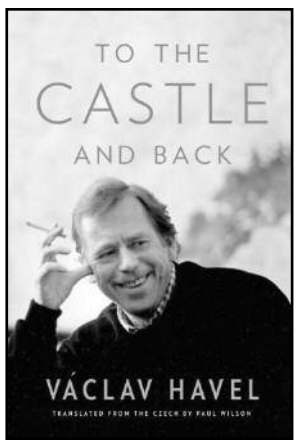
A former High Commissioner in Australia's diplomatic service, Reg Little writes from Brisbane, Queensland.

To the Castle and Back

Jan Drabek

The Czechs have a strong tradition of books based on presidential words. It dates back to the 1920s when the first President of Czechoslovakia, the philosopher Masaryk, was interviewed by Karel Capek, author of many books and notably the play R.U.R. which introduced the word "robot" to the world's languages. The result of the many interviews was the best-selling *Talks with T.G. Masaryk*, probably the most exhaustive examination of a statesman's thoughts I have ever encountered.

Masaryk's successor was Eduard Benes, one of the tragic figures of modern history. It was Benes who was forced to preside over the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia by the Nazis in 1938 and again when the country disappeared into the Stalinist abyss ten years later. In his somewhat dry but exhaustive style he ably depicted the former in his memoir called *The Munich Days.*



To the Castle and Back
Vaclav Havel
Trans. Paul Wilson
Knopf.
383 p. $34.95 cloth.

The only writer by profession ascending to the Czech presidency was Vaclav Havel. Author of several plays and other types of literature – his insightful essay *The Power of the Powerless* from his dissident days immediately comes to mind – he was elected President of Czechoslovakia in 1989 and President of the Czech Republic four years later. As a result, some sort of a definitive word about his years as president has been eagerly awaited ever since his terms in office ended in 2003.

Alas, this isn't it. Not exactly, anyway. If someone expects to find in *The Castle and Back* a work with sequential order and/or authoritative commentary overview, he will be disappointed. There is precious little of either. An early critic from the newspaper which favours the present president Klaus, an intellectual nemesis of Havel, called the book a "Neurosis Caused by Klaus". He dismissed it as "a more or less walk through the intellectual landscape of Vaclav Havel." Perhaps, but the modest question can be asked through whose landscape should the book take us.

Personally I was more taken by Havel's original and often non-intellectual meditations about such things as American presidential aspirants ("Yesterday we went to dinner at Madeleine's with Hillary. Hillary made a marvelous impression on me"), Poland ("the Poles have a different and far more heartfelt relationship to their own statehood than we do") and about American drivers (… "on hundreds of Georgetown intersections everyone is always stopping and politely giving the other person the right of way. In such a situation in Bohemia there would be a multicar pile-up at every intersection every couple of minutes"). He also lets us in on some pretty serious self-criticism: "I have constant doubts about myself, that I blame myself for everything, plausible and implausible."

If historians are the caste entrusted with the objective explanation of the significance of various times, and if statesmen are here only to clarify their own views of their times, then Havel's book is a laudable and highly literary contribution to mapping an important individual's approach to a landscape of the nearly two post-Communist decades that have just passed. The title To the Castle and Back might refer to the Hradcany Castle towering above Prague, which since 1918 has housed the presidential offices, but also to the classic work of another Prague writer named Kafka.


Vaclav Havel listening to an angel

However, it should be noted that the original Czech title *Prosim Strucne* means "Please Be Brief" in English. Havel was watching an American TV program and became so annoyed with the moderator's constant admonitions to that effect that he chose it as his title.

To the Castle and Back operates on three levels. Sometimes Havel is answering questions posed by the Czech journalist Hvizdala; at others we are treated to forgotten notes from his computer and occasionally there are a few pages in italics of highly personal observations on various subjects, many of them dealing with Havel's time in America. If a clear formula for it all is not clearly discernible, it must have been the author's point: it testifies to the multifarious nature of our times and also the author's difficulty to concentrate; a shortcoming he mentions in the text.

Capek was clearly identified as the author of Talks with T.G. Masaryk, but in the case of Havel's book the role of Hvizdala is not that simple. When Masaryk saw the manuscript, in places he expanded on his answers, though he never interfered with the questions themselves. In the case of Havel. his own statement that he "slightly misused" Hvizdala throws a bit of a question mark on the volume: didn't Havel in the end ask the questions himself? But even that would be acceptable were it made amply clear.

On the other hand we are dealing here with a highly individualistic and consequently controversial personality, a perennial candidate for the Nobel Prize. Havel simply always marches to a different drummer, a fact which has infuriated not only his one-time Communist masters but also some of his democratic contemporaries.

Expect the unexpected here and then marvel at the man's creativity.

A former ambassador for the Czech Republic, Jan Drabek's current work is His Doubtful Excellency (Ekstasis).

"...EXQUISITE LIPS, ETC..."

Peter Grant

Stan Persky has standing in the Vancouver literary community from long association with the likes of Robin Blaser — with Michael Ondaatje he edited the first edition of Blaser's serial poem *The Holy Forest* and in 2003 published a longish piece on Blaser's poetry, 10,000 words (on the literary website Dooley's Café) that contributes important insights about the sources of Vancouver's flourishing postmodern culture. Persky claims lineage from Jack Spicer and Allen Ginsberg. Jack Kerouac encouraged him to write. He has been friends with legends and icons: Spicer, Ginsberg, Robert Creeley, George Stanley, Fred Wah.

Topic Sentence: A Writer's Education
Stan Persky
New Star Books, 2007
320 pages, $22.00

The subtitle *A Writer's Education* raised my expectations of finding more of the same — writing on writing. The latest from the front lines in the revolution. of postmodern thinking. Persky is no slouch. A human rights and civil rights activist, philosophy instructor at Capilano College, sometime newspaper columnist, frequent contributor to Dooley's Café, author of *Buddy's: Meditations on Desire* and "a dozen" other books. Startling, then, unsettling, to find much recycled *Buddy's* here. Persky's personal sexual history is fascinating, especially his anatomizing of pederasty. I eat up sexual memoir like candy. Don't get me wrong. The more candid, the more particular, the better. It just doesn't do to shuffle it in with writing on writing. It doesn't belong there. Neither does his memoir of sexual initiation in the Navy, really. Nor does his memoir of family life, really. Am I missing something, some nuance, a missed signifier? I counted about nine thousand I's — but only one reference to Narcissus — in the half of *Topic Sentence* that gets the reader warmed up and past that and into the writing about writers. That isn't right — it isn't … truthful. Truth in Advertising! It doesn't end there. Persky has the gall, I say, the gall to publish under the rubric of *A Writer's Education* a piece on his teaching career that I read as so much shop talk. And speaking of gall, on the dedication page is a name to make strong men quail: Jacques Derrida. The Father of Deconstruction. You'll search the text for amplification on a thinker so obviously greatly influential to the dedicator. There isn't any. On the *Books in Canada* website, however, you will find Persky's review of Derrida's *The Work of Mourning* (2003). The reviewer lets drop that "even though I work as a philosophy teacher, I've tended to avoid Derrida, perhaps put off by the reputation that his ideas and language are difficult and inaccessible. What little I've known of Derrida up to now, I must confess, has come from a few readable, friendly and amusing essays about him by his colleague, the American philosopher Richard Rorty." It's all very puzzling. A "practicing philosopher" wrote this, and from one end of *Topic Sentence* to the other, so little philosophical probing? So much confession — but not enough?


Stan Persky

I very much like Persky's essays on writers. The essays on George Orwell, Christopher Isherwood and Robert Creeley are very good. In the midst of an appreciation of Creeley's later poems is this:

> …a focus of Creeley's continuing attention… is the precise registration of how the mind, through language and other means, including the 'real-time' digressions of consciousness, engages the world and the experience of being in it….

More of this would be good.

I like especially the fascinating piece on Oscar Wilde, who went to jail for love of boys, of a boy, Bosie (from the Irish endearment "boysie") Lord Alfred Douglas, whose father was the Marquess of Queensbury. In prison Wilde wrote the long letter to Bosie that a Canadian friend, Robbie Ross, edited and published posthumously as *De Profundis.* "[T]he intellectual problem" that Wilde's ruined Brilliant Career poses to scholarship is, Persky writes, "the framework or context in which to understand Wilde" — especially his decision to go to jail rather than flee. Persky describes a speech Wilde made at trial in 1895, "a public political speech in defence of the naturalness of a form of homosexual love." It is a very signifier of the Modern. Wilde is "the first modern homosexual." Persky traces the lineage of gay liberation through Wilde to the ancient Greek culture of pederasty.

> "The Love that dare not speak its name," which Wilde eloquently defended at his trial in 1895, the love of men for young men and adolescents (male youths from mid-teens to early twenties), the love whose name is also pederasty, is in our era, in which homosexuality has become a public fact, still the Love that dare not speak its name, even among homosexuals.

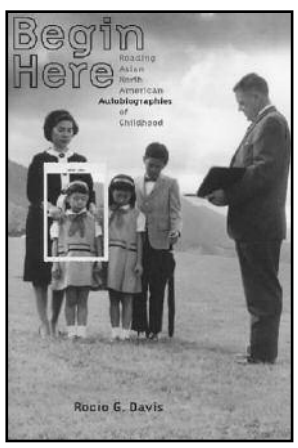
Persky's sexual memoirs do precisely speak the name — he is quite clear that the objects of his desire are not Jail Bait — and, like his narrative of Wilde's and Bosie's relationship, demonstrate the emotional dynamic of the relationship of men and boys. It's about ardor. About loving not wisely but too well. This is not, however, philosophical discourse, I would say, but literary criticism with journalistic motives. Journalism is an honorable calling. Courageously bearing witness. Married to a keen sense of social justice — there's Stan Persky's strength as a writer.

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

Revisting Childhood, a Distaff View

Ranbir Banwait

In this ambitious study, Rocío Davis focuses critical attention on Asian North American life-writing by arguing that these narratives of childhood function as a form of intervention in typical North American literary representations of minority subject groups. Significantly, she offers an engaging analysis of how Asian North American writers translate the trauma(s) of childhood into memoirs that, taken together, produce "cultural memory" and help create "a community of readers." As Davis explains, these memoirs allow ethnic writers to write through traumatic conditions such as displacement, immigration, internment, gender abuse, etc. Their autobiographies, she argues, add to American and Canadian narratives that until recently had not traditionally acknowledged such Asian immigrant-oriented groups.



Begin Here: Reading Asian North American Autobiographies of Childhood
Rocío G. Davis
(University of Hawaii Press, 234 pages)

In this respect, trauma, Davis suggests insightfully, serves as a foundational experience in ethnic literary memory. The ensuing dialogue is typically one that Asian North American writers generate in response to the conflicting demands of seeking to recover a lost "homeland" the one hand, and encountering the demands of assimilation on the other.

Davis examines two general Childhood narrative modes. In the first, the constituting moment of trauma typically occurs in a country of origin that the child protagonist is forced to flee. Loung Ung's *First They Killed My Father*, for example, situates itself in wartime Cambodia in the context of the Communist takeover. The writer brings to light experiences of forced migration and the death of family members. Yet North America offers the possibility of another life and English becomes the language of escape, agency and mobility. Similarly, for Da Chen in *Colors of the Mountain*, English "*signifies a passport to a better life*" and by extension, it functions as the language of power. The dilemma of the speaker's narrative position remains that of the traditional immigrant caught between the emotional demands of two nations—the lost, and the new with its avenue for escape. She concludes that for some like Lu Chi Fa, America symbolizes success, confirming "*the reality of the American dream for this immigrant.*" Needless to say, other ethnic writers dampen this somewhat optimistic perception of immigrant life in North America.


Loung Ung, childhood survivior of Pol Pot

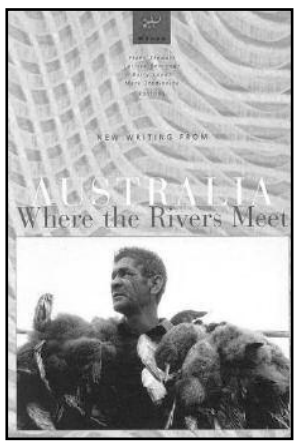
In the second type of autobiography, the narrative contends with the troubles of assimilation in North America: "*much of the difficulty for many of these Asian North American children lies in the gap between their perceptions of themselves and their encounter with the gaze of the mainstream / White observer.*" In *Burnt Bread and Chutney*, for instance, Carmit Delman suggests how a McDonald's Happy Meal ultimately compensates for the cultural indeterminacy fostered by the child's U.S. immigration experience. Remarkably, a McDonald's Meal—as the ultimate signifier of Western consumerism—signals how the child learns to "survive" by '*eating the right food and dressing the "right" way.*' In brief, the child quickly learns the language of con-

(*continued on page 34)*

Where the Rivers Meet

Sanja Garic-Komnenic

Where the Rivers Meet, a selection of new Australian prose and poetry, conjures an image of a continent divided by different interpretations of history but attempting to imagine a shared future. The idea of identity-shaped-by-landscape permeates the writings of this collection. The sense of belonging to the landscape contests with ownership of the land in the writings of the Indigenous, non-Indigenous and authors of mixed descent, alike. An intense process of reevaluating or reaffirming the past takes place, and in the process the earth shakes. Bulldozers wipe out neighborhoods in Tony Birch's "The Bulldozer" and leave people stripped of their memories. "The water people" of "the old Golf country" blast Gurfurritt mine into splinters as their answer to globalization in Alexis Wright's "From Carpentaria." More literally, in Don Watson's "How's Your Day Been?", a current affairs television program covering the Southeast Asian tsunami portrays Australia's "traditional" and "unmatched" generosity as "Aussies pitch in when there's a crisis," in an attempt to "invent or reinvent tradition."



Where the Rivers Meet: New Writing from Australia. edited by Frank Stewart et al. University of Hawaii Press, 184 pages

The legitimacy of traditions is fought for over the ownership of the spiritual landscape. Even the sky is claimed: among the Australian Aboriginals, the Southern Cross is the Crocodile. In "The Rivers of Babylon," Deborah Bird Rose tells of the origin of the name: "the Owlet Nightjar Dreaming ancestor who "killed the croc," and helped by a strong wind, scattered the boys who tried to steal his dinner "all around the country." The sky stories thus also tell the stories of earth.

Famed adventurer Robin Davidson "Walks [her] Country" to get to know its landscape and its stories. She is fascinated by the Aboriginal culture carved in the landscape and appalled by her own, embodied in the image of a tourist taking pictures of the sacred Aboriginal rock paintings in Emily Gap. There, "the landscape is alive. Every pattern in it, its very shape, is proof of [the ancestors'] living presence." Similarly, in "the Gulf of Carpentaria," the ancestral, mythical serpent permeates the landscape, and the rhythm of its breathing creates the tidal wave. Thus, to claim a space, one has to reinvent its spiritual imagery. As Luis Oxley relates in "North of Mount Cameron West", one must "retrace [one's] steps" and discover how the scenery dreams to truly belong. However, as the anthology's editor Mark Tredinnick observes, one cannot belong to a landscape without knowing oneself.


Larissa Behrendt

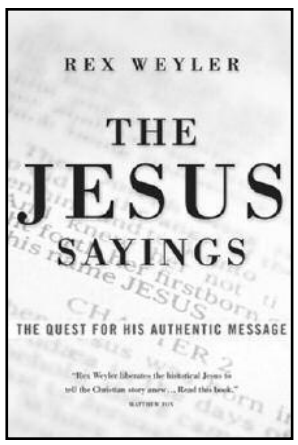
The legacy of "reinvented imagery" has left painful scars in the collective consciousness. Larissa Behrendt, in the story "From Home" tells of stolen names and stolen children; the aboriginals "were first given the terror of God … and a new language which gave them new names." Soon came the men in black in their black cars to take the children away. Both Kim Scott's "From Benang" and Bruce Pascoe's "From Earth" talk about "invented ancestry" and the need to "write a simple family history…to make things clear." Out of desire to reinvent himself, Nevil (in Vivienne Cleven's "From Bitin' Back") wakes up one morning wanting to be a woman. In a landscape where collective histories can be rewritten and reevaluated, why cannot personal ones?

(*continued on page 20)*

The Jesus Sayings: The Quest for His Authentic Message

Steve D. Black

For some there is discomfort in the suggestion that the Jesus of the New Testament and Church dogma is not the same as the historical figure who walked the earth 2000 years ago. Indeed, for many, it is difficult to acknowledge the difference between the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history. Yet, scholars have argued for many decades that such a distinction exists. However, determining what Jesus' message originally was is a complicated puzzle. The biblical texts were originally written many years after Jesus' death, and all the texts we possess are copies of copies of copies. There are many differences between the various versions of Jesus' life, as well as between the copies of those versions. Outside of the bible the references to Jesus are scant and often of dubious authenticity.



The Jesus Sayings: The Quest for His Authentic Message
Rex Weyler
House of Anansi Press, 2008. 360 Pages. $29.95

Nevertheless, there is evidence to be found within and without the New Testament that can help get us closer to the historical Jesus. Some exciting discoveries in the last hundred years can take us beyond what is found in the gospels of the New Testament. Scholars have recreated a hypothetical text used by both the Gospels of Matthew and Luke called "Q" (from the German word for "source" – *quelle*). Important archeological discoveries of relevant texts, including the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Mary, can also be utilized in this quest.

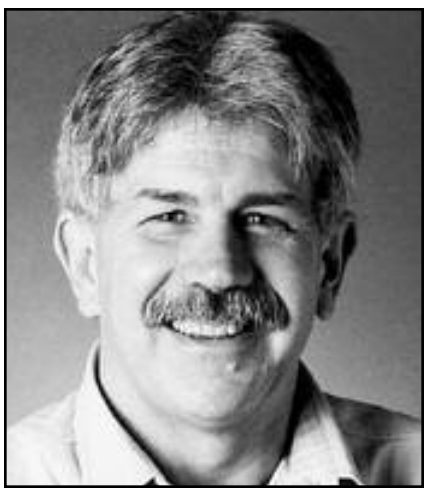
Using these resources, Rex Weyler reconstructs the core message of Jesus as being about seeking for an inner light which should be shared with the world, about abstaining from judging others, and not worrying about material needs. For the historical Jesus the "Kingdom of God," to be found within oneself, is an important theme. The message of the historical Jesus was primarily addressed to the poor and marginalized, and often came in the form of parables. These conveyed a subversive vision of reality that "invaded […] highly structured society like a weed and provide protection for innocent creatures" (110). Weyler suggests that Jesus rarely spoke of God, and recommended his disciples "not to worry about god, but to care for their neighbors" (237). Weyler's Jesus believes that "a just, egalitarian society, the kingdom of God could appear on earth through the ethical actions of ordinary citizens" (125). Jesus did not refer to himself as the Son of God, but rather as the "son of Man", which Weyler suggests simply refers his humanity.

Weyler argues that Jesus rejected Jewish conventions of the time. Here, he may be guilty of falling into the common problem found in historical Jesus research of highlighting something good about Jesus at the expense of a hypocritical "Judaism". This manner of argument is well attested in the pages of the New Testament, which was written in the context of conflict with more normative forms of Judaism. An interfaith reading must interrogate texts and interpretations that perpetuate this unwitting form of anti-Judaism, so that that we hesitate to affirm, with the gospel writers, that the Pharisees were simply hypocrites with empty understandings of their own religion. Such portrayals may be little more that rhetorical devices that are part of struggles between groups.

Weyler notes some striking parallels between Jesus' manner of life and message with that of the Cynics, a group of philosophers that existed at the same time as Jesus. They both challenged social conventions, exposing the faulty ways of the rich and powerful. Indeed, the similarities are strong enough to prompt some to suggest that Jesus was a Cynic. For Weyler this does not, however, mean that Jesus was not unique, as Jesus' affirmation of community contrasts significantly with the Cynic's pursuit of a more solitary self-sufficiency. There are also, Weyler notes, arresting parallels between Jesus' teachings with those of Taoism and Buddhism. While there could have been some direct relationship with early forms of Buddhism upon Jesus, Weyler concludes that it is just as likely that all these spiritual masters "drank from the same wells of common sense and perennial wisdom".

Utilizing the Gospel of Mary, a text likely written in the early decades of the second century, Weyler argues that in the early Jesus movement Mary Magdalene likely had an important position of authority and influence. Indeed this reflects the important place that women had in Jesus' movement, a position that was erased by the church as it took on institutionalized shape.

Weyler believes the simple message of Jesus was lost in favor of the message developed by the emerging church of the first four centuries. The church established for itself a centralized hierarchy in Rome, founded many crucial doctrines not taught by Jesus (the physical return of the messiah, final judgment of God, and the trinity, to name a few), and marginalized rival interpretations of Jesus' message. The resulting religion, argues Weyler, left little room, and had little need for the message of the historical Jesus.


Rex Weyler

There is much to be gained, Weyler continues, from recovering the original voice of Jesus. This message can inspire us in the 21st Century to regain the light within, and the courage to face to injustice without. "Jesus," he continues, "had faith in humanity, and this knowledge bolsters my faith in humanity".

I have a few problems about details here and there, and one might wish that Weyler had adopted a slightly more sympathetic understanding of Christian myth-making, given his general affirmation of the importance of myth. Nevertheless, this book scores high points in readability, relevance and insight. Weyler shows us that Jesus still has the power to inspire, and that it is up to us to make sure this inspiration draws out the best in humanity, and not the worst.

Steve Black is a PhD. Candidate studying the New Testament and Christian Origins at Trinity College in Toronto, He currently lives in Vancouver.

RIVERS MEET (*continued from page 19*)

In Melissa Lukashenka's "Not Quite White in the Head" and Ashley Hay's "On the Edge," geography divides the continent as well. The White Australia "seep[s] to the coastal edges of the continent as though the stories of the inland had frightened them away," (Lukashenka) so they "still cling to the continent's edges" (Hay). On the other hand, the wilderness, the bush, is the dream land, not "a white idea of a land empty of people," since "[e]very landscape had its Dreaming Law." Identity thus becomes fragmented and the sense of belonging is created through "small stories which attach to" a particular piece of land, "a single creek bank [or] an acre of remnant rainforest." Paradoxically, this division of landscape resulting from the fragmentation of spiritual landscape brings the country together. Attachment to small portions where people "take care of the land they live in," answers globalization which turns landscape into commodity (Lukashenka).

On a continent where each piece of land is precious and unique, to own land means to know it and guard it. In Roger McDonald's "The Bullock Run," the divide goes deeper between those who guard and cherish their land and family, and those who steal and despoil. In those wild parts, the gun is ready at hand to shoot a neighbor's dogs that eat a man's sheep, or kill a "friend" who touches his women.

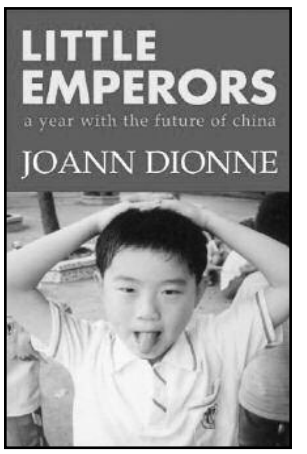
The segments of reality caught in Riki Maynard's photographs, fragments forced out of the narratives they belong to, make the viewer pause and imagine the missing parts. The photographs reveal more out-of-frame content than in-frame. They invite the viewer to fill in the content of the broken narrative: a black man facing a wired fence, the clouds over his head. Or a close-up of Wik Elder, Arthur, biting his lips, his frowning eyes forming a single slit. Or a shack in a barren landscape, with a cloud of mist curled on top of a hill. Finally, a stone grave, standing in a field of dry grass, invites the reader to imagine an entire life ending in exile, on Flinders Island in Tasmania.

This collection of visual and verbal messages from a far away continent offers a universal, disturbing premonition: the premonition of silence descending upon the earth. Like Australian dingoes, in Deborah Bird Rose's "The Rivers of Babylon," howling in anguish over the loss of their habitat, maybe "we should all be howling…"

A playwright and screenwriter with a Ph.D. in film and theatre semiotics, Sanja Garic-Komnenic teaches English at UCFV and in the Liberal Arts Dept. at BCIT.

Little Emperors:
a year with the future of China

Yvonne Blomer



Little Emperors: a year with the future of China,
JoAnn Dionne
The Dundurn Group, 2008, $24.99

Through reading books we are enabled the opportunity to go places we might never otherwise visit, to experience things beyond us. JoAnn Dionne's year in China, collected in a series of linked essays, certainly succeeds in taking the reader along on her voyage to a China of the recent past.

Little Emperors: a year with the future of China is a voyage where expectation and reality clash almost from the get go. Dionne expects at least some questions and a careful study of passport and visa at customs when she arrives, but "Entering China is so easy it's almost disappointing."

These contradictions are constants in Dionne's story as she struggles with her delight in finding familiar things – like Cornflakes at the new local supermarket – paired against her shock at being delighted with so everyday an item rather than embracing the food and culture of China. Her desire to embrace this new place battles against homesickness and a longing for things familiar and less traumatizing than a dark city market filled with still-living but broken animals on display or semi-carved carcasses splayed to catch the eye of dinner-shoppers.

Dionne also struggles with the ideals of communism in a country where Coke and Pepsi logos battle it out down busy city street. The golden arches of McDonald's take a position of prominence in her city of Guangzhou and a shopping mall with air con sprouts up and fills with shoppers donning all things corporate America: "Now I understand why communism has failed in most of the world. It has nothing to do with superior or inferior ideologies. Communism doesn't work because it's dreary. It's sooty. It's grey…Capitalism, on the other hand, is a vain and colourful creature, a strutting peacock, a flashing billboard, a glass-and-granite shopping mall."


Joann Dionne (James Watson Photo)

Immediacy of language and lightness of tone make the memoir readable, fun and vivid while at the same time providing insights into the minds of young Chinese, both those that Dionne teaches and the women she depends on as Teaching Assistants, " 'I'm so happy I can speak English with you in China…It is like our secret language. I can say whatever I like.'" says Connie, Dionne's third Assistant and close friend. It is through the conversations with these women that Dionne and the reader gain deeper insight into the every day life of young Chinese, especially young women.

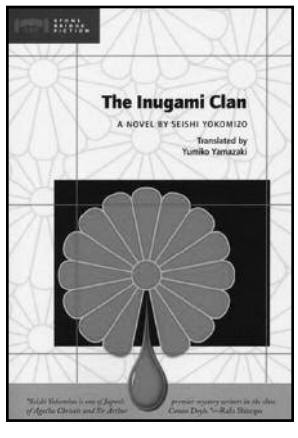
The friendships and connections Dionne makes with her students and co-workers suggests a profound and deep connection that is being made in city after city between the youth of the western world who are travelling to teach English (that fast-spreading and mighty commodity) and those of Asia. These connections allow *Little Emperors* to have insight beyond China to the west and its relationship with the east.

This east-west relationship is based on actual experience with each other rather than through movies, corporate logos and trade agreements. The students Dionne taught in her year in Guangzhou will never see a foreigner in the way they did before they met her. Equally, her understanding of China goes beyond textbooks, geopolitics and news clippings. As she says near the end of the book when discussing Tiananmen Square with an old man, "I am speechless. Speechless because, for the first time since

(*continued on page 39)*

The Inumagi Clan

Hilary Matheson



The Inugami Clan
Seishi Yokomizo. Trans. by Yumiko Yamazaki.
Stone Bridge Press.
309 pages, $12.95 US

How far would you be willing to go in pursuit of a fortune? In this first novel of his wildly popular Japanese mystery series, Seishi Yokomizo explores the complexities of human nature, examining the depths to which one might be prepared to plummet in order to realize the oft-elusive dream of wealth. In this new English edition, *The Inugami Clan* allows the previously uninitiated to glean a new understanding of Japan's rich cultural history. A master of suspense, Yokomizo crafts a thrilling tale interwoven with the inclusion of many pertinent cultural and historical details.

The novel consists of one unexpected twist after another, and no brief summary of the plot can do it justice. It must be first established that Japan in the 1940s has already seen its fair share of conflict, internal and external. With the death of silk business tycoon and patriarchal figure Sahei Inugami, however, and the subsequent revelation of his intentionally divisive will, a bloody contest ensues that threatens to destroy all who are connected to the massive fortune. The novel begins with a thorough examination of the Inugami genealogy and of recent history—a necessary framework to establish, given the complexity of the events that will later pollute the clan's already convoluted family tree. Very quickly, this initial narration gives way to the dry musings of detective Kosuke Kindaichi, whose legendary ability to solve even the most puzzling of crimes has garnered him recognition throughout the country. An affable, quirky hero, Kindaichi possesses a distinctive persona, which readers might recognize from the era of *Colombo*, the famed TV persona made popular by Peter Falks: both conceal a razor-sharp mind hidden behind the façade of a seemingly dishevelled and distracted appearance.


Seishi Yokomizo

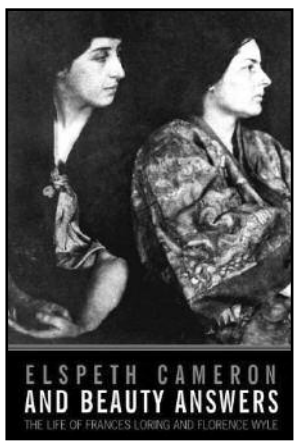
Introduced to the Inugami's bitter feud by an intriguing letter and the accompanying biography of Sahei Inugami, Kindaichi quickly becomes immersed within in the case with the discovery that his informant has been brutally murdered. Here, the author seizes the opportunity to inform the reader that, had this murder not been committed, the mystery would really have been quite straightforward after all. This belief is continuously expressed with the discovery of each consecutive murder, however, and allows the reader rare moments of insight unconnected with the typical observations offered by Kindaichi. By interjecting this wisdom borne of hindsight into the midst of critical developments, Yokomizo creates an oblique method of foreshadowing that only serves to heighten the suspense, as the stakes in this dangerous game constantly increase in direct proportion to the body count. With each successive murder, it seems that those most likely to be the murderer are eliminated first. By doing so, the author is able to question what the defining characteristics of a murderer must be. Motives become the obvious answer, and we are brought to the realization that we might all be capable of committing the same atrocities, given a suitable incentive. This subtle examination of human nature serves to set this novel apart from the myriads of other exciting tales that exist within the genre of suspense. As such, Yokimozo creates a novel that proves its merit beyond the boundaries of a fast read or an exciting who-done-it mystery. More notably, it forces the reader to understand the complexity and fallacy of human nature, which can find itself capable of justifying even the most horrific of actions given a strong enough motivation. That is a sobering thought indeed.

Hilary Matheson lives in Langley, B.C. where she pursues an equal passion for music and writing.

And Beauty Answers

Linda Rogers

We speak of a good eye or an eye for beauty. The artist, photographer or fiction writer has an advantage over the biographer in that she can arrange reality any way she likes to set up the picture. Elspeth Cameron, the author of the "response book" *And Beauty Answers* must stick to the facts that answer the central question, who calls sculptors Frances Loring and Florence Wyle? Cameron, an experienced interviewer and biographer, with award winning books about Robertson Davies, Irving Layton, Earl Birney, and Hugh MacLennan to her credit, must walk through the garden of speculation, nuance and innuendo without disturbing its clay, the good earth of this story.



And Beauty Answers, the life of Francis Loring and Florence Wyle,
Elspeth Cameron, Cormorant Books, 2007, hardcover, 528 pages with 32 pages of photos.

Every garden is as good as its soil. Cameron makes compost out of the details that shape the lives of two exceptional women and shows us how they took root in Canada, their chosen home, then flourished and faded. Loring and Wyle's is an occasionally frustrating story in that, by virtue of their gender and geographical situation, they missed their chance to graft onto the new tradition influenced by modern technology and world art.

Mud was the matrix of "The Girls" separate childhoods. Frances loved to make mud pies. Florence was a farm girl, obsessed with the conformation of animals, human and otherwise. The two women brought their obsessions to the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and, in 1906, began the "adult play" that characterizes all great artists. Florence was in love with her teacher. Frances had affairs. Elspeth poses the question again and again, "Did they call one another, or were they mutually attracted to mud and the life of play?"

Art brought the two artists together and art kept them together until their sad decline into the mud of dementia. Cameron asks all their surviving friends to comment on the nature of Loring and Wyle's relationship, because that is the question her readers will be asking. Is this a love story? The impression we are left with is, "Yes!" but it is the greater love for the phenomenal shapes that represent the voyage of two souls in an adversarial world.


Francis Loring in 1931

I have yet to meet a female painter who has not regretted her failure to work in the third dimension. It takes courage to be a painter and even greater courage to be a sculptor. Sculpture is more expensive to produce and more difficult to sell. Working in clay, stone, wood or marble requires great physical resources. Difficult for men, it was almost impossible for women before the advent of birth control and subsequent shift in the perception of women's roles in society.

Many potential sculptors have adapted their understanding of the elements of sculpture to a more modest scale, becoming "jewelers" and working small. Loring and Wyles were remarkable in their focus, especially at a time when women artists were most often regarded as hobbyists or adjuncts to men, like the tragic Camille Claudel.

What is significant about the sculptors' relationship is the ways in which they supported one another through hard times and good; and how, subverting the maternal instinct which was more obvious in the more introverted Florence, they nourished a coterie of artists, especially young people. Who cares what they did in bed? They were brilliant on the scaffold and at the dining room table in their converted church where ideas about the direction of Canadian art were stirred together. Cameron captures the essence of this life as if it were a fine cioppino, all the fishes complementing one another and the herbs as invigorating as altruistic argument.

When the artists met, they wore their long hair in plaits. It is as if Cameron is unbraiding their hair, which, in Florence's case became a man's bob, as we slowly understand the similarities and differences in their work directed by the classicism of their teachers and the conservatism of the city in which they chose to live.

It is ironic that artists born into the dramatic social climate of the early Twentieth Century should wind up defending artistic tradition. Toronto the Good, its longing for greatness aside, was a provincial town. Monuments for the newly rich and the newly dead, planted in the fields of Flanders, were required. Loring and Wyle, eccentric in everything but their approach to art, fit the job description perfectly. Their technique unassailable, their passion legendary, they overcame the prejudice against "women artists" the way women living with men and raising children could not and became the voice of a generation devastated by the first great war.

The artists brought the grief of mothers to their portraits of dead souls and the comfort of the hearth to intimate portraits of survivors, and especially in Wyle's case, to children "who would never grow old." Cameron brings to "The Girls'" aging the modeling of regret. Her description of their now derelict sculpture and the home fires restored in their rundown church studio by a boy who had known and loved the "clay ladies" is heartbreaking.


Florence Wyle in 1930

But life doesn't end with death, and that is the durability of sculpture.

There are many parallel histories in *And Beauty Answers.* Braided together with the story of two people in love with the same muse is the bigger picture of a developing Canadian culture and the Canadian obsession with identity. Loring and Wyle (who abhorred the holes in the monumental sculpture of Moore and Hepworth) wrestle with tradition and innovation as their young country struggles to find its voice in the world community.

Cameron also offers glimpses into identical conversations in the Aboriginal community, where arguments about maintaining tradition and transformation to fit in changing times still rage. Bringing up the issue of appropriation, she sheds insight into the failure of the sculptors to evolve past their classical beginnings. While European artists were adapting the elements of African and Asian arts to the post-apocalyptic realties of Twentieth Century life, Canadian artists compartmentalized "folk" and "fine" art, missing the valuable lessons afforded by our First Peoples with their organic approach to iconography.

As their garden goes on without them and their work acquires the luster and insult of patina and guano, Loring and Wyle are well-served by this thoroughly–researched biography, which places them in the inner circle of the paradise they chose. Because the sculptors captured the empathetic souls of their subjects, their work still speaks to us. Because the biographer cared to listen to the questions and answers that never change, we are enlightened. Beauty maintains its truth through all the seasons of love.


Grant Hayter-Menzies

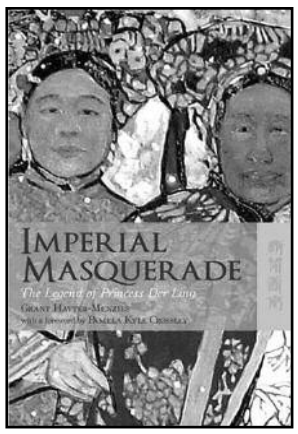
Before the age of face-book and DNA tests made the crimes of stolen and mistaken identities impossibly challenging, personal deceptions big and small often went undiscovered and unchallenged. Crossing oceans and borders, criminals found new identities and new lives and ordinary people from humble beginnings sometimes assumed fairy-tale provenance. On the Pacific Rim, remittance men with pedigrees padded by gentle fictions (Polish Counts, German Barons and English Lords) rode Cariboo horses and Oak Bay ladies with style and grace. Their lovely manners, sometimes "received" accents, and titles real and assumed were keys to the great houses of the *nouveau riche,* lumber barons and coal mining magnates.

Resourceful, literate and pretty, Princess Der Ling, the daughter of a Manchu aristocrat and an American woman, who spent two years in the household of the Empress Dowager Cixi at the end of the Xing dynasty, perfectly satisfied the new world appetite for celebrity. As the ancient doors to China closed, Der Ling's opportunity to

fabricate and ingratiate herself opened wide.

The sum of her interesting memoirs could be fiction but they are based on acute observation of a lost time. Der Ling may not have been raised to the level of Princess by the indulgent old Empress who had herself risen from the role of concubine, but photos of her at court prove she was there. Her capacity, whether it was as mere translator or first lady-in-waiting, is historically irrelevant. She paints turn of the century life at the Manchu court from a privileged perspective.

In his beautifully produced biography, Grant Hayter-Menzies is faithful to Der Ling's own memoirs, only offering the caveat of dissenting voices, those of Western scholars and the tutor of The Last Emperor Puyi, who was an infant when Der Ling left court, as shadows in her carefully painted screen.



Imperial Masquerade, The Legend of Princess Der Ling,
Grant Hayes-Menzies, Hong Kong University Press, 2008, 350 pages hardcover, $35

Like Lady Murasaki, who gave us intimate projections of Medieval Japanese court life in her *Tales of Prince Genji*, Der Ling was one of those uncommon women who rose above cultural expectations of women and created their own realities. In China, Cixi aside, this was all the more unusual. Chinese women learned early that they were grass for men to walk on that their first duty was to their fathers, husbands and sons.

Der Ling and her sister Rong Ling, raised by an enlightened diplomat father, were conversant with a world outside China's walls. That gave them importance at court, while Cixi played the diplomatic balancing game of the first Elizabeth. Cixi, who had seen her country drugged and plundered by the British Empire, knew she had to sleep like a serpent, eyes and ears open to intrigue within and without her troubled nation.


Der Ling and Empress Tzu Hsi

Ladies-in-waiting generally married well in alliances brokered by the Empress for her own strategic and dynastic reasons. This the strong willed Der Ling refused to accept. The dramatic former acolyte of the great Sarah Bernhardt and the dancer Isadora Duncan left the court, just in time, married an American and spent the rest of her life telling and embellishing her story with an understandable theatricality given her early influences.

Hayter-Menzies allows his dissembling subject to charm us with her painterly descriptions and proclamations for reform in a country as cruel as it was beautiful. Her view of the monarch as the concerned mother of China offer another side to the perceived Dragon Lady surrounded by a retinue of two thousand eunuchs, whose dismembering, more complete than that of the Italian castrati, is described in horrific detail.

There was a West Wind blowing across China, always auspicious. The coolies sent to dig the trenches of World War One came home versed in Socialist ideology. Feminism attacked from within its Imperial court. The jade wall was crumbling. Der Ling gives us final glimpses backwards, and for this we can perhaps forgive her delusions of grandeur.

Linda Rogers is working on* The Third Day Book*, the second novel in a trilogy begun with* The Empress Letters*, and a book about a Canadian in Turkey.

NEWLOVE (*continued from page 5*)

longing, that many of our generation felt at the time, part of the reason why his verse continues to survive

George Bowering avers that there is "so much said there in a language anyone I know can read." Pat Lane: "…an absolutely distinctive verse that he found in himself and on the page." Barry McKinnon speaks of Newlove's great skill and power at compressing the narrative of the most profound emotional moments into poetry. In the midst of a story about Newlove spitting in his face during a long drinking session, Patrick Lane ruefully remarks that Newlove once told him that he "learned one trick" about how to write poetry and that it never failed him, but he never told Lane what it was.

The film provides a treasure horde of such illuminating moments. The great simplicity and modesty of McTavish's documentarist and interviewer approach, somehow magically allows his subjects, including Newlove himself, all the room they need to reveal themselves with full candour. On the way, the film provides some completely new revelations about Newlove's younger life, previously hidden away from his friends, and therefore goes a long way towards explaining and even providing some perhaps illusory transparency to some of the previous enigmas of Newlove's personality and work, especially about the bleakness and the darkness from which his poetry was the main relief and solace.


Newlove in front of the old McLeod's bookstore

The film's narrative manages to make a complete form, not entirely tidily, given the messiness of any individual life. It concludes on a relatively happy note, showing Newlove in his final illness following a stroke. The narrative of the film shows him surviving decades of personal internal misery and unhappiness, made worse by alcoholism and self-doubt, deliberately resisting fame and applause, yet ultimately arriving during his final illness at a state of relative happiness and welcome self-acceptance.

The illuminating appearances by other poets are interspersed with vignettes from his family life, both as a child amidst the sun and dust of Saskatchwan and as a husband and father in the various cities in which he lived and worked. Susan Newlove and Newlove's stepchildren, Jeremy and Tamsin Gilbert, provide clear-eyed reminiscences about the pain and difficulty of living with his alcoholism and his profound bouts of depression and crippling self-doubt. But they also give testimony to their admiration and affection for him and their great pride in his accomplishment. In spite of himself, Newlove the man obviously received the affection and admiration of his family and his peers, and not only for his work.

The film presents substantial fragments of his poetry in the form of typewriter text moving on the screen, the tapping sound of a typewriter accompanied by Newlove's own deliberately clear, colloquial and unpretentious reading style, aided by Newlove's compelling voice, the voice of a one-time radio personality. These moments of actual poetry are balanced against Newlove's self-revelatory reflections delivered in his patented oddly formal manner—plain-spoken, candid, deeply confessional, wry. It seems sometimes as though he is addressing his own ghost or self-image as it exists in the imagination of his contemporaries or in a ghostly posterity, setting the record straight for himself as much as for others.

Newlove was never a complicated theorist or explainer, preferring that his poetry, the "unyielding phrase," as he once wrote, should stand for itself. Yet there is a very simple moment when he explains with startling clarity his own motive for writing:

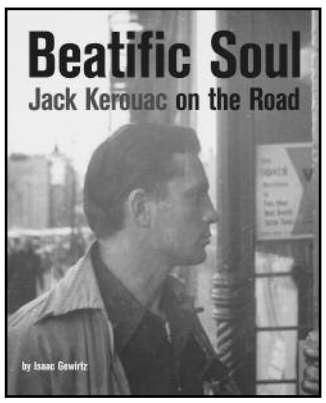
"You've got to remember that I AM John Newlove, from Kamsack, and whether I write poems that some people [think] are good, is beside the point. I'm not trying to figure out who I am. That's too silly. I'm just trying to be human, and it takes a long time to learn how."

In the absence of the full biography which still needs to be written, the new *Selected Poems* by Rob McLennan and Robert McTavish's fine film are now the very best and truest place to start to understand Newlove's life and the wellsprings of his art. No university or college library in the country will be complete with copies of both the book and the film.

***Organizer of Vancouver's first historic Be-In during the 1960s, Jamie Reid has been a notable member of the west coast's literary community for decades. He previously reviewed Robert Priest's* How To Swallow a Pig *for the* PRRB.**

Walking Saint: Go Moan for Man

Jordan Zinovich



Beatific Soul: Jack Kerouac On the Road
November 9, 2007 – February 24, 2008;
(*closed while the scroll is replaced by a facsimile*)
March 1 – March 16, 2008
The New York Public Library
D. Samuel and Jeane H. Gottesman Exhibition Hall

Despite internal stresses, with funding cuts threatening restrictions on its special collections and the "new-generation" Board of Directors, most of whom are in their 30s, prioritizing digitization and internet access over opening hours and public access to the treasures in the stacks, the New York Public Library staff continues to curate inspirational exhibitions. This year, Isaac Gerwirtz, curator of the Berg Collection, has outdone himself. While the pleasure of tracking Whitman's hand-written annotations and reworkings drew me back on four separate occasions to "*I Am With You*": *Walt Whitman's* Leaves of Grass, *1855–2005*, Gerwirtz's new exhibition, *Beatific Soul: Jack Kerouac On the Road*, has transformed me into a compulsive visitor to 5th Avenue and 42nd Street. Simply put, *Beatific Soul* is one of the most intriguing public literary explorations I've ever immersed myself in.

Entering Gottesman Hall and encountering 60 feet of the famous 120-foot *On the Road* scroll stretching like a lost-highway centerline to meet Robert Frank's two-lane backing photograph, it becomes immediately obvious why the exhibition design gets kudos. The scroll is the liminal soul of the exhibition (as it is of Kerouac's oeuvre), symbolically bisecting the enormous hall and underscoring Kerouac's rise to mastery. It's an exclamation of undeniable literary exuberance. But Gerwirtz's deftly nuanced tendering of the primary source material is the engine that has driven my compulsive return. For anyone fascinated by creative process, life's threshold moments, and the contradictory and countervailing forces that transform an original manuscript into a published book, *Beatific Soul* is revelatory.

Kerouac is an underrated master of American prose, every bit as original as Stephen Crane or Jack London, for instance, and vastly more erudite and innovative than either. *On the Road* remains his signature masterpiece (though not by any means the only one he wrote). Celebrating the 50-year anniversary of its publication has allowed the NYPL and Gerwitz to lionize their special collections and curatorial connoisseurship.

The exhibition is divided into eight sections, beginning, as it should, by exploring the cultural argot of "beat" (1. The Beat Generation). As one of the two exhibition handouts notes:

> *The word "beat,"… was introduced to Kerouac in 1946 by the junky, petty thief, and Times Square hustler Herbert Huncke;… "Beat" had long been an American slang synonym for "down and out,"… [b]ut for Kerouac… Allen Ginsberg and [William S.] Burroughs,… [it] assumed a positive connotation as well, since a state of existential desperation provided the opportunity to see… clearly, and to speak truthfully, whether in conversation or on the printed page.*

In addition to introducing the earliest members of "the Beat Generation" ? Burroughs, Lucien Carr, Neal Cassady, Ginsberg, John Clellon Holmes, Huncke, and Kerouac (notably missing are Edie Parker and Joan Adams Vollmer), the first cluster of cases offers journal entries, letters, and manifestos unpacking and exploring the group's commitment to the transformational potential that lay at the heart of "Beat." In one of these documents Kerouac writes:

> *It will be the only real revolution we've had so far, arising from spiritual and sexual energy.* (typescript notes for a letter to Allan Temko, Dec. 13, 1948)

During the post war years and early '50s, the United States was atomized, horror stricken, and dislocated. Of the many creators responding to an impulse toward personal liberation, the Beats were among the most prominent. Kerouac sometimes

The entrance to the Jack Kerouac exhibit

called their ethos "self ultimacy" (*see* Gerald Nicosia, *Memory Babe*, p. 134), insisting that it demanded a new "artistic morality." Their intense dedication to living is obvious in the material Gerwitz presents. Nevertheless, in the corner of a case that largely concentrates on Allen Ginsberg and *Howl*, lies evidence of the depth of the malice that the revolutionaries had to confront. In a vitriolic letter [on loan from the Allen Ginsberg papers at Columbia University], Kerouac's mother, Gabrielle, warns Ginsberg, and through him Burroughs, to stop sexually perverting her son. Clearly, the more ambiguous sexual aspects of Beat's libratory experiment were bound for controversy.

Kerouac chose early to pursue writing as a career. By junior high school he was already publishing sports commentary in local newspapers and writing short stories. Section Two of the exhibition (2. Early Life, Influences, and Writings) examines his early life: the traumatic loss of his brother Gerard (protagonist of *Visions of Gerard*); his boyhood in Lowell, Massachusetts; the athletic prowess that carried him to New York City; his time at Columbia University and in the Merchant Marine; and, most importantly for his writing, his initiatory encounter with the work of Thomas Wolfe.

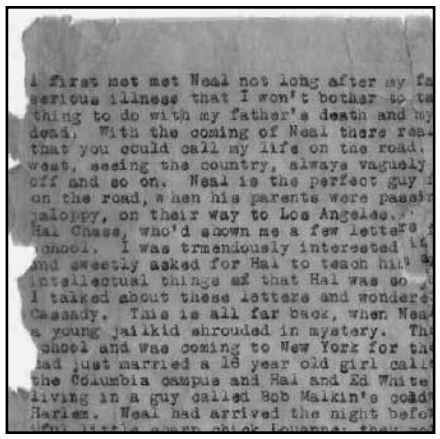
Wolfe's tenacious struggle for a genuinely American voice seized Kerouac's attention. The enterprise was one he aspired to emulate, and his first book, *The Town and the City*, is his nod to the Wolfean ideal. *The Town and the City* is the manuscript mentioned in his early "On the Road" journals: the one he abandons for Denver and California in Part One, Chapter 2 of the first edition of *On the Road*; and the one that generates the money for his trip to Mexico in Part Four, Chapter 1. (References to the Viking first edition are henceforth cited "*OtR*, Part __, Chapter __.") The contrast between a home that offered Thomas Wolfe, a life to be emulated, and a New York that provided Burroughs, Carr, Cassady, Ginsberg, sex, drugs, jazz, and a life to be lived, is a major theme.

The archival material from *The Town and the City* in Section Two is more evocative of the arduous labor of writing than anything else I've ever seen. Here are endless notebooks filled with description, self-justification, aspirations to greatness, references to influences, theorizing, character sketches, all the minutiae of intellectual effort. The work is eavy handed; Solipsistic; Genuine! Kerouac's five-year dedication to completing *The Town and the City* marks him as a serious author.

But Section Three (3. On the Road: Proto-versions, Drafts, Fragments, and Notes) is where the exhibition really sets its hook. Until the end of his life, Kerouac centered his anecdotal account of writing *On the Road* on the three weeks he took to complete the scroll. While that's certainly one version of the story, it isn't a complete one. The first of the four cross-country journeys serving as the basis for *On the Road* (three to California, and one to Mexico City) began in July 1947, by which time Kerouac had already decided to write a road novel. Spread out in a remarkable cluster of cases in Section Three, early versions of many sections of *On the Road* offer tantalizing insights into the growth of the project. One 1947–48 journal lies open to a detailed map of the United States that Kerouac drew of his first great trek; another offers the lively first version of his aborted Bear Mountain start (*On the Road*, Part One, Chapter 2).

Kerouac was struggling to find a voice for the book. His early "road novel" typescripts continue *The Town and the City*'s formal novelistic styling, but his journal entries hint at the more conversational, almost bardic style that Neal Cassady's friend-

ship was nurturing. And "Neal's California," which lies beside the Bear Mountain anecdote, suggests an expanded structural conception. Though by 1949 Kerouac's "road" manuscript was swelling to include a backstory chronicle of Cassady's early life, which ultimately became the subject of *Visions of Cody* (McGraw Hill Book Company, 1972), thematic elements of the leaner scroll narrative dominate Section Three: accounts of the wilderness spirit embodied in the "Ghost of the Susquehanna" (*On the Road*, Part One, Chapter 14), the isolating/liberating western vastness suggested by "Ed Wall's ranch in the middle of Coyote Nowhere" (*OtR*, Part Three, Chapter 8), and the deep perceptions of transience expressed in the "Amnesiac incident in Des Moines" (*On the Road*, Part One, Chapter 3, p. 15).


The top of the scroll

My reading of the primary sources points to the amnesiac incident as a spark that helped fire Kerouac's scroll binge. *On the Road* only started to take form when he recognized that he was writing a first-person narrative in which the narrator isn't the true protagonist of the story. As he struggled to formulate his overall conceptions, the Des Moines incident teased him. It drew him back again and again to uneasy notions of immortality's sublime threshold, to the intuition that only absolute experiential immediacy demolishes self limitation. The number of times he rewrote and polished it testifies to its importance. In his earliest serious attempts to start the novel, that loss of self in Des Moines became a lens that focused his concentration.

At first the amnesia he'd experienced left him feeling awe but no fear. In the introductory paragraph of his first attempted typescript ("Chapter One: An Awkward Man," July 26, 1950) he depicted it this way:

> *It all began when I came awake and a terrible, certainly most terribly beautiful thing was taking place, only for a few moments, enough to make the change in my life and walk [sic] led to the events I implore God to help arrange in my mind so I may bring them to the light.*
>
> *It was I had no idea what time of day or night, behind drawn shades that on first waking seemed like something else, in a rickety old hotel room with a crooked ceiling, all in a city impossible to remember that this spectral awe possessed me in the space of five or six seconds in which I completely lost every faintest, poorest, most woeful recollection of who I was.*

But a few weeks later, during a second aborted start (Ch. 1, A Lonely Tired Man, Aug. 1950: Private Ms. Of "Gone on the Road"), the awe became fear, a sensation perhaps tied to his growing concern that he might never actually get the manuscript rolling:

> *In Des Moines, Iowa, in the middle of the American plain and this groaning world, I came awake late one afternoon in the autumn of 195_, a bit startled to find myself beneath what seemed to be a crooked roof and completely scared that I had no way of knowing where I was, what my name was, what my favorite, usual way of thinking, what my birth, nothing, till gradually I began recalling the feel of my skull from the darkness of the ceiling. There seemed to say to me, "Stranger, stranger, how come you make this dream your living day?" and I heard the slamming of the freights in the railyards across the street and I grew to realize what town I was in, what for and how stuck I was with this too-most-familiar life of mine.*

"Too-most-familiar life"? The style was coming, but entrance to the world he wanted to create still eluded Kerouac. Perhaps total self loss was too radical a departure for him to completely grasp ? part of his writing process rather than an initiatory cause of it? He turned to more deliberate preparation. He gathered the notebooks and journals he'd been keeping since 1947, composed a single-sheet outline of the incidents that the narrative had to include, and prepared the long sheets of architectural tracing paper that would become the scroll. By April 2, 1951, when he finally sat to write the scroll version, he had moved the Des Moines incident deeper into the narrative. The more personalized grief brought on by the loss of his father replaced loss of self as the incident that precipitated his narrator's move to the road.

The scroll is an expression of Beat self ultimacy, a profound literary engagement with life. The scroll version of the amnesia incident carries Kerouac's struggling narrator past his previous limitations and across the western threshold. In writing it, style and substance merge to convey real transcendence (*On the Road: The Original Scroll*, ed. Howard Cunnell, Viking, 2007, p. 120 [punctuated as in the original]):

> So I went to the Y to get a room, they didn't have any, and by instinct wandered down to the railroad tracks- -there's a lot of them in Des Moines- -and wound up in a gloomy old plains inn of a hotel down by the locomotive roundhouse, and spent a wonderful long day sleeping on a big clean hard white bed with dirty remarks carved in the wall beside my pillow and the beat yellow windowshades pulled over the smoky scene of the railyards. I woke up as the sun was reddening; and that was the one distinct time in my life, the strangest moment of all, that I didn't know who I was… I was far away from home haunted and tired with travel, in a cheap hotel room I'd never seen, hearing the hiss of steam outside, and the creak of the old wood of the hotel, and footsteps upstairs and all the sad sounds, and I looked at the cracked high ceiling and really didn't know who I was for about fifteen strange seconds. I wasn't scared, I was just somebody else, some stranger, and my whole life was a haunted life, the life of a ghost… I was halfway across America, at the dividing line between the East of my youth and the West of my future, and maybe that's why it happened right there and then that strange red afternoon.

Here, also, is a perfect example of his stylistic maturation: the long onomatopoeic and alliterative scintillations; dashing, affectively agglutinating image; sound and allusion. The fact that jazz influenced his style is presented in Section Three of the exhibition for all to read… and hear. Kerouac viewed the jazz greats ? particularly the bebopers: Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonius Monk, and Lester Young ? as titans battering at the gates of perception. Bebop and George Shearing dominate the musical explorations in *On the Road*. An idiosyncratic jazz history that Kerouac outlined in a pre-scroll piece called "The Flower that Blows in the Night (March 1950)" helps wrap up Part Three of the published first edition, with *OtR*, Part Three, Chapter 10 closing in a performance by blind "Old God Shearing," as Neal Cassady called him, that crystallizes the dominant affective charge of the Beat ethos:

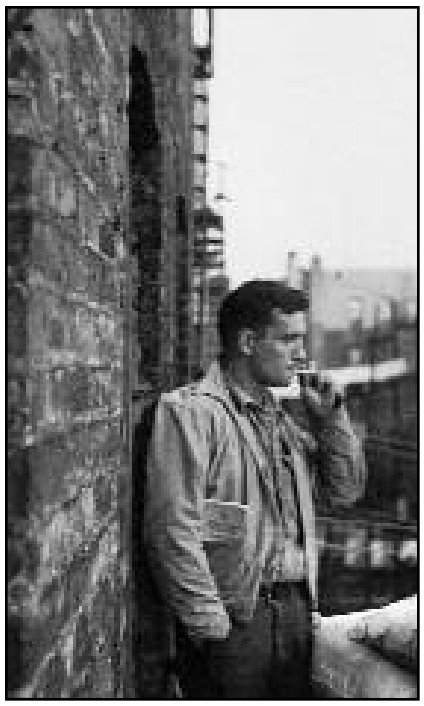
> *There's always more, a little further, it never ends.* [*On the Road*, p. 243]


Jack Kerouac with the scroll

Section Four (4. On the Road: The Scroll and Its Successors) is the heart of the exhibition. Here a long custom-built case housing the scroll faces a smaller case containing the single 8 x 10 inch typescript chapter outline Kerouac used to guide his creative binge. These two documents are the stuff of literary myth, and the wall cases near them explore the rewrite process.

From here the exhibition progresses through later aspects of Kerouac's literary life, which time constraints prevent me from examining in real detail. Section Five (5. The Buddhist Christian), covers his exploration of Buddhism and the gestation of his novels *The Dharma Bums* and *Desolation Angles*. Section Six (6. Confession, Reflection, and Judgment: Life and Work) delves into his notions of "spontaneous prose," contrasting his ideas with Ginsberg's. While Ginsberg came to accept the simplistic aphorism "First thought, best thought," Kerouac hewed to a bardic notion of immediacy: "Write in recollection and amazement for yourself." ("History of the Theory of Breath as a Separator of Statements in Spontaneous Writing.") And he practiced the intense mental and mnemonic disciple that kind of process required: "I struggle in the dark with the enormity of my soul, trying desperately to be a great *rememberer* redeeming life from darkness." ("Answers for David McCullough for Farrar, Strauss Publicity Dept." [emphasis mine]) Section Seven (7. Fiction, Poetry, and Prose) displays the fruits of that practice, including manuscript pages from the three-day binge that produced *The Subterraneans* and some of the "blues" poetry he developed during the last, most mature phase of his writing. Section Eight (8. Fantasy Sports) seems only there to emphasize Kerouac's prodigious power of memorization, and though it does demonstrate the extent of the Berg Collection holdings, to my mind it could easily have been left out.

Comparing the scroll text of *On the Road* to Viking's published edition, I imagined editor, Helen Taylor, scalpel in hand, curlers in hair, an industry manifestation of the emasculating mother. (My own long experience as a developmental editor spices my



outburst here. Surveying her predations generated the uneasy fear that I too, despite my best intentions, have scattered shells in certain writers' omelets.) Her relentless interventions encouraged Kerouac's worst and most sentimental impulses during the rewrite process, leaving two generations with an ending that simpers "and don't you know, God is Pooh Bear." Yet enough of the original poetry remained to continue entrancing generations of readers. Though much more conventionally punctuated, for example, the published version of the Des Moines incident remains almost exactly the scroll text (*OtR*, p. 15).

In the time between April 1951, when Kerouac composed the scroll, and August 1957, when the Viking first edition appeared, he completed nine other major manuscripts: *Doctor Sax*, *Visions of Cody*, *October in the Railroad Earth*, *Maggie Cassidy*, *The Subterraneans*, *San Francisco Blues*, *Mexico City Blues*, *Visions of Gerard*, and *Tristessa*. And as a result of publicity surrounding *Howl* and Beat's increasing notoriety, by the time *On the Road* reached the shelves, William Hogan, book reviewer for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, speculated that it was getting more prepublication publicity than any work since *Finnegan's Wake*. Yet all that now seems forgotten in the strange ongoing controversy over Kerouac's literary legacy. The recent sale of the scroll to a private owner, the NYPL's Berg Collection acquisition of most of the rest of the archival material, and Kerouac's confusing, almost malicious preparations for his own impending death have all combined in recent years to almost overshadow his literary output.

One morning in late summer of 1969 a drunk banged on Florida lawyer Fred Bryson's office door in St. Petersburg, Florida. "I'm Jack Kerouac," he said, pulling a battered first edition of *On the Road* out of a brown paper bag to show the jacket photo as proof. "I want to make a will. I want everything to go to my mother. And if she dies before I do, I want everything to go to my nephew, Paul [Blake Jr.], who is stationed in Alaska." No mention was made of his wife, Stella, or his daughter Jan, whom he had disowned years earlier.

At the time, Kerouac's estate, which included his personal letters, manuscripts, paintings, publishers' contracts, published books, and research library, was valued at less than $30,000. His main asset was thought to be the three-bedroom home he shared with his ailing mother and his wife. Bryson drew up the will, which was duly signed and witnessed, and on October 20, 1969, Kerouac wrote the following letter to his nephew:

> My Dear Little Paul:
> This is Uncle Jack. I've turned over my entire estate, real, personal, and mixed, to Mémère, and if she dies before me, it is then turned to you, and if I die thereafter, it all goes to you.… I just wanted to leave my "estate" (which is what it really is) to someone directly connected with the last remaining drop of my direct blood line, which is, my sister Carolyn, your Mom, and not to leave a dingblasted fucking goddamn thing to my wife's one hundred Greek relatives. I also plan to divorce, or have her marriage to me, annulled. Just telling you the facts of how it is.… you can do anything you want with my property if I kick the bucket, because we are of the same blood, and were good buddies, and have an association that went back to when you were one year old, if you recall."

The next day, due to a massive internal hemorrhage brought on by advanced stages of cirrhosis of the liver, Jack Kerouac died. Since Kerouac had not, in fact, made provisions in his will that the estate revert to his nephew in the event of his mother's death, when Gabrielle Kerouac died, she left it to Jack's widow, Stella Sampas-Kerouac, giving no apparent thought to her grandson's claim.

Jan Kerouac had learned to expect nothing from her father and had started a writing career of her own. At a 1982 Kerouac Conference at Allen Ginsberg's Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colo., she met one of John Steinbeck's heirs, who asked if she'd been receiving the royalty renewal payments that were her due. The young Steinbeck explained that, as a blood heir, Jan was automatically entitled to 50 percent of all royalties of her father's books, once they came up for copyright renewal. So Jan retained a lawyer and discovered she was party to a fairly lucrative ongoing business relationship with Stella and the Sampas family. By the early '90s, she was receiving more than $100,000 a year in royalties from her father's books, but watching Jack's legacy carved up was making her angry.

After Stella Sampas-Kerouac died, in 1990, the Kerouac estate transferred to her six siblings, who had it appraised and realized it was a gold mine. (Its value was recently estimated to be between $10 million and $20 million.) Among many other things, the archive included the original scroll manuscript of *On the Road* and Kerouac's paintings, journals, letters, and unpublished novels and stories. John Sampas has acknowledged that, as the estate executor, in the early '90s he sold some things to raise money to pay estate-management attorneys. Kerouac's raincoat, for example, went for $15,000 to actor Johnny Depp. And other collectors purchased letters, paintings, and Kerouac's personal library books, each of which went out the door stamped and signed as authentic. But Sampas insists that nothing of any real literary value was sold.

Many Beat scholars consider the sales to be, at the very least, ignorant and irresponsible. An incomplete archive is a disservice to scholars, and an insult to the writer;

and Kerouac had repeatedly asked that his papers be kept intact and made available to the public. In 1994, with the help of Kerouac biographer Gerald Nicosia, Jan and her attorney examined a copy of Gabrielle Kerouac's will, which had transferred the Jack Kerouac archive to Stella Sampas. The signature on the will looked peculiar, perhaps even misspelled. A handwriting analyst claimed it was an obvious forgery. In an attempt to legally wrest control of the archive from the Sampases, Jan instituted legal proceedings in Florida to contest the will. At the time of her death in 1996, the suit was ongoing. (*See* "The Kerouac Obsession," by Jack Boulware, *SF weekly.com*, July 29, 1998.)

The whole confusing mess came to a very public conclusion in May 22, 2001, when Jim Irsay, owner of the Indianapolis Colts football team, bought the scroll for $2.2 million (plus a buyer's premium) at Christie's Auction House in New York City, and the Berg Collection acquired the rest of the archival material for an undisclosed sum.

While I was working in the exhibition one day, John Sampas appeared beside me and struck up a conversation. He had no idea who I was, but genuinely loves Kerouac's writing, knows a great deal about it, and was very helpful to me. He was open to questions and freely offered all kinds of remarkable information, including his position on the archive controversy and his assertion that the Berg Collection now contains all the remaining Kerouac material.

Based on my research for this review, I find myself agreeing with Jack Shea, whose documentary film *Who Owns Jack Kerouac?* is probably the most even-handed examination of the Kerouac Estate Controversy: there aren't any true villains here.

Though it is unfortunate that the scroll is now in private rather than public hands, John Sampas's efforts have ensured that most of the rest of the material ended at University of Massachusetts, Lowell, and in the Berg Collection of the NYPL. He has worked to enhance Kerouac's memory, and seen to it that his sister Stella and long-dead brother were honored; Sebastian "Sammy" Sampas is the boyhood friend who inspired Jack to make writing his career. And he has used estate royalties and proceeds to endow The Jack & Stella Kerouac Center for American Studies at University of Massachusetts Lowell, in Kerouac's home town.

Jan Kerouac, abandoned by her father to suffer in confusion but included in royalty loop by her uncle John Sampas, really only wanted to see the Kerouac archive remain intact.

According to a colleague of mine who knows Jim Irsay, the new owner of the scroll considers himself its steward. Evidence shows that he has had it carefully conserved, and freely makes it available for research and public display. Furthermore, working with John Sampas he has gone out of his way to see it published in its original unedited form as *On the Road: The Original Scroll* (ed. Howard Cunnell, Viking, 2007).

Only Paul Blake Jr., a recovering alcoholic with almost no financial resources, continues to suffer. Of all of the people involved, Paul most desperately needs the share of the estate promised to him by his uncle.

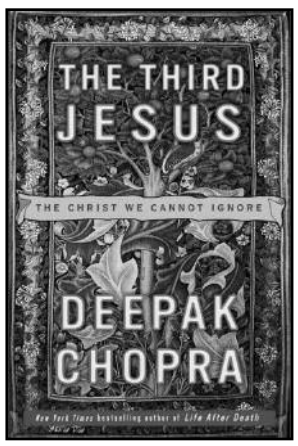
During the final years of his life, Kerouac was tragically confused, his addiction to alcohol fueling an embittered paranoia. He was no saint, yet he remained alert enough to gather and organize the personal archive that produced this remarkable exhibition. And while the work of many of his contemporaries is fading into insignificance, the gems of his disciplined creativity still sparkle with energy. In the end, what more can we ask of a writer? What more could a writer hope for?

Jordan Zinovich lives in Brooklyn, New York and is an editor at Autonomedia Press. He has published Gavriel Dumont in Paris *(University of Alberta Press)* ***and*** **The Company I Keep** ***(Ekstasis Editions).***

The Christ We Cannot Ignore

Steve Bentheim

"Jesus is in trouble" – with these words, Deepak Chopra appeals to us to invoke the experiential aspect of the Christ to replace both the historical and theologically-bound figure. Deepak presents the historical figure- a Jewish rabbi who has shared the experience of Grace to many around him, as a figure changed by later-written accounts. Then, the "theologically-correct" Jesus is used to maintain the institutional policies of the militant church for centuries. Finally, Chopra offers his own choice of Jesus- that of the universal, experiential God –consciousness.

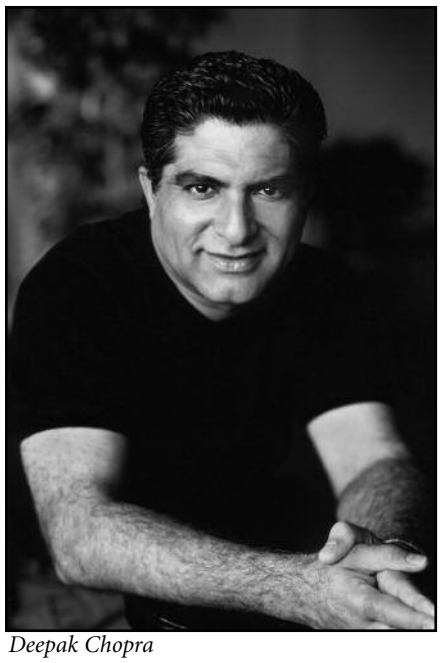


The Third Jesus: The Christ We Cannot Ignore
Deepak Chopra
(2008, New York: Harmony Books)

I find his work like a refreshing drink of cool water, accessible to all. Deepak skillfully weaves his early learning while in a Catholic school with his home traditions of the Hindu Vedas. Like Deepak, I also come to Christianity with one leg in other religious traditions. *The Third Jesus* is written as a universal, meditator's guide- using the words of Jesus in the Bible to lift us into a state of receptivity for an inclusive connection with the divine.

For the past fifty years, the Roman Catholic Church has become more "inclusive" with the advent of Vatican II. Pope John XXIII allowed what was not previously permitted in the church—that one's personal conscience can be sought for spiritual guidance. It allowed that other religions could also be doorways to spiritual truth and part of the divine intent. In addition, world politics were not separated as the things of "this world"—but that seeking world peace and forgoing nuclear arms was the duty of all the "People of God."

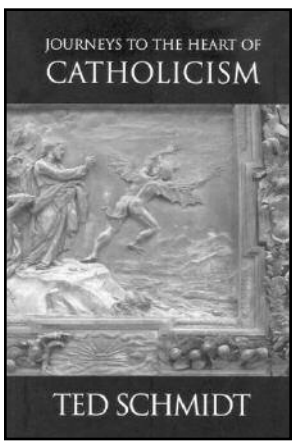
But just as political revolutions are followed by periods of reaction, the Roman Catholic Church may lose everything that might have been gained through Vatican II. This is the concern of Ted Schmidt, an award winning columnist and the former editor of Canada's *Catholic New Times.* He has long been at odds with the church hierarchy, and his concerns are primarily with the Church's complicity in war, its insistence on priestly celibacy and the role of the Papacy.


Deepak Chopra

His book, *Journeys to the Heart of Catholicism* begins with a critique of the Church's acquiescence to capitalism, allowing a false, market-place defining of "individualism." While glamour is pursued as a value, what happens to the poor, he asks? He contrasts this with the Church's more profound calling- to address community needs. Schmidt decries that this has been thrown asunder by the modern day Church leadership. Instead of supporting progressive movements, the Church has stood silent to the makers of economic globalization, increasing world poverty and the rape of the environment.

Schmidt would prefer to see a "ground up" rather than a "top down" Church community. He decries the old guard system that has effectively banished those who would come into the priesthood with broader values. He describes how many who are called to priesthood today are denied by the Roman Catholic Church, due to their being women, or their preference to be married. Schmidt rails against celibacy for priests in his chapter, "Hardly a New Testament Value." He describes the pagan rites of celibacy as actually antithetical to the Gospel, and points out that the medieval convents "were rather brothels than houses of God" and how "infanticide of unwanted children became common." The author laments the current "exodus of heterosexual priests who left to marry, and left behind a predominantly gay priesthood… who are becoming the scapegoat for the pedophilia crises."

Schmidt also takes sharp aim at the present Pope Benedict XVI, and offers a chapter of how the "enlightened theologians" were no longer permitted a prominent voice after Vatican II. He describes how, as young Father Ratzinger, the future pope had deplored the social unrest in his native Germany in 1968 and became increasingly conservative. Scmidt describes how Ratzinger preferred the right-wing German campus of Regensberg, which was engaged in the apocalyptic Marion prophecies, rather than trying to relate to the needs of *this* world. Ratzinger then moved up to a position of power in Munich's academy. When an excellent German theologian, Johann Baptist Metz, was then a leader of social justice, Ratzinger saw to it that this prominent theologian would be denied a position there. Ratzinger later became the chief enforcer of dogmatic purity of the Holy Office, and, in Schmidt's assessment, would "continue his merciless assault on [progressive] theologians."



Journeys To The Heart Of Catholicism
Ted Schmidt
(2007 Seraphim Editions)

Schmidt moves us from the values of the Church to world politics and back again, noting the Church's present silence in the War in Iraq, and the destruction of innocent human lives for oil profiteers. Schmidt offers more laudatory words for Pope Benedict's predecessor, John Paul II, who spoke to world powers against war, the nuclear bomb and capital punishment.

Schmidt's book is difficult to put down, as I was moved by his call for social justice, and his ability to link this with his knowledge of Church history. My main disappointment is that I would like Schmidt to recommend the avenues that are possible for change. How does one appeal for change without dividing one's church members into a "good vs. bad" polarity? And it is here that Deepak Chopra's *Third Jesus* provides that very ointment. Chopra spells out what are the most healthy and productive steps that individuals can take within their religious communities for change. He suggests we use our *courage*, *prayer* and *truth telling* to others, without putting anyone out of our hearts.

One could argue that these two book titles be reversed. Schmidt's book is focused on the damage that the "second Jesus" has had in the Church, thus pointing how we have lost the "Third Jesus." Deepak Chopra takes us on a "journey to the heart" of Christianity, by presenting the words of Jesus as a meditation to take us into the place where we can experience God-consciousness. Taken together, these writers are helpful for those whose individual journeys have been involved in seeking change within religious institutions.

Steve Bentheim, PH.D. is editor of* The Satir Journal: Transformational, Systemic Therapy*, and a former editor of* Illumine*, the graduate publication of the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society at the University of Victoria. His forthcoming book,* The Ram Dass Revolution*, will be available through Ekstasis Editions.

A Poem by Robert Priest

whoever made up the word
'miracle'
was wrong

we have been touched
by the ordinary

we have been altered
by the immutable

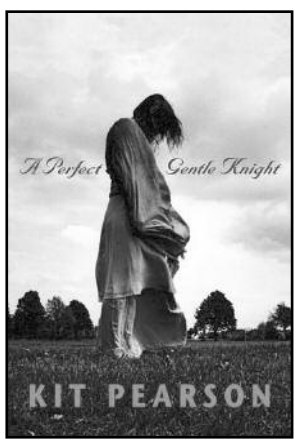
whoever made up the word
'love'
was right! a genius

it is perfect

Robert Priest is a poet and songwriter from Toronto, Ontario.

Vintage Pearson:
The Delights and Perils of the Imagination

Hilary Turner



A Perfect Gentle Knight,
Kit Pearson.
Puffin Canada
224 pages
$20.00 hardcover

Kit Pearson has long been interested in the way imagination and history intersect. In this, her eighth novel for children, she revisits some of the territory she had explored in *A Handful of Time* and *Awake and Dreaming*—notably, those moments when states of consciousness blur, and the past comes alive to comment on the present. This is not "fantasy"—not from a child's point of view, at any rate—but a genuine overlaying of one reality upon another. Experiencing the two together, with equal attention to both, is what we call creativity. What we call madness is closely aligned, of course, and Pearson is adept at showing us how fine the line between the two really is. As in *Awake and Dreaming*, where Theo's habit of drugging herself into oblivion with books is eventually replaced by a more writerly awareness of how stories condense reality and make it manageable, *A Perfect Gentle Knight* illustrates the dangers of crossing the boundary between play-acting and delusion.

The six Bell children might seem enviable in their freedom from adult supervision. Their mother has died in a car accident and their father, a remote though kindly professor of English literature, has reacted by retreating into a private world of reading and research. Quoting T.S. Eliot to the effect that humans cannot bear very much reality, he burrows into his study, leaving the children under the eye of a feckless housekeeper whom they hold in well-deserved contempt. Rather than reveal the extent of the household confusion, the children create their own routines—and wash, dress, and feed themselves as well as they are able. The benign neglect under which they exist carries a charge of misery and anxiety, however, from which they escape in an elaborate recreation of the stories of King Arthur's court and the knights of the Round Table. Each of the six assumes the identity of a knight, squire, or page; and the game functions as a comforting structure with which to keep chaos—both domestic and emotional—at bay. Fourteen-year-old Sebastian, the eldest, is Sir Lancelot; his strict adherence to the chivalric code provides a moral touchstone for the others. The code is a stabilizing force for Corrie in particular, who is eleven at the beginning of the story, and its centre of consciousness and most clear-sighted character.

Pearson has set her story very concretely in Vancouver in 1958, the year she herself turned ten. On the one hand, details such as the collapse of the Second Narrows Bridge and the Sputnik launch capture the flavour of the era; on the other, baton-twirling, the hula-hoop craze, and the importance of the right clothes and hair styles curtail any tendency on the reader's part to become too uncritically immersed in the Bells' secret life. The world of school, with its demands for conformity and its routine penalties for minor eccentricities, ought not to be lightly dismissed. As Roz, the second oldest, begins to prefer activities with her friends to the rituals of their private Camelot, Sebastian grows alarmingly entrenched in his self-appointed role as defender of the faith. Bullied at school, he feverishly retreats into the safety of the game, coming to believe, in the end, that he is Lancelot reincarnated. The depiction of the psychological breakdown that occurs when Sebastian can no longer distinguish between his two selves is probably the most powerful scene that Pearson has written.

Compelling as Sebastian's case is, however, the real focus of the reader's attention is Corrie. She is also the character most severely tested by the Bells' irregular upbringing. Like her namesake, Cordelia, she remains loyal to her father, despite his abdication of all but the most nominal duties of parenthood, and she observes and attempts to mediate the conflict between her brother and sister. Failing in this, she assumes for a time the entire burden of household management. Corrie has the gift, or perhaps curse, of being able to see a situation from many points of view. It is through her intervention that each family member (including "Fa," literally a once and future king) is eventually brought to take responsibility for the impact of his or her actions upon the others. Towards the end of the story, Corrie uses her insights to negotiate a transition of her own—from childhood to adolescence—with a minimum of angst. Perhaps having been solely responsible for managing a household of seven makes the job of becoming a teenager seem relatively straightforward. On the other hand, Pearson is never ironic at the expense of her characters, and her portrayal of the resourcefulness and depth of feeling of which twelve-year-old girls are capable is accurate and true.


Kit Pearson

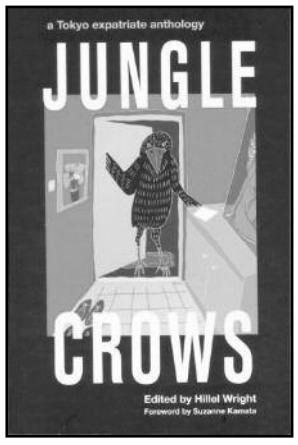
A Perfect Gentle Knight is a solid addition to Pearson's impressive list of works for older children. It is hard to say whether it is her most accomplished. Like *The War Guest Trilogy*, this book reveals a remarkable grasp of the details of lived experience and of their slight but indelible impact upon our consciousness. The Bells' rambling old house in Kerrisdale can be easily pictured, and the children's various excursions traced through the neighbourhood with great precision. In similar fashion, Corrie's hobby of making shoe-box dioramas is a well-chosen reminder of just what children did in 1958; it is also, of course, the perfect vehicle with which to convey her need for comfort and escape. The texture of this book is dense with comparable examples. At the same time, some aspects of its overall structure seem slightly forced. Unlike the dysfunctional but very moving parent-child dynamic in *Awake and Dreaming*, the constraints under which the adult characters operate here are not always clear, nor the extent of their blindness entirely credible. Moreover, there is one odd oversight on the author's part—a character whose existence she appears to forget, or for whom she never finds a use. This is Harry, the middle child, whose rare appearances in the plot (winning a prize at the science fair, building a skateboard) seem purely incidental. Still, even Homer nodded, so they say, and Pearson's overall craftsmanship and sympathy with her characters are never in question. For good reason, she is one of the foremost authors of books for children writing in Canada today.

Hilary Turner's previous reviews include "Joseph Howe and the Battle for Freedom of Speech" (Winter, '07).

Jungle Crows:
a Tokyo expatriate anthology

Apis Teicher

Crows take over the Japanese landscape sometimes, drowning out the day to day with cacophony and irreverence, silenced by none – so it's a telling title that the latest expatriate anthology to come out of Japan (specifically Tokyo) should be named *Jungle Crows.* Edited by Hillel Wright it's a wild foray into the literary fiction and poetry coming out of that strange in-between place that expatriates inhabit, never quite part of the scenery but able to observe it and dissect it, even occasionally participate. As Suzanne Kamata forewarns in her observations, the writers in this anthology "are more interested in what happens on the fringes, when the rules are thrown away."



Jungle Crows: a Tokyo expatriate anthology.
Hillel Wright, ed.
Printer Matter Books.

The mundane becomes sublime in narratives like Leza Lowitz's soul –searching in "Kerouac in my backpack": *I want rhythm, destruction, sacrosanct ghosts/ I want words to carry me home.*

Rootless and antsy, many of the voices in the collection seem to highlight that perennial search for meaning – though here they do not find it in spiritual enlightenment for the most part, but in the bending of the rules that define their very existence.

There are other beautifully lyrical pieces, like Morgan Gibson's elegy "I-Thou Poem for Kenneth Rexroth's Centenary (1905-2005)": *Am I your Thou or you my I?/As years passed, coherence splintered,/your life, your work fragmented/ into contradictions…*

And its these fragments and contradictions that we see as an undercurrent in many of the tales, a yearning for that elusive sense of place and self. Most notable is Jonathan Mack's "Joy of Wrong" delving full speed ahead into the realization that once something is left behind it is forever altered, and cannot be recaptured, or Ian Priestley's "The Park" where we are left wondering if the protagonist was the madman or the only one still sane.

Many explore the seedier undercurrents of modern Japanese society and the nigh incomprehensible lengths that the human mind and heart will go to escape the confines of such a structured society. A tree, sturdy and rigid, is dissected down to the sap coursing at its core, intermingling in a myriad different fashions. Donald Richie's "Commuting" encapsulates in the setting of a daily train ride one man's search for meaning, purpose – connection – and beyond that, the conflicting versions of what human beings see as their reality; echoes, perhaps of Leza Lowitz's "Old Crow": Shape-shift reality/ & bend the world/so that it bends to you."


Donald Richie

Brian Howell's "Idol" showcases the emptiness in otherwise model lives, where successful, intelligent people still struggle to find meaning when all else is drowned in mindless rote, in routine. And there is Michael Hoffman's "Taguchi"- half social critique, half mystery tale, where the main character does the unthinkable in oddly blasé, reasonable ways. There is a certain sober macabre approach to that exploration, reminiscent of the likes of Edogawa Rampo – and of the man that inspired him, Edgar Allan Poe.

There are also the crows that caw loudly and explore the state of the societies they left behind - the more political and social critiques of Hillel Wright – like his "The Atom Bomb Denial, History Revisionist Textbook" which is as powerful an echo of recent trends and events as it was true of the second world war, Joe Zanghi's take on the US presidential race, or Wallace Gagnes' "If the Beats had Won", Levi Jacobs' "some rags near the entrance to the underground" which is a poignant social commentary about the invisible people – those we do not see or choose not to.


Leza Lowitz

Not every exploration is dire and dark – an unexpectedly lighthearted gem is Janice Young's "The Day Mr. Noda Became Mr. Wong" – where generations of expectations and behavioral dictates are shed away like a second skin through an unexpected name change – a kernel of hope even for those being suffocated by the weight of their own lives.

Jungle Crows is a chaotic ensemble of voices, all singing their own tune – some hopeful, some dire, others pensive and almost nostalgic, while other still rage loudly at the world.

Apis Teicher is a freelance writer, artist and designer of doll's-clothing. She speaks several languages and lived in Japan for three years. Her previous contribution to PRRB was a review of* 100 Aspects of the Moon *by Leza Lowitz.

Phantom Limb

Allan Brown

Phantom Limb.
Theresa Kishkan,
Thistledown Press, 2007
168 pages; $17.95

The fifteen essays gathered in *Phantom Limb* provide a satisfying resting and reading place for those of us Kishkan fans familiar with her other work, the poetry and fiction, and particularly the earlier collection *Red Laredo Boots* (New Star, 1996). It is also a useful starting place for those first encountering her distinctive voice, careful/ care-filled and apparently casual at once, and the topics that range from familiar close-ups of nature ("Autumn Coho in Haskins Creek," and following), through the self-parodic humour of family reminiscences in "Laundry," to the quiet but deeply moving account of the life and death of their dog Lily in the title essay.

Several of the pieces here have appeared in the BC journals *Geist* and *The Wayward Coast*, across the country in *Brick* and beyond in *Manoa*, and elsewhere. This generous scattering of her pages is reflected partly also in the places she reports on and from — to the south with two essays from Utah ("Shadows over the Red Hills" and "Drunkard's Path") and, with an especial richness and personal concern, to Ireland for the memories of "The One Currach Returning Alone" and the ever-increasing historic and mythical complexities of the final study "Well." But each distance brings a kind of nearness to and for her as, for instance, the last well encountered in the Irish tour at Ceannanach "in its veil of ivy," pointing simply back home to the familiar "source for our household, clean and cold, capped in red iron."

Theresa's "home" since the early 1980s has been in BC's south coastal rainforest area, a house and property near Sakinaw Lake on the Sechelt Peninsula. Names familiar to her and that soon become familiar to us as well include Mount Hallowell and Haskins Creek, "which runs into the lake near our place, and where we walked three or four times a week." A movement away from the coast, in time as well as space, takes us through some deftly presented history ("Erasing the Maps") to the remaining fragments of Granite Creek, founded in the southern interior in 1885 and now found in her eloquent wonderings of when "the dead will turn in their graves… and smile to hear magpies again."

Theresa Kishkan (photo Keith Shaw)

Theresa shows us person. the person whoever it may be whom she calls "I," as well as place. In this way, the most resonant and interesting pieces in *Phantom Limb* are new articulations of what Warren Tallman famously spoke of 30 years ago, with reference to Clifford Olson's theories and samples, as the "politics of the place." The idea has appeared again more recently — it has probably never gone away, at least not from west coast thought — and even more closely aligned to the voice(s) of these essays, with Jeff Derkson's focus on "making the landscape of self" (see his article "Sites Taken as Signs" in the 1994 collection *Vancouver: Representing the PostModern City*, ed. Paul Delaney.)

Some of Theresa's essayistic "scapes" can fit in the palm of one hand. Objects become subjects for her, yielding and revealing their power of becoming to and through her artistic eye. She looks, for instance, at a hand-blown paperweight, a gift from her husband, and "I imagine that something has been captured inside it, something precious and rare" ("Paperweight"). The imagining and the something interact, separate, return, as she continues to "take it in my palm and gaze into its depths, looking for something"; repeating and repeating, as the writer writes and writes; and eventually (or at least sometimes) the thing looked at is seen, in some form anyway of "the world made perfect, suspended in clear glass."

Her active interest in, and even seeming instinct for discovering/ uncovering ever new instances of some "creative place" extends also to something apparently as domestically and conventionally controlled and controllable as the new bed cover she stitches for her daughter, and that keeps expanding, as it were — not as fabric, but as fantasy, a cluster of new sights and new stars ("An Autobiography of Stars"). As her poet husband John Pass simply and acutely observes, "you look at quilts as terrains."

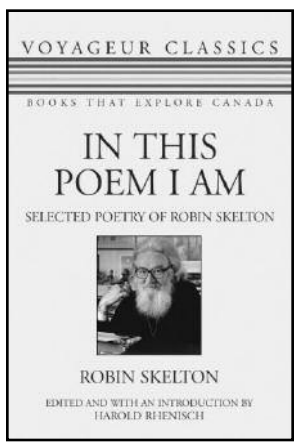
By means and with the ongoing help of Theresa Kishkan's ability to look, to see, and to show, we can also "fashion a parallel life, a world mirroring the topography of our own lives, irregular and beautiful geometry in service to love."

Allan Brown's reviews have appeared previously in* The Pacific Rim Review of Books. *His 19th volume of poetry,* Biblical Sonatas*, was published in February by Serengeti Press.

Robin Skelton

Hannah Main-van der Kamp

"*Poetry is studying*
how the spirit soars
on learned as on simple
ignorant things."

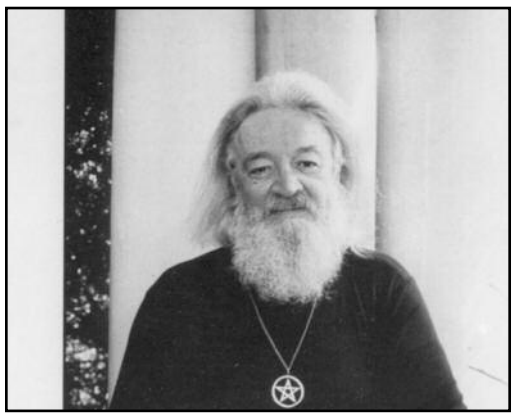


In This Poem I Am: Selected Poetry of Robin Skelton,
Selected, introduced and edited by Harold Rhenisch,
Dundurn Press, 2007,
109 pp, pb, $15.99

He strode through fey Oak Bay, rings flashing, white hair whisping from under his hat brim, a Tolkeinesque figure. An icon and a myth; also an ordinary husband/father/teacher/poet. Who can say in what proportion the myth was to the reality? His image was part faux, part cultivated, part bone-and-sinew authentic. Probably not even Robin knew in what ratio.

Skelton published over sixty volumes not to mention scholarly articles, volumes of poetics or the ten unpublished manuscripts left after his death in 1997. *In This Poem I Am*, a representative collection carefully chosen by Harold Rhenisch, poems from more than four decades of prolific writing show mostly the best and very little of the weakest of his output.

Maker of "high" and "low" poems, Skelton excelled at both. In both he could also be embarrassingly weak. Sorting his work into a four part matrix running hi/lo down one side and strong/weak along the top his output probably fits into those four categories equally. The strong "hi's" are original, exalted visions as in "Night Poem, Vancouver Island" (1964). The weak "hi's" such as "Quaternion" (1961), are prone to abstraction and idea spinning. The strong "lo's" are charming such as "Don't Get Me Wrong"(1988), a teasing love poem. Rhenisch has wisely omitted the weak "Lo's" that came from the versifying, entertaining Skelton. Even his loyal publisher rejected some of those manuscripts. Rhenisch's editorial choice was to exclude them though he refers to them in his introductions to both of these books. "Poems better off left sleeping", Rhenisch calls them.



Robin Skelton

The *Selected* is not arranged chronologically but around themes. Thus each of the six sections contains poems from a span of decades. It must have been a huge task, especially as Skelton left a morass of unsorted poems and projects behind. Rhenisch thanks Skelton's family and acknowledges many others, "A blessing of friends".

The editor has made an interesting choice to pull out of all the possible poems those which represent "the one book Skelton was trying to write." This may explain the many poems which refer to Her/She/ the Goddess. A pre-Christian, pre-scientific, pre-Enlightenment world offered glimpses of the power of spells, alchemical transformation, magic. What one finds missing is the cruelty, darkness and fear also inherent in that world. The aura in Skelton is so often moon light and thoughts about death, not the horror of tribal warfare, vengeful gods and wound-wracked suffering.

"Poetry is a vocation as priesthood is." This quote, from "The Final Commitment", the last chapter in Skelton's *The Practice of Poetry*, speaks to the essence of Skelton's impulse. In this he was out of step with his time. Being out of step was also his unique calling. Poetry's calling is to be out of step with the time, prophetic, indicter, running counter to the received values of the surrounding culture.

In Robert Graves' *The White Goddess*, (a book Skelton admired and read carefully in his twenties,) Graves makes a distinction between the ancient Welsh poets who were "gleemen" or entertainers and those who were true bards, a priestly role. The latter were seers, deeply versed in myth, invocated the Muse and honoured the ancient Goddess. Bards were advisors to kings, consulted as oracles and respected for their skills in magic. Gleemen received no such honour though they were invited to court and village and paid well if their story/songs were good. A contemporary equivalent might be something like the difference between a Jungian therapist and an advice columnist. Each has value but the first has greater status as a seer particularly among those considered to be the cultural elite. Another way to illustrate this would be to look at a poet like Seamus Heaney compared to the writer of greeting card verses.

Skelton who knew Graves, visited him in Mallorca and corresponded with him, would have been aware of these distinctions. They are related to his own delineation between poem-makers and poets, both in his poetics and his practice. In his best work, he showed himself as inheritor of the bardic tradition: in "Prayer before Birth", (1985), "Everything", (1996), "Clare Abbey" (1966). As Rhenisch points out, when Skelton was bard, he was truest to his best mytho/poetic impulse and strongest as a poet.

Facing the Light,
Robin Skelton, edited and introduced by Harold Rhenisch,
Ekstasis Editions, 2006,
119 pp, pb, $19.95

In his poem about Robert Graves in Mallorca, written in his trademark broken iambic pentameter, Skelton asserts, "What matters is not scholarship/ or fame/ but being both of shadow/ and of light,/of root and air." Skelton died in relative obscurity. There was much affection for him as a scholar and mentor but few were reading his books.

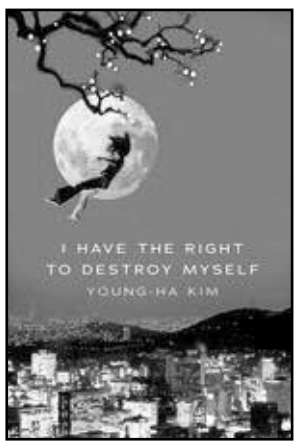
Had he been bolder, weirder, more threatening, had he been less picturesque and more of a pigment-daubed screaming warrior? If he had been able to be blacker…? It is not enough to use the word "darkness" in order to evocate it. The word "fear' does not induce fear. His writing about silence sounds more like talking.

His weakness was not that he was outrageous. He wasn't quite outrageous enough.

(*continued on page 38)*

I Have the Right to Destroy Myself

Bruce Fulton



I Have the Right to Destroy Myself,
Young-Ha Kim
trans. from Korean by Chi-Young Kim.
Harcourt/Harvest,
119 pp., $12

Kim Young-ha is the most visible South Korean writer to have emerged from the economic and cultural ferment attending the mid-1990s Asian economic meltdown, a period that reinforced South Korea's vulnerability in the global economic system even as the nation was developing into one of the most wired societies in the world. Kim is also one of the most prominent of the young, imaginative, and diverse group of writers publishing through Munhak tongne, a Seoul house that has become the most successful publisher of literary fiction in South Korea. Munhak tongne and writers like Kim are transforming the South Korean literary scene from a staid, patriarchal, and didactic enterprise worshipping at the altar of historical relevance and political correctness, to concerns with life in an increasingly urban, affluent, and spiritually rootless universe.

I Have the Right to Destroy Myself is Kim's first book-length work, a novella set in the author's home city of Seoul. The nameless first-person narrator is a creative writer who has an unusual way of accumulating material for his novels: he places an ad in the newspaper—"We listen to your problems"; screens the two dozen nightly caller respondents for those who have "promise"; and selects as clients those who stimulate his creativity. The service he provides his clients? Assisted suicide. "My clients don't have Sylvia Plath's literary talent, but they design the end of their lives with as much beauty as she did. Their written stories now number more than ten." What follows are three of those stories: Judith, a seductress of brothers; a nameless woman from Hong Kong with a bizarre history involving a kinky interlude with a water bottle; and Mimi, a performance artist who adorns canvases with her paint-smeared nude body. References to casual sex and expressway drag racing will strike North American readers as nothing new, but in mid-1990s South Korea this subject matter, and its matter-of-fact delivery, was unusual.


Young-Ha Kim

Sound familiar? The descriptions in the novella of David's *The Death of Marat,* Klimt's *Judith*, and Delacroix's *The Death of Sardanapale*, considered along with the narrator's occupation as a purveyor of death, may elicit comparisons with Mishima Yukio and in particular his novel *Confessions of a Mask*. And yet like Mishima, Kim has proven, a half dozen novels and story collections later, to be a classic writer of fiction, a highly visual and intertextual writer who is thematically centered in the family and in the people of a nation. Asked at a November 7 bilingual reading from *I Have the Right to Destroy Myself* why he was so concerned with sex and death, Kim responded that in 1995 he was full of hormones and not yet married. He has since continued to mature as a writer. For evidence of this check out his next novel translation, *Empire of Light*, which has a North Korean angle, and translations of his short fiction by Dafna Zur. At age forty Kim has already infused contemporary Korean fiction with a new sensibility, similar to what Murakami Haruki has done for contemporary Japanese fiction. Best of all for readers of *The Pacific Rim Review*, Kim is planning to spend a year at UBC starting in September. Look for him at the Vancouver Writers Festival this fall.

Bruce Fulton writes from Seattle and Vancouver, where he teaches Korean literature and literary translation at UBC. His next book, co-translated with Ju-Chan Fulton,* There a Petal Silently Falls: Three Stories by Ch'oe Yun*, is due out in May 2008 from Columbia University Press.

Ordinary Days

Yvonne Blomer

Ordinary Days,
Cornelia C. Hornosty.
Ekstasis Editions, 2007
80 pages, $18.95

This is a collection of memoir-like poems that capture moments, ordinary as snowdrops and daffodils, which are then asked to transcend norms, reaching for the profound and the banal.

Ordinary Days is not divided into sections, though the collection moves from memoir-like events of the past toward a grim present where a loved one is recalled and mourned. The collection is dedicated to the author's deceased husband, allowing for an autobiographical reading to impose itself on many of the poems.

There are several prose poems scattered throughout the collection that are light, more prose than poetry, and allow for a shift in focus. These brief narrative snippets are energetic and end with either a drum roll or a quiet ironic wink.

Endings may be too tightly conceived, yet many poems in this collection have vivid beginnings such as in the poem *Summer of Fear*, "Sometimes we forget/ to lock the door/ and old memories/ begin to creep back/ into our unguarded minds" These lines could easily be used to set up the entire collection where memory, snippets of conversation, quiet moments are recorded in short, attention-calling lines.

The line is perhaps the key component of a poem. In a line of poetry is the power of a single notion or thought. Through enjambment, caesura, and end-stopped punctuation a line can have layers of meaning. When a poet forgets to pay attention to a line, or does so erratically, the layers and meanings of the poem are lost. A reader will look to line to guide her through the poem; short lines will slow a poem down while long lines will speed it up. If a single word has a line to itself, that word takes on symbolic power. Often, in this collection, Hornosty forgets her lines. The last stanza and sentence of the poem *Connecting* reads like this: "So when the MA was done,/ the best he could do/ was take a photo of the book/ containing her thesis/ as it stood upright on the dining room/ table" Though this is also a rather prosaic line, having the word "table" on a line at the end of the poem on its own gives power to an object that has very little relevance in the poem.


Cornelia Hornosty

Poems swing between first and third person – "We argue over breakfast,/ in spite of the scarlet geraniums/ beckoning on the balcony,/ in spite of your warm hands/ on my blonde hair." (from *Beautiful Dragon*) and "This woman/ is reading the paper,/this woman who's kind of happy,/ even though her partner/ is going blind/ and she's got a bad disease/" (from *The Sour Woman Blues*) – in this particular series of poems first person lends itself to drawing the reader in, as the narrator is willing to be a part of the story whereas in the third-person poem, the distance lends itself to bathos.

Poems that stood out in this collection were simply written allowing for the power of line, image and suggestion to work in sync. In *The Leap,* lines take on lovely double meanings as in, "Her eyes met the necklace of lapis/ lazuli on the dresser/ crooning a noiseless blue/ inside its silver/ oval, her periwinkle socks". These are delightful lines. By breaking 'lapis' and 'lazuli' the reader is full of expectation, there is strangeness that is carried out with the oval of socks.

Yvonne Blomer's first book,* a broken mirror, fallen leaf *was short listed for The Gerald Lampert Memorial Award in 2007. Most recently her poems were short listed for the 2007 CBC Literary Awards. Yvonne teaches poetry and memoir in Victoria, B.C.

BRINGHURST (*continued from page 3*)
culture. It is what it is, and the best way to approach it is surely to try to see it for what it is. We needn't be in a hurry to swallow it up and put it to work making art of our own. We could take some time to try to understand what kind of art it already is.

SC: *Your poetic work is made vivid and is informed by a matrix of diverse sources such as the Egyptian, Indigenous North-American, classical Greek, and Asian. What do you think the role of translation has meant to your poetry and your creative process?*


Robert Bringhurst sans shoes

I grew up hearing a lot of different languages, and translation has been important to me for as long as I can remember. I also spent some of my childhood in some very thin and barren environments – impoverished houses in impoverished small towns where the main ways of making a living were industrial mining and logging and ranching. People fed themselves, in other words, by radically simplifying, and frequently destroying, the richness of the world in which they lived. Books from other times and places, mostly written or transcribed in other languages, were vitally important to me then and still are now.

SC: *Besides the poetics of "Others", there is in your poetry the incorporation of extra-poetical elements, such as biology, mathematics and religion. In an interview you once stated that "a music that is excessively human is worthless, a music that is exclusively human is not human enough". Does the same hold true for poetry and your need to be open to new forms of language?*

I don' t think of poetry as something restricted to human beings. I think of it as something present in the forest, in the land, in the light, in the breathing of the world. The reason for composing what we call poetry in the languages spoken and written by human beings is to join in that larger and more various kind of poetry that was here before any human was ever born and will, with luck, be here when all the humans have vanished.

SC: *You have an interesting study on "digital revolution" in relation to the printed word. Do you see structural changes in language with new technologies, or only the creation of new media? And how do you perceive the future of the printed word book in this new context?*

The digital age is just beginning. It may last for a long time, and I do not know what it will bring. Perhaps the digital revolution, like the industrial revolution, will bring more destruction than it is worth, and perhaps it will not. I have no way of knowing. When books were first printed, the type was cut by hand and set by hand and printed by hand on handmade paper, then the books were folded and sewn and bound by hand, and so the editions were rarely more than a few hundred copies. Now we make books on giant machines, printing ten thousand copies per hour. This is probably much more significant as pollution than as the sharing of information. The forests we destroy to print the books are probably much wiser than any book that has ever been written. People have suggested that the digital revolution will cure this problem, because books will be read on a screen, not printed on paper. But the human appetite for human-centred visions, hallucinations and delusions remains as strong as before. Most humans are much more interested in humans than they are in the larger world. This is preposterous, but it's true – and what's more, it's quite normal: other species do it too. Woodpeckers, squirrels and deer are more interested in each other than in the universe that surrounds them. The tissue of the forest, the ecology of the planet, is woven of vast numbers of ethnocentric lives. But humans, just for the moment, have an unhealthy and unsustainable ration of power which sets them apart from those other species. And so, as we go about our daily business – even the peaceful business of printing books and magazines – we incidentally ruin the world in the process. I don't suppose the digital revolution is any cure for that. The revolution's underlying aim, if I'm not mistaken, is to give us even more power, not less, though we already have much more than we can handle.

CHILDHOOD (*continued from page 19*)
sumerism in order to "fit in" and adapt to North America's shifting cultural landscapes.

For Delman, consumerism and assimilation clearly become a way of negotiating racial and religious factors. Autobiographies such as Shichan Takashima's *A Child in Prison Camp* also explore the years of displacement during the Japanese Canadian Internment. In particular, by revisiting the past while simultaneously experimenting with different forms of expression in the diary format and linking the official government apology with "*the personal process of healing*," Takashima links personal childhood memories with a collective experience. This allows readers to place her narrative within a Canadian historical context, thereby activating the cultural memory that these narratives reflect upon.

Begin Here notes how many of the selected narratives challenge the conventional expectations of autobiography, while taking an approach to migrant identity that is "*neither purely assimilationist nor oppositional.*" This in itself marks progress beyond Joanne Saul's assertion in "Theorizing Contemporary Canadian Biotexts," that previous literatures of displacement have been "preoccupied" by doubleness, by reflecting on "*the crisis of being caught between two worlds, and the painful process of adjusting or separating oneself from that situation.*"

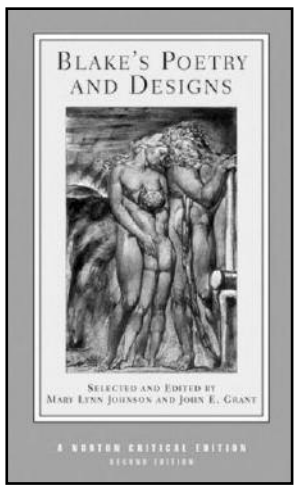
In her analysis, Davis attempts to provide a reading of autobiographies that avoids this dualistic approach. Nevertheless, her study misses a more complete examination of how Asian North American memoirs of childhood might also seek to defy *doubleness,* that elusive positioning of the self between "here" and "there." In the main, her study continues to speak to the traditional attempts to either recover the past, or to address assimilation problems. But to genuinely 'challenge the expectations of genre' as she contends is necessary, then we must also consider in what ways Asian North American literatures can critically engage with newer, perhaps more global-minded questions of belonging beyond the nation.

Ranbir Banwait writes from Vancouver where she recently completed graduate studies in English at Simon Fraser University.

Countering War with Wonder:
Poetry and Peace in the Visionary Poetics of William Blake

Susan McCaslin

The creative and imaginative power in humans, their innate desire to make things of use and beauty, has coexisted alongside an impulse toward aggression, hostility, and self-defensiveness throughout human history. Sometimes people have harnessed their creative propensities to the engines of war, as in the martial arts or patriotic paintings depicting the glory of battle, but more often artists transform human conflict in ways that are more mysterious and life-affirming. When a person is absorbed deeply in a creative act like poem-making, music-making, or furniture-making, she may experience joy, exhilaration, or sorrow, but the more aggressive, reptilian brain responses are dimmed. Perhaps certain forms of art may prompt us toward peace because they are ultimately acts of creation in and out of love in which every molecule of the artist's mind is bent toward receptivity and attention. For the creator of such works, the entire being is absorbed in the process of bringing something forth in beauty and amazement. Writing at the beginning of the Romantic period, English poet and painter William Blake is one of those rare visionary artists whose imaginative vision counters war with wonder.



Blake's Poetry and Designs
by William Blake,
edited by Mary Lynn Johnson and John E. Grant
W. W. Norton & Company,
628 pges, $21.25

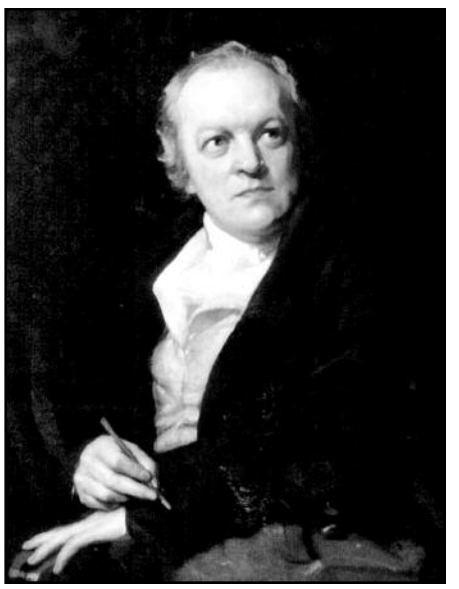
An artist who shapes alternative worlds that enrich life cannot, in the moment of creation at least, be a warrior primed to kill. And those who respond to the creative arts can be gently pivoted toward peace through their active participation in a vision of the world that is disinclined to see things in terms of self and other, black and white, good guys and bad. Such art steps back and takes the broader view in which diverse things are richly interconnected. In its most complex and meaningful forms, such art may invoke compassion and empathy. Yet the artist can also be called to what the Blake called "mental fight," a form of spiritual warfare where the opponent is not the external enemy, but all within and without that hinders the expansiveness of creative imagination in both the individual and society.

Blake, writing at the end of the Enlightenment in the early nineteenth century, urged that we should have Imaginative contentions, not physical ones. He stated that if every man and every woman were engaged in acts of creative Imagination, then war would eventually cease and we would already have commenced the task of building the New Jerusalem, a community based on mutual forgiveness. John Lennon, another radical idealist like Blake said, "Make love, not war," and Blake might have added, "Make art, not weapons of mass destruction."

The English poet followed with intense interest the revolutions occurring in America and France when he was a young man, and applauded these social upheavals as necessary to bring about social justice. He wore the red cap of the revolutionary for a time and was considered a radical or a sympathizer with radicals. But like John Lennon and others who stepped back from the tumult of their era to observe the spiral of violence spinning out of the revolution, Blake soon became disillusioned when he witnessed the replacing of one reign of terror with another. He therefore later denounced violent revolution and opted for an imaginative transformation that must begin within each individual.

If we could only perceive the world differently, "not with but through the eye," he mused,[1] a tree would no longer appear as a number of board feet of lumber, but a being of sentience and light: "The fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees."[2] The sun would not resemble a coin or guinea in the sky, but "a host of heavenly angels singing Holy, Holy, Holy."[3] If, as he chanted, "Everything that lives is holy,"[4] and if we experienced this holiness from our innermost core, then we would not be inclined to destroy the natural world that is our matrix. The desire to manipulate the world as other would fade, and the need to dominate our fellow creatures might become unthinkable.

What Blake means by Imagination is much more than the organ of aesthetic appreciation, or that which longs to beautify of the world. The Imagination with a capital "I" is the act of seeing with what the east has called "Third Eye" vision, and what Blake called "Four-fold Vision." It is an act of being in which mind (reason or Urizen in his system), body, emotions, and creative imagination, Blake's Four Zoas or life forces, are integrated by the creative faculty, the same divine mind repeated in us that continually gives birth to the cosmos. Blake's mythology is a cosmology of holistic interaction in which the individual moves into balance to become, not just an autonomous bit of mechanism in a clockwork universe, but a finite repetition of the movements of the cosmos, a microcosm mirroring a glorious dance. Every flower, tree, person, and grain of sand in Blake's view is a center capable of expanding to infinity where one can



William Blake by Thomas Phillips

> …see a World in a Grain of Sand
> And a Heaven in a Wild flower:
> Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
> And Eternity in an hour.[5]

The figure of Jesus in Blake's system is the Imagination itself in each of us—the incarnate divine presence. Crabbe Robinson, one of Blake's contemporaries, reported in his journal that when asked if Jesus was the divine son of God, Blake answered, "He is the only God,"—but so am I and so are you."[6] Artists like Blake, who seemed crazy to their contemporaries, can be prophets calling us to a more authentic mode of being. Despite his lack of recognition in his lifetime, Blake was reported to have died in a glorious burst of song. Though poor and unrecognized, he was mostly exuberant, as if he had gazed deeply into the heart of things. For him, the calling of the poet and prophet (visionary and social critic) were one and the same, for he exposed in his art the devastating effects of the Industrial Revolution, the widening gap between rich and poor, as in the poem "The Chimney Sweeper" (*Songs of Experience*):

> "And because I am happy, & dance and sing,
> They think they have done me no injury:
> And are gone to praise God & his Priest & Kind
> Who make up a heaven of our misery."[7]

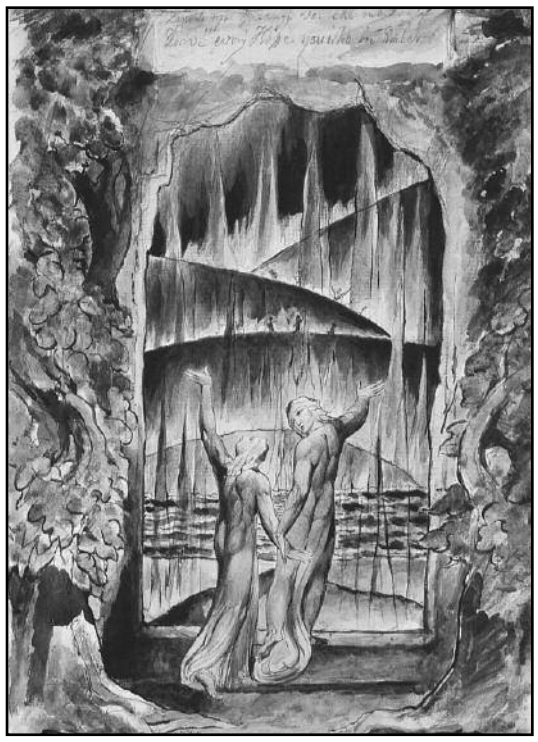
Two hundred and fifty years since his birth, Blake's work is still studied in colleges and universities around the world, but society at large has not caught up with him. The social ills he blazoned, like the exploitation of children in the "Chimney Sweeper" poems, are now magnified on a global scale. The Enlightenment "scientism" (not true science) he queried in his attack on Newton, Lock and Bacon, has invented the atomic bomb, smart bombs, and chemical warfare. It has furthered the "them-us," subject/object thinking that sets us (and God or the divine) outside the world under the illusion that we can control it for our use. Greed, exploitation, warfare, the demonizing of the other, false religion in the form of militant fundamentalisms, are now endangering not just England, but the globe's fragile ecosystems. The smog over Industrial London has exploded into an envelope of green house gas emissions now threatening the balance of life on the planet.

Blake depicted the progress of this kind of destructiveness in his epic poem *Jerusalem*. Yet his genius is that he transformed the oppositional apocalyptic narratives of the Bible into psychodramas of interior transformation. He wrote that when anyone embraced truth and cast off error, a "last judgment" occurred within him on the spot: "Whenever any Individual Rejects Error & Embraces Truth, a Last Judgment passes upon that Individual."[8] Judgment is therefore a sloughing off of error or mis-

takes—a liberation. There is no final annihilation of the enemy, but a release from states that no longer serve: "So men pass on: but States remain permanent forever."[9] So no one who chooses to be free is forever locked in hell or punished eternally in Blake's universe.

Blake leaves us with hope, for in his epics, the warring Zoas or constitutive parts of human consciousness declare a truce through a play of dynamic "contraries." Los, the Imagination, unites with Jesus to restore Urizen or the fallen reason to his proper place in human consciousness. The male and female aspects of each person embrace. And this reunion happens, not through a destructive force like war, but through acts of empathy, compassion and mutual forgiveness. In his apparent autonomy, Urizen isolates and exhausts himself because, despite his reliance on his intelligence, he is not very wise. In an act of self-emptying love, then, Los goes down to embrace him and restore our fallen reason to the original divine humanity.

Blake's whole cosmic story, therefore, is a re-visioning of the Fall and redemption. He is suggesting that a lower or "fallen" form of reason has usurped its place in the collective psyche and wreaked havoc, but through the awakening of creative Imagination in each, we can restore our right relation to the earth, and to the larger community, symbolized as Jerusalem. He believes that transformation of a few will eventually lead to a transformation of the public realm. But we are not to wait for a divine fiat; we contain within us the power to change the world: "How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way/ Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by your senses five?"[10] Such a recognition of the infinite in the creation is the artist's gift, and those who participate in the arts become co-creators of new, life-altering perceptions.



Dante and Virgil at the Gates of Hell

If art and poetry, music and the visual arts are, as Blake suggested, "the three Powers in Man of conversing with Paradise,"[11] why do the arts often fail to move society irrevocably towards justice and peace? For without justice, external peace can become a false ideal, a deceiving harmony or adjustment to corruption that veils injustice. Mere aesthetic appreciation, it seems, can happily coexist with the most abhorrent forms of inhumanity. For instance, German audiences flocked to concerts and theatrical performances, improving their minds, where a few paces away Jews were being rounded up and sent to concentration camps. The modernist poet Ezra Pound could pen "The Cantos" and yet work for Mussolini's radio station, believing he was opposing the usurious banking system. The philosopher Martin Heidegger was affiliated with the Nazi's for a time. The ability to appreciate and create truth and beauty, then, is no anodyne for complicity with systemic evil, whether one is involved directly or naively and implicitly with corruption. A love for the arts does not necessarily guarantee an advanced ethos.

In Blake's mythology, art corrupted, corrupts society and no longer performs its prophetic function, its role as witness. Sometimes all an artist has to do his let his art mirror or reflect the horrors of the injustice, so people can choose how they will respond. Yet visionary and prophetic art for Blake is a refining fire. Such artists labour like blacksmiths at their forges to make art that, whether implicitly or explicitly, indicts systemic corruption and offers an alternative vision. "Would to God that all the Lord's people were Prophets,"[12] cries Blake. And he adds in *Jerusalem,* let everyone "as much as in him lies engage himself openly and publicly before all the World in some Mental pursuit for the building up of Jerusalem."[13]

So within the world of deadly and deadening materialism he named Ulro, the arts never lose their corrosive, satiric power. Such art may appall and shock before leading back to a place of praise. But unlike mere polemic or invective, good poetry is never merely didactic. It uses palpable images of human suffering to awaken. It makes us taste, see, and empathize before experiencing any kind of catharsis. It turns to the world as it is, and thus turns us back to the world. So the poetry of peace Blake achieved in his prophetic works is art at its most profound, not that which brings simple pleasure or creates an aesthetic distance from turmoil. In fact, such poetry is an art of social engagement that does not allow one easily to compartmentalize life. It cracks us open, softens our hearts, and transforms. As a piece of art in the form of a luminous, broken sculpture tells us at the end of the poet Rilke's "Archaic Torso of Apollo, "You must change your life."

Certainly, we can resist the way such art works upon us and continue to compartmentalize reality, but prophetic art provides a portal to new ways of being. Such art declares, "Enter at your peril, or the risk of your egoic self." If art took on again its prophetic function, those who are reluctant to come to the arts because they find them inaccessible or see them merely as frills or decoration might have to reconsider.

Art of the Blakean sort surpasses entertainment but is nevertheless compelling, often disturbing. The artist's form of social criticism is in the end more effective than any form of political invective or didacticism because it invokes the whole self in both the one who creates and the one who reads or beholds. Such art creates a dynamic interaction between the thing or issue depicted and the audience that is a kind of "third space" where the "whole being" is called into presence.

Poetry, though a less than appreciated form today, except perhaps in popular song, has the advantage of appealing to several levels of being at once: the world of imagery, the world of musicality (sound, rhythm), and the world of thought and meaning. In a good poem all three are up and running. Discursive prose moves mainly at the level of idea, but poetry, music, and painting, as Blake knew, interweave all three so that the body, mind, emotions, and spirit are all activated simultaneously. Sometimes a magical synethesia or blending of the faculties can come into play. Because of the power of the arts to speak to our deepest interiority, Blake often speaks of them as having the power to awake: "Awake! Awake O sleeper in the land of shadows, wake! Expand!"[14]

How, then, does poetry restore us to peace? Is there a poetry of peace? I would suggest that sacred or visionary poetry is a mode of contemplation coactive with contemplative states, so that one moves smoothly from interiority and silence to birth in expression, in and out in a fluid rhythm. In a painting or a poem, the blank spaces and silences are equally important, more important perhaps, then the images or words. Art calls us to contemplation and contemplation calls us back to creative expression. Contemplation leads to action and action to contemplation. One need not choose one or the other, but follow as the spirit leads. St. Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, both mystics of deep interior silences, knew well the limits of language when it came to talking about God or the divine, but also continued to write glorious poetry. At the end of his life, St. Francis wrote "The Canticle of the Creatures, a hymn to the sun, moon stars and wild animals. What mystical poetry can do, then, is to lead us up to the very brink of the invisible, the ineffable, the nameless, and allow us to sink briefly into the divine unity. Then, it draws us back from that silence with burning hearts and lips and gives us back to the world.

NOTES

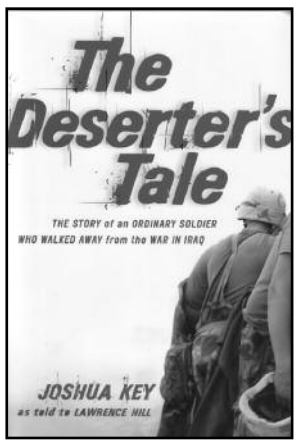
1 *Blake's Poetry and Designs*. Ed. Marry Lynn Johnson and John E. Grant. "The Everlasting Gospel," 368.
2 *Poetry and Designs*, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," 89.
3 *Poetry and Designs*, "A Vision of the Last Judgment," 416.
4 *Poetry and Designs*, "The Marriage," 102.
5 *Poetry and Designs*, "Auguries of Innocence," 209.
6 *Poetry and Designs*, "from Henry Crabb Robinson's *Reminiscences* (1852), 497.
7 *Poetry and Designs*, 46.
8 *Poetry and Designs*, "A Vision of the Last Judgment," 413.
9 *Blake: Complete Writings*. "Jerusalem," 73.45, Geoffrey Keynes, ed. London: OUP, 1966, 714.
10 *Poetry and Designs*, "The Marriage, Plate 7, 88.
11 *Poetry and Designs*, "A Vision of the Last Judgment," 412.
12 *Poetry and Designs*, "Milton," Plate 1, 239.
13 *Poetry and Designs*, "Jerusalem," 346-347.
14 *Poetry and Designs*, "Jerusalem," Chap. 1, 313.

Susan McCaslin's "luminous companions" include William Blake and the Romantic poets, Rainer Maria Rilke, Vernon Watkins, and Denise Levertov. Her lastest book of poetry is* Lifting the Stone *from Seraphim Editions.

The Deserter's Tale

James Eke

I tried to like *The Deserter's Tale* – I really did, so much so that I read the dang thing twice (which I never do) but both times and finally, it leaves a bad taste in my mouth.



The Deserter's Tale
Joshua Key
(hardcover) House of Anansi/Groundwood Books
(paper) Grove Press
256 pages

The book, by Joshua Key (as told to Lawrence Hill), published by Anansi, isn't a bad book. It is well written, tells a good story, gives insights into the American war in Iraq – honestly, it isn't lacking anything. Well, nothing except a little honesty and some backbone.

OK, you are probably thinking by the little blurb and the end of this about how I'm in the military that my views on such things are biased but that just isn't the case (believe me, that is why I read it the second time, figuring I was somehow full of military doctrine to the point that I couldn't give this book a fair read).

Key not only deserter in the physical sense but after reading the book it becomes clear that he deserted himself.

The book is full of the old standard clichés of the poor boy with no other options who goes off to join the military because not only is that what his family has always done but that is what he always wanted. And that war is hell and terrible things happen.

Well…duh.

This drivel has been done to death.

War is chaos and yes, when it isn't boring as hell, it is hell on earth. It is the nature of the beast. To think otherwise is naïve.

In the book Keys says, "As poor and as desperate as my young family was when I drove to the armed forces recruiting center in Oklahoma in March 2002, I never would have signed up if I'd known I would be blasting into Iraquis' houses, terrorizing women and children, and detaining every man we could find – and all for $1,200 a month…" This comment is from the same man who spends the first quarter of the book recounting how much he loved guns while growing up, including how by the time he was 12 he was using AK-47s, Uzi and various other weapons, blew up turtles and snakes and apparently grew up with a secret desire to join the military.


Joshua Key

I'm not really sure what Keys thought he'd be doing in the military. Maybe he expected to be traveling the world, meeting interesting people and just helping America show itself and its military might without ever doing a thing. Instead, he went to Iraq and saw the sort of things that happen in a war zone.

When all was said and done, Key went AWOL and ran to Canada with his wife and children.

Key complains that the Canadian government doesn't really want him here and how 30 years ago Canada opened its arms in some sort of 60's love fest and welcomed draft dodgers.

Key's failure is not as a story-teller but as a soldier, a citizen and an adult who the public expects nothing more than for him to take responsiblility for his own actions and his life. Reading this book makes the reader doubt that one thing – everyone else in Iraq is messed up or up to no good and Keys was there seemingly all alone and for no reason at all and left it all without having done a single thing.

I don't buy it.

James Eke, the author of* Falling Backwards*, is currently working on two new novels (*Roadside Saints *and* Trailer Trash*) and a book of poetry (*Bodhisattva Poem*).

Boundary Bay Poem

David Watmough

David Watmough has been shaped and nourished by a Cornish background as well as years in London, Paris, New York and San Francisco. All his novels, short stories, plays and poems, however, have been written on Canada's west coast during the past 45 years. A new book of poems will be published by Ekstasis Edtions in 2008.

MERCHANDIZING

I know a snug boutique not far from Boundary Bay.
It calls its customers lucky girls and boys,
And makes a neon festival of every passing day.
Its myriad flyers claims its prices are all joys.
The week, in fact, contains a niche for every fleshly grind.
If Monday is for tumours and migraines,
The next is for unsightly scars – not forgetting the wall-eyed.
Wednesday claims cleft-paletted, while Thursday's for the bind.
Frazzled Friday's free for frenzied fits and epilepsy,
Saturday marks those with kidneys now bereft.
(It also serves with special rebate price, the wholly deaf.)
Sunday, of course, climaxing with those confronting death.
And all this jovial packaging of grimmer human frights,
Goes with a 10% minimum that increases day and night.

SKELTON (*continued from page 32*)

"waking I find light/announcing altered windows"; the book opens with a waking poem. "Only the light/And I put out the light" closes the book. *Facing the Light* is the last set of poems completed shortly before Skelton's death more than a decade ago. The manuscripts was lost for some years, then rescued from the post-humous papers and, in some parts re-constructed, edited by his friend and former student.

What a mixture it is! It includes among many stories and memories, reminiscences of his teaching years, "the long dazed years standing in front of the chalkboard". There's also the disappointing doggerel. One has to wonder why Skelton did not heed the excellent advice he gave to his students on how to avoid it. But what poet/teacher/critic ever heeds her own advice? Skelton loved old forms, sometimes obsessively; he tinkered with them and though he excelled at these games of rhyme and meter, he didn't notice the absence of a real poem inside them. There's loving descriptions of the shambling old house he and his family lived in for many years, a sharp childhood recall of his father. An over-use of words as "darkness, death, breath, grief, laughter" weakens the Yeatsian mode. He was prone to self-pity, "Considered too old/ too rumpled…for words with no listeners/other than words".

A few of these poems were included in the *Selected*, but these poems belong together as the faith statements of a poet who, looking quite directly at his own coming death, is already part way in the spirit world and appears to have no fears. Sadnesses, yes, for the absence of great friends, and fellow poets, (the dedication is to Charles Lillard), for his son who pre-deceased him, for the "wraith" he has become, but not depressing. The most poignant of these reflect on the transcience of life and the merging of death/birth. "Stumbling…yes/ marching gets us nowhere…Right now/ I am stumbling/ and am nearing home."

Hannah Main – van der Kamp is the poetry reviewer at* BC Bookworld *and a poet. Her most recent volume is* According to Loon Bay. *She lives part of the year in the Desolation Sound, studying how the spirit soars.

LITTLE EMPEROR (*continued from page 21*)

arriving in China well over a year ago, I realize that, from now on, for the rest of my life, news stories of China will no longer be about strangers in a strange, faraway land. They will be about places I have seen, people I have met." She shows the truth of this statement in her Epilogue, written ten years after her experiences in Guangzhou.

Little Emperors is a love story of sorts, a getting-to-know, a courtship and a leaving. Dionne loves China despite its flaws, for its differences. She loves it with the knowledge that she can and will leave. This comes across in effortless writing which is a celebration of a year abroad. Writing which works best when it doesn't strive too hard for deeper meaning or metaphor but allows the events, through simple descriptions, to contain within them the profound.

Her present-day world-wise self of the Epilogue is less enamoured with China. She looks at the Human Rights abuses, Tibet, and the rise of protests within the country opposing the loss of farmland and unsafe working conditions, yet recognizes that the government is still in control. A weakness of the Epilogue is its lack of description of where Dionne is now. For, though this is a memoir of China, it is also the story of a particular woman and how China shapes her.

At the time of her packing and leaving, Dionne's Assistant Connie says "You are becoming the past tense," but through the writing of this book it is clear that China is tangible and present in Dionne's thoughts.

As is often the case with publishing, her experiences in the book happened years before the book's appearance, and yet to those armchair travellers of the world, its timing is near-perfect to give Olympic aficionados insights into the next host and to raise awareness of the complicated problems rising out of China being on the world stage.

Yvonne Blomer's first book,* a broken mirror, fallen leaf *comes out of her experiences in teaching English in Japan. It was short listed for The Gerald Lampert Memorial Award in 2007. Yvonne teaches poetry and memoir in Victoria, B.C.

JAPAN (*continued from page 15*)

my children, my sisters?'" So Emi, afraid of contracting an STD from her philandering husband, fills her life with fashion, fitness clubs and drinking and dining with her girlfriends.

Sumie Kawakami

Misa, 36, also a mother of two is likewise married to an unfaithful and promiscuous husband, but is less tolerant than Emi. She has gone so far as to make one woman pay for the professional cleaning of her bedroom because she slept with Misa's husband in the marital bed. But she will not divorce him while her children are still in school. Unlike Emi, however, Misa eschews fashion and make-up and concentrates on her children's schooling…in Japanese lingo, she's an "Education Mama".

The lone male subject, Hideo, 44, is married, an executive at a prosperous IT company and a sex volunteer. Hideo moonlights (literally) at a sex clinic established by Kim Myongan, an ethnic Korean anthropologist who was a radio talk show host in the 1980s, specializing in dispensing sex-related advice to callers, many of them "desperate housewives". After undergoing s physical and psychological screening process, men like Hideo are assigned to service the clinic's female clients, mostly women in sexless marriages. The men receive no payment, so in the eyes of Japanese law, this is not prostitution, which, technically at least, is illegal. Hideo's own marriage became sexless following the birth of the couple's third child. His life now, the author tells us "…is a conundrum. He has slept with more than one hundred women, but he has yet to find a solution to his own sexless marriage".

Yazuki, 47, is a typical recipient of sex volunteer services. Like the author, she is a single mother. "'I've had relationships with seven sex volunteers over the past six months," she tells Kawakami. "Not all were perfect partners, but each came with deep sexual experience, and thanks to them I feel a little less uptight…." She concludes, however, "I want a man who would love only me. I'm tired of the debauched life…going to hotels just to sleep with a man. I would like to graduate from being someone who can only relate to men through sex".

Despite a few differences in details, most of Kawakami's selected interviewees tell pretty much the same story. In Japan today, as in the past, the man is still king of the castle, the woman someone who serves tea in the office, prepares meals and baths at home and devotes her free time to her children, or to hobbies, female friends and drinking…which leads this reviewer to question the book's title: Is Madame Butterfly really gone?

While Ms Kawakami sheds light on the sexless couple phenomenon and the unique sex volunteer lifestyle, she offers no way out for these unhappy women. Perhaps if she had widened the field and interviewed women from outside Tokyo, more younger women (all are between 27 and 58, most in their 40s), and some women who she didn't "like and respect", the reader would have gotten a more optimistic and less depressing look at sex, marriage and the Modern Japanese Woman.

Hillel Wright is author of the novel* Border Town, *the story of a fictional manga artist and her works.

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PAPER TROMBONES NOTES ON POETICS

Mike Doyle

The text centres on the craft of poetry, others' and my own. That being so, it's a memoir, in anecdotes, of a life in poetry, which in my mind I've called 'the other life', the one not confined to earning a crust. As a sketchy memoir, it does not avoid a certain amount of ego-tripping and name-dropping; after all I haven't lived in a vacuum, but in a world where one must fend for oneself.

Mike Doyle from *Paper Trombones*

Mike Doyle has lived in Victoria since 1968. His first poetry collection A Splinter of Glass *(1956) was published in New Zealand; his first Canadian collection is* Earth Meditations *(Coach House, 1971), his lastest* Living Ginger *(Ekstasis, 2004).*

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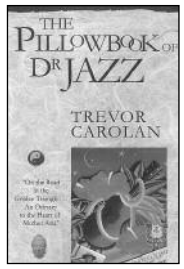
Trevor Carolan is the author of Giving Up Poetry: With Allen Ginsberg At Hollyhock, *as well as books of poetry, including* Celtic Highway. *He teaches writing at UCFV and lives in Deep Cove, BC.*



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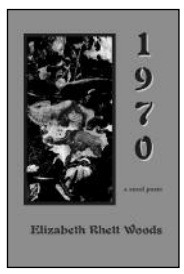
Elizabeth Rhett Woods has published four other books of poetry and three novels. She lives in Victoria.



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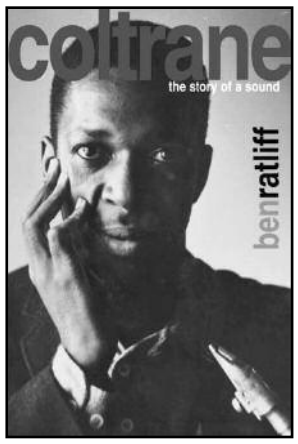
Two recently published books describe passionate voyages of sonic discovery. More than one wag has been credited saying 'Writing about music is like dancing about architecture'. These two jazz books transcend that quip.

New York Times critic Ben Ratliff's *Coltrane* is a thoughtful biography of a modern jazz saint with his own African Orthodox Church of John Coltrane in San Francisco. Ratliff, from his post in the Big Apple, portrays the legendary saxophonist's musical evolution from blues-born Navy band bebopper to his breakthroughs with Miles Davis, heroic struggle with heroin, and rebirth with Thelonious Monk. The author runs the biographical voodoo down with Milesian understatement and a focus on Coltrane's evolving sound and musical approach.



Coltrane: The Story of a Sound
Ben Ratliff
Douglas & McIntyre / FSG Adult, 250 p. , cloth. $27.50;

Most telling is the image of Trane's blood-soaked mouthpiece from hours of practice underlined by his biographer's description of "stamina that comes out of hard, solitary practicing" and references to the saxophonist's trademark sheets of sound as "immensely worked out music."

Ratliff is hip to the power of a working jazz band and steady (albeit low-paying) gigs, noting Coltrane's six-month stint with Monk at the Five Spot in 1957 as transformational.

In the book's second section describing and trying to explain the saxophonist's legacy and influences, Ratliff writes that "like all great artists, he embodied multiple, often contradictory aspects. He was Liston and Ali."


John Coltrane

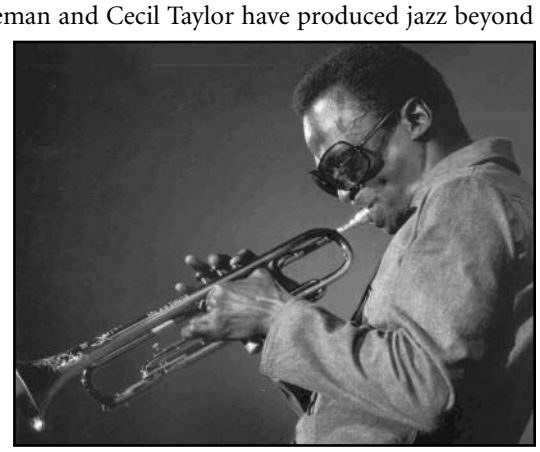
The author is good at writing about Trane's sound too. My favourite is his description of the saxophonist's solo on the *Milestones* version of *Straight No Chaser:*

"At first he announces himself, getting comfortable with some long tones in his first chorus. But most of the second and third are expressed in sixteenth notes, skidding through extensions of chords and implying several chords simultaneously; it's like dirty motocross."

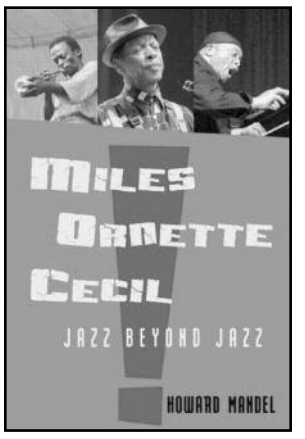
The biography's concise narrative builds to Coltrane's early '60's classic quartet and its disbanding after seven years of wide-ranging triumphs from lyrical collaborations with Johnny Hartman to *A Love Supreme's* spiritual resonance. Ratliff frames the musical breakthroughs in a wider cultural, artistic, and political context and while pealing the personal and historic layers from Coltrane's sheets of sound, reveals the components of the musician's transcendent musical discoveries, "the mystic's keen sensitivity for the sublime, which runs like a secret river under American culture."

It's a good read and a layman's guide to Coltrane's odyssey.

Howard Mandel's *Miles Ornette Cecil* takes off from there. Even more than the perceptive analysis that Ratliff serves-up, Mandel offers a soul-revealing story of personal discovery in his biographical explorations of these three major figures in modern jazz. Miles Davis, Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor have produced jazz beyond jazz for half a century. Mandel sketches a sonic pilgrim's progress through the minefield of fusion, free jazz and avant garde that he first discovers in his native Chicago's cut-out record bins and during a New York-career catching and interviewing his musical heroes.


Miles Davis

In conversation with Miles, the trumpet star offers opinions about Prince, Wynton Marsalis, and just about everybody else in the wide-ranging interview at the heart of the book's first chapter. Mandel's a quirky critic with a sensibility forged in the fire of his passion for the new. He loves Miles, loves pretty much every stage of his chameleon-line career, but the author does his best work dealing with the electric stuff from *Bitches Brew* to the unfinished, but still daunting and daring *doo wop*. Mandel really cooks while championing the critically-trashed ghetto gem, *On the Corner*. He makes a case for *Decoy*, even Miles' versions of Cindy Lauper and Michael Jackson, arguing that the trumpet star could always pick a good tune to cover.



Miles Ornette Cecil: Jazz Beyond Jazz
Howard Mandel
Routledge, 292 p.
cloth. $30

Mandel presents Ornette Coleman's guiding harmolodic theory, what the musician now calls sound grammar, in a series of cubist, Socratic interviews that capture Ornette's serious play with language as well as music theory:

"If you're playing a melody and you don't have everything in your mind that you can do with that note," Coleman explains. "What some people call improvising, which I now call harmolodic theory and method, which has to do with using the melody, the harmony and the rhythms all equal- I find that it's much easier when a person can take a melody, do what they want to do with the melody, then bring his expression to yours, then combine that for greater expression…the people who I have worked with, they know how to do that."

Band mates Don Cherry, Charlie Haden, Dewey Redman, Denardo Coleman, Asha Puhtli and Ed Blackwell add their visions of Ornette and his music, but it's Mandel's description of his education as a serious, passionate listener and fan that sets the page on fire, and it flames brightly through his immersion into Cecil Taylor's equally boundless musical world.

Intimations of the theatre in Miles and Ornette's performances are jacked-up a notch in Taylor's costumed, choreographed projections of his artistic conviction. Unlike Ornette, who seemed to describe his musical essence as compositional, and Miles, whose contrary leadership was legendary, Cecil describes his music as ritual, adding, "I mean: Is it entertaining? I hope it is entertaining, but it is also, I think, the most holy thing I can do."

Mandel describes the moment he grasped that "Cecil's music was not whatsoever random, thrown carelessly together, or chaotic, whatever I'd thought up until then." Carving Taylor's architectural musical conception to it's core, Mandel writes, "Players, it seemed, could stand alone even while remaining vital parts of larger ensembles; equally, entire ensembles could turn or climax on the motion of a single link."

The author's passionate, personal, and scholarly descriptions of his encounters with Miles, Ornette, and Cecil's music and his interviews with the musicians offer inspired, insightful reading. This music is not easy listening, but the book provides a knowing, open-hearted guide.

Joseph Blake is PRRB's music correspondent extraordinaire.