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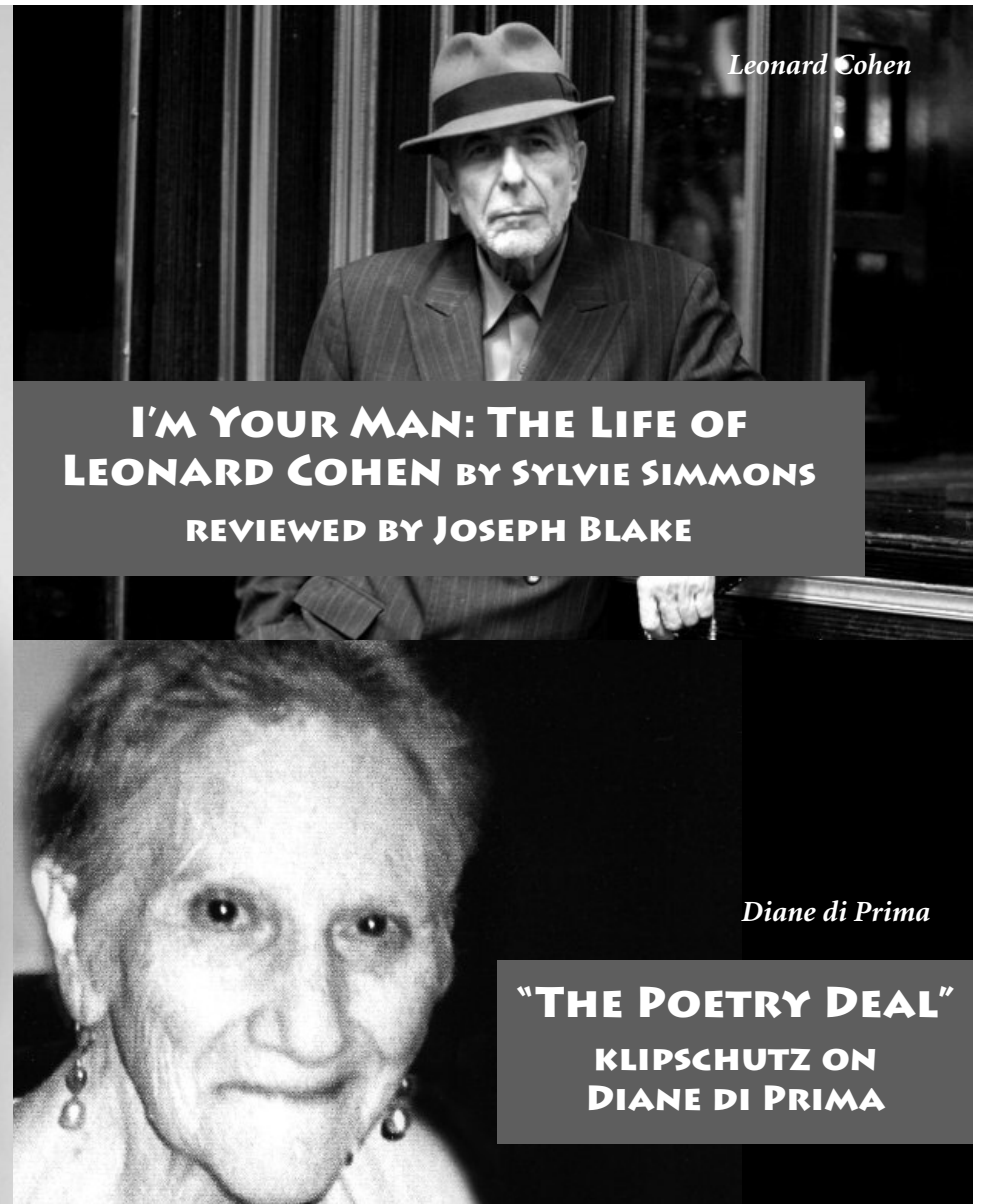
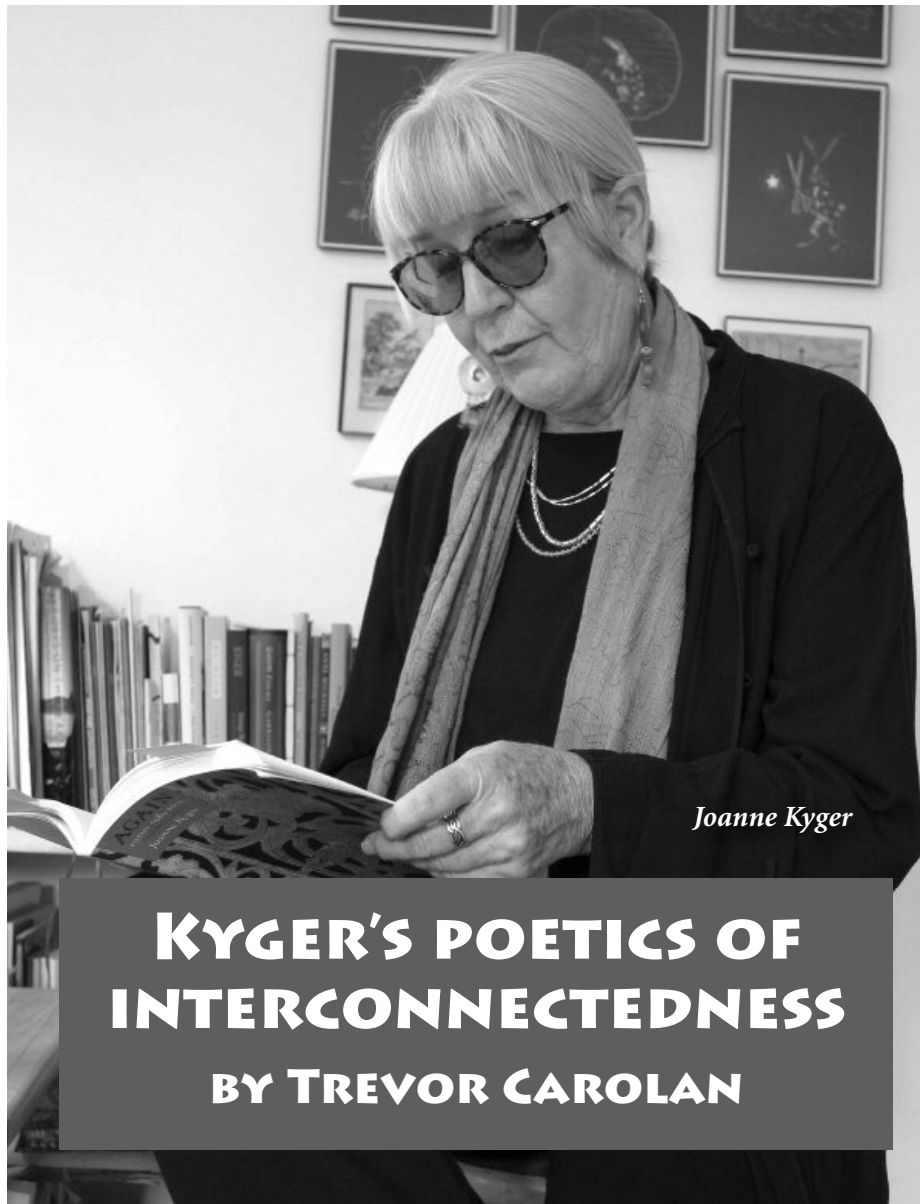
Issue Twenty Vol. 10, No. 1 Spring 2016

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TENTH ANNIVERSARY EDITION



**RICHARD WIRICK LOOKS AT NORMAN
MAILER'S *SELECTED LETTERS***

"A BRIEF, SHINING CENTRIFUGAL FORCE"
CHELSEA PASTORCHIK ON
THE LITERARY STOREFRONT

OUI, PARIS EST UNE FÊTE!
BY ANNA AUBLET

**NEW POETRY BY DAVID DAY AND JOE
ROSENBLATT REVIEWED BY LINDA ROGERS**

L'ANNÉE LA PLUS LONGUE
REVIEWED BY PETER MCCAMBRIDGE

**THE UNKNOWN HEROES OF TURKISH
LITERATURE BY CANSU SOYUPAK**

**PLUS: LETTER FROM MOROCCO, LOUISE GLÜCK, EUGENE
TARSHIS ON ADOPTION IN JAPAN, KOREA'S RAINHAT POET,
AND GROWING UP CHEERFUL WITH DOWN'S SYNDROME**



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CONTENTS

FEATURES

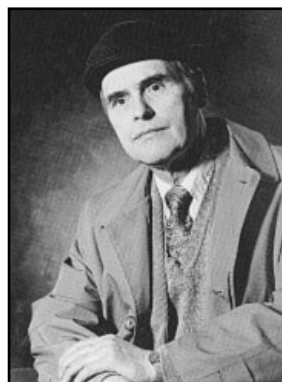
- Memories of Gabriel Garcia Marquez
Essay by James Edward Reid page 3
- "The Duke of Self Regard": *Selected Letters of Norman Mailer*, edited by J. Michael Lennon
Review by Richard Wirick page 4
- The Poetry Deal* by Diane di Prima
Review by Kurt Lipshutz page 6
- "Kyger's Poetics of Interconnectedness" *On Time: Poems 2005-2014* by Joanne Kyger
Review by Trevor Carolan page 8
- "Bright & Burning: C.K. Williams (1936-2015)"
Essay by Richard Wirick page 9
- "The Illusive Effect of the Nobel Prize: The Unknown Heroes of Turkish Literature"
Essay by Cansu Soyupak page 10
- "Modernist, Downhill Racer": *Litterchoor Is My Beat: A Life of James Laughlin* by Ian S. MacNiven
Review by Richard Wirick page 17
- The Voice is All: The Lonely Victory of Jack Kerouac* by Joyce Johnson
Review by Carol Ann Sokoloff page 20
- "Oui, Paris Est Une Fete: Paris After the Attacks"
Essay by Anna Aublet page 24

DEPARTMENTS

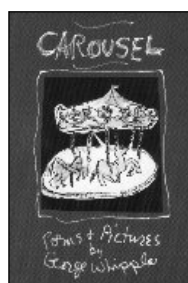
- Border Crossings: "Letter from Morocco"
Essay by Joseph Blake page 12
- Poetry: "A Café on Main Street"
Poem by Shannon Rayne page 13
- Gallery Shows: "We Are Continually Exposed to the Flashbulb of Death:
The Photographs of Allen Ginsberg" review by Trevor Carolan page 16
- Music Books: "Pop Music Royalty: Four Biographies": *Nilsson: The Life of a Singer-Songwriter*
by Alyn Shipton; *I'm Your Man: The Life of Leonard Cohen* by Sylvie Simmons;
Autobiography by Morrissey; *Simple Dreams: A Musical Memoir* by Linda Ronstadt page 29
- Worthy of Note: *Live Souls* by Serge Alternes & Alec Wainman; *The Flour Peddler* by
Chris & Josh Hergesheimer; *That Lonely Section of Hell* by Lori Shenher; *No Regrets*
by Larry Gambone page 39

REVIEWS

- Faithful and Virtuous Night* by Louise Glück
Review by Linda Rogers page 11
- "A Brief, Shining, Spontaneous Cultural Centrifugal Force!": *The Literary Storefront:
The Glory Years* by Trevor Carolan, review by Chelsea Pastorchik page 14
- Rose's Run* by Dawn Dumont
Review by Chuck Barker page 14
- "Trauma Stories": *Scattershot: Collected Fictions* by Amy L. Eggert
Review by Linda Rogers page 15
- "Memoir in Eight Chakras": *Here Comes the Sun: A Journey to Adoption in 8 Chakras*
by Leza Lowitz, review by Eugene Tarshis page 18
- Captive* by Claudine Dumont
Review by Peter McCambridge page 19
- Alice's Adventures in Wonderland Decoded* by David Day
Review by Linda Rogers page 22
- "Hetherington's Permanent Impermanence": *The Archive Carpet* by Michael Hetherington
Review by Paul Falardeau page 23
- Back Off, Assassin!* by Jim Smith
Review by Richard Stevenson page 23
- Anita's Revolution by Shirley Langer
Review by Linda Rogers page 24
- "Korea's Rainhat Poet": *Selected Poems of Kim Sakkat*
Review by Trevor Carolan page 25
- "The Blessings and Challenges of Special Needs": *Snapshot of a Soulplace: In the
Land of Special Needs* by Kari Burk, review by Rose Morrison page 26
- Those Godawful Streets of Man* by Stephen Bett
Review by Richard Stevenson page 27
- "Remembering the Beats in Bombay with Poet Ail Jussawalla"
Interview by Trevor Carolan page 28
- "A Clump of Lavender"
Review by Linda Rogers page 31
- A Manual for Cleaning Women* by Lucia Berlin
Review by Richard Wirick page 33
- Kabuki Boy* by Perle Besserman
Review by Apis Teicher page 34
- The Big Thirst* by Jim Christy
Review by Ryan Pastorchik page 35
- Of a Feather* by Michael Daley
Review by Jim Bodeen page 37



This issue of the
Pacific Rim Review of Books
is dedicated to the memory of
George Whipple
(1927-2014).
Wonderful poet, creative doodler
and a good friend of the press,
he will be missed.



Carousel
Ekstasis Editions
1999



Collage
Ekstasis Editions
2012

MEMORIES OF GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ

James Edward Reid

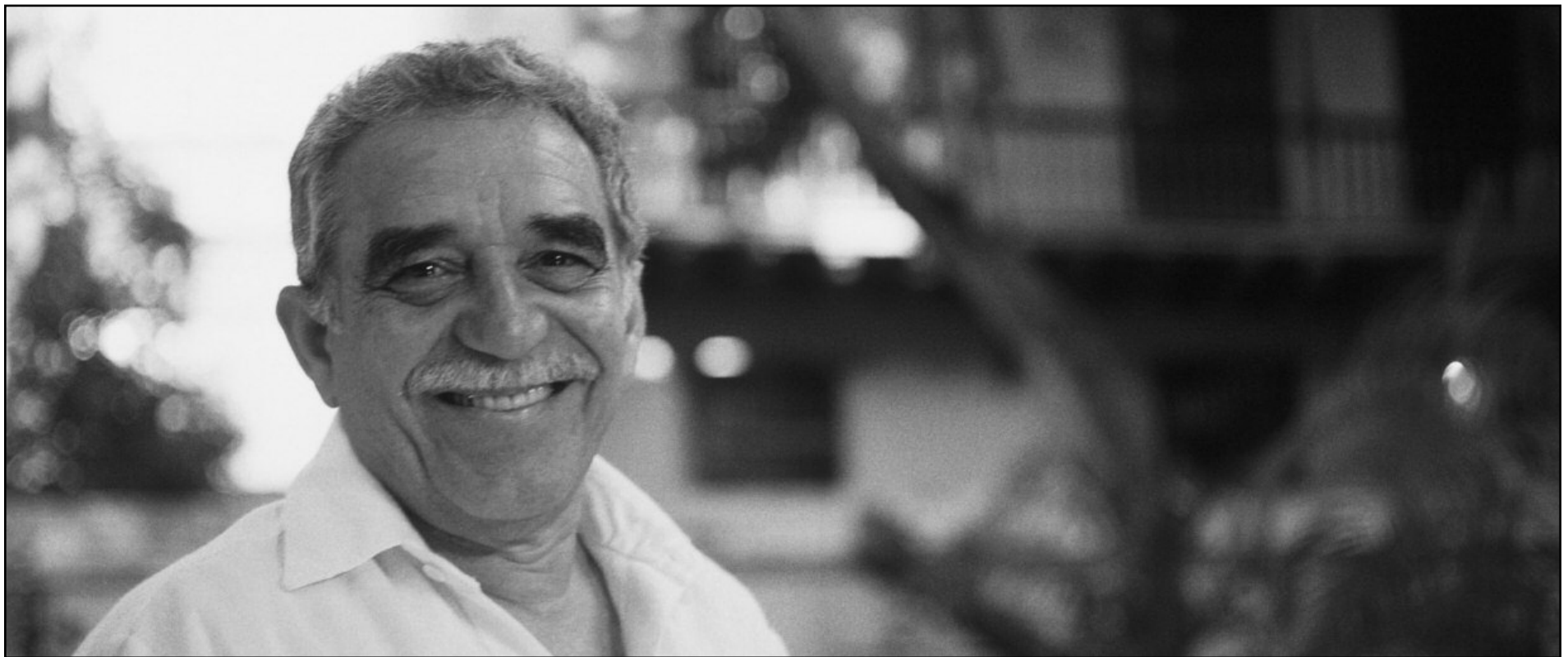
In July of last year, Márquez's brother, Jaime García Márquez reported that Gabo had dementia, "He has problems with his memory. Sometimes I cry because I feel like I'm losing him." Márquez no longer writes, and will not publish another book. Now that Gabriel García Márquez has exchanged one solitude for another, a great voice has been stilled. It is difficult to accept this news about a writer who has been such a part of our lives for over four decades.

On the soft-cover edition of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), two lovers embrace, heated by the ball of the tropical sun. This image seemed to be everywhere in the 1970s. Poking out of knapsacks. Intently read on buses, trains and airplanes. The book engaged deeply with the hopes of that time. Was the title a premonition of the increasingly untrustworthy histories we now face? Or the start of understanding and rejecting them? In retrospect, yes. I started the book a number of times, and gave up repeatedly. There were just too many Aurelianos and Buendías. But eventually, as I recovered from a fever, while my mind cooled, I began to read it again, barely pausing to put it down.

Una mala hora!

When I returned to the *pension*, Susanna and Kim were having lunch in the *pension* dining room. As I appeared in the doorway, the waiters glanced at me, and fled in fear and silent trepidation to the kitchen. In the sudden descent of quiet, I heard the theme music from *Fistful of Dollars*, filmed in the arid sierra I had just crossed twice. A mysterious and resonant story, something like a Márquez narrative was unfolding. The regulars stared away, or looked down at their food, hoping against hope. When I reached her table, she hugged me, and then introduced Kim. I shook his hand warmly. We became friends and talked about writers we loved, such as Márquez. Before Kim left Almería to pick fruit in France, he gave us a Spanish copy of *La Mala Hora*. Márquez's preferred title for this taut little book, which looks at the conspiracy of silence that haunts a small place, was *This Shit-Eating Town*. He had to be convinced by his publisher to change it to *In Evil Hour*.

In a *Paris Review* interview in 1981 Márquez was asked if he would be interested in the Nobel Prize for Literature. He replied, "I think that for me it would be an absolute



Gabriel Garcia Marquez

I picked the book up again recently, wondering how it would unfold, after a few decades. Long-forgotten scenes returned, the most disturbing and repressed of which was the massacre of the banana plantation workers who were planning to unionize. Those *desaparecidos* of the past had prefigured new terror in countries like Chile and Argentina. I emerged once again "from this marvellous novel as if from a dream, the mind on fire," as John Leonard, in the *New York Times Book Review*, said when the book was first published. At that time, Márquez said he was stunned when the publisher of the first edition printed so many copies—8,000 of them. By 2011, over 50 million copies had been sold worldwide.

Márquez's writing continued to permeate our lives. In 1978, decades after Franco's planes strafed women and children on the Almería road, *La Mala Hora* (1961) surfaced in this quiet little town in southern Spain. Franco had died three years earlier, and the country was exhaling a sigh of relief. But it was still a country where, in every city and town, the Guardia Civil carried loaded submachine guns in the streets. I was there, hitchhiking to Morocco with Susanna, the love of my life, and had to hitchhike alone back up the coast to Cullera. While I was away, she met a Korean man who was hitchhiking through Spain, sleeping at night in abandoned castle ruins and signal towers. She invited him up to our room, so he could bathe, do his laundry, and hang it with ours on the roof of the *pension*. A terrible mistake in such a conservative town.

catastrophe . . . it would be terrible." Receiving the Nobel the next year was not a catastrophe. In his Nobel acceptance speech, he took the opportunity to present the distant and incredible nature of Latin America's solitude. "Our crucial problem has been a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable. This, my friends, is the crux of our solitude." He went on to argue that it was "the very scale of our solitude" that "did not put us beyond the reach of madness." The Nobel gave him no pause. After receiving it, he published *Love in the Time of Cholera* (1985), *The General in His Labyrinth* (1989), *Strange Pilgrims* (1992), and *Living to Tell the Tale* (2002). Is there more of his work to be translated?

Some time in the early 1990s I arrived early for a flight from Toronto to western Canada. At the terminal, I purchased a copy of *The General in His Labyrinth*, to read while waiting for my boarding call. Sitting down next to the departure gate for my flight, I opened the book to its first sentence: "José Palacios, his oldest servant, found him floating naked with his eyes open in the purifying waters of his bath and thought he had drowned." Much time passed after Simon Bolívar rose from his bath and took flight over the continent of madness he loved so deeply that he dreamt of uniting it. So much time, that I missed every flight boarding call broadcast by the speaker above my head. I travelled on the next available plane, accompanied by the loneliness and immense dream of General Bolívar.

Sixteen years after his report of *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor* (1970), Márquez published another piece of non-fiction, *Clandestine in Chile: The Adventures of Miguel Littín* (1986). The timing was perfect: Pinochet in Chile, Reagan in America, Thatcher in Britain, Videla's genocidal dictatorship in Argentina, and that little PM in Canada had all been attacking or rending the social contract in their countries, under the baleful gaze of the neoconservative economics of the Chicago school. Littín was an exiled Chilean film maker who returned surreptitiously to Chile to film the fear and psychological devastation wrought by Pinochet's dictatorship. Initially disappointed to hear that the book contained an edited version of an interview with Littín, I soon warmed to Márquez-Littín hybrid sentences such as, "I suppressed my innermost feelings and assumed the strange condition of an exile in my own country, the most bitter experience imaginable for me."

A decade later, his reporting in *News of a Kidnapping* (1996) was difficult reading. Although he sometimes disparaged his work as a journalist, this book was journalism of the highest order. It was deeply disturbing, and true. At one point, Columbian drug barons had bombed the offices of *El Espectador*, the newspaper where Márquez began his writing career decades ago. Why did he risk writing this look at the heartrending atrocities of the drug trade that poisoned and ended so many lives in Colombia? His Acknowledgements provided an answer: "Their pain, their patience, and their rage gave me the courage to persist in this autumnal task, the saddest and most difficult of my life."

Over the years Márquez personally, as well as in his writing, has been buffeted by the collisions of the now calmed storm fronts of communism and capitalism. It is becoming more difficult to remember the tensions between conservatives and liberals, and the climate of the Cold War, now that they are being swept away by the current rise of ignorance and enraged zealotry. Some of the hope and complexity of the politics of that time are revealed in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, in the dream of Colonel Aureliano Buendía, late in life: "Later it would be learned that the idea that was working on him at the time was the unification of the federalist forces of Central America in order to wipe out conservative regimes from Alaska to Patagonia." And "the possibility of coordinating the popular elements of both parties, doing away with the influence of military men and professional politicians, and setting up a humanitarian regime that would take the best from each doctrine." Such an inspired, retreating, necessary and impossible dream.

The first volume of Márquez's autobiography, *Living to Tell the Tale* (2002), revealed that his childhood realities were often inspirations for his "magic realism." But was it magical? Colombia before the drug cartels was a place where ghosts were seen and accepted as real presences. Where gun duels were fought in the streets. Where, for many years, his mother was able to conceal from her children the truth of their abject poverty. Where his grandfather took three-year-old Márquez to look at the Pacific for the first time, and in response to the child's innocent question about what was on the other shore, he answered with certainty, "There is no shore on the other side." Where, at the age of four, Márquez spoke "only to recount absurdities," but no one is too concerned—in fact, his grandmother regarded it as a gift of prophecy. Where the future Nobel laureate and author of dozens of books never learned to spell, and still can't. To the end of his career, his copy editors have assumed that he could not type, and have been silently correcting his appalling manuscripts.

Living to Tell the Tale concluded at the beginning of his fiction-writing career. It was also the moment in the 1950s when the love of his life replied to his letter to her. Those who awaited the second volume of this projected trilogy were saddened by the rumour that Márquez had become too ill to complete further installments, then relieved in April 2009 when he responded to a question from *El Tiempo* about this rumour: "Not only is it not true, but the only thing I do is write." In *Gabriel García Márquez: A Life*, his persistent biographer, Gerald Martin, describes *Living to Tell the Tale* as "brilliant but not always accurate." Adapted accounts sometimes trump the impossibility of accuracy over time. Accurate or not, how many unshakeable truths are revealed about the earliest years of his past in the certitude of, "There is no shore on the other side"? The past is not a foreign country—it is a lost continent, as far away and present as that nonexistent shore.

In 2005 Márquez tossed a grenade, both loaded and disarming, into the hierarchical arenas of literary reviewing. Fragments also landed in the less modulated stadiums of political correctness. After reading the first sentence of *Memories of My Melancholy Whores* (2004), I wanted to discard the book: "The year I turned ninety, I wanted to give myself the gift of a night of wild love with an adolescent virgin." No wonder the book appeared to widespread grim and judgmental condemnation—it was easy to miss the book's melancholy, sly humour, and deliberate provocation, especially in that opening sentence. There was some praise by those who understood its wintry tenderness, but generally it received the worst reviews of any of his books. For praising the book in a review, I was denounced angrily at a party by a woman for my obtuse sexism. My question to her, "Did you read the book?" ended the contretemps. A

question some other reviewers may not have been able to answer affirmatively either.

I am now re-reading *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975), the book he called "my most difficult and adventurous work." It is perhaps also his greatest and most demanding work. Punctuation-free sentences proliferate across many pages in twisting profusion like coiling liana vines, as each one culminates in a leaf storm of absurd, majestic, and sometimes startling finality just as the next one begins to unfurl its tendrils toward you with inextricable and multiple unfoldings of despair and humour.

Miguel de Unamuno spoke of the choice in Spain between the approaches to life of Christ and Cervantes—Christ who wept for the world, and Cervantes who laughed at our faith in the absurdity of our repeatedly broken dreams. Now, with the passing of our patriarch, Gabriel García Márquez, what does he choose? In the Prologue to *Strange Pilgrims* (1992), he provided a chronicle of his own death foretold, with the answer waiting unexpectedly for him in the last solitude:

"I dreamed I was attending my own funeral, walking with a group of friends dressed in solemn mourning but in a festive mood. We all seemed happy to be together. And I more than anyone else, because of the wonderful opportunity that death afforded me to be with my friends from Latin America, my oldest and dearest friends, the ones I had not seen for so long. At the end of the service, when they began to disperse, I attempted to leave too, but one of them made me see with decisive finality that as far as I was concerned, the party was over. "You're the only one who can't go," he said. Only then did I understand that dying means never being with friends again."

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

for collectors of rare books

EROTOKRITOS

The summer of 1958 my family moved from the suburb Peristeri of Athens to Hagios Fanourios where we settled for a few years until my father managed to build our first family home in the north part of the suburb Ilion. During that summer my father brought home a copy of the most famous poem Erotokritos. I don't remember where my father found the book, yet I remember he said I could read it and then he would return it to its owner. Knowing the difficult financial situation of those days and knowing it was almost impossible for us to buy such a book not only I read it but I sat and day after day page after page I copied it. All its ten thousand and twelve fifteen syllable verses in fact I used two different colors of pen Bic, for those of us who remember those days. Least I knew back then that my longhand book would appear in the form you see it today almost sixty years later: one of the rarest ever handwritten books on Earth



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Vitsentzos Kornaros
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THE DUKE OF SELF REGARD

Richard Wirick

Those of us who grew up in the 60s and 70s were exposed not so much to the writer as to his public personae. We saw the head butts with Gore Vidal on Dick Cavett and otter talk shows, coupled incongruously with Mailer's amazing erudition on almost any subject thrown his way. We saw the parody (and nearly self-parody) of the New York mayor's race with his ticket-mate Jimmy Breslin. We endured *Maidstone* and other film forays. We more than endured the feminism debates with Germaine Greer at Town Hall during the release of *The Prisoner of Sex*.

Though Mailer never got to the point—as he said of Truman Capote—of replacing his writing with a social life that became his “real work,” it was damn close for a while. He had the non-fiction masterpieces of *The Armies of the Night* and *Miami and the Siege of Chicago* behind him, but would have to wait a decade until his fiction would crest, through a long-awaited self-effacement of the narrator, in *The Executioner's Song*, the Gary Gilmore novel told in a majestic duet of “Eastern” and “Western” voices. It was the home run of a novel he had not enjoyed since *The Naked and the Dead*.

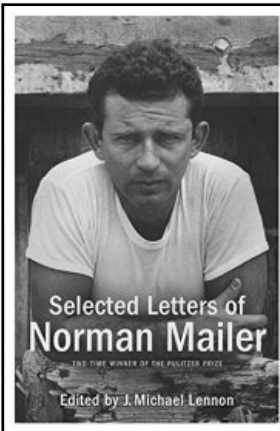
Now we have the letters, and, as Hemingway said, ‘It is fun to write letters because it is fun to get letters back.’ Many of the missives herein were one-offs to other celebrities (often non-literary) that he hardly knew; many are long essay-disquisitions to pet-project recipients of the time, especially the prison bird Jack Abbott, whose writing Mailer justly praised but who failed to respond to Mailer's half-baked program of rehabilitation.

There are some letters that illuminate his (and many working novelists') mundane and tormenting labours. To Gordon Lish, as *Executioner's Song* was germinating, he wrote “The Gilmore book has me

working like a lawyer preparing briefs; I think I have two thousand pages of notes already, and not a line of manuscript.” Mailer had not yet broken through and abandoned the ‘Aquarius’ personae that animated *Armies* and other successful novel-as-history experiments, so his flailing left him with little but compliments for other writers, which are generous, encouraging, and abundant. This to Abbott: “You have one talent that very few writers have, even good professional writers, and that is a personal tone [There's a psychology to convicts and murderers which has never been touched by anyone, except for that author sitting next to God himself, Old Dostoevsky.]” Tone and style, especially when coming with the effortless virtuosity with which they visited Mailer, would be the

key out of his own true prison of self-doubt, a place never inhabited by certain “naturals” (Bellow, Malamud) he did not count himself among. The many letters to Lillian Hellman show his admiration for the “natural voice” of her then husband Dashiell Hammett: “I had considerable respect for Dash, and not because he would refuse to face into knotty problems, but would . . . dismiss them by an exercise of his personal style.”

What one marvels at here, of course, is the range of Mailer's interests. He jots off praises to the old Beat buddy Michael McClure for his *Meat Science Essays*; hobknobs



Selected Letters of Norman Mailer
edited by
J. Michael Lennon
Random House, 2014
867pp.



A young Norman Mailer



Norman Mailer

with Bellow and the Kennedys (“Jack didn't look like a president, too pretty; he looked like your ski instructor”) in gathering notes for *The Presidential Papers*, and tells Graham Greene he will simply have to wait his turn for a more substantive letter. Bad manners though it traditionally is, he actually answers his critics. My favourite was a letter to William Buckley castigating him for letting (the great critic) Hugh Kenner, then a *National Review* staffer, to trash Mailer's *Deaths for the Ladies*: “Bill, one wonders whether you are not managing a farm team for the Book Review at *Time*.”

For every wonderfully funny, juvenile fight over sports statistics with Red Smith or Sonny Liston, there are earlier, searingly astute snippets on the big (besides his own) books of the day: Heller's *Catch-22*; Updike's *Rabbit, Run* (“its great, bending arcs of despair”); Baldwin's *Another Country*, and Roth's *Letting Go*. He could see the genius behind Sartre's novels, but deftly warned away readers from the great man's “ultimates and principles.” He gave unlikely praise to Isherwood's Weimar stories as the inspiration for *Barbary Shore*, and displayed increasing obsession with (to quote Vidal) the National Security State, and his ambitions of writing its ultimate history in his CIA opuses *Harlot's Ghost* and (the much better) *Oswald's Tale*.

Of all possible things, theology surfaces in late letters as a constant preoccupation. He fashions his own doctrinology and then bobs and dances around it like one of his beloved prizefighters. His fluency is staggering but beguiling. He explains to some recipients his notion that God puts at work certain forces of good and evil in the world, and lets them war with one another. Accordingly, “[H]e is not all-powerful; he exists as a warring element in a divided universe, and we [humankind] are part of—perhaps the most important part of—His great expression, His enormous destiny.” He also believed that certain evils of the human heart could “invariably be saved by art.”

This certainly was not the case with the aforementioned Abbott. As soon as Abbott—with Mailer's help, just as Sartre had helped free Genet—was released from prison, he stabbed to death a waiter in a Greenwich Village restaurant in some dispute over use of the restroom. As J. Robert Lennon says in his admirable preface, Mailer finally recognized the “folly that sinners and criminals could *invariably* be saved by art.”

The best letters here have Mailer writing admirably about the process of composition, and of course, with characteristic pugnacity, lighting into his critics. Especially after he learned to box, his desire for physical confrontation became puerile. He describes vanquishment “eating at my heart like a cancer.” But the same correspondent could brim with charm and almost unqualified offers of assistance and encouragement. He was enormously generous with money, scowling at critics of the first mega-advances he got from Little, Brown with the exclamation “I have *nine* children.” He was a beacon to grieving friends, writers on a bad publishing streak or suffering from block, and spent his “public” time finally in a prolonged presidency of PEN [during the critical Rushdie *fatwa*], steering clear of the former mayoral politics and rescue of felons. Though his writer's crow's nest in Brooklyn Heights was off limits

(continued on page 36)

THE POETRY DEAL

klipschutz

“Can you feel what I feel / Can we make it so that’s part of the deal,” Robbie Robertson sings on one of his solo releases. The title poem of Diane di Prima’s first new collection in nearly thirty years lays out the terms of the deal *she* made, directly addressing the art form she has practiced almost daily over a long, full life. She expresses gratitude:

*I don’t want anything you don’t already give me:
trips to other worlds, dimensions of light*

intermixing obeisance with draw-the-line resolve:

*You can not make sense for years & I’ll still believe you
drop husbands, tribes & jobs as you wish*

*“Choose between me & it”—“it” has always gone
Except when “it” was my kids*



The Poetry Deal
Diane di Prima
City Lights Books, 2014
120 pages, \$12



Diane di Prima and Amiri Baraka

Husbands beware!

The Poetry Deal, issued as part of the City Lights Laureate Series, opens with di Prima’s 2009 San Francisco poet laureate inaugural remarks, which double as an introduction to first-time readers and a welcome back to fans. In them, she reads older poems, and quotes both Keats and Pound.

The occasional poems in *The Poetry Deal*—delivered at May Day celebrations—remind me that di Prima has filled the role of public poet, reciting before large crowds throughout her career. In 1967, my friend Charles Potts brought her to Seattle, to perform on a bill that featured Buffalo Springfield, the Byrds, and the Seeds. He still remembers her perseverance in the teeth of the sheer noise and indifference of the rock ‘n’ roll throng.

By the late 1960s, her stance had shifted from that of the 1950s (best expressed in her New York years memoir *Recollections of My Life as a Woman*):

To be an outcast, outrider was the calling. Not fame, or publication.
Keeping one’s hands clean, not engaging. By staying on the outside we felt
they weren’t our wars, our murders, our mistakes.

Never part of the establishment, by the late 1960s, at the advanced age of nearly forty she had become an elder stateswoman. As for her earlier stance, some bearings might help: Di Prima’s generation endured Joseph McCarthy’s rampage and the Rosenberg executions. Henry Miller’s books were contraband. During high school, she and a friend, discovered reading *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, were sent to a priest, who “wound up shouting at us, ‘Don’t think! Don’t think! You’ll spoil your faith!’” Naturally, the two girls found him ridiculous, but nonetheless learned a lesson of the times: not to let authority figures know what they were reading, or thinking.



Diane di Prima

As might be expected from someone di Prima’s age and experience, *The Poetry Deal* contains its share of nostalgia, and elegies, for, among others, Philip Whalen, Kirby Doyle, Pigpen (of the Grateful Dead) and Audre Lorde. There are also memorials for non-famous friends, casualties of the AIDS epidemic.

I do not take well to being schooled by poem, and di Prima can sometimes make me roll my eyes. The opening of “Haiti, Chile, Tibet,” however, stopped me in my

tracks, despite the screaming caps:

*LET’S STOP FOR A MOMENT TO REMEMBER
WHAT WE ARE
a handful of tribes on a rather small rock*

Bracing and sobering at once, given the competing connotations resonating from the word “tribes” in a post-9/11 world.

Perhaps being the mother of interracial children provided her unusual perspective in “& About Obama”:

*if you were living
in the enemy’s house
wife & kids there too*

*& guarded—all of you—
by known assassins*

*How wd you fight
do you think
for what were only—
after all—dreams*

(Poet as prophetess: Shortly after the book came out, a Secret Service scandal over lack of presidential protection came to light.)

In “Gracias,” di Prima takes a lunch break from her teaching duties, amid the sights, sounds and aromas of San Francisco’s Mission District: “... *The corn chips / taste of maize growing tall in desert... / She brings / guacamole I see avocados of San Joaquin Valley... / Add cheese & sour cream... / cows on northern / California hills.*” Slight, but touching. Counting blessings for each ingredient in turn, the poem then broadens its frame to embrace “*Chinese man / in Oakland A’s cap, gay lad in enormous / cowboy hat...*” The human comedy on display, a celebration of locavore culture, di Prima working fast, like a painter, getting it all down on the fly on the canvas of the page.

Her poems have always drawn from a range of forms. Among her few rhymes is the standout early “Dee’s Song,” a ballad that teeters on the verge of doggerel while delivering its stunning, tragic tale about a woman on way to prison for “ten years and a day” on a heroin charge. (See *Pieces of a Song: Selected Poems.*) Diverse forms can be found in *The Poetry Deal*. We get alchemical arcana reminiscent of her epic-length *Loba*, tear-down-the-walls fervour a la *Revolutionary Letters*, field of composition poems.

The multi-page “Clearing the Desk” hearkens back to her early and underrated New York School-influenced book of stories and poems *Dinners & Nightmares* (1961),

and almost reads as light verse, but is anything but. Shedding her priestess robes, the incendiary's marching boots, and urge to instruct, in a burst of energy cum parade of minute particulars she shows *and* tells how dailiness can overwhelm even a legend. Via the list poem's chiseled form, she encapsulates mood swings and exhaustion, through the prism of demands on a sought-after public person's time and energy. By turns playful and spent, bemused and confused, its easy touch drills deep, even as she blows off countless correspondents in one long sweeping motion. Here are some salient excerpts:



Diane di Prima in 1954

*I'm sorry I was
sick
on the road
at the gym
on retreat
meeting a deadline
buying socks
[...]
when you came to town*

*I was too
broke
tired
busy
discouraged
dirty
unhinged
[...]
to answer yr letter*

Later in the poem:

*I'd love to send money (if I only had some) to
the UFW
Nalanda Translation Committee
[...]
the Society to Lynch Newt Gingrich
& that new one: People Against Impermanence
(such a sweet idea)*

It concludes:

*I don't mean to ignore you
or hurt your feelings
but if it helps at all
feel free to ignore this note
I will understand.*

In my initial readings of "Clearing the Desk," the generational self-parody embedded in the standalone line "on the road" went right past me.

It bears repeating that the blinding media spotlight on the Beats lasted only two years or so, and was over by the early 1960s. The word "beatnik" became a punchline; the movement's founders went hither and yon. One of them, Diane di Prima, went to San Francisco and continued writing and living, the textbook definition of a survivor. Encountering her work in the twenty-first century, the young poet Sandra Beasley "was impressed by how fierce her voice was, how unapologetic." Oversensitive versifiers of either sex: Toughen up!

Ultimately, Diane di Prima will escape her status as the most famous female beatnik and a "feminist icon," and readers will encounter a multifaceted poet whose complicated lineages and stubborn personality produced a rich body of work containing several timeless lyrics, though it's far too soon to know which ones they are.

The latest collection by klipschutz (pen name of Kurt Lipschutz) is *A Visit to the Ranch & other poems* (Last Word Press, 2015.) Earlier books include *This Drawn & Quartered Moon* (2013) and *The Erection of Scaffolding for the Re-Painting of Heaven by the Lowest Bidder* (1985). He writes songs with Chuck Prophet, and with Jeremy Gaulke edits *FOUR BY TWO*. This review is adapted from a longer essay-review that appeared in *Toad Suck Review* #5 (Univ. of Central Arkansas, 2014)

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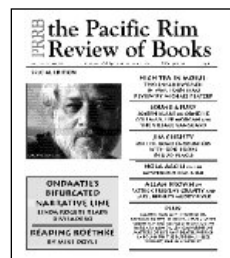
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KYGER'S POETICS OF INTERCONNECTEDNESS

Trevor Carolan

I can't think exactly when it began coming clear that Joanne Kyger is among the, or perhaps is simply *the* most critically neglected major poet in the United States, but it seemed to coincide with delivery of the 6th or 7th edition a few years back of the popularly used "pocket" anthology of poetry in North American colleges and universities. Why, I wondered yet again, was she ignored for inclusion when yet another cluster of AWP conference self-promoters were plumped for academic attention until the next expensive edition was due.

Humour was probably at the root of it, I reckoned. British poets like Craig Raine laugh and write goofy lines, but not Americans, except Billy Collins, and scholars don't seem to take him very seriously, although they ought to. Popularity, I considered. For a poet who doesn't make the anthology coach's all-star line-up, Kyger usually tops out one-two with Diane di Prima when it comes to student choices, especially younger female students, for their tutorial talks in English classes in the U.S. and Canada. And at international conferences, Kyger regularly runs with Emily Dickinson as a non-male American poet that people want to hear about. Lack of critical theory? Ideology, politics? Beats me.

Back in the real world, so many workaday acquaintances in the writing world have been excited by the news of Kyger's latest book with City Lights that I've been thinking about her poetry for months. Re-reading it for the fifth or sixth time, I'm put in mind of what Allen Tate said of E.E. Cummings; that this is a poet with vision, who in a dehumanizing world takes us back to the roots of our humanity.

On Time, her latest, shows Kyger as a non-overtly-political radical with a vision of inclusion and dissent. Note that it's a community vision, one that like a bird-watcher's extends easily from a favourite reach of nearby countryside to the migratory flyover routes in spring and fall that link up local and distant avian habitats. That's Kyger's turf, the *dharmakaya* realm of natural shapes and forms, along with conversations over the neighbour's fence. Her narrative work flows evenly, although images and references not unlike in Philip Whalen's poetry are frequently discontinuous. For example a reflection on war criminals and George W. Bush and company shifts as quickly as a hiccup to view a baby quail pecking in the shadows.

Humour runs like an underground stream throughout the collection; there's more wit here than in a generation of late-night TV comics. "You Go To War With The Army You Have" laughs at the absurdity of clapping outdoors at the end of a meal to scare off poaching whiskey jacks from the patio, only to be mistaken by a foreign visitor as a California New Age ritual of grace. Quirky dream accounts and panoptical references abound—there's screen idol Tab Hunter; now it's women presidents abroad; then it's a friend's ashes that disappear—macabre, yet somehow funny like teenage horror movies. What's it all about? The poet calls it her book of days: "indulging the maintenance / of the thin emotional line of balance / is what I call life these days" ("The Studio").

Not everything is comic. "White Kites" and "For a Moment" are brief Pound-like Zen *pensées* in English that lasso fleeting glimpses of joy and sadness. There's appreciative stillness in her seeing surfers waiting out offshore, hanging for a breaker. We are reminded too, this is a world poet who hears the news and bears witness when stuff happens, reflecting on U.S. Government policy tragedy after tragedy, but who remembers to read outdoors during a rare dry spell in the rainy season.

I've always appreciated Kyger's nutty ability to come up with titles that say it all, or don't even try to. In this, her only serious American rivals have been Captain Beefheart and Frank Zappa. Have a taste of these:

- * "Really There Is No Solution"
- * "A Great Vampire Squid Is Wrapped Around the Face of Humanity"
- * "I'm Very Busy Now So I Can't Answer All Those Questions About Beat Women Poets"
- * "Everything I Know About You Guys Is Wrong"



On Time:
Poems 2005-2014
Joanne Kyger
City Lights Books



Joanne Kyger

- * "Nobody Told Me Grief Felt So Much Like Fear"
- * "Make Yourself Home in the Dreamy Bardo"
- * "Post-Extinction"

The poems accumulate, each dated, and we sense the sharpness of her absorption in the consciousness of being purely attentive, while remaining non-complicit in the routine savageries of military and governmental bad-idea men who make the news cycles go. Amidst it all, like a gracious, cranky friend, she reminds herself to be kind and to cut late-arriving Good Friday visitors some slack in crappy weather. It's impossible not to love the random, but still linked associations between ideas and images in Kyger's work. In "Pomegranate Syrup" a power outage, the sound of backfiring car motors up the road, droning plane engines overhead, and a moment's contemplation on bamboo; each melds in a gawky, but congruent assemblage that echoes with an old myth about Dionysus. In the mosaic of everyday happenstance, everything plays some part.

On Time collects poems from all over the place; from Kyger's home on the California littoral, from the Mexico that she knows well, and from a grab-bag of road-stops from every other direction. There are goodbye poems for some familiar names from America's modern lit fraternity: Anselm Hollo, Peter Warshall, Arthur Okamura, Albert Saijo, as well as a neighbour or two. For literary gossips, other poems refer to a constellation of writerly veterans: Philip Lamantia, Lyn Hejinian, Ed Dorn, Charles Olson, Walt Whitman, W.C. Williams, W.S. Merwin, Gary Snyder, Philip Whalen, Allen Ginsberg, Rod Padget, Robert Duncan, Christopher Isherwood. And there are references to the sixties and its ephemeral Summer of Love, her own Zen teacher acquaintances, and always her community pals from along the lane. If you've followed Kyger's work, you'll recognize that within her poetic vision *everybody's in*.

The results are subtle, lucid and offbeat. Kyger is unique. There's simply no other voice in contemporary poetry quite like hers. Nature literate, Buddhist-inflected, a veteran roadie who's seen some miles, this book is a treat, especially if, like her, you take delight in looking at birds and fauna: her observations train on sharp-shinned hawks, scrub jays, herons that eat gophers, flickers, song sparrows, and northern California's ubiquitous wavering eucalyptus.

This is a poet who declared her turf, her aesthetic and ecological interests back in 1965 with a volume called tellingly *The Tapestry and the Web*. Her message, *amigos y amigas*—no theoretical decoder ring necessary—is that everything is interconnected. There's unity even in her quixotic dissimilars. It's known as "sticking with what got you here", and Kyger's latest communiqué from the biome we know as our beloved Blue Planet arrives right on time.

Trevor Carolan is the International Editor of PRRB.

BRIGHT & BURNING: C.K. WILLIAMS (1936-2015)

Richard Wirick

C.K. Williams died last week in Princeton, where he had for many years been a much-beloved and celebrated University Professor of English. He had won every single major American poetry award, and international acclaim for his translations. None of the accolades distracted him from the great and elusive target that had always consumed him—the ecstasies and burdens of consciousness, and the path between them that makes us most essentially human.

His long, ruminative verse-paragraphs had recently lightened into shorter clause pairings, embodying fleeter thought, quicker conclusions, brighter images. It isn't that the dense, impacted long lines of his earlier books were in any way restrictive. They were rich with detail, observational "sketching" used to set up an argument. But the new short form, counter-intuitively, ranged more into social subjects, and how consciousness best apprehended them. His prominent short-line themes became "How we take the world to us / And make it more/More than we are / More even than itself."

"We are not of the world," Stevens had told Williams when he was a verse-obsessed prep schooler. "And not ourselves," Stevens continued, "And hard it is / In spite of blazoned days." ("Men Made Out of Words"). Williams took this as a challenge rather than a statement of helplessness. What is art if not ameliorative? What are days if not blazoned? If you pour a draft of sadness with sufficient exquisiteness, beauty—maybe even happiness—will sparkle on its surface like soda bubbles.

The *Times*' William Deressiewicz had written of "The Singing": "His poetry proceeds not from a verbal impulse, not from a lyrical impulse, not even from a prophetic or visionary impulse, but from a moral impulse. Everything in his work is held up to the most exacting moral scrutiny, beginning with the poet himself."

This moral impulse, not always breaking through the earlier verse-paragraphs, was in his newer work hovering, tender, almost overbearing. He was always bending over the crib, checking the infant creation's breathing. After teaching at a Hillel Center, his identity as a Jew blossomed with 1968's "A Day For Anne Frank," a fine example of his "rescue-fable" that always pulled up just short of sentimentality:

The twilight rots
over the greasy bridges and factories.
it dissolves
and the clouds swamp in its rose to nothing.
I think sometimes the slag heaps by the river
should be bodies
and that the pods or moral terror
men make of their bodies should split
from their cold, sterile seeds into the tides

like snow
or ash.

Frank and her sisters, when they arrived at Bergen-Belsen, were told that the only way out was "up the chimney." Williams takes this sentence of the unimaginable, reflected upon later in tranquility, and tries to convey its horror through the undirected winter rubbish and bleakness of the Jersey winter. We cannot comprehend what she faced except through analogy, the evisceration of the nature that had tried to shelter and contain her.

His poems vibrated between two frequencies, the domestic and the strange. He honored the boundaries of each but, like Frost, searched along their tunings for similarities and correspondences. He would often come into an idea through stagey set pieces, shockingly exotic, and then taper down into whatever familiarities we could latch onto to allay discomfort. Often the strangeness came in images and the endings settled into speech. Believable, American speech was his method of conveyance. He



C.K. Williams

dabbled with the colloquial, but eschewed epigram, condensation, abridgements. He takes a truism and turns it around as abruptly as what it is describing, yet falling short of: 'A girl shot by the police: In the beginning was love, right? / No, in the beginning . . . the bullet.'

He enters with shock, then wanders in the digressions the American grain gives him—saying what people say in their attempts at truth, saying it to himself, himself, his moral "I." Then he comes to rest back in the domestic, but one that is never free of chaos, of the ungatherable, the clamorous and organic. You don't yourself become a sadist by being mean. Going back to "Anne Frank," the music of speech restores the pitiable in the harm you do, the pity for who you do it to.



C.K. Williams

When I was about eight, I once stabbed
somebody, another kid,

A little girl.

After argument—argument? Battle, war, harrowing; you need
shrieks, moans from the pit—

After that woman and I anyway stop raking each other with
the meat-hooks we've become with each other'

I fit my forehead into the smudge I've already sweated onto

The window with a thousand other exhaustions
to watch an old man having breakfast out of a pile of bags
on my front step.

("With Ignorance")

Yes, he sometimes wandered too far in the direction of prose, but the voice always had the buzz of the rarified, the musically charged, the mystically askew—what poetry sends us searching for. *Falling Ill* was his last, appropriate collection, reiterating the deaths surrounding him, the near-death of his son Jed, now a major painter, which he wrote so movingly of in *The Vigil*. And finally his own death, coming around the corner as sure and unsure as the PATH train, taking its own gritty time: "What I think poets tell themselves, either aloud or unconsciously, is that poetry is part of the resonance of the world. Poetry adds to that, the sense that human beings have that we have some moral meaning that is part of the basis of our identity, no matter what our acts are."

Richard Wirick is the author of the novels *One Hundred Siberian Postcards* (Telegraph Books) and *The Devil's Water* (Ekstasis). He practices law in Los Angeles.



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THE ILLUSIVE EFFECT OF THE NOBEL PRIZE: THE UNKNOWN HEROES OF TURKISH LITERATURE

Cansu Soyupak

For the last six months, I've been living in the Netherlands as an expat and as soon as people learn that I'm Turkish these are the two main questions they ask me: what is going on there? (with the government, ISIS, the Kurdish problem, etc.), and what do you think about Orhan Pamuk? Well, to be honest, the first question is always easy to answer for me and I believe people who ask the question also expect the answer I give. *Things are not going well and I don't have hope for the near future.* Then I have to answer the second question which is tricky and most of the time my answer surprises people immensely. *We have better writers than him.*



Orhan Pamuk

By giving this answer, I don't claim that he is a bad writer or underestimate his literary success as a Nobel laureate. I'm just being honest in terms of my main concern: Orhan Pamuk is not the only author we have and the reception of Turkish literature should be emancipated from his monopoly.

Orhan Pamuk is well-known for his depictions of the clash of culture between East and West. Although his books, especially the ones he wrote before the Nobel Prize, differ from each other in terms of time period and location, all of them examine drifting individuals between the old world and the new, between traditional and secular values. This constant lingering between worlds creates the concept of *huzun*, Turkish melancholy, which was introduced to the Western reader by Orhan Pamuk. However, Pamuk is not the originator of the theme in Turkish literature. In order to understand this notion of melancholy, which is so particular to Turkish society, one should read the "overcoat" text on *huzun* that Pamuk comes out of, *The Time Regulation Institute* by Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar.¹

Tanpinar describes his theme as "the awful thing we call belatedness." For him, the experience of arriving late in the modern world has its consequences for Turkish society and in this novel he shows these consequences in an absurd and witty way. The literary influence of Tanpinar on Orhan Pamuk is not just my observation. Pamuk himself frequently names Tanpinar as one of his main influences and also describes him as the greatest Turkish novelist of the 20th century. I believe *The Time Regulation Institute* is an essential novel in order to grasp the notion of *huzun* and, more importantly, to understand Turkish society.



Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar

Another point that I also realized since living in the Netherlands, is that most foreign readers who follow him consider Pamuk as the primary author for understanding Istanbul. His *vivid* portraits of Istanbul are the second point that made him so popular perhaps. I'm emphasizing vivid here, because I'm highly skeptical about his depiction of Istanbul. Whose Istanbul he is depicting in his books? How vivid are these depictions?

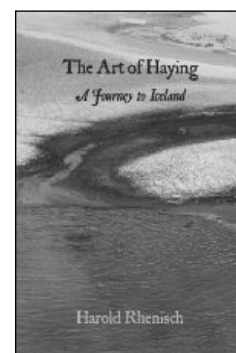
Although he always wrote about Istanbul in one way or another, this idea of Pamuk as the "narrator of Istanbul" was enhanced by his memoir *Istanbul: Memories and the City*.² In this book, once again, Pamuk gives reverence to his master Tanpinar and mentions Tanpinar's book *A Mind at Peace*³ as the best novel written about Istanbul. The echoes of *A Mind at Peace* can also be heard in Pamuk's latest book, *A Strangeness in My Mind*.⁴ By creating a synthesis of past and present and by depicting every possible dualism within the city, Tanpinar shows us a cosmopolitan Istanbul that has its own voice in the book as a character. Compared to Tanpinar's diffusive

representation, Orhan Pamuk portrays the city in a limited and stable way. His Istanbul is a Turkish, upper class, sterilized city. In order to understand real Istanbul with its diversity one must read other perspectives as well. To understand minorities and their life, consider these titles: *Istanbul was a Fairytale*, by Mario Levi⁵; for the poetic and nostalgic Istanbul, *I'm Listening to Istanbul*, by Orhan Veli Kanik⁶; for underground and criminal Istanbul, *Cholera Blues* by Metin Kacan,⁷ and for political and rebel Istanbul, *The King of Taksim Square* by Emrah Serbes.⁸

In the end, Orhan Pamuk is the most popular, best-selling Turkish writer and our only Nobel laureate. Yet, as a Turkish person, I have to admit that his repetitive vision of Istanbul does not reflect the truth about the city I lived in for years. He is neither the primary narrator of Istanbul, nor it is possible to point out one writer as the sole voice to depict this complex city. But most importantly, foreign readers shouldn't consider him as the only Turkish author and they themselves should dive into the richness of Turkish literature as deeply as possible.

Cansu Soyupak is a literary studies research master candidate at Leiden University, the Netherlands. Her main interest areas include Turkish translations of the Beat Generation and their reception in Turkey. Her BA thesis examines similarities between the Beat Generation and the post-WWII Turkish literary movement called "Garip".

- 1 Originally published in 1962, translated into English by Penguin Classics in 2014.
- 2 Originally published in 2003, translated into English by Faber & Faber in 2005.
- 3 Originally published in 1948, translated into English by Archipelago Books in 2008.
- 4 Originally published in 2014, translated into English by Faber & Faber in 2015.
- 5 Originally published in 1999, translated into English by Dalkey Archive Press in 2012.
- 6 Collected poems translated into English by Corinth Books in 1972.
- 7 Only available in German. Originally published in 1995, translated into German by Dayyeli Verlag in 2003.
- 8 Originally published in 2014, translated into English by Amazon Crossing in 2016.



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FAITHFUL AND VIRTUOUS NIGHT

Linda Rogers

M *i mi mi*, and who doesn't love the impossible tuning of sopranos with the cutting edge of X-acto knives, invented by the father of Louise Glück? This poet was born to edit and her prosody has been so clean, so memorable as to be the parable of Seven Sisters, schools that produced the uniquely American feminist mid-century poetry.

That genre, the *cri de coeur* of women trapped between the lines of American literature, has made its point and its point has been taken or discarded as men and women shuffle their roles in a sharply divided society.

Glück is a coloratura, her high notes clean and incisive, her classical references impeccable, but, when *mi* collapses into *me*, the vocal gymnastics can be less compelling and more wounding, the lines bloody with commas separating subordinate clauses that sometimes blame and complain, and who listens these days to poets wearing twin sets and pearls?

Confessional poetry, once avant-garde, provenance of the first cutter, the first head in the oven-er, is as risky as trapeze art, especially when the net has lost some of its bounce, namely a social ethic that favoured men like the poet whose name rhymed with fume, the only option left when words failed.

Now, like sea glass, the sharp-edged poetry of female privilege, i.e. educated women, eroded by changing mores, is taking a more philosophical configuration as the poetry of change moves to the streets, where rap and urban music nourish a different revolution against the realpolitik of male economic power.

Where does that leave Louise Glück, whose new persona is a fictitious I, the transformed eye of a small boy, orphaned as she has been and morphing to fit new realities?

Characters came and went, costumes were changed,
my brush hand moved from side to side
far from the canvas,
side to side, like a windshield wiper.

Glück has famously stated that the life of the mind begins and ends in childhood, in the constructs of children, who create and assimilate mythology in order to comprehend the universe. The rest is spiritual and intellectual inertia, as we are carried backward and forward by our ethical systems, or lack thereof.

"Look up," her persona insists like the mythical Friendly Giant, past ceilings glass and otherwise because children must learn to navigate stars and familiarize themselves with essential song-lines. In the dark, we are all orphans, our spirit guides materializing in the upper air.

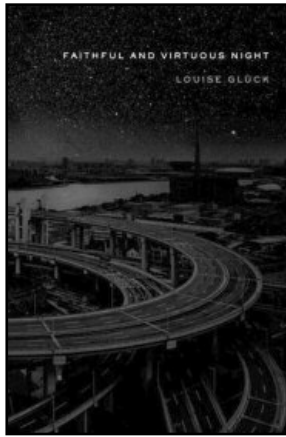
...I lay in the small room we shared
staring at the ceiling – never
my favourite part of the room. It reminded me
of what I couldn't see, the sky obviously, but more painfully
my parents sitting on the white clouds in their white travel suits.

Fairy tale and legend begin in the life of stars, their trajectories determining the gestalt of our own flickering paths to extinction.

I was like a bright light passing through a dark room.

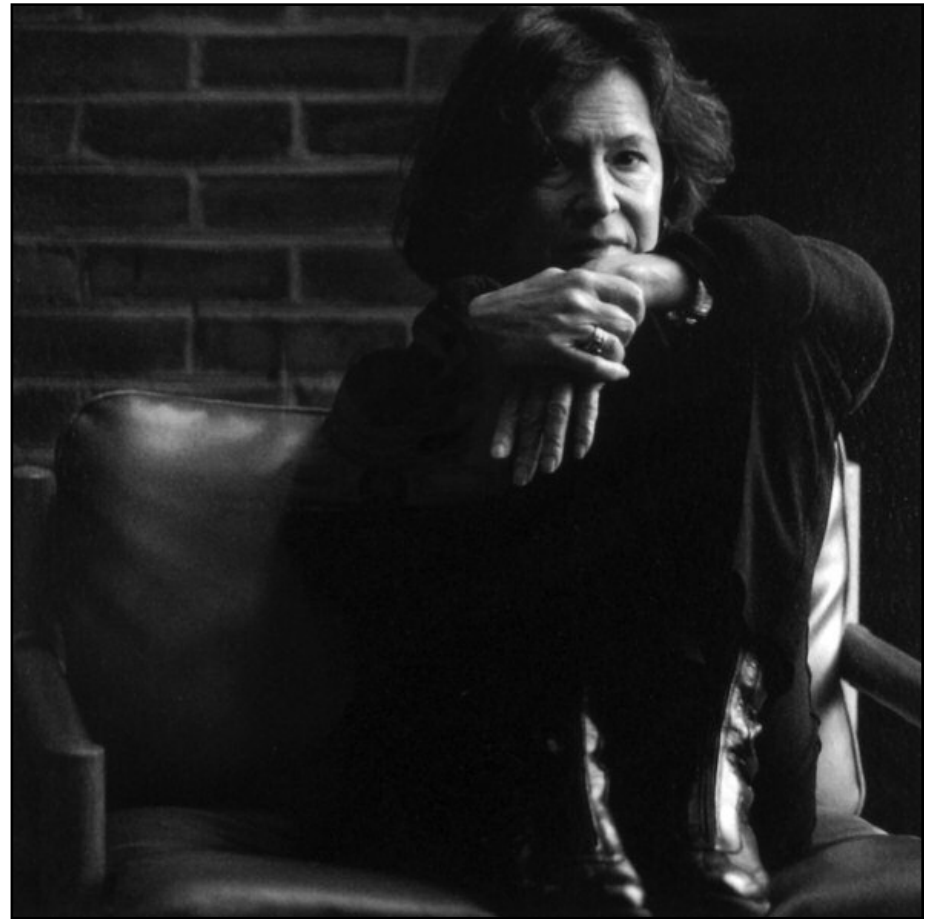
These poems bring to mind artist Pat Martin Bates whose light-boxes recreate star maps Glück also tracks in memorable lines that lift her best poetry from the banality of loss. Their grief and awe at the inevitability of the firmament lifts both artists out of their time, post-feminist, post-formalist, to the pantheon of greatness. That is the legacy she exacts in this book.

Poems celebrating the train that leads to the end of the world as she knows it transcend everything she has known to embrace the unknown. In them, she reprises the



Faithful and Virtuous Night

Louise Glück
Farrar, Straus and
Giroux
hardcover, 71 pages



Louise Glück

child who regards the phenomenal world with the detachment of stars, and in one faultless line, she rescues all lesser observations from the prison of self-absorption.

And that was the whole point, the beholding.

In changing her girl to boy narrator's Knight to night, Glück gives proper acknowledgement to the little suns that configure heroism, muscular verbs freeing Excalibur from the rock of mortality.

*How alone I am, but in music
my desolation is my rejoicing.*

Music has no gender and no shelf life. Her jacket notes speak of mutable parts and that is her strength as the voice transforms as it moves like music through the various shapes of being.

This must explain the puzzling music coming from the trees.

What she reveals is music as its own explanation, the *why* and *because*, transparent archetypes that inform children in the time of real learning before they are broken, groomed to conform.

The poet asks what we have left when the world is too much with us, when time weighs us down with Ozymandian melancholy, and her inner child replies, it is the faithful and virtuous night.

Linda Rogers is an award-winning poet, novelist, teacher and journalist. She is completing the Victoria trilogy she began with *The Empress Letters* and the recently released second volume *Tempo Rubato*.

LETTER FROM MOROCCO

Joseph Blake

Tangier with visions of William Burroughs, Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Tennessee Williams, Truman Capote, Jean Genet, and, of course, Paul Bowles and Brion Gysin pounding in my head like venerable Olympus typewriters—each echoing the rhythm-charged wailing of the Maghreb.

At dawn the call to prayer roared from the dark through cranky, static-choked amplifiers that yanked me from my dreams until I settled into my own, Moroccan, circadian rhythm. During three weeks here I went to bed earlier and earlier, relieved to be home and in bed away from the chaos and noise of the old, walled Medina and clogged, anarchic streets. I woke earlier and earlier, until near the end of our adventure I'd lie awake in the dark ecstatically awaiting the muezzin's call to prayer and the wave-like echoes of the singing from distant minarets.

Everything about Morocco seduces you...except the *hijab*, *abaya*, and *burqa*. The country's recent shift to a democratically elected coalition government headed by a moderate Islamist party's prime minister is reflected in everyday urban dress. Women in head scarves or hijab are everywhere, but women in a handful of big cities including Marrakech, Casablanca, Rabat and Tangier seemed free to dress in more revealing, Western styles. In small towns and villages traditional fashion ranged from modest, sack-like, full-length outer garments to simple head scarves. When a woman was out in public without a head scarf anywhere, I noticed, nobody hassled anybody.

When a desk clerk at a desert hotel greeted us in stilettos and tight, leather mini-skirt, I was gob-smacked. How quickly our consciousness shifts during travel.

One night we stayed in Hotel Toulousain in the new, European-influenced section of Marrakech. It's where William Burroughs stayed while visiting modern Morocco's most tourist-friendly city. In the pre-dawn shadows I envisioned old Bill huddled over his typewriter working on *Naked Lunch* and then wandered a few blocks to Jardin Majorelle, the formal garden that designer Yves Saint Laurent and his partner Pierre Berge renovated and lived in from 1980 until Saint Laurent's death in 2008. A memorial in the garden marks where the Algerian-born fashion designer's ashes were scattered. The 12-acre grounds were originally designed by expatriate French artist Jacque Majorelle in the 1920s and '30s. The public space's extensive cactus garden, towering bamboo and date palms, fountains and water lily ponds surround a little Berber museum, a Saint-Laurent inspired bookstore and gallery, and tea house painted dramatic Majorelle blue. Bulbul, blackbirds, sparrows, robins, warblers, wagtails and doves are some of the avian species that make this urban haven home. It was hard to leave its sweet peace, but we only had a few days to visit the city's many spectacular sites and the fevered excitement of Jemaa El Fna, Marrakech's great square.



Café Hafa

Founded in the eleventh century as a caravan market linking traders travelling east and west, Marrakech's central square still teems with an exotic mélange of new- and old-world trade. Author Tahir Shah calls Jemaa El Fna "a turbulent circus of life—teeming with astrologers, healers, storytellers, and acrobats," adding "It's a focal point of folklore, a borehole that descends down through layers and sub-layers of Morocco's underbelly. A lifetime of study couldn't teach you all it represents."

The Afghan-born, British-bred author isn't the only literary traveler to fall under Morocco's spell. Early in the twentieth century Edith Wharton wrote, "To visit Morocco is still like turning the pages of some illuminated Persian manuscript all embroidered with bright shapes and subtle lines." Even earlier in the nineteenth-century, Swiss-born Isabelle Eberhardt converted to Islam, dressed as a man calling herself Si Mahmoud Essadi, and fought on the side of the anti-colonialists while writing many books and French newspaper stories about the Maghreb.

French painters like Eugene Delacroix and Henri Matisse fell in love with Morocco and were influenced by the country's artisans and landscapes, but the arts' love affair



Marrakech

with the culture reached fruition in Tangier and writers like Tennessee Williams, Jean Genet, Burroughs, Brion Gysin and Paul Bowles enjoyed the mystery, moral anarchy and freedom of the Interzone in the post-WWII years before Moroccan independence.

The ghosts of these writers still haunt Tangiers despite the flurry of modernization and building inspired by Morocco's young King Muhammed VI. The old Medina seems pinched and shadowy, a scabby, shrunken vestige in the shadows of shiny, modern high-rise towers and glitzy hotels for the super-rich...but the ghosts are still there and the tiny, literate Librairie des Colonnes on Boulevard Pasteur is thriving still with its well-chosen stock of Beat classics and Moroccan authors in French and English translation.

The Cinema Rif, originally opened in 1948, still stands on the Grand Socco. It now features Bollywood films, and in its current incarnation sometimes projects films outward on the ancient Medina's walls for thousands in the market square. Nearby, Café de Paris still does a bustling business at its ground-floor café, with its 100% male clientele—like most Moroccan cafes—sitting at sidewalk tables, hunched over newspapers or talking, some just staring at the passing parade as they smoke and drink café noir or mint tea.

Around the corner and up a stairway, the café's dark bar/restaurant with a tiny balcony where we ate a grilled seafood lunch and watched the scene at the French Embassy across the street still conjures up echoes of the Interzone literary salon that included Tennessee Williams and Truman Capote.

At the other end of Boulevard Pasteur, the stylish, six-storey Rembrandt Hotel still stands. A temporary home for both Tennessee Williams and Jane Bowles, the Rembrandt was also the venue for a 1954 show of Brion Gysin's paintings that Burroughs visited early in his Moroccan adventure. Later Gysin turned Burroughs on to the cut-up technique that led to his non-linear breakthroughs in *Naked Lunch*. Burroughs had fled Mexico for the lawless Interzone after shooting his wife and lived in Morocco from 1954 to 1958. He titled an early collection of short stories *Interzone* and developed some of those characters in later work like *Nova Express* and *Naked Lunch*. Burroughs initially lived in a rented room in a male brothel on the west side of the Medina, remembering "Tony, the old Dutch man who runs this whorehouse I live in" in one of his Moroccan diaries.

Bowles' *Let It Come Down*, the 1952 novel inspired by Tangier, was one of the reasons Burroughs came to the dream city of forbidden pleasures, smuggling, spies, prostitutes, drug addicts, and killers. Burroughs wrote much of *Naked Lunch* while living in Hotel El-Muniria, and Kerouac and Ginsberg shackled up there too in 1957. The walls of Tangier Inn, the bar below the hotel, still celebrates the era with many photos of famous Beat customers.

You can also still find Café Central, where Burroughs hung out to pick-up men and score dope. Another legendary hangout, Café Hafa is where Bowles and members of the Rolling Stones smoked hashish together. Brion Gysin's legendary club 1001

(continued on page 30)

A CAFÉ ON MAIN STREET

Shannon Rayne

Are you my angel? – Allen Ginsberg

What yearning I have for you today Allen, for I walked past Main Street cafés

alone and self-conscious
under cumulous clouds and red-fingered Maples, searching
for 1962 San Francisco in the bearded faces of men bent over
computer screens and five-dollar lattes.

What legacy have you passed on Allen? What community
have you left us to write in?

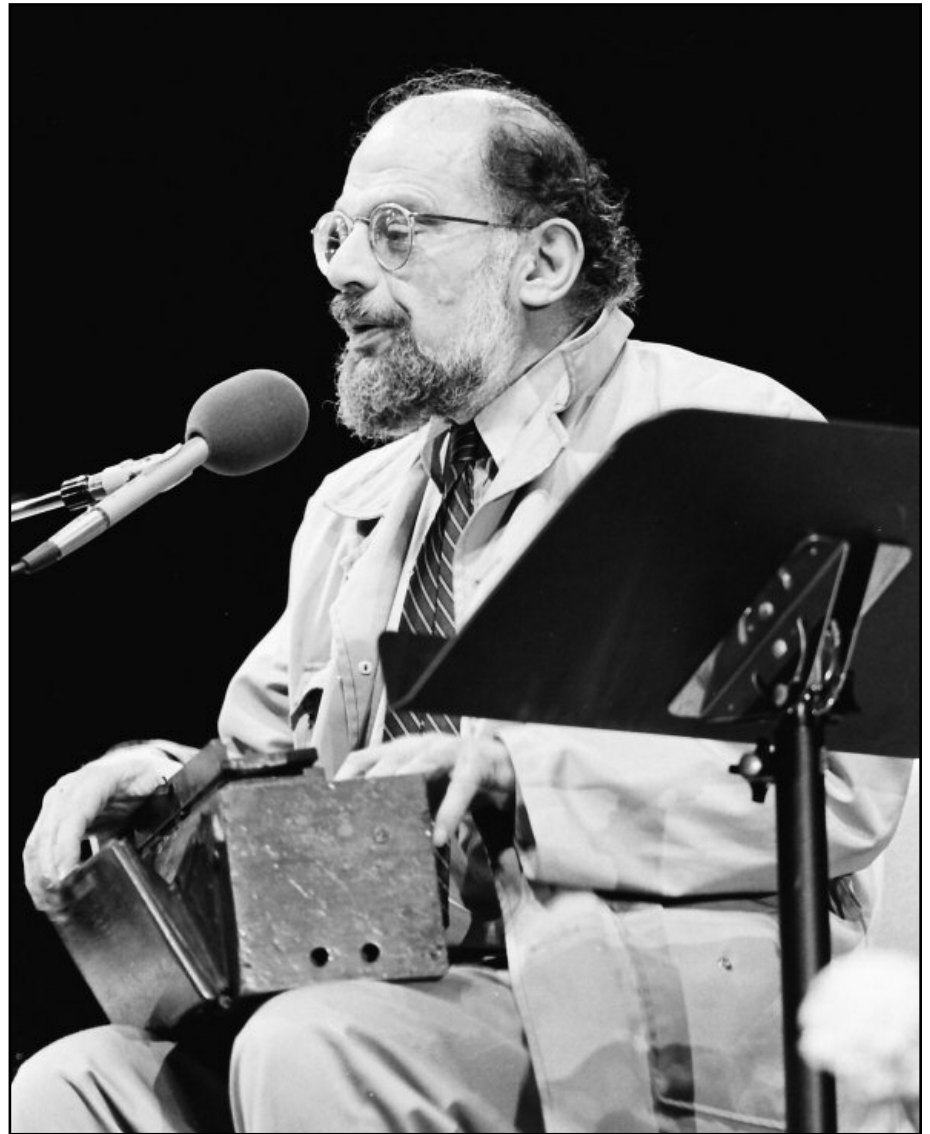
I'm writing in a time of flashing neon signs spelling out
vacant, speed-readers on autopilot surfing websites, lovers over-medicated,
over-caffeinated, but sleep-deprived. I'm writing while television talk show hosts
dictate the books the nation is reading, magazines prize erasure minds
and computers generate poetry.

I'm writing in a time when cafés stack you and Kerouac
beside the speaker, but there are no books by women, no Canadians,
no First Nations writers on any of the tables. I try my best Allen, not to cry
in my coffee, reading a friend's first collection, written before he swallowed
too many tabs of Prozac.

I'm afraid Allen, of what poetry is turning us into, of what it has made me –
alone and self-conscious, searching for 1962 San Francisco in East Vancouver, talking
to dead men.

I hold your book and feel foolish, even this I cling to now. Will you walk
with me a few blocks while I mumble out rhythm? Will you sit with my friend
while I sleep, tell him his writing mattered? Poetry teacher, boundary crosser,
the café closes in an hour. Tell me, Allen, where do I go from here?

Shannon Rayne writes from Vancouver.

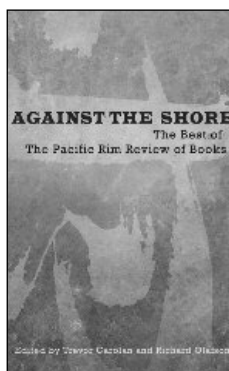


Allen Ginsberg in 1984

Against the Shore The Best of PRRB

Along the Rim The Best of PRRB, Volume 2

edited by **Trevor Carolan**
& **Richard Olafson**



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

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

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

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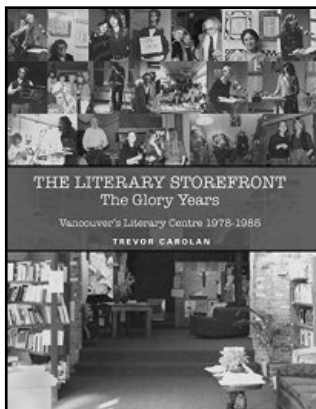
A BRIEF, SHINING, SPONTANEOUS CULTURAL CENTRIFUGAL FORCE!

Chelsea Pastorchik

For a younger writer like me, reading *The Literary Storefront* is akin to reading Ovid's *Metamorphoses* – the pages are full of legends. Carolan's history of Vancouver's first literary centre is populated by many of the defining names of the West Coast scene. The book however, is not really about the people; instead, it strives to capture the movement and the mission of the Literary Storefront: "It was the Gastown donkey engine in the West Coast's arts scene, chugging along indomitably toward the Word, the Sound, the Beat." Founded by Mona Fertig in 1978, the Literary Storefront offered readings, workshops, newsletters, and community for writers of all stripes until 1985.

In the book's introduction, Carolan explains that the impetus for writing this book came from the realization that the history of the Literary Storefront, as well as the people who could tell it, was disappearing. This reality stood in stark contrast to Fertig's original determination to preserve as much of this history as possible: "We were documenting something that was unique and I had a feeling that it was important to retain evidence of the dream." This book both honours Fertig's wish and makes powerful use of the materials she and others so painstakingly collected. The book is filled with copies of photographs, posters, newsletter covers and letters collected over eight years. For me, the highlight is a copy of two guestbook pages, signed by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Margaret Atwood and Christie Harris – three authors who occupy pride of place on my own bookshelves. These copies, as well as the bold chapter cover pages, type-writer inspired flourishes and glossy cover make the Literary Storefront a book worth displaying.

Those who choose to explore this book beyond the rich visuals will be rewarded with an equally rich history. Carolan, with what can be described as an obsession with context, has turned the story of the Storefront into the story of Vancouver during the



**The Literary Storefront:
The Glory Years**
Trevor Carolan
Mother Tongue
Publishing

late seventies and early eighties – the history picks up threads from all over the city's social, political, and geographical landscape. Each event is recounted with precision and detail. Unfortunately, this dedication to detail results too frequently in long lists of names, agenda items, or budgetary considerations – minutiae that do not exactly grip the imagination of all but careful scholars.

One of the greatest strengths of this book is the mosaic of voices Carolan has sought out and woven together into a comprehensive account. Often, the story of the Storefront is told through quotations from the volunteers and writers who lived the history. Adding to this sense of living history is the inclusion of Carolan's own voice as witness – his occasional personal anecdotes provide a welcome change of pace from the carefully researched narrative.

The reader knows from the start that the Literary Storefront would not last. It is difficult to read about the decline of the Storefront, to watch an idea that started with so much optimism get bogged down in the petty realities of finances and politics. Carolan softens the blow by exploring the many legacies the Storefront left behind. He also acknowledges, however, that the Literary Storefront's particular contribution to Vancouver's literary scene remains unmatched, quoting Dona Sturmanis: "There has been no place like it since, nor will there ever be, for its spontaneous cultural centrifugal force."

Chelsea Pastorchik studied at McGill University and the University of the Fraser Valley. She writes and teaches in Chilliwack, BC.



George Faludy (L), Trevor Carolan, Jan Drabek and Robin Skelton; taken at the old Classical Joint

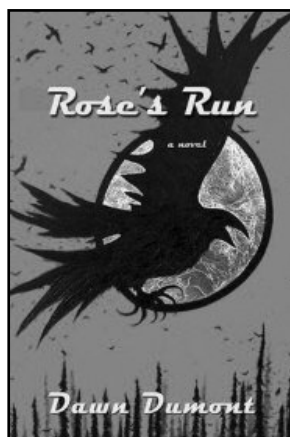
ROSE'S RUN

Chuck Barker

Firstly, no matter your social class or ethnicity, *Rose's Run* is relatable. You're going to relate to Rose and you're going to laugh both at her and yourself when you read her story.

Already the winner of the 2015 Saskatchewan Book Award for Fiction, Dumont's novel is her next step into the Canadian canon. A comedian born and raised in Saskatchewan, Dumont writes an intricate thriller-mystery with the tone of a profane comedic drama. A Plains Cree comedian and reporter for APTN indigenous television from the Okanese reserve in Saskatchewan, Dumont's previous novel, *Nobody Cries at Bingo*, was about growing up on a First Nation reserve and featured a series of hilarious stories. *Rose's Run*, while also a comedy about life on the rez, takes an imaginative turn for the supernatural, where both the fantastic and the terrifying aspects of spirituality play a heavy part of the story. It's this mix of humour and fear that will leave you in a cold sweat one minute, and in a ridiculous laughing fit the next.

Rose's thoughts are a peculiar weave of both juvenile playfulness and acquired



Rose's Run
Dawn Dumont
Thistledown Press

wisdom. Readers are plummeted to rock bottom with Rose in chapter one and we quickly develop a relationship with our off-the-wall protagonist as she works to pick herself back up. There is a middle ground drama when Rose's irresponsible husband leaves her with their two daughters (a child and a teen), a set of injured knees, no money, and no car. Since she can't make it to work, she is promptly fired, and when Rose hits bottom the reader feels it. Her chance for redemption lies in her insistence on running herself into shape for a marathon, and just when readers might think her life couldn't get any more hectic, an angry spirit is awakened from an ancient slumber and sets out to terrorize everyone on the reserve.

On top of financial and life survival,

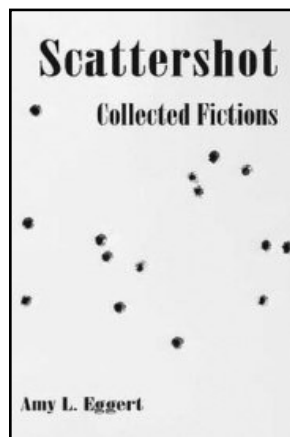
(continued on page 25)



Dawn Dumont

TRAUMA STORIES

James D. Sullivan



Scattershot: Collected Fictions

Amy L. Eggert
Lit Fest Press
112 pp., \$16 US
2015

Full of dread and trauma, the stories in *Scattershot: Collected Fictions*, by Amy L. Eggert, are as serious as a drunken stepfather removing his belt, serious as a 2 a.m. knock on the door, serious as a foster parent who just can't deal with this kid, serious as a popped eyeball, serious as lifelong guilt, serious as a young corpse.

Eggert will not avert her gaze from trauma, not shift around looking for some tragic redemption somewhere, but look steadily at horrible things that happen in our world and that lead—one domino tripping another—to more horror yet. No, in Eggert's stories violent acts shove perpetrators, victims, and witnesses into lives of trauma and into futures of more violence and of deeper despair. She explores not only what would lead a young husband to murder a prostitute, but how he would live into old age with that terrible memory. In what kind of life can a child possibly thrive after a parental murder and suicide outside his bedroom door? The scuzzy man we would all avoid on the bus is living forever in that moment when he saw his love's skull smashed in in an act of random violence. One act of violence leads to another and to survivor's guilt and to despair. A lock-down drill in an Eggert story is no waste

of time, interrupting the important work of the day, but preparation for the all too damn likely.

She has little patience for looking on the bright side. A flash fiction included here has a character feel a bloom of anger when she encounters moral obtuseness and denial of tragedy. Here is the single sentence—long-rumbling like muffled thunder inside the protagonist's skull—of "Signs":

Across the asphalt, the sign, proud and cardboard, staked between just blooming tulips in the garden behind the catholic church, angled toward traffic and toward the high school, catches her eye just like every afternoon as she sulks away from her campus toward her car, its big black block letters **Pray to End Abortion** leering, sneering, snaring her attention, her ire, and she wonders what the fuck, why the hell not **Pray to End the Causes of Abortion** or **Pray to End Incest** and **Poverty** and **Damaged Baby Brains** and fucking **Date Rape**, like it's always some selfish kid using it as fucking birth control, like it truly is a fucking choice, like some earnest prayer or genuflection or signum crucis would suddenly make birthing a broken baby beautiful, and as she punches deep into her purse and tears her keys from inside, a man rounds the corner of the church, the priest with a watering can, and he meets her gaze, nods in greeting, so she thrusts her middle finger into the air, climbs into her car, and slams the door behind her.

The anger here, for all its ferocity, manifests itself feebly, no more than an unfriendly gesture to meet the friendly one. Her world, unlike, as far as she can tell, the priest's, includes incest and rape, and his pleasant but judgmental obliviousness that heaps pain onto pain without knowing it—well, that's just cruel. But it's the wound, the anger that is this little story's focus, not the politics.

Formal experimentation—flash fiction and prose poems, a tale told backwards, different fonts that follow different story lines, ambiguous paragraph breaks that may suggest either that this whole paragraph has been a run-over line of prosey verse or else that the break is a deeper and harder break than just standard paragraphing—lends a further, formal instability to the moral instability of Eggert's work. Since violence may intrude at any moment into her stories (even if it's just a bird breaking its neck against a window), life there has no predictable form. Does one paragraph build upon another, or is each as isolated from its neighbors as her people are across those brief conventional spaces between them? Just leaving out or altering conventional indentation is enough to suggest there's something going on here besides conventional thesis- or narrative-building.

Right from the start we see a declaration of hybridity: the book's subtitle is *Collected Fictions*, but the first piece, the title piece, "Scattershot," is verse. As line breaks cut the language, in this poem, they chop narrative. While the rest of the collection that



Amy L. Eggert

follows tells one story at a time, this opening poem collages many and diverse moments of violence, trauma, PTSD, war, car wrecks, pleadings for mercy or forgiveness, rage, tortured memory, broken childhood, and learned aggression—each moment with a suggestion of a full story around and behind it, the collage suggesting it's really all one traumatic story lived out across the whole culture. The Man (capital letter, archetypal), the woman, the boy (though he's young, violence sometimes makes him a Man), and the girl suffer so many violent fates throughout the poem that passages like the following can indicate either a different narrative altogether after every comma, or else distinct moments in one damaged life:

The Man thundered something about forgiveness, something about adverse effects of the medication, something about show some fucking compassion, something about an exaggerated startle response, something about snapping her neck like a twig.

And the collection ends with a beautiful story, "Something about the Birds," that, unlike everything else in the collection, includes no overt violence, but a growing sense of impending loss and (a hangover, perhaps, from all the stories that precede it) of dread. A couple moves into a house in the spring when male cardinals, mad with territorial aggression, break their necks flying into the window. As the summer proceeds, the couple spend their time, more and more, in different parts of the house; dead birds still show up from time to time. Autumn leaf fall reveals a broken nest. "Four eggs lie inside, one cracked open, holding the pink hued body of a baby cardinal. I let the rake slip to the ground and reach with gloved hands for the little abandoned nest." And then, soon, it's winter. But that gesture of too-late compassion in *Scattershot's* world of trauma is something, however small and impotent, to hang onto as the cold approaches.

Amy L. Eggert looks real-life horrors in the face—horrors from tonight's news or from next door—to see and to show how trauma works.

(*Scattershot* is one of the first round of five books published by Lit Fest Press, the latest extension of Jane Carman's many-pronged Festival of Language, which includes among other things experimental reading events and the on-line journal *Festival Writer*. The other books in this opening release are *Is* by Martin Nakell, *Night Chorus* by Joani Reese, *Reliquary of Debt* by Wendy Vardaman, and *Blasphemer* by Bill Yarrow.)

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

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“WE ARE CONTINUALLY EXPOSED TO THE FLASHBULB OF DEATH”

Trevor Carolan

The Photographs of Allen Ginsberg (1953-1996)

Presentation House Gallery, North Vancouver.

When the poet becomes painter (or in this case the photographer), Western art aesthetics begin to approach those of East Asia. In Chinese, there is the Tang Dynasty maxim “Every poet a painter, every painter a poet.” We have comparatively few such examples in Western culture—William Blake, E.E. Cummings, Henry Miller, P.K. Page, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti—but it thins soon after that. With this outstanding exhibition, perhaps it is no surprise that Allen Ginsberg, certainly America’s best-known, if not best-loved poet of the 20th century (Carl Sandburg set a high bar)—often declared that he received his poetic transmission in a vision from Blake.

For more than forty years, Ginsberg packed a small Kodak Retina camera practically everywhere. He never pretended to be a photographic artist, although with friendships that included Richard Avedon and film-maker Robert Frank (images of both in the show), he had opportunities to sharpen his skills. Did he take photography seriously? You bet. Where he differs from another shutterbug stenographer-of-the-moment like Andy Warhol is in the fundamental grounding of his creative sensibility. Ginsberg termed the aesthetics of his decades-long fascination for photo-documenting meetings and public occasions with friends and colleagues a “snapshot poetics” and published a collection of this same title (Chronicle, San Francisco, 1993) in which a number of the photographs in this show appear. Ginsberg spoke of his interest in taking pictures as “sacramental documentation,” and came to recognize that the images he created were “valuable and historically interesting—maybe even art.”

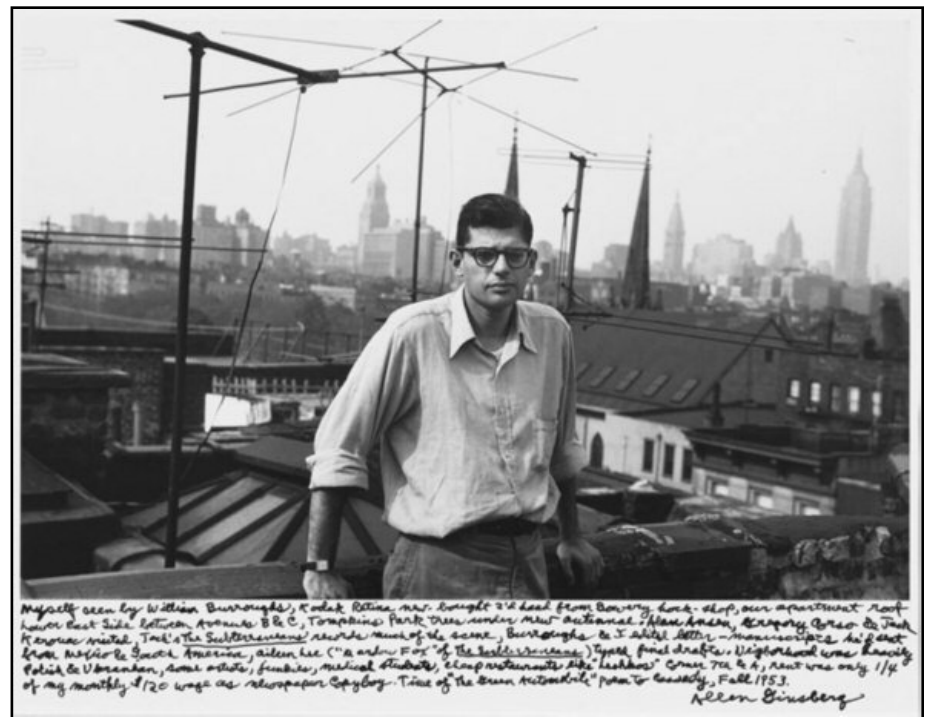
Familiar Beat faces run right through the exhibition. There is an abundance of images of novelist William Burroughs—from the earliest days of his romantic friendship with Ginsberg, through periods of *The Yage Letters*, his time on the lam in Tangier, and later at Naropa University where he often taught at the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics. Ginsberg photographed Burroughs for almost 40 years.

The exhibition also features images of other friends—poet John Giorno, Herbert Huncke looking strung out and cadaverous; many of film-maker Robert Frank, ethnographer and music archivist Harry Smith at the Chelsea Hotel, British poet Basil Bunting (1973), punk pioneers Jello Biafra and Kathy Acker, Yevgeny Yevtushenko at his dacha outside Moscow (1965), Robert Creeley, controversial psychologist R.D. Laing, on and on.

Less well known are the family photographs of Ginsberg’s Russian grandmother and schoolteacher-fellow poet and dad, Louis, ill with cancer in ’76. Homoerotic shots of youthful boyfriend and subsequent life partner Peter Orlovsky appear from across the years—on the road in Mexico with his brother, Lafcadio; in North Africa, India, with his own ill-starred family, and aging together with Allen in various U.S. locations

Ginsberg’s “sacramental friendship” with Jack Kerouac is celebrated with some vintage images we’ve come to expect. There’s an iconic photo of Kerouac with railroad brakeman’s rule book, probably taken in 1953, at time of Kerouac’s novel *The Subterraneans* with its verboten theme of inter-racial love. Ginsberg captures Kerouac looking exactly like the kind of fella who could take the heat for falling in love with Mardou Fox, his Afro-American lover of that time. and a rarely-seen image of her appears too. Kerouac, like his mythic *On The Road* buddy Neil Cassady, turns up a lot. There’s more than a little of both men in James Dean and Hollywood’s commercial hustle in carving off a slice of renegade Beat independence for popular cinematic consumption becomes clear through Ginsberg’s portraits.

Whether it’s New York or San Francisco, red brick walls and back-alleys are *leitmotif* in Ginsberg’s world and work. Architecture, mood and light are constants, and likely unintended elements in the photographs. Curiously, one of the most powerful additions to the work is Ginsberg’s own unmistakable handwriting in the captions beneath each black and white image. The history and information the captions impart provides superb context for appreciating each photograph, and prompt the viewer’s own free associations with names and places, restaurants and locations encountered in Ginsberg’s poetry. An example is “View From My Kitchen Window.” Taken in August, 1984 from his beat, rent-controlled Stuyvesant Town apartment in lower Manhattan, it’s a shot of grimy brick tenements, weathered fire-escapes and an enclosed courtyard



Myself seen by William Burroughs; Kodak Retina, max. bought 2nd hand from Beverly back: stop, our apartment roof
 have last side between Avenue B & C, Tompkins Park trees under new national Alex Amen, Gregory Corso to Jack
 Kerouac metal. This is the Subterraneans records man of the same, Burroughs to J. White Miller - Monterey area of first
 love, before to Jack Kerouac, taken here ("a note for" by the best-known) Type final draft, neighborhood was heavily
 filled to Vancouver, some other, friends, medical student, "long restaurant" like looking? Corso, the 4, next was only 1/2
 of my monthly \$120 wage as newspaper copyboy. Time of the team notebook, poem to Cassidy, Fall 1953.
 Allen Ginsberg

“Myself seen by William Burroughs” 1953
 photograph from the collection of the National Gallery of Art

of wet ailanthus trees. *This is where the great poet lives?* Then the caption-note: “I had tea every morning almost a decade looking out my kitchen window before I realized it was my world view.”

That’s the poet at work.

In San Francisco, where the Beat Generation phenomenon really kicked into overdrive when Ginsberg and his Big Apple confrères encountered the S.F. Bay Area Renaissance poets, Ginsberg’s camera-eye kicks into over-drive. His passion for Denver stud Neil Cassady is reflected in a series of bluejeans and tee-shirt portrayals—Cassady browsing for used cars, handsome Neil with wife Carolyn who would soon welcome Neil’s friend Kerouac into a historic *ménage à trios*, Neil with LSD-promoter Timothy “Easy Travel to Other Planets” O’Leary during the Merry Pranksters’ famous Electric Kool-Aid tour. More importantly, there’s the simple Montgomery Street apartment where Ginsberg wrote *Howl* after his attempt to live the straight life for a while—working as a copywriter and dating girls. This, the photographs tell us, is where the work gets done, the history made. In the everyday moments—in places that look a lot like our own ordinary life.

Other Beat pantheon heroes turn up too. Gregory Corso with his appetite for the dark side is caught in superb profile at the Beat Hotel on Rue Git-le-Coeur in Left Bank Paris, 1957. It’s one of the best images in the show. This was when Corso wrote his incendiary poetry in *Gasoline*, while Ginsberg worked on *Kaddish* down the hall and Kerouac banged away at *Satori In Paris*, all in the same cheap digs that today is a tiny boutique hotel off the Rue St. Andre-des-Arts. What a remarkably productive period for modern literature in lean times! Corso also figures in one of the many shots of Ginsberg naked, the pair of them giggling, covering their willies with their hands, and we see how John and Yoko might well have borrowed from such work during their “Two Virgins” episode. Lennon never shied from paying homage to the Beats and followed the path Ginsberg had led out to India five years before; but then look at the name he gave his band—The Beatles, right?

Ginsberg talks a little about that India journey in this exhibition and we can see why. It’s 1962; India is quieter, less frantic than today. Ginsberg, who’d hit big with his *Howl* long poem, had done the unthinkable thing in U.S. consumer culture: he’d dropped out at the height of his celebrity (notoriety?). Having seen how fame was eating up his closest friend Kerouac, he hit the road with Orlovsky, winding up for a long year in India. It was a transformational experience (see *Indian Journals*, City Lights Books).

(continued on page 36)

MODERNIST, DOWNHILL RACER

Richard Wirick

If you could do anything in life, what would it be? A serious literary novelist? A hockey forward or a tech lord? Maybe you could try to live sideways as one of Jonathan Lethem's flawed superheros, like Vestman or False Dave? Let's put the question differently. If you came into a fortune as a Harvard sophomore and one of the world's greatest poets looked you in the eye and said "Do something *useful*," what would it be?

James Laughlin, heir to the Jones and Laughlin steel fortune, was in Rapallo in the late thirties, having attained an audience with Pound, who called his tutoring of the young poet the "Ezruniversity." The bearded one's "usefulness" advice was taken with the knowledge that virtually none of Pound's friends, save for Hemingway, had steady publishers. James Laughlin came back and, armed with a Buick full of manuscripts and access to a friend's Heidelberg offset press, began the great and famous publishing house of New Directions. William MacNiven's *Litterchoor Is My Beat* follows Laughlin from the silver spoon manor to the garrets of writers the world was ignoring, but in whom he believed with prescient, unerring conviction. What we need now is more Laughlins, with the tiny handful of publishers in the U.S. having fulfilled our worst expectations, owned by less than a handful of conglomerates and basically making major publishing decisions in their marketing departments. 'JL,' as he was known to friends, saved from oblivion those who would never have found a place in that juggernaut—the Oppens and Levertovs and Duncans, the ones whose pavannes and divigations were, again in Pound's words, making it new.

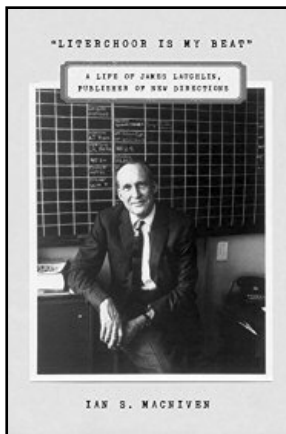
The history of New Directions became the history of Modernism's visibility and influence, its march out of the shadows of American cultural and public life. Laughlin did not just bring into print Kenneth Patchen, Djuna Barnes, and a whole lot of Lorca. He didn't just take chances on outsiders, but salvaged untouchable works from established figures. Of course he re-issued *The Great Gatsby* when it went out of print. But he also published *The Crack-Up*, mental illness being a subject Scribner felt should remain hidden in the happy family of established authors. It was a move that dazzled even the officious Edmund Wilson, Fitzgerald's old Princeton roommate and a standard bearer of the official canon. The book is small, as thin as the unravelling tapestry it accounts. But its phrases have become indispensable on our tongues, like there being no second acts in American life, or that in the dark night of the soul it is always three o'clock in the morning.

For a number of decades, New Directions had to simply absorb the losses of masterworks guaranteed not to sell: Pound's *Cantos*, the spidery, filamental notebooks of Robert Walser. But by the sixties, a new openness boosted the popularity of poetry to where Levertov and Patchen, as well as Gary Snyder, could have best sellers. The house's first million-copy sale was appropriately that of a similar publisher poet, Lawrence Ferlinghetti's *A Coney Island of the Mind*.

Laughlin's own verse ranged from slim haiku to the mock epic. He seemed to follow the influence of whatever (not always first class) talent he was publishing at the time. If he could be compared to anyone it would be Dr. Williams—a rough-hewn, straight-backed stare at the structure and scales of the everyday marvelous: a bicycle or a pitching wedge, what clotheslines could tell us about perseverance, and chimney smoke about hope, and hope's evanescence. Dr. Williams had told him that "Anything is good material for poetry," and Laughlin agreed.

Pound slashed at the verse Laughlin handed him, so that other editors like Williams and Louis Zukovsky did not have to. MacNiven notes that Laughlin found in Pound not so much his real father who had abandoned him in corporate oblivion, but an "intellectual father, a soul's father." Laughlin didn't swallow, as did many acolytes, everything Pound dished out. To his credit, he vigorously confronted Pound on his anti-semitism and his pathetic fascist sympathies.

In writing his verse, Laughlin would make sure that the length of a following line was within two typewriter spaces of the line preceding it, which he called "typewriter metric," the mechanical space count having an equivalent value as the letters of words. His subjects varied from the Great Depression to magic realism where 19th Century



Litterchoor Is My Beat:
A Life of James Laughlin
Ian S. MacNiven
New Directions



James Laughlin and Ezra Pound in the hills above Rapallo, Italy, 1937
(Estate of James Laughlin)

poets showed up on the subway, to the acceptance of the suicide of his son, who stabbed himself numerous times in a bathtub, "Four hours," Laughlin wrote, "just to wipe the blood away."

Other tragedies and shortcomings plagued him: thrice-divorced and with scores of mistresses, his erotic poetry was abundant but received no publishers and little attention when brought out by smaller houses. His family ostracized him—abandoning the family business, a stalwart, shining star in America's manufacturing economy, was unforgivable. He was blind in one eye, but used it effectively in Cyclopien motifs and allegories.

This writer would regard Laughlin's enviable life as a sort of vacation, but the question arises of what *he* regarded as fun, as the experience of "getting away." The answer was skiing. He'd gone to Harvard rather than the other elites who beckoned him, given Cambridge's proximity to New Hampshire's White Mountains. In Europe, slaloming the Alps and Dolomites hooked him completely. His other "doing something *useful*" became ski resorts—not just visiting but starting new ones. After World War II, he founded with several fellow literary ski bums the Alta Basin resorts in Utah, which made him a fortune New Directions could never provide. It was the source of consternation to his writers, never being able to find him as he disappeared onto the world's most enviable slopes. Williams became furious when his novel, *White Mule*, showed signs of best-sellerdom, and Laughlin, with little office staff to speak of, was in the New Zealand Remarkables and unavailable to order a second printing. Rexroth and Delmore Schwartz had similar experiences, writing letters to the trades and never forgiving him.

He was a poet's poet and a publisher's publisher, and he wrote to his last breath at 83, turning out over 1200 fine poems in the more sedentary (he finally broke his back on an icy slope) last two decades of his life. He approached death with the joyful misanthropy, zaniness and self-deprivation that proves endearing and effective, and is often the closest we can come to wisdom. He embodied Lionel Trilling's notion of the supreme author being first and foremost a vessel of authenticity and sincerity. One of his last poems was "The Junk Collector": discursive, light yet mordant, anticipating the self-consuming, tossed-off conversational strolls of Frank O'Hara and James Schuyler. And it is "typewriter metric" at its brief best, muscular and slim as a whippet:

what bothers me most about
the idea of having to die

(continued on page 18)

MEMOIR IN EIGHT CHAKRAS

Eugene Tarshis

Reading fiction may require suspension of disbelief, willed or unwilling, but reading a memoir depends on belief in the narrator. The memoirist has to earn credibility almost immediately. Leza Lowitz establishes her creds early on in *Here Comes the Sun*, before offering up insights gained along the way to adopting a child in Japan. From the cover onward, readers know they'll be on a rare journey, along a path discreetly laid out in eight chakras. And in a charming if disarming move, author to audience, Lowitz lets us know, in the preface, that we'll not be reading an account of adoption by an expat but a story about the physical and spiritual ins and outs of arriving "at a place where motherhood could become a possibility." She comes well prepared to tell her tale: more than 19 books of poetry, essays, and young adult fiction; PEN Josephine Miles Award in Poetry for *Yoga Poems: Lines to Unfold By*; and a yoga studio she's been running in Tokyo since 2003.

Her memoir unfolds from Tokyo, where she's alone in line at a Harajuku crêpe stand in 1999, and reflects on epiphanies before then, including life in Berkeley, and ends high above the cherry blossoms, in Tokyo Tower, with she and husband, Shogo, and son, Shinji, holding hands, not long after the Great East Japan Earthquake of March, 2011 has ceased shocking the city. In the aftermath comes balance to overcome fear, and harmony to move forward. It is a forthright, articulate account of adaptation and adoption, managing the dualities of pain and joy, stumbling block and resolution, to become a family of three.

The narrative arc is vast, crossing distant yet distinct borders and cultures—Yogic, Buddhist, Judaic, Indian, Japanese, and American—from the USA to Japan to India, and back to Japan, from single life to marriage, and finally, to motherhood. In an alluring form of armchair travel, transportation nodes are not stations but chakras, those "wheels" of spiritual energy and motion, and before setting out, readers are given a concise definition of chakras to come, chapter by chapter, as "roadmap and metaphor."

Moving from Berkeley to Tokyo, two of the planet's more disparate cultures, Lowitz finds writing and teaching jobs—challenging work but not part of a life shared intimately with another. Family keeps in touch but is on the other side of the Pacific Rim.

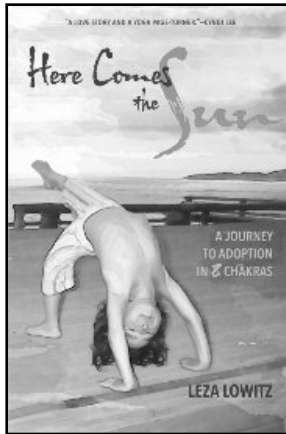
With time comes ease in navigating the currents of daily life and comfort in the language. Then Lowitz meets Shogo, fiction writer and literary translator, while hanging out with friends at a Yokohama jazz bar. She finds his easy manner charismatic and calming, an inspiration to love and a foundation for marriage.

During their life together, buying a home and founding a yoga studio, they want to start a family, and after eight years of trying, decide to adopt. In a culture where ancestors are honored and a family altar common to every home, adoption is an enormous undertaking. Along with the lengthy vetting and interviewing of potential parents and child as in the West, adoption of a child in Japan is rare in general and particularly challenging in an international adoption by non-Japanese, when "the chances of a successful placement seem slim, even with a Japanese partner." What's more, there is the longstanding stigma in Japanese culture of adopting a child, due largely to birth parents being unwilling to give up legal claim to son or daughter by removing the name from the family register (*koseki*), a document that links family to family. Then there's the matter of getting approval from her in-laws: an unwritten rule in Japan, unlike most countries, that such permission is a must for adoption.

And were the adoption to go through, the child might face bullying for looking different than either parent and being an outsider.

Shogo reminds her that they are "a rainbow family," and they proceed with the process after getting approval from his sisters and widowed father.

In response to the stress of having a number of available adoptees placed with other families, plus hearing a pregnant yoga student say she "wants to get rid of it," Lowitz agrees with Shogo's gentle suggestion that she needs a break from it all. She then goes to India to embrace the Middle Way, its healing perspective, and "search for the mother within." Eventually, she and Shogo overcome the hurdles of adoption bureaucracy and city government regulations.



Here Comes the Sun: A Journey to Adoption in 8 Chakras

Leza Lowitz
Stone Bridge Press



Leza Lowitz

Lowitz has stated, "Among other things, this book is about forging a creative life." To read the tale of this forging is to encounter courage and craft that reveal with keen insight her deeply private moments, crises, and triumphs, and give them universal relevance. The beguiling simplicity and casual tone divert attention from how far we've travelled with her on the adoption journey, and that certain lessons have been given, including a compendium of Buddhist, Yogic, and Judaic lore and poetry, prayers and sayings, fluidly shaped in a confluence of three wisdom traditions.

Once we reach the eighth chakra, it becomes clear the narrative has been turned and tuned to gather tension ever so slowly. The cathartic moment comes when the new parents take Shinji out for his favorite food, ramen. When he asks *Mommy* a question, that two-syllable word resonates in the taut dramatic line, releasing a note of relief that something meaningful has been forged which links three lives as one. It comes about rather like discovering that the stone sea of tranquility in a Japanese garden derives from a dynamic tension of structure, mindful of one's surroundings and aware of other presences, all vital and engaging.

Eugene Tarshis left Chicago for Japan in 1988 to experience genuine Zen practice and has been a resident since then. He lives in Tokyo, where he edits ANA's *Wingspan* magazine and writes on international literature and Japanese culture.

LAUGHLIN (continued from page 17)

(sooner or later) is that
the collection of junk I

have made in my head will
presumably be dissipated

not that there isn't more
and better junk in other

heads and always will be but
I have become so fond of

my own head's collection.

Thank God he didn't go into the steel business, that his head's collection was reflected in the actual cold type of shelves upon shelves of bookstores and libraries. And that his list, without peer, may well be with us, in the words of his first cantankerous teacher, "[T]ill time hath broken/ down all things/ save beauty alone."

Richard Wirick is the author of the novels *One Hundred Siberian Postcards* (Telegraph Books) and *The Devil's Water* (Ekstasis). He practices law in Los Angeles.

CAPTIVE

Peter McCambridge

Captive by Claudine Dumont, translated by David Scott Hamilton, comes with a hell of a twist. It's a twist so big that you might want to consider stapling the last few pages together in case you accidentally read the equivalent of "The butler did it." It's a twist so huge that readers would be grateful upon reaching the last page to find a message from House of Anansi's Arachnide imprint: "To read the end, please email us with 'Spoiler alert' in the header." It's a twist so game-changing that it makes the novel. It shapes our impressions of everything that came before; it's what remains with us long after we put the book down.

But what about all that comes before the twist? It's not bad either. Emma finds herself taken out of the world around her. She has a dead-end job and drinks to forget: "I can't get to sleep without it. I can't forget the empty box of my life without it." She dreams of getting stuck inside a falling elevator. Then suddenly she wakes one night to find two men in her room, one on either side of her bed. "Dressed in black. In black masks."



Captive
Claudine Dumont
translated by David
Scott Hamilton
House of Anansi, 2015

She has been snatched. Kidnapped. Taken by these mysterious intruders to an empty concrete room, swapping the falling elevator of her nightmares and the "empty box" of her life for another, all-too-real empty box. A cell.

Thirst comes first. There's no water. Then the inevitable question: "Why am I here?"

Emma is washed and groomed by her captors every night once she has passed out from the sleeping pills they drug her drinking water with. She maintains a modicum of dignity. She doesn't have to use the bathroom except to pee. She doesn't have to eat, just drink the water. They've even fitted her with an IUD.

Hours, days, weeks, months pass. "An unending string of empty moments. [...] A hell in which nothing happens and nothing moves."

Then, everything changes.

"I hear a noise. Irregular breathing. It's not me."

"Are you okay?" he asks. There's a man in the cell with her: Julian, a stressed-out financial consultant, who hates his work. She resents him being there, wants to make him disappear. This is her prison, her punishment, her personal hell. What's he doing there, restricting her freedom even more than the room's four walls?

And so we make progress. Chapters mark the passage of time, but how much time has passed between them? One day? One week? One hour?

The reasoning is as staccato as ever, thought building upon thought, often going back to contradict itself, the repetitive vocabulary and turns of phrase perfectly bringing across the circular thinking and lack of progress that come from being trapped between four walls all day.

And then, suddenly, there is a shift in gear. The same short, staccato sentences build more quickly to create tension and breathless panic.

Silence. There's too much silence. He's speaking to me. I can see that he's yelling. I don't hear anything. He stops. He claps his hands. I don't hear anything. I shake my head. He brings his fingers to his ears. He shakes his head. He shows me his ears. He can't hear a thing. I can't hear a thing. I mouth, 'No.' I scream. I can feel a vibration in my throat, but I can't hear a thing. He's standing. He's looking at me. He doesn't move. He can't move. I can't find the strength to get up. A thousand thoughts rush through my head at an impossible speed. I feel like I'm going to implode. My fingers begin to go numb. I recognize panic. The tightening in my throat, my stomach contracting. The cold in my fingers and toes. No. I don't want to lose consciousness. Not now.

The experiments have begun. Away from alcohol, work, friends, family, television, and everything else that tends to stand between us and life, Julian and Emma are subjected to a series of increasingly cruel and unusual tests. Why them? What is this?



Claudine Dumont

Some kind of twisted reality TV show? But here they are, labs rats. "Rats running around in a circle."

All will be revealed in the end, but in the meantime, we have the writing. Dumont's distinctive pacing and phrasing. The sparse but poetic prose as tears fall like rain. And David Scott Hamilton's translation.

Overall, the translation is nice. Scott Hamilton doesn't hug the French for the sake of it. "Mon estomac se contracte" becomes, for example, "My stomach clenches" rather than the more literal "contracts." "I'm the girl who can disappear without a ripple ["sans remous"]," Emma says to herself, leaving us with a pleasant image in English. But for every "lousy pay" (paye de misère), there's a "pertinent" question or a "When I reached the age of majority" as the English text can be a little heavy on nouns. "How long before someone notices my absence?" Emma thinks, when "before someone notices I'm gone" might have gone over more smoothly.

Similarly, "I can't even conceive of the possibility" sounds a little strange coming out of the mouth of a young woman stuck in a dead-end job, while—and here's the important bit—the original French sounds perfectly natural. And when "C'est une transgression si énorme de mes droits" becomes "It's such an egregious violation of my rights," to me at least "egregious" sounds more like David Scott Hamilton's voice than Claudine Dumont's or Emma's as occasionally the translation slips into a higher, more foreign register than the French original.

Sentences like "Je ne peux pas m'habiter" are admittedly difficult to translate into natural-sounding English. Scott Hamilton's "I can't inhabit this body" gets the job done, but perhaps taking another step back from the French to "I can't live in this body" would have been a bit less faithful to the original while sounding more natural in English. These are perhaps the two or three sentences per novel that literary translators—and their editors—have to spend most time on. It's easy to let them slide by, but that's at the risk of exposing the translation to death by a thousand cuts, each tiny slippage where the language is off being just enough to detract from the reading experience.

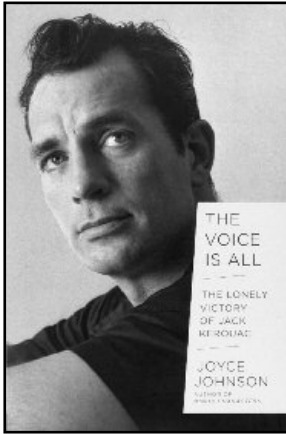
I am nitpicking, though. Translation is such an art, not a science, and it's based so heavily on instinct and personal preference that it's difficult to weigh up impartially. And who am I to judge? David Scott Hamilton does a fine job of stepping to one side and letting us enjoy Dumont's distinctive narrative. Right up until that memorable twist at the end.

Peter McCambridge is the translator of half a dozen books, the founding editor at QuebecReads.com, and a past winner of the John Dryden Translation Prize. His most recent translation is *The Closed Door* by Lori Saint-Martin (Ekstasis Editons). He lives in Québec City.

THE VOICE IS ALL: THE LONELY VICTORY OF JACK KEROUAC

Carol Ann Sokoloff

*I'm sick of Jack Kerouac... he's been haunting me, following me around with those sad puppy dog blue eyes I still wish I could have seen. I've been trying to review the newest biography of him for the past two years. Probably several new ones have been published, in the interim. Jack Kerouac is an industry now. His photo was used as an advertisement for The Gap, for goodness sake! What would he make of that? If Joyce Johnson is correct, former girlfriend and author of the biography, *The Voice is All: The Lonely Victory of Jack Kerouac*, he'd both hate it and love it, 'cause that was his nature – conflicted. He might have hated that he, a penniless itinerant who starved long years for his art, was bringing in profits for corporate America (except he wasn't antipathetic towards corporate America). On the other hand, he'd likely be amazed and proud – the fulfillment of a secret dream to be quintessentially American.*



The Voice Is All: The Lonely Victory of Jack Kerouac

Joyce Johnson
Penguin, 2012

Jack Kerouac's novels dance angel-like on the porous borders of fiction and non-fiction. Why, then, read a biography, one may wonder? After his first conventional novel, *The Town and the City*, Kerouac realized his own life provided ample content for his voice in fiction and thereafter never deviated from mining that rich vein. Yet Kerouac's life consists of a compelling combination of forces at a moment in the universe, a trajectory that makes for absorbing reading in the hands of a good storyteller such as Joyce Johnson, author of the very readable *The Voice Is All: The Lonely Victory of Jack Kerouac*. Biographies also help track Kerouac's translation of life to art, revealing his considerable craft, process, method and style.

In Jack Kerouac's life story we see a fascinating convergence of elements creating an innovative voice during a period of cultural upheaval—arguably the quintessential American novelist of the mid-twentieth century. Although his work met disdain both in his own and later days, few can rival Kerouac's output or impact. Johnson's biography adds to our understanding of Jack Kerouac as a divided soul, torn between languages (French/English) and cultures (Quebecois / American); possessing paradoxical character traits—quiet and shy, but obnoxious when drunk; athlete / intellectual; Catholic / Buddhist—and riddled with conflicting desires, such as seeking love and relationship but refusing all responsibility. Johnson traces the roots of these conflicts and demonstrates how Kerouac sought to bridge an inner chasm through the act of writing.

A novelist herself, biographer Joyce Johnson's warm, narrative voice takes us deeply into the psyche of a man for whom, as the title quote states, "the voice is all." In ten parts, from birth to the start of work on the novel that eventually became *Visions of Cody* (published posthumously), the biography offers a thorough and compassionate examination of Kerouac's life and art from his early years to the attainment of the mature voice it was his mission to find. Johnson scours the shadowy corners of Kerouac's complex nature, not to raise the dirt but to gain understanding of the soul and artistry of this important author. Drawing on Kerouac's papers, letters and journals, now available to researchers in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library, Johnson relies on few external authorities, preferring to use Kerouac's own words to illuminate the aspects of his life she writes about. Johnson also happens to have been intimately acquainted with her subject, having lived with Kerouac for two years prior to and during the explosive time of the publication of his second novel *On the Road*. There was one of his more enduring



Jack Kerouac



Jack Kerouac

romantic relationships. Having written about that period in a previous memoir, *Minor Characters* (another great read), Johnson only occasionally adds personal reminiscences to this biographical narrative, when a memory resurfaces to validate a conclusion she has drawn from Kerouac's own work and words.

Joyce Johnson begins her Introduction to *The Voice Is All* with the statement: *Precariously balanced between conflicting selves, between two cultures and two different languages, between ambition and self-immolation, Jack Kerouac rose suddenly to fame with a label that only half fitted him: "King of the Beats."* Suggesting that while Kerouac did come to represent the changing culture of American youth after the devastation of World War II, he also had an inner life quite apart from what was known as the "Beat" phenomenon. The other side of his being was that of his upbringing as a child of Quebecois immigrants in working class New England, growing up in Lowell, Massachusetts's "Little Canada," steeped in French-Canadian language, culture and Catholicism, striving to be the bluff American he admired, an outsider struggling to find his place. This is the balance of "conflicting selves" Jack Kerouac sought to maintain through the act of writing and an almost sacrificial dedication to the art of literature.

Johnson's exploration of Kerouac's childhood is extensive, if not always profound. Tracing his lineage to grandparents who left rural Québec for work in the New England textile mills, she looks into the families of father Leo Kerouac and mother Gabrielle Levesque. After losses of siblings and parents, this marriage of "two orphans" perhaps rendered inevitable the dysfunctional family dynamics that both propelled and repelled their youngest child, Jean Louis, affectionately called "Ti Jean" who later came to be known by the Anglicized name "Jack."

The Kerouacs spoke only French at home and young Ti Jean did not learn English until his middle grades, leaving him awkward, shy and frequently tongue-tied, even in high school embarrassed by the traces of a thick 'Canuck' accent. Yet his determination to master the language of America started him on a literary journey, first as a reader, which, in turn, fueled an ambition to write. While Johnson delves perhaps more deeply than other biographers into the experience of the French-Canadian immigrant family in New England, with its rigid, xenophobic and dark Catholicism, her exploration is relatively superficial, referencing the bestselling novel *Maria Chapdelaine* for cultural information. Quebecers might not find her treatment of their culture very nuanced, however, she deserves credit for at least trying to grapple with this aspect of Kerouac's background.

Where Johnson is more successful in offering depth and insight is in her evocation of the haunting centrality of the ghost of older brother Gerard who died of rheumatic fever when Ti Jean was four. Kerouac's dim recollection of his brother became another source of inner turmoil in that his own few memories conflicted with stories told by his mother, Gabrielle, who dealt with the loss by elevating the child to sainthood. The sickly Gerard had commanded all Gabrielle's attention during long bouts of illness, leaving the young Ti Jean feeling abandoned and resentful. Jack's last memory of Gerard was not as a saint, but as a mean older brother who slapped him for destroying an Erector set creation. Johnson writes: *Jack's last memory of Gerard was the slap across the face that*

had been his punishment for knocking over an elaborate crane Gerard had been carefully building with his Erector set. What particularly disturbed him, even as a man of 28, was a hazy memory like a waking dream of a 'gaunt and ragged phantom' standing over his crib in the middle of the night 'intent on me with hate.' (p. 7/8) Johnson suggests that Kerouac could never shake the guilt this memory induced, compounded by that from his own premonition that his sickly brother would die. Gerard's elevation to sainthood in his mother's eyes also ensured the insecure Ti Jean would always feel inadequate, even while Gabrielle now clung fiercely and seemingly without boundaries, to her only remaining son.

Of Gabrielle, who came to be known as 'Memere,' Johnson writes, "*her cupcakes had chains in them.*" Much has been written in this and other biographies about Kerouac's domineering, alcoholic, anti-semitic and personal-boundary-defying French-Canadian mother, to whom Jack always returned—likely the most important female figure in his life. However, Johnson also illuminates the larger-than-life Leo Kerouac, a hard-drinking, gambling, bigoted and argumentative figure, with whom his son found himself in a constant power struggle. A printer and linotype operator for Lowell's French-speaking community until a spring flood of the Merrimack River destroyed his business, Leo was ill-equipped to work for anyone else and the family fortunes began to sink. They moved houses frequently, always in a downwardly mobile direction. Eventually Gabrielle went to work in a shoe factory and Leo was forced to work out of town.

Jack already had formed an ambition to be a writer and believed that to do so he would need to go to university—unlikely, even unheard of, given his upbringing. In Lowell's immigrant communities young men went from school, if they finished it, to factory work. Excelling in track and field, with an ability to run very quickly, Kerouac set his sights on the football team in order to both please his father and earn a scholarship out of the grim mill town reality that was otherwise his future. After scoring a winning touchdown in an important Thanksgiving game, re-created in the *Town and the City*, Jack was courted by coaches from both Columbia University and the more local and Catholic, Boston College. The choice became fraught when it was made clear that Leo would lose his job if Jack did not choose Boston College. But Jack dreamed of Manhattan, the setting of the movie serials and dime-store novels he devoured, and encouraged by his mother who had family in Brooklyn, chose Columbia—away from his Catholic roots and towards the stimulation of New York's intellectual and jazz scene.

By high school Kerouac had formed close friendships with diverse boys in his neighbourhood, including the sensitive, intellectual Sebastian Sampas (whose older sister he married towards the end of his life) and the riotous, extraverted G.J. Apostolous, an early Neal Cassady-type figure. Johnson writes: *When Jack was with G.J., he would become G.J., just as he would later become Neal when the two of them were together, a personality change others would notice. Perhaps that troubling permeability of Jack's began with his mother who recognized no boundaries; perhaps it began with his imitations of Gerard. Yet looked at another way, it was the form love took for him.* (p.62) Kerouac also had his first serious romance with a Mary Carney, a brakeman's daughter, later immortalized as Maggie Cassidy in the novel of the same name. While tempted to marry and raise kids with her and take a railway job to do so, he could not abandon the call of his to mission to be a writer. Johnson writes: *As he went through life, Jack would often find himself in the position of wanting two irreconcilable things simultaneously—in this case the Lowell girl he was smitten with versus the irresistible adventure of becoming an unattached young writer in the great metropolis he mostly knew from movies he'd seen at the Royal Theater.*" (p. 67)

On a road trip to Vermont with a friend in the summer of 1939, Kerouac suffered a head injury in an accident. Johnson writes that the injury was "*bad enough to require a couple weeks hospitalization—one more blow in addition to the ones he received playing football since he was twelve. Could there be any truth to what his mother had later claimed, that he had seemed to her a very different person after the accident?*" (p. 67) Joyce Johnson may be the first Kerouac biographer to address the possibility that the writer suffered brain damage in both athletic and automobile accidents. Only recently have the tragic consequences of routine sports injuries come to light with evidence of alcoholism, depression, addiction, suicide and premature death among players. Johnson raises the issue as to whether such might be the source of Kerouac's premature decline.

In September 1939, Jack Kerouac left by train to New York, where his new life would begin at the prestigious Horace Mann School for Boys in the Bronx, a Junior College. There he would become at last a writer, while completing a make-up year before entering Columbia. Johnson writes: *It was a school with excellent teachers where there wasn't much emphasis on being athletic. The Jewish kids from well-to-do families*

who made up the majority of the student body concentrated on getting good marks...In a school dominated by upper class WASPS, Jack who was still terribly shy, might have felt intimidated. But among his new classmates, he was oddly comfortable even though he had never known any Jews before. (p. 73) A new friend, Seymour Wyse, introduced him to jazz and the Harlem clubs, then at their height of creativity. Johnson states that Kerouac claimed to write over eighty stories while at Horace Mann, many influenced by the popular William Saroyan. *For the first time, he experimented with abandoning plot and began to explore the possibilities of an auto-biographical first person voice,* Johnson writes. (85)

In the following seven sections of her biography Johnson narrates his time at Columbia, his summers in Lowell, the football accident that finally gave him time to read and write, his frustrations with his coach who did not recognize his abilities, and his eventually leaving Columbia to join first the Merchant Marines and then the Navy. The drums of war were beating and several boyhood friends had enlisted and even died, including his soul friend Sebastian Sampas. Johnson mentions the fiction Kerouac was writing during all these experiences and also his literary influences from Whitman and Hemingway to Saroyan, Wolfe, Celine, Rimbaud and Joyce.

Back in New York he was living with girlfriend Edie Parker and digging be-bop in Harlem. From the long jazz lines of Charlie Parker he borrowed the idea of the bop prosody of spontaneous prose. He was also drinking heavily. In the Fall of 1943, a new Columbia student appeared at Edie's apartment, the attractive and erudite Lucien Carr. Trailing him were several admirers including the young Allen Ginsberg and an older homosexual who had served as a mentor, David Kammerer, a friend of fellow St. Louis native, William Burroughs. The group became a tight circle which Johnson calls "the libertine circle." Much has been written of this group and these times and Johnson adds little new information but well conveys the spirit. She provides an unvarnished account of Lucien Carr's fatal stabbing of the persistent David Kammerer, a murder in which Kerouac was arrested as an accessory, showing that all was not sweetness and light in this group.

The phenomenon that came to be known as "The Beats" was largely a boys club, where women played the peripheral roles of witness or assistant but rarely as equals in the action, although Johnson notes that Kerouac always encouraged her to take her writing seriously. Johnson writes knowledgeably and compassionately about the women involved, although where others, such as Carolyn Cassady, have penned their own memoirs, she comments only to correct the occasional misconception.

Jack Kerouac's biography tells an absorbing story of a French-Canadian joining the melting pot of American society, of American innocence extinguished with the lives of boyhood friends dying in a far-off war, of a boy with an extraordinary memory and a drive to write who used sports as a way to out of a dreary fate, and finally of a shy figure who unwittingly finds the spotlight as the king of a cultural movement he named but does not fully embrace. After an agonizing wait of seven years between the publication of his first and second novels, Kerouac was unable to handle the attention, mostly negative, given to his innovative *On the Road*. Alcohol, drugs, constant movement and avoidance of all responsibility beyond the personal duty to write, to record and to "moan for man" fueled the decline which Johnson claims has been well discussed and avoids in her biography.

The Voice is All: The Lonely Victory of Jack Kerouac is profound in that biographer Joyce Johnson understands that Kerouac had a mission to write, a mission he served above all, to the sacrifice, perhaps, of his own happiness. For all the faults of the overbearing Memere, we can thank her for giving Jack a home and a place to come back to, to write and to be willing to support her son as a writer by working in a shoe factory. His family could hardly have imagined the place in literature his voice would eventually fill.

Postscript: Joyce Johnson ends her biography in the Fall of 1951 with Jack trying to find a publisher for On the Road (not released until Fall 1957), and writing long letters about writing to Neal Cassady. In his journal Jack writes, "I'm lost, but my work is found." Unfortunately, the finding of his voice as an American author meant Kerouac ultimately submerged the Francophone Ti Jean to the point where he could not entirely live with himself, one suspects—a martyr at the altar of literature.

Carol Ann Sokoloff is a poet, author, editor and jazz vocalist/songwriter. She has published several books including *Eternal Lake O'Hara* (poetry and history) and *Colours Everywhere You Go* (for children); and produced *Let Go!*, a CD of jazz standards and originals. She is based in Victoria, BC, where she teaches popular continuing studies writing programs through the University of Victoria.



Jack Kerouac

ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND DECODED

Linda Rogers

When he lifts the weight of his lengthy and complex study of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Victoria-born poet and historian David Day must be remembering the tendonitis he suffered after challenging the Kwakwaka'wakw Nation to arm wrestle.

Alice's adventures might have been cautionary tales for inquisitive Victorian children, but their gestalt intrigues historians of every ilk, not the least Day, whose childhood obsession with mythology and transubstantiation, the morphing of ideas in and out of reality, has been translated into children's books, poetry and studies of lateral thinking authors like Tolkien and, for the past two decades, the Oxford scholar Lewis Carroll, aka Charles Dodson.

Wordplay, sometimes the linguistic manifestation of abstract mathematical hypotheses, is the magnetic force that compels an ideal lector to the deep and various meanings of Carroll's apparent homily for children of all ages. Day is not immune to its attraction, the alluring shape-changing of word, number and visual image. His eyes have become our portals to worlds inhabited by archetypes and packaged in accessible books, among them *A Tolkien Bestiary*, *The Doomsday Book of Animals*, *The Quest for King Arthur* and now *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland Decoded*.

This Alice book is brilliantly designed, incorporating contemporary photography, illustration and coloured text to support his exegesis of the pedagogical storyteller. Day allows the mind to relax and rest and laugh in the intervals between serious examination of arguments that have obsessed philosophers from the beginning of recorded time and were reinvigorated during the Enlightenment, when auteurs as diverse as Bishop Berkeley and Mozart continued the holy dialogues, theses and *songspeils* about the nature of being, which incorporate everything from the transmogrification of Christ, the Spirit religion of indigenous cultures, theosophy and the mysterious secular rituals of Freemasonry, revealed in Mozart's *Magic Flute*, precursor to Alice's wonderful adventures of the mind.

Alice... Decoded is a big book, but the content is lightened by an interdisciplinary approach that embraces mathematics, aesthetics, philosophy, and theology, all of the flow conjoined in the sparkling real and metaphorical rivers running through Oxford.

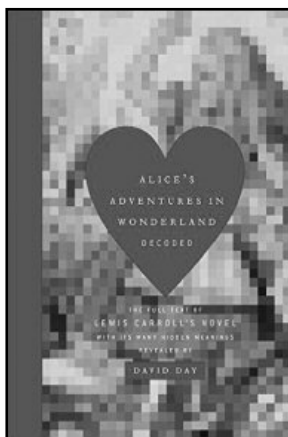
Wonderland Oxford was the seat of English disputation of Plato and Aristotle and the relationships between design and designer, reality and unreality, actual and spiritual, and of the Anglican scholar who told stories embedded with ideas to a little girl called Alice, the transubstantiated Virgin, herself a curiosity in a culture where women descended from Adam and Milton still "lived for the God in him."

Day raises the question, was the story told to three little sisters on a punt ride twisted by rage when he finally put it on paper fairy tale or polemic, as he follows the course of the river from one to the other, arriving at the conclusion that his dedication was a postal address for a poison letter and not the signature of friendship?

Dodson's differences with Dean Liddell were both personal and philosophical. How does an Anglican mathematician reconcile Plato and Aristotle, little women and Holy Mothers? There may or may not be One Great Designer but the argument for a great design is irrefutable, as every child who takes apart daisies confirms. "He loves me, he loves me not" is cabalistic language, formulae for matter and anti-matter, the simplest and most sophisticated argument for and against the love of God: "Heaven in a wild flower," a game that revealed the simple truth that Dodson, the humble mathematician, would never wed Alice Liddell, daughter of the aristocratic Dean of Christ Church, albeit rosy pink.

The social design Dodson ardently protects, the numerology of birth, will not allow such disruption of the social order, ordained or otherwise enforced.

His Alice book demonstrates all the ways in which religious passion, the ontological pleasure of irrefutable and mutable truths transcends the pain of ordinary affliction, including inappropriate attraction, well documented in photographs, some



Alice's Adventures in Wonderland Decoded: The Full Text of Lewis Carroll's Novel with its Many Hidden Meanings Revealed
David Day
Doubleday Canada
2015

of them bordering on pornography. In the mind/body split, the mind filled with comforting archetypes and marble formulae soothes and conquers febrile desire.

Aristotle, the master of mimesis, was also a high comedian. Explicating visual and verbal puns, Day unpacks satire, rabbit holes, the revelatory opening up, cracks from which truth emerges, perfectly expressed by the poet Leonard Cohen, himself a descendant of rabbinical scholars, "Forget your perfect offerings / there is a crack in everything / that's how the light gets in."

Nothing, it turns out, is as sacred as God's intention, and men who would be gods are evidence of imperfection. Decoding Dodson's characters is their unmasking, and Day reveals the cast, contemporaries with various vanities and power bases,

schools of thought or the anti-think that still gives great delight, not because the identity of certain Oxford dons and Victorian philosophers has current relevance for anyone but historians, but because Dodson could be the father of the Absurd, a movement that found its apotheosis in the mid-twentieth century, of surrealism, Oz, the modern mystery plays of Pinter and Albee and the opiated lyrics of The Jefferson Airplane, "Go ask Alice when she's ten feet tall."

Dodson, according to Day, although familiar with the wild dreams of his contemporaries Coleridge and the Pre-Raphaelite Lord Leighton, and probably aware that common teething and cold medicines contained opiates "by appointment to Her Majesty, the Queen," was writing from logic, however surreal, *reductio ad absurdum*, knowledge that foreshadows computer technology, another fantastical application anticipated in Dodson's presentation of various numerical bases.

Portmanteau nouns aside, the operative words are verbs and "Decoding" is the key to Day's successful intention as he penetrates the cracks in mathematical and ecclesiastical formulations, postulate, pun and palindrome, finding the common denominators in common human experiences that start with the descent down the universal rabbit hole, the scary canal of birth and rebirth.

Wonderland is Pangea, the primal continent and incontinent, convulsion and expulsion, the formation and reformation of ideas and physical being, fear being the close companion of joy and sexual pleasure, which Dodson may have felt in the company of little girls and their infectious laughter when he first heard it in the rector's Paradisiacal enclosure, where God's Gardeners play cards with prime numbers in a group of three.

In this shaky world, disturbed by opposing schools of disputation that rose out of the Enlightenment, and most recently Darwin's theory of evolution, we find games that are familiar secular and religious rituals in the Church of England, the largely Presbyterian Masons, descendants of Mozart's Masons, and spiritualists, the Rosicrucian theosophists. This is as confusing to us as it must have been to the child Alice, dizzy in her gyre, up and down, inside out and outside in, befuddled by cats with enigmatic smiles, another mathematical phenomenon revealed by allusions to sphinxes and the engineering of catenary bridges.

Day has made Alice's book of hours and minutes whose time arrives at a tea party attended by a hatter high on glue and guests affected by mushrooms and alcohol, other mind altering substances, madly accessible, as we recognize hat to hat, head to head, the tombstones worn by whirling dervishes and bishop's mitres. It won't be surprising if his deconstruction of the "poisoned apple," his work dedicated to a possibly ungrateful child, is equally fascinating to lay readers and scholars.

(continued on page 34)



David Day

HETHERINGTON'S PERMANENT IMPERMANENCE

Paul Falardeau

Michael Hetherington's book, *The Archive Carpet*, occupies an interesting space. As he explains in a short author's note that begins the book, Hetherington wrote small, mostly unrelated snippets of fiction each day while working on different projects, continuing the process mostly uninterrupted for a total of 6,000 days. The titular metaphor is aptly chosen: *The Archival Carpet* selects 600 of those one-off fictional hors d'oeuvres, weaving together the seemingly disparate strands into a unified so-called object that became the book's focus.

Before one delves into this collection, the *other* archival carpet must also be considered. Imagine the carpet covering the floor next to Hetherington's PC or typewriter. Words given little second thought fall between the fibres of the rug and are lost there, petrified like forgotten bones if lucky, otherwise completely lost to time and memory. The carpet itself becomes a sort of archival space, collecting fragments of thought and prose.

In a modern world where more and more writing, both good and bad, is being distributed online, often for free and often without ever being thought of again, *The Archival Carpet* represents a strange middle ground between that and more traditional publishing; a place where a writer's thoughts are not simply lost to the ether, but held onto in print. Maybe they will never become a book of their own, but they are collected here at least. A good line is, after all, always worth reading again and again. While the idea of holding on to seemingly ephemeral thoughts may appear to be a futile and dated practice, it still seems to have worth; books are not dead. As I write this in Japan, land of the cell phone, I still regularly see many folks,



The Archive Carpet
Michael Hetherington
Passfield Press, 2013
117 pp., \$ 19.95

young and old alike, reading on the train during their morning commute.

So on to this carpet of Hetherington's making. Some of the threads within it are like miniature stories or poems of their own, such as "The Scarlett Thread," in which the birth of twins is considered: "Tamara gave birth to twin boys. During the delivery one stuck out a hand and then pulled it in again, so they never knew who was truly first born. But I know." Others seem to be presented to the reader in mid-thought, such is the case with "Summer Solstice,"

where Hetherington writes, "By contrast, the first day of summer that year was problematic. Courtney ate so much jelly to celebrate the solstice that her astrological advisor resigned. And when she threw up, only the dog came to her assistance."

The book is arranged so that the blurbs fall under different sub-headings, but it seems like the best way to read it is to simply pick it up and read a few of them at random, creating meaning only as it happens from necessity or impulse. Perhaps this sort of impermanent permanence is what makes the book so beautiful. It was written in a random way and it can be read in the same manner. It is a book for the modern era of fleeting ideas, but it still a book. Here we have an inspiring effort by Michael Hetherington in which little moments of the charming mundane are captured and preserved along with wisps of fleeting meaning.

A regular contributor to PRRB, Paul Falardeau writes on sustainability, poetics and culture. He writes from Vancouver.



Michael Hetherington

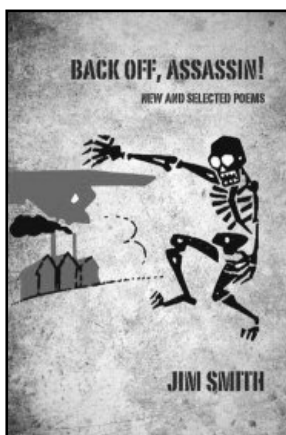
BACK OFF, ASSASSIN!

Richard Stevenson

Welcome back, Jim, and sorry I wasn't at the launch and am arriving so late to the party. That might be an appropriate opener. As these things go though, I'm picking up a review copy from a pile of books my publisher wants reviewed. The pile of books to be reviewed accumulates quicker than the pile of books assigned for review wherever you happen to be, and whatever literary publication you happen to be writing for, of course. Still, wasn't it Pound who said "poetry is news that stays news"?

I'm happy to say there is no "best by" date sticker on this collection's cover; indeed, while the bulk of the poems here come from the period 1979 – 1998, when the poet was most active on the Canadian poetry scene, and before he got "sidetracked" in pursuit of a law degree in the mid-nineties (;-)) and started practice as a civil litigator, Mr. Smith wrote a lot of wonderfully quirky neo-surrealist political poems. His avowed purpose has always been "to personalize the political, and politicize the intensely personal" (back cover blurb).

I'm happy to say this new and selected volume has not only "stayed news"; it's met Pound's other dictum to "make [the poetry] new" as well. Not that this volume doesn't have antecedents: the Latin and South American neo-surrealist "leaping poetry" Robert Bly has long championed—and specifically, the revolutionary poetry of Neruda, Vallejo, Parra, Roque Dalton, Mayakovsky, and Leonel Rugama, among others, is often imitated, parodied, echoed or answered poem to poem directly. This habit is not just the most sincere form of flattery, but a kind of acid test



Back Off, Assassin!
New & Selected Poems
Jim Smith
Mansfield Press, 2009,
\$16.95

of its internationalist flavour, and a testament to the poet's skill and wide reading. He's definitely found the right mentors to help him with his poetical agenda. Gary Geddes offers this assessment: "Jim Smith, laying down the law, places himself squarely in the line of fire, where the poet belongs" (back cover blurb).

Understand, we're not talking about a dire, deadly serious political polemic here. Rather, we're talking about a poet who has mastered the sub-genres of political fable, prose poem, the incantatory list poem, sudden or flash fiction, serial narrative, the shaggy dog story, lyric, and anti-lyric; a poet as comfortable with the Beats, San Francisco Renaissance poets, Tish/Black Mountaineers, oulipos post-modern deconstructionists, etc. as he is with the mainstream modernists. He's not a documentary realist like Geddes; he's an neo-surrealist satirist. More loose and shambling with his vernacular poetic line. Best of all, his work is witty, even hilarious, and trenchant—often all at once—and is never inaccessible or precious. It's not surprising that Stuart Ross is listed as editor for the current volume either. Jim Smith's work stands comparison with Ross's work and the droll vernacular delivery style of other strong Canadian neo-surrealists, fabulists, and absurdist poets—David McFadden, Robert Priest, Robert Sward, Frank Davey, and Robert Zend all come to



Jim Smith

(continued on page 24)

"OUI, PARIS EST UNE FÊTE" PARIS, AFTER THE ATTACKS

Anna Aublet

French literary scholar Anna Aublet teaches at Université Paris Ouest, Nanterre, La Défense. PRRB invited her to write from her city following the terrorist murders of November 13. She writes in honour of her friend Robert who lost an eye and whose jaw was destroyed in the Bataclan concert hall attack and thus cannot yet talk or eat.

To Bob, whose tongue was taken away

"Ma patrie, c'est la langue française¹" ~ Albert Camus

[...] [...] [...]

"Acte de barbarie"

"les barbares sont à nos portes"

[...] [...] [...]

barbarus, balbus

PARIS, usually synonymous with refinement and the epitome of civilization, has been painted over with the word "BARBAROUS," its moveable feast shattered. (*Car oui, Paris est une fête!*) We hear it always, endlessly, it has become the banner under which to bury the unutterable—a long repetitive string of the same syllable *bar-bar-bar-bar-bar-bar-bar-bar-bar-bar-bar-bar-bar-bar-bar-bar-bar-bar-bar* like so many bullets and shots mimicking the baffling, illegible bursts and outbursts of history. *Barbarous* has come to signify: "a means of communication unintelligible to us". The word has somehow recovered its etymology. *Balbus, Balbutier, Balbutiement*, a stuttering, stammering, spluttering act of language. It is the irruption of that ejaculatory bomb followed by a deafening silence. [...] [...] [...] It is the inarticulate chaos of history, unfathomable to us, of which we are all witnesses. The word itself is performative with its grotesque repetition of the same syllable as if to warn us about the dangers of reiteration.

N'oublions jamais. [Let us never forget]



Anna Aublet

I woke up on Saturday and walked the streets of Paris with husband and sister, listening to the unrelenting flow of whispers from the cafés, the ceaseless murmur of the French language, our language. We talk a great deal about loving our country, about loving our city, flag and anthem, but we never mention our native tongue, our idiom, or what truly shaped us. What makes us French is not our love of frogs, bread, cheese,

¹ "My homeland is the French language"

and good wine, it is that we call it *grenouilles*, pain, fromage, et bon vin. When I wander around my city, I don't have a feeling of communion with my fellow citizens because of the place I was born in, but because of the language and literature I share with them. That is what we tend to forget when we talk of national unity. I am not proud of my country because I was born, by chance, within its borders but because of its rich literary and cultural history. When I hear *grenouille*, I think of Jean De La Fontaine and "La Grenouille Qui Veut Se Faire Aussi Grosse Que Le Boeuf", when I think of *pain* I go to Marcel Pagnol's *La Femme du Boulanger*, *fromage* conjures up La Fontaine again and Balzac's servant in *La Rabouilleuse*, and *vin* is Baudelaire's "Vin des Amants" or Rabelais' gargantuan orgies.

Notre langue comme refuge contre la violence de la barbarie. [Our tongue as a refuge against the violence of barbarism]

As I write this piece, sitting in the French National Library, surrounded by archives, manuscripts written by the best minds of past generations, I cannot help but feel grateful for the repository it represents and the freedom I am granted to unearth them. In the aftermath of the attack, after the surge of monstrosity and dismemberment within our reality, most of us feel our jobs and daily tasks to be most trivial and insignificant. To those who feel helpless I say we need to slowly re-member—the difficult task of weaving and mending pieces together awaits us all collectively.

Exhumons nos archives. [let's start exhuming our archives]

Anna Aublet lives in Paris where she is currently doctoral fellow and lecturer at Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense. Her dissertation is entitled "The Prophet in the Garden, William Carlos Williams and Allen Ginsberg". The title of her article, *Paris Est Une Fête*, is the English translation of E. Hemingway's book *A Moveable Feast*, and it has become a signal phrase for solidarity in Paris since the attacks.

ASSASSIN (continued from page 23)

mind—all poets who have carried the *anti-poemas* approach of Nicanor Parra forward in unique ways.

Jim Smith is a really observant chronicler of our computer age too, and it's a telling detail to say that he's chosen to mix in the new poems with the older ones and not follow a chronology of composition. So: no section breaks, no saying which poems came from which book until we get to the Acknowledgments page at the end of the book; it simply doesn't matter. The voice and dark comic tone carry the book, and the skill level is very high and consistent throughout.

A wide cast of characters—strange bedfellows too!—make cameos: not just the literary luminaries mentioned but Alexander Graham Bell, Arnie Swartzenegger, Williams Blake and Burroughs, John Wayne, Robert Heinlein, bp Nicol, and Nibbles the dog as well. Highbrow and lowbrow culture both get a seriously funny drubbing:

WHAT IS IN THE HEART OF AMERICA

a big kid
afloat on popcorn and pop
in a carnival his dad owns
looking for heroes

(section 1, from *The Swartzenegger Poems* (for Nora Astorga))

This is a book of poetry that belongs on every seriously funny poet's shelf.

Richard Stevenson's latest books are *Fruit Wedge Moon: Haiku, Senryu, Tanaka, Kyoka, and Zappai* (Hidden Brook Press, 2015) and *The Heiligen Effect: Selected Haikai Poems and Sequences* (Ekstasis Editions, 2015). A documentary realist long poem sequence, *Rock, Scissors, Paper: The Clifford Olson Murders* is forthcoming. He currently lives in Lethbridge and will be moving to Nanaimo when his wife joins him in retirement.

KOREA'S RAINHAT POET

Trevor Carolan

Though one of his nation's greatest lyric poets, Kim Sakkat 'the Rainhat Poet' (1807-1863) is scarcely known outside Korea. Born Kim Pyong-yon, he remains an iconic, renegade figure in a country that has made the kind of sacrifices to achieve economic prosperity few contemporary North Americans or Europeans could understand. Koreans love an underdog; collectively they know the role too well, so Kim survives as a kind of beloved outlaw figure. When educated urban business people dream about chucking in their jobs and escaping the rat-race, the person they likely dream of emulating is Kim Sakkat—living free and easy as a wandering bard on the road. Until now, there have been few decent translations of his poetry in English. Now we have this first major gathering of his work for consideration.

In turbulent political times, Kim's landowning family hit a downward spiral and he wound up as an itinerant minor *yangban* aristocrat, paying his way along the road like a Celtic bard or a delta bluesman, with spontaneous poems and songs for every landlord. As O'Rourke's introduction explains, Kim was part of a new social and political phenomenon in early 19th century Korean society. Squeezed by China and Japan, and threatened by the expansion of Catholicism introduced in the south, a new class of landless scholars emerged—rootless intellectuals, Kim among them. His is the Cinderella story of Korean Literature: a suffering, broke, passionate genius—unexpectedly modern in style—screwed by an outmoded feudal system.

As the poems show, this is not the Tang-inflected Zennish work Westerners have come to love: Kim gives people what they want in poetry, but not in the ways they've come to expect. O'Rourke's comprehensive introduction sets the collection up well with biographical information on Kim, his life and times with, notably for readers unfamiliar with Korean poetic tradition, a technical overview of its metrical and verse forms. It's an uncommonly rich discussion of Korean poetry and poetics.

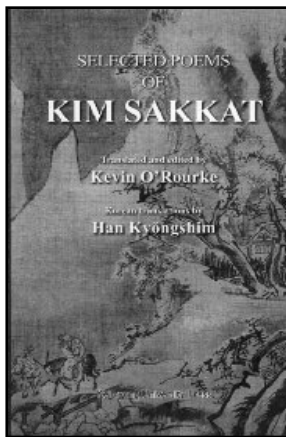
The *Hanshi* style Kim practiced involves the poetic use of Chinese characters. Among scholars, this too often resulted in stilted Korean poems that were poorly imitative of older Chinese models. Kim's distinction, or notoriety, was to use this high-brow intellectual form to express the rugged vernacular of Korea's early 19th-century common folk, and this makes him memorable. He's as bawdy as the Elizabethans or Spaniards of the 16th and 17th centuries:

*Second month; neither hot nor cold;
Wife and concubine are most to be pitied.
Three heads side by side on the mandarin duck pillow;
six arms parallel beneath the jade quilt.
Mouths open in laughter—thing p'um;
Bodies turn on their sides—stream ch'on.
Before I finish in the east, I'm at work in the west.
I face east again and deploy the loving jade stalk.*

Drink and the natural world are never far off: "...I drink ten jars of red Seoul wine / In the autumn breeze I hide my rainhat / and head into the Diamond Mountains." Tarts, drunkards, itinerant philosophers and sundry Buddhist adepts colour Kim's poetic landscape.

In conversation once in Seoul where the translator has lived for more than 45 years, O'Rourke discussed links between Kim Sakkat and the classical Chinese and Japanese poetry of writers like Tu Fu, Wang Wei, Ryokan, and Basho—literary characters that have wielded incisive critical influence on the development of the Cascadia/Pacific Coast region's eco-poetics. He further suggested comparisons to Celtic tradition with its bardic finger-pointing to beneath the surface of things; associations similarly, and favourably, arise with contemporary poets such as Mary Oliver.

In Korea, Kim's poetry has been best loved among the *kisaeng*, the wine-shop singsong girls. With their job of seducing, none has suited their *métier* more than the Rainhat Poet:



Selected Poems of Kim Sakkat

Trans. by Kevin O'Rourke
Keimyung Univ. Press.

*At first we found it difficult to relate;
Now we are inseparable.
Wine Immortal and town recluse together;
Heroine and poet are one at heart.
We're pretty well agreed on love;
A novel trio we make—moon, she and me.
We hold hands in moonlit East Fortress;
Topsy, we drop to the ground like plum blossoms in spring.*

The translations are readable and hold up to the originals well. O'Rourke captures Kim's country Koreanisms better than anyone. Occasionally a leaner line might work, dropping conjunctions or use of the definite article, but this comes partly from our modern experience of reading poetry aloud more frequently. O'Rourke though, is a poet who translates poetry. He has given us the lion's share of our fine translations from Korean poetry and this is a lively new addition. Welcome then, Kim Sakkat to the "renegade scholar" tradition—a fresh name to include alongside such Asian poetic character worthies as Nanao Sakaki and Ko Un.



A portrait of Kim Sakkat

Trevor Carolan's latest work is *The Literary Storefront: The Glory Years, 1978-1985 (Mother Tongue)*.

ROSE'S RUN (continued from page 14)

Rose struggles with her romantic life. The newly elected Chief is giving her a lot of unexpected attention, and ex-lovers cause chaos and a small amount of fear for both parties.

In the most unorthodox way, Dumont introduces feminism into this novel. However, it's not as simple as calling *Rose's Run* a feminist piece. It has a stronger focus on gender equality. Where one man sneaks a woman into his wife's bed, the woman is betraying her own family. The people in Dumont's story are just that: people. They make mistakes. They misbehave. While it's true that many of the men Rose knows have caused the women a lot of grief, the "feminist" response from the women on the rez is not quite what one would call ethical either (though some might call it satisfying.)

Dumont's style of humour is self-deprecating, honest, comprehensive, and confidential. This is a novel where you get to know Rose and her trials and triumphs intimately. When we see Rose breaking through to and actually having successful conversations with her rebellious teen daughter, it's clear that Dumont is giving us some precious information on how to survive parenthood. It's fiction, but there's no bullshit. That is an important distinction in contemporary novel-writing. *Rose's Run* is integral Canadian literature. It has sincerity, it has setting, and it has culture. Writers like Dumont provide a foundation which every citizen can use to understand what it means to be truly Canadian. She doesn't rely on stereotypes from Canada's aboriginal community. Instead, her characters are people, and each one is brought to life with her attention to detail and fearlessness of the *strange*. As Canadians struggle with defining their identities, Dumont acts as a mentor, similar to writers like Sheila Watson, Timothy Findley, and Alice Munro, in guiding us toward creating our national legacy.

This is a novel that will appeal to a broad audience and I'd recommend it to adolescents, adults, rich, poor, city-dwelling, country roaming, Canadian or otherwise. It's pedagogical and a celebration in one package. An easy read. With *Rose's Run*, you can add to your Canadian repertoire, scream, cry, and laugh, all in one whirlwind juicy book.

Chuck Barker is a First Nations writer from Chilliwack, BC. Her first completed manuscript is a children's novel called *Canidae*. She hopes her career will involve kids, whether writing for them, teaching, or rearing her own.

THE BLESSINGS AND CHALLENGES OF SPECIAL NEEDS

Rose Morrison

Snapshot of a Soulplace: in the land of Special Needs is a delightful, family-published book that blends poetry, prose, drawings, paintings, and photography. It can be likened to an artistic scrapbook of significant happenings in the life-so-far of twenty-five-year-old Mielle Metz who has Down syndrome.

Author Kari Burk is an artist, writer and landscape gardener who lives in Castlegar, British Columbia. She is a graduate of the Emily Carr School of Art and Design, has self-published fourteen chapbooks of poetry, and performed and exhibited her work throughout British Columbia.

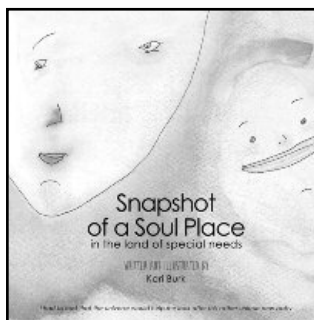
The aim of *Snapshot of a Soulplace* is to tell the triumphs, challenges, hopes and fears of both Burk the parent and her daughter Mielle. It is also written in celebration of significant people, places and images that have shaped their lives and inspired Burk's art. In her introduction Burk writes, "I have enormous gratitude and appreciation to those who have opened their hearts and minds to my daughter."

This attractive book is decorated with illustrations on almost every page. Two paintings and a photograph introduce the book and baby Mielle before the Table of Contents. Burk has divided the book into three sections; People, Places, and Art. In "People" the photographs of Mielle and brother Max as children, and the one of Mielle singing "Angels Do" with her songwriter grand-dad Rick Scott are beautiful, and would justify possessing *Snapshot of a Soulplace*, even if everything else was unremarkable. But that is not the case. Every written page is full of information. I did not know, for example, that Down syndrome babies often need heart surgery (Mielle had open-heart surgery when she was eight months old) or that, because of low muscle tone, suckling is sometimes difficult for these babies. Section one presents Mielle's caring and talented family, as well as many friends and professionals who have enriched her life.

In section two, "Places," Mielle is a growing girl, going places, who learns that she is different, and how to deal with it: "Are you a monster?" asks the boy on the structure. 'No!' she said with a laugh." And Burk has to learn how to cope when her daughter is excluded from activities: "I would climb into the car and weep." When Mielle has a serious health scare, Burk is distraught, but learns to listen to her adolescent daughter who says, from her hospital bed, "Mom... don't!"

"So I don't and... had to take bravery from wherever I could find it."

The author is quick to acknowledge all the help she and Mielle always get from family. For any reader who is not familiar with Down syndrome, it is insightful and maybe



**Snapshot of a Soulplace:
in the Land of Special
Needs**
Kari Burk
Grand PooBah Music Pub

surprising to read of all Mielle's community activities and her love of music.

Section three, "Art," begins with the heading "Art is my mother tongue," and Burk writes that she frequently uses drawings to help Mielle with homework, tasks and scheduling; her artistic sensibilities are involved in "how I interact with her and how we unfold our lives together." The artwork in this section offers a glimpse into how Burk does use art, poetry, sketches, photography and painting help sustain herself and her daughter when life becomes challenging. She also offers her philosophy: "Adapt, Create and Evolve. That's my A.C.E. in the whole."



Art graduate Kari Burk (right) with daughter Mielle

The book's title, *Snapshot of a Soulplace*, does not do it justice. It is a lovely collaboration of words and visual art as well as the story of a young woman; it is far more than a snapshot. Its light drawings decorate and lift the mood throughout. A few written pages seem too dense in information to fit in, and a little editing would allow them to breathe along with the rest of the book. Burk's poems inform her perspective and she contributes depth and tone through her paintings. The photography is very good.

It is warming to read a book that celebrates family and community coming together in support of Mielle Metz, without minimizing some of the challenges involved. It is equally warming to encounter a book that is the result of collaboration between an author and a family member, in this case Burk's mother-in-law, Valerie Hennell.

With its attractive illustrations, *Snapshot of a Soulplace* would be an inspiration to many young people who have Down syndrome and their families. Any other reader who would like to read about Mielle while sampling Burk's visual art and poetry will not be disappointed.

Rose Morrison writes from Chilliwack. Professor emeritus of Agriculture at UFV, her work has appeared in the anthology *Down In The Valley*.

Thanks for the memories Renaissance Books.



Renaissance Books in Victoria, BC is closing and looking for a new buyer.

Poem on first entering the bookstore in 1981:

Literature is a liquor
intoxicating the mind: a wine
sparkling with light – drunk with ghosts
in a bookshop
that I found off the street...

**We'll meet again, don't know where
don't know when, we'll meet again**

Contact Peter Gray at Renaissance Books • pgraybooks@shaw.ca • 250-381-6469



THOSE GODAWFUL STREETS OF MAN

Richard Stevenson

I love what Stephen Bett is doing with language in his latest opus. I call it word jazz: poetry generated as much by sound association as image association; what Charles Olson called Projective Verse—propriocognitive poetry that lives in the moment and leaps playfully through word association nets not so much to create a thing, as to arrest the movement of the mind as it moves through microcosms and macrocosms of the cityscape, reflecting on and refracting what the poet finds.

Let me lay my cards out. I've been in a long love affair with English language *haikai* poetry (haiku, senryu, tanka, kyoka, zappai, renku); Kerouacian "pops" and Ginsberg's "American Sentences"; trad to avant garde 'ku; imagism; found poetry; realist and neo-surrealist styles. So, after a bout of jazz poetry and performance in homage to Miles Davis, and performing cryptocritter/alien poems at kidlit conferences and local bandshell/gazebos (Frank Zappa for Tweens) with my jazz/rock troupe Sasquatch, I've been getting low and digging wit, irony, humour, epiphanies, bumper snicker spam-ku, scifaiku, for a good ten years or more.

Hence, I love the paradox of the so-called "wordless poem," erasure, minimalism in all its modes, modern and post-modern.

Bett's his own man here. He's absorbed the lessons of Donald Allen's New American poets—the Objectivists, Beats, Black Mountain, New York and San Francisco schools, etc.; the Canadian Tish poets' experiments with vernacular phonological phrasing in open form; the studious avoidance of the "burnished urn" Modernist reliance on myth, metaphor, and intellectual conceits, dense allusion, tight boxed containers.

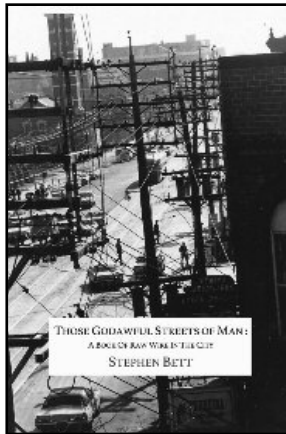
Not that Bett's poems aren't marvelously allusive; the bric-à-brac of pop culture is all here: movies, cell phones, the Web, selfies, Tweets and all manner of squawks from the Interface. But there is nothing overtly confessional and the stitches and strophes are as comfortable and companionable as a Tetley Tea bag or new silk pyramid of the latest craft tea. The allusions are to pop culture events: post-modern texts, not obscure texts. The reader is invited in—to squalid cold-water flats of yesteryear newly converted for the addicted and down-and-out of the lower east side of Vancouver, with sparking bare wires spitting between poles, maybe—but, no matter: the urban experience touches everyone and the reader will supply his or her own meta-narratives where the minimalist directive of the poet's overarching narrative allows.

This is minimalism for readers who like their poems fat: rich, but *sans* impasto or ornament. A book of raw wire in the city: edgy, tense, sharp, angular, dangerous—in the electrified, computerized grids of cityscape we inhabit, and in the boxes we place each other in and peer out from; pole to pole down the dirty low-rent boulevard, in back alleys, out to suburbia, as we attempt to touch through wires and wireless interfaces, en face, live and in person in an age of celebrity cast-off culture and relationships.

At the heart of the book and appearing late in the accumulating narrative—the overall alienation we 21st-century zombie citizens feel facing globalization and its feral children—is the story of a dissolving relationship, the man too earnest and accepting; the woman raging and fading into madness. But nothing is cloying or mawkish or sentimental, or even confessional; instead we shift easily from a sort of Special Victims Unit episode of macro family skeleton news:

Then there was cousin
Billy (Edinburg)
down the shop for smokes

Wife and baby daughter
at home for five
minutes



Those Godawful Streets of Man: A Book of Raw Wire in the City
Stephen Bett
BlazeVOX (books)
2015



Stephen Bett

Twenty years later
detective tracked h
im to NYC

(Those Godawful Streets of Man (64" St.)

to deeply personal, eviscerating sorrow:

When anger turns
to rage he could
still hit "on"
you rather than
"at" **you,**
How you got
so goddamn
deep under
his, skin, you
are the leeches
you *are* the
Borderliner
the zombie
the drain
down which
he disappears

— ... (69^{,11} St.)

with grace and elan.

Musically, rhythmically, the poet is adroit, fluid, as graceful as Sonny Rollins on a good day:

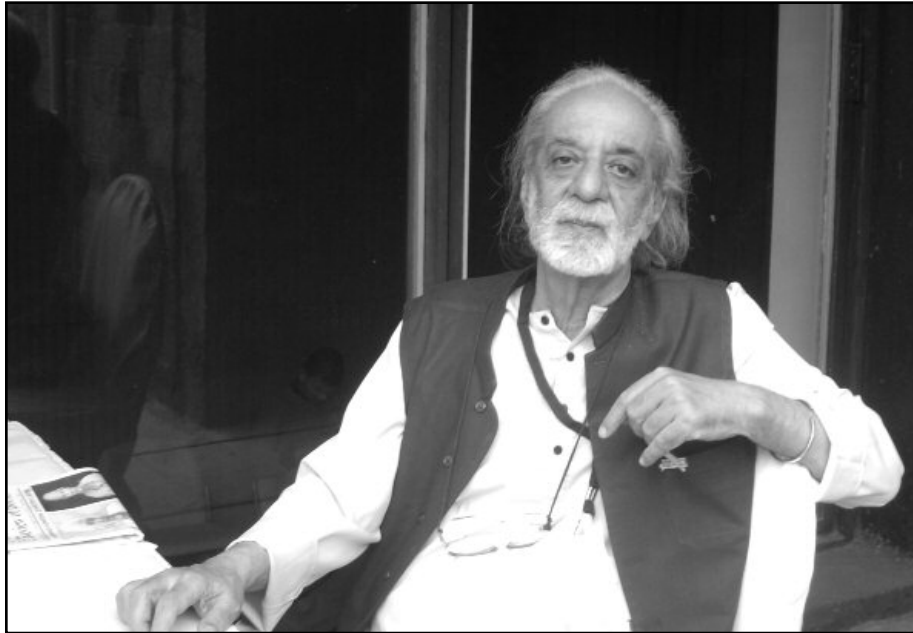
Distress message received,
absorbed, there *is* no point
but feeling puts there

What felt like such joy
rides out despair
runs down, so
godawful

(continued on page 36)

"REMEMBERING THE BEATS IN BOMBAY" WITH POET ADIL JUSSAWALLA

Interview by Trevor Carolan



Adil Jussawalla

Other than Mark Twain's 1896 visit, the Beats were first among American writers to visit and write about India. As Indian cultural commentator Pankaj Mishra has observed, the popular revival of Indian poetry in India—from Arvind Mehrotra, Arundhati Roy, and others—has been inspired in part by ideas from Beat Lit. During a visit to the Tata Literature Live Festival in Mumbai, PRRB's Trevor Carolan was delighted to meet a number of the original group of young Indian poets who welcomed Allen Ginsberg, Peter Orlovsky, Gary Snyder and Joanne Kyger to Bombay in 1962. Poet Adil Jussawalla was kind enough to recollect that historic occasion during a conversation at the National Arts Centre.

* * *

TC: Adil, a number of accounts have been published regarding the readings that took place in Bombay with the visiting American Beat writers. What's your recollection of that time?

AJ: Regarding Allen Ginsberg and the American writers, it was on April 14, 1962 that we all met at the terrace reading. That's where Allen said he was reading *Kaddish* publicly here for the first time; it was a work which affected him deeply, emotionally. I had broken my studies in England and come home back here to be in India. The reading was held on a terrace above the home of Ebrahim Alkazi, an Arab immigrant. Being a kind of outsider, he knew that in India we tended to get things wrong, and he wanted high standards. Ebrahim was also a great friend of Nissim Ezekial, the poet. We'd heard about *Howl* and Ginsberg and the Beats, so when he learned that Allen and Gary were in town he organized a reading for them. After the American visitors read, they said that they wanted to hear us read and we went to Nissim's place.

TC: Can you recall that reading?

AJ: Yes, I can. The events of the evening have been misrepresented. Recently there has been something of a revival of interest here in this occasion, perhaps due to Deborah Baker's book, *A Blue Hand*. Nissim introduced them. Peter read first. You couldn't avoid Orlovsky; people were shocked by his language and some left at the break. In Nissim's flat he wanted to pee, so he rushed out onto the lawn, but he was pulled back by the family. Later he said that "If we were gangster poets, we'd shoot you." Allen was much quieter, composed. He seemed very self-contained. Snyder always had a smile on his face. He'd been living in Japan for several years by that point and appeared comfortable travelling in India. His wife Joanne was with him and she was at the reading too. The evening was mostly polite chit-chat except for that explosion of Orlovsky at the beginning. Ginsberg talked about poetry, how he hadn't read publicly for sev-

eral years; he spoke about the influence of W.C. Williams...I wish Deborah Baker had done some of her research in Bombay.

TC: This was at Nissim's flat on Warden Road?

AJ: Yes, what I remember is that when Ginsberg entered Nissim's flat there were so many books. He smiled and said, "Why do you want so many books?"

TC: Nissim Ezekial almost seems to be a poet of an older generation, but he's an Indian writer whose work you can find in North American libraries. I've met people at the University of Mumbai where he taught in the English department and he's regarded as quite a beloved figure.

AJ: Nissim was a sort of pivotal figure. We'd developed a firm friendship and I knew I could always find him at the PEN office, although he wasn't a mentor to me. We had different ideas about poetry. My verse at that time was formal. Nissim was also formal. The American poets were new to India. They didn't know English had so many functions here—office English, academic English, and so on. They had an agenda. They wanted to get a rise—they didn't think the kind of poetry we had in India had any future at all. Poetry has gotten stronger here.

TC: What kind of impression did Allen make on you and the other young Indian writers who'd gathered to meet and hear him, and to hear the other Americans read?

AJ: Allen had a way of reading—he caught you up in it. Many people do readings, but Allen has become an important figure. As I recall, he read from his early poems before reading *Kaddish*, and when he read that, it was affecting to you as a listener. You could feel that it was deeply personal. We weren't writing like that here. He was also erudite when he spoke and I don't think he has generally been given credit for that critically. There was this idea that the Beats were bohemian, or vernacular. He was too erudite to be able give up his learning easily. That's his attraction to professors.

TC: So there were actually two separate readings that took place that day; the reading at Alkazi's, and a second gathering at Nissim Ezekial's on Warden Road?

AJ: Yes.

TC: Which Indian poets read at the second gathering?

AJ: There was Nissim, Lancelot Ribeiro, R. Pathasarathy—who later went to live in the U.S.—and who continues to write in English, and I read. There were also some Urdu poets in the audience at the first reading. The rest of the audience had more or less dispersed when the Beats asked the Urdu poets, some of whom were leftist, to recite some of their poems. The [Urdu poets] mentioned Charlie Chaplin and the Beats liked them.

TC: How long did your Indian poet friends read?

AJ: We must have been there an hour and a half altogether, two hours at the most. It was a matter of hospitality. We read our work, there were cold drinks, samosas, no drugs. There is an account of these things that was published by R. Parthasarathy in *Miscellany*, a journal in Calcutta in 1962 or early 1963. In Deborah Baker's book there's a journalist who wanted to interview Allen, and I think that was Parthasarathy.

TC: Do you remember what you read of your work?

AJ: I read my Robert Lowell-influenced poem called "Land's End" and a few others. Ten minutes, even less.

TC: Land's End was your first book of poetry?

AJ: As a collection, yes. After that time I taught in London for a few years, returned to Bombay, and published my second book in 1976. I recently published another collection, *Trying to Say Goodbye*. And I've edited anthologies, done literary work for magazines. I've got three books out.

TC: Would you say there was any lingering influence from the visit of these American poets?

(continued on page 36)

POP MUSIC ROYALTY: FOUR BIOGRAPHIES

Joseph Blake

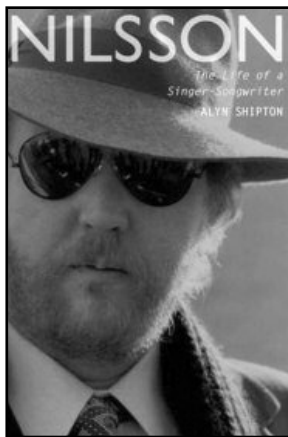
It's hard not to feel nostalgic for the expansive nature of pop music in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Some recently published books accentuate the reason for such nostalgia.

Alyn Shipton's biography of singer-songwriter Harry Nilsson is a thorough, loving depiction of one of the era's most endearing and enigmatic characters. Nilsson's story begins in dirt-poor Brooklyn and the near-mythic abandonment by his father (brilliantly portrayed in Nilsson's early pop masterpiece, *1941*), followed by Harry's Los Angeles adolescence and work in a bank while honing his studio chops at night.

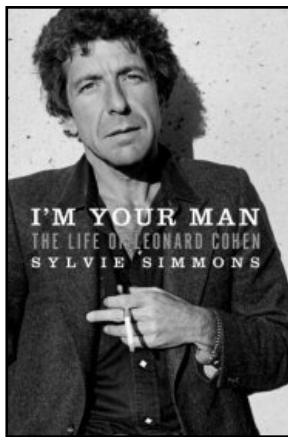
Shipton uses interviews with Nilsson's friends and colleagues, as well as notes from the musician's unfinished autobiography to paint a vivid portrait of the familial southern California music scene. A plethora of insider music industry tales frame Nilsson's rise and slow fade, a downhill narrative that peaked with the Beatles' 1968 Nilsson shout-out as their favourite group, two top 10 singles (ironically for the noted songsmith, a pair of covers written by Badfinger and Fred Neil), as well as Nilsson songs covered by the Ronettes, Yardbirds and Monkees, plus two Grammy Awards.

Nilsson avoided live performances like the plague, and his self-undermining, destructive lifestyle and substance abuse (most famously the year-long lost weekend binge shared with John Lennon in 1970), destroyed a voice star producer Richard Perry called "the finest male singer on the planet." Lennon wasn't Harry's only playmate, and his self-proclaimed Hollywood Vampire gang of the Who's Keith Moon, Alice Cooper and Monkees drummer Mickey Dolenz kept the hard-living party going for years.

Both Keith Moon and Mama Cass died while staying in Nilsson's London flat, underlining the darkness surrounding his personal destruction. That said, Shipton's biography hails Nilsson's unique genius and visionary pop masterpieces like 1971's *Nilsson Schilsson*. Besides squandering his talent and repeatedly shooting his career in the foot (what other pop star would follow up *Nilsson Schilsson*'s critical and commercial breakthrough with a lyric like "You're breaking my heart, you're tearing it apart—so fuck you"?), Nilsson was



Nilsson: The Life of a Singer-Songwriter
Alyn Shipton
Oxford University Press, 345 pages, \$23.89



I'm Your Man: The Life of Leonard Cohen
Sylvie Simmons
McClelland & Stewart
370 pages, \$35

truly one of a kind, and his great voice and songs endure on record. This book will send you back to those records.

Sylvie Simmons is a London-born, San Francisco-based, veteran rock journalist. With her biography *I'm Your Man* she has produced a penetrating description of the life of Leonard Cohen. The authorized biography uses a prologue and epilogue that captures Cohen's voice. ("Darling, I was born in a suit," by way of introduction. "Sometimes elements of my life arise and an invitation to experience something that is not mundane arise, but in terms of deliberate investigation of my life to untangle it or sort it out or understand it, those occasions rarely if ever arise. I don't find it compelling at all," as a wordy epilogue kiss-off by Cohen.)



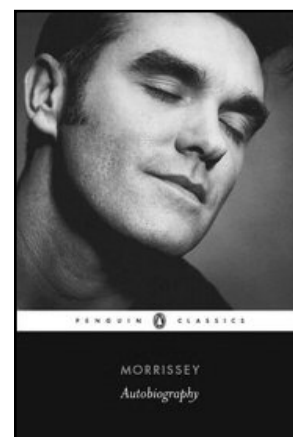
Morrissey

Luckily, Simmons' book is compelling, albeit respectful and a little juicy. Using more than 100 interviews with Cohen's childhood friends, muses and lovers, musicians, rabbis and fellow Buddhist monks, Simmons investigates the artist's poetry and songs, religious practice and extensive drug and alcohol abuse, mental health, and roots. The Montreal garment business heir and son of a deeply religious Jewish family (Simmons interviews Leonard's old rabbi from the synagogue founded by Cohen's ancestors), spent five years at the Mt. Baldy Zen Center becoming an ordained Buddhist. Earlier in his life he became an advanced adherent of Scientology. Cohen's *Death of a Lady's Man*, a guns-and-paranoia-spiced studio collaboration with an unhinged Phil Spector would be enough to drive anyone to Scientology or up Mt. Baldy to sit meditation for at least five years.

I'm Your Man is not a catalog of madness or lovers (Simmons infers that would be a much longer book), but the author visits two famous muses, Marianne Ihlen ("He taught me so much, and I hope I gave him a line or two.") and Suzanne Verdal, who was less happy about her song and is writing her own book.

There are sketches of Cohen's long relationships with Rebecca De Mornay and Anjani Thomas, but much more detail about his music and finances, including how his longtime manager drained his accounts and led to his financially-driven, critically acclaimed late recordings and lengthy world tours. Not bad for an octogenarian.

Morrissey's autobiography is one long rant from the misanthropic leader of the British pop group, The Smiths. Steven Patrick Morrissey (always just Morrissey) is the offspring of working class Irish Manchester, "a barbaric place where only savages can survive" in Morrissey's memory. The musician-author spends pages and pages railing against his past and monsters like Mother Peter: "a bearded nun who beat children from dawn to dusk."



Autobiography
Morrissey
Putnam, 460 pages,
\$34.95



Harry Nilsson



Leonard Cohen in 1988 (photo: Roland Godefroy)

Morrissey is a fey, shy, but mean-spirited romantic who swoons as a boy at the sight of soccer star George Best's athleticism then ends up bored, lonely and disgusted with his life as a clerk until he becomes the unlikeliest of pop stars in The Smiths. There is little about the music and pages about the music business. Morrissey has utter contempt for the business and his dim-witted bandmates, venom only topped by his hatred of impresario Tony Wilsons and journalist Julie Burchill. He's a complete curmudgeon and contrarian who rails against the violence permeating contemporary life, calls Bush and Blair terrorists, and yet gets repeatedly mushy about injured birds and animal rights. Every now and then his florid prose hits the mark at easy targets like his portrayal of Sarah Ferguson, "Duchess of nothing, a little bundle of orange crawling out of a frothy dress..." Nasty, unlikeable, occasionally brilliant, Morrissey's book is like the man.

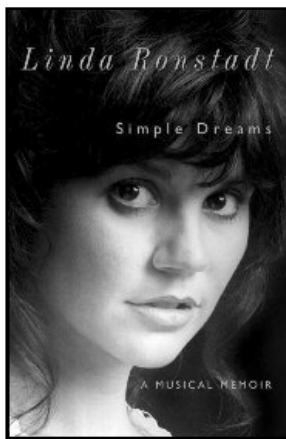
Linda Ronstadt is the anti-Morrissey, and *Simple Dreams*, her recently published musical memoir, is a subtle, intelligent, warm-hearted look at her life and 45-year career. At 67, Ronstadt has retired from music. She lost her voice to Parkinson's, a fact that's not mentioned in her autobiography, noting only that at 50 "I re-crafted my singing style and looked for new ways to tell a story with the voice I had."

What a loss, but what a gift that she found her voice as a writer. Born into a very musical, multicultural Tucson, Arizona family (her grandfather played Puccini on the family piano. Her father was invited to go on the road with 1930s jazz star Paul Whiteman. Her aunt, Luisa Espinel was an internationally acclaimed singer and dancer who employed a young Andre Segovia as a guitar sideman.), Ronstadt was a force on the southern California music scene as folk rock and country rock emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. One of her back-up bands became The Eagles, and she had three #1 LPs including one that shares the book's title. She also won 12 Grammy Awards and sold over 100 million records, and she's still not in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Shame!

Ronstadt's big, pure soprano was featured on her recordings inspired by Mexican folk songs, traditional Cajun music, and a trio of Sinatra-inspired pop standards arranged by Nelson Riddle. She sang onstage for Joe Papp-produced Broadway versions of Puccini and Gilbert and Sullivan. "The only rule I imposed," Ronstadt writes, "was to not try something that I hadn't heard in the family living room before age ten."

Ronstadt didn't write original songs, but she had good taste in choosing songwriters to cover. She describes her serial monogamy, and some of her lovers contributed to her repertoire and stage show, but this is no celebrity kiss-and-tell. She writes lovingly but discreetly about her long-time boyfriend, California governor Jerry Brown, but not about another beau, filmmaker George Lucas. She admits to smoking a little pot, describing instead her love of books. "My addiction was to reading," Ronstadt writes, and it shows in this well-written, understated depiction of an under-appreciated pop career.

Journalist and raconteur, Joseph Blake is a Contributing Editor and PRRB's long-time jazz columnist.



Simple Dreams: A Musical Memoir
Linda Ronstadt
Simon & Shuster
242 pages, \$29.99



Ronstadt in the summer of 1978
(photo: Carl Lender)

MOROCCO (continued from page 12)



Jardin Majorelle

Nights (also known as the Dream Machine) was famous for the trance-like rhythms of the celebrated house band, the Master Musicians of Jajouka. The club has been closed for years "for renovation."

In his 1972 memoir *Without Stopping*, Bowles remembers Burroughs coming to visit him at Hotel Massila when Bowles was recovering from paratyphoid. "During my convalescence," he writes, "a tall, thin man came to see me, his manner subdued to the point of making his presence in the room seem tentative."

Socially isolated, strung-out and suffering writer's block, Burroughs was a stranger in a strange land, a city one wit called "a sunny place for shady people" and another tagged "Sodom-on-the-Sea." Modern Tangier has few echoes of the old, dark decadence. It's a bustling, big city how in a hurry to modernize. Nearby, the Rif Mountains conjure-up the Beat days and the hippie invasion that followed. Still the largest cannabis cultivation area in the world, an estimated 1400 square kilometers, the Rif's hash business employs over 800,000 Moroccans. Wandering the blue-walled, narrow streets of Chefchaouen, a beautiful, relaxed hill-town, we smelled it everywhere.

The old pirate town Assilah is now a tidy art village with a huge festival every July that has left the old Medina's walls vivid with modern murals. Another beach town, Essouria was the site for Orson Wells' film, *Othello*, and the town park is named in the film-maker's honour. Essouria is even better known for its surfers, laidback atmosphere and art scene's striking paintings reminiscent of Australian aboriginal art. Jimi Hendrix spent time on the beach here too.

Further north on the Atlantic Coast, Spain retains a toehold in Ceuta, a Point Roberts-like landing behind chain link. Just outside the fence in Morocco, a huge, anarchic, open-air market of shady, cross-border commerce piles European goods into private cars for the trip to Morocco's towns and big cities. The Tangier ferry unloads streams of sedans packed to the roof with used clothing and other worldly possessions, bikes and kitchen sinks strapped to the rooftops, bringing more European goods from cash-strapped Spain, Portugal and Italy. Meanwhile, nearby in the shadows along the highway, displaced, black Africans with haunted and haunting eyes who have spent months getting to Morocco wait and watch for an opening to climb aboard a vehicle heading back to Europe. Little do they know that Morocco's booming economy is far stronger than the Europe of their dreams.

One of my old dreams was to ride a camel out into the Sahara Desert to witness the sunrise. Our guide drove us south past Ouarzazate's "Ouallywood" studios (*Jewel of the Nile*, *Kundun*, *Kingdom of Heaven*), past Taourirt Kasbah (*Sheltering Sky*, *Gladiator*, *Prince of Persia*) past date harvest in the Draa Valley, past Dade's Valley and Gorges with mud-brick palaces, beyond Merzouga to Hotel Tombuktu and my camel (dromedary actually) ride into the Erg Chebbi Dunes at sunset. Rose gold, the sands stretched like an ocean as far as I could see. My dromedary named Bob Marley rocked and swayed and jolted me up and down the dunes as the sands shifted from orange to pink to purple with the setting sun. Reaching our camp after two hours, my beast knelt down and I staggered to a lamb *tagine* feast prepared by our blue-robed camel guides. The guides sang and played music into the night, the tourists danced and then slept like stones in solar-powered carpet tents until dawn's light show exploded over the oasis the next morning. It was a moment and an experience I'll never forget.

Journalist and raconteur, Joseph Blake is a Contributing Editor and PRRB's long-time jazz columnist.

A CLUMP OF LAVENDER

Linda Rogers

A century ago, lavender was the only scent worn by neurasthenic ladies. The collective noun for the fragrant anti-depressant flower is a “clump,” the way we are inhaling ten volumes of poetry released in Spring 2014.

Canadian publishers cluster identities, blowing familial whiffs over variegated landscapes—each with its own top note of urban edge, suburban compost, exotic spice, laughing gas and ozone. Not always coterie, print clusters are recognizable by the scent of their tribe.

Exile Editions chose its heirloom imprimatur when it gathered the voices of cultural refugees from sneezes of displacement during the late 20th century. In one sense, all artists are in Exile, adjusting to changing soil conditions and then there are the transplants.

Vladimir Azarov is one of the latter. He describes his two solitudes, Russia and Canada, in vertical strokes, words that seek the shortest path past shadows from tall buildings that contrast the glorious accessibility of old Russian architecture. There is space in his restrained empirical poetry for balloons released in corridors of darkness, their dance of light and shade and dramatic finales.

Azarov is an architect, and he builds his poems thoughtfully, music with minimal notes. *Seven Lives*, stories of rivers and blood, the traveller’s media, reminds us that almost everything can be taken from an individual but his or her story, small circles he inflates with fresh air, which fly, then return to earth.

*This was the crushed thistle in the
Ploughed field...*

Broken Pastries is twenty-seven songs for The Thaw that ends Stalin’s reign of terror in Russia and brings the poet to his editor’s garden, where he encounters a revelation of the antithesis, an American rose blooming in the compost of the Cold War—where significant names and places are dropped like seeds and the hibernating earth rises and flourishes.

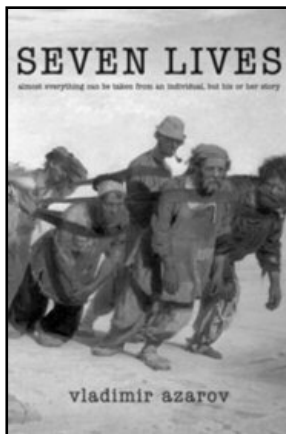
After exile and the gulag, a tea strainer!

Strong Words, Azarov’s collaboration with Barry Callaghan, is a translation of the poetry of Alexander Pushkin, Anna Akhmatova and Andrei Voznesensky with glorious endpapers—three figures swirling in the oneness of being—by Claire Weissman Wilks.

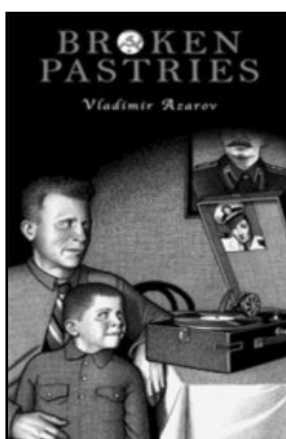
Not the smallest of blessings in this book is artwork by Modigliani, Pushkin, Nikolai Tyrza, Voznesensky and Wilks, images that refresh language, keep the conversation visual, visceral with the virtual presence of Akhmatova’s incisive profile and the torn edges of Russian regime change.

Rumi wrote about pain as psychic messengers. The impulse transferred from poet to translators might be chest pain; the rhythm of each lonely muscle the heart a challenge to faithfully replicate. In Pushkin’s nineteenth poem, a phrase is rendered as “hooves sounding a lied,” which rhymes with lea in the following verse. From love song to echoing fields we require ourselves to take the leap of faith. It is a delicate art.

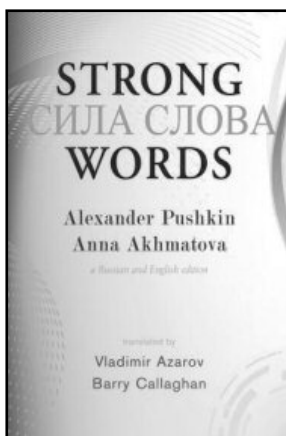
In this triplet of poets, Akhmatova rises to the



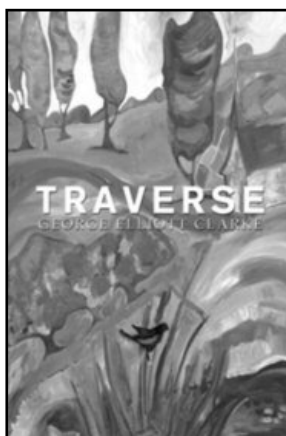
Seven Lives



Broken Pastries



Strong Words



Traverse

Ten volumes of poetry under review:

Seven Lives, Vladimir Azarov, Exile Editions, paper, 120 pages, 2014

Broken Pastries, Vladimir Azarov, Exile Editions, paper, 99 pages, 2014

Strong Words, Alexander Pushkin, Anna Akhmatova, and Andrei Voznesensky, translated by Vladimir Azarov and Barry Callaghan, Exile Editions, paper, 154 pages, 2014

Traverse, George Elliott Clarke, Exile Editions, paper, 79 pages, 2014.

Testing the Elements, Bruce Meyer, Exile Editions, paper, 99 pages, 2014

100 Love Sonnets, Pablo Neruda, translated by Gustavo Escobedo and illustrated by Gabriella Campos, Exile Editions, paper, 231 pages, 2014

A Soldier's Fortune, Ed Brown, Agio, Paper, 111 pages, 2014

So That the Poem Remains, Youssef Abdul Samad, translated by Ghada Alatrash, Agio, paper 177 pages, 2014

Summertime Swamp Love, Patricia Young, Palimpsest Press, paper, 69 pages.

As if a Raven, Yvonne Blomer, Palimpsest Press, paper, 87 pages

viscerally memorable as her oriental sensibility, “a Paris moment that intones underfoot/like the groaning sea,” is captured in exquisite language.

Her poems could be rare Chinese vases holding the ashes of familiarity.

*I've changed you to this reliquary
That contains the constant ache in my heart.*

The historical lives in romantic painting by Pushkin and Akhmatova’s extra-domestic longing, but for Voznesensky, it is the realism of cruelty that brands his text with yawning graves. His ghosts are active on the page and in the mind as memory and imagination conflict.

*Look my country-
Down in the ditch a mother weeps for her son.
The surroundings suppurate
Soul's dreadful ecology.*

“O some spoken words need stay unspoken!” exhorts Akhmatova in “Strong Words,” and who would disagree? Three poets called to witness are recalled in this respectful translation to tell the story of country with a large aching heart.

Lavender, reverberating the repression of women, is also an aphrodisiac. In *Traverse*, George Elliott Clarke charges into the Victorian compound—balls out, brass band blowing—broadcasting orchids in candid familial plantings. Naughty boy, Georgie Porgie. What endures in Clarke’s incorrigible spill are his energy and his music—impulsive, good-humoured improvising, rushing, brushing away the cobwebs in the formal garden of contemporary verse,

*as if reading were the same experience
as watching a piano explode.*

What do we call this clump of sonnets? Not Georgian. Too formal. The collective noun for orchids is a coterie.

Clarke demonstrates the poetic mandate to traverse the chakras, touching keys that ascend from trash chute to halo. Although he can play the careful chords, his music rises straight up, from compost to dreams.

A “falsetto” buzz in the referential garden of exiles is Bruce Meyer, who pipes from the estrous Throne Room in the centre of the labyrinth. Meyer’s collection, *Testing the Elements*, is described as “poems that reach up like flowers opening to the sun.” The

challenge for a poet embedded in the female element, the hive, is to steal the essence of flowers and avoid getting his feet stuck in Royal Jelly.

*He wears brown shoes defiantly
Because he has a fear of undertakers,*

Meyers dedicates these poems to the recently deceased Seamus Heaney, and that is a set up for comparison. Fortunately, in “Dawn,” his poem for the great Irish poet, lucky pollen resonates in lines like, “... a shadow shows the outline of a body wherever the soul goes.” Meyer takes the risk of species who love and die. However, his poetry is mindful and “the (bee) dance continues,” measure for measure, as he sips elixir from the Queen’s Cup, avoiding the shade. A scholar rooted in the soil of rural Ontario, he can safely reach for the top blossoms, the infinite sky, as the garden rises to meet its higher purpose.

And happy in the shade is Neruda, whose *100 Love Sonnets* for Matilda Urrutia have been translated by Gustavo Escobedo. Translation is a tango. In such intimacy, it is easy to bruise a partner’s toes, when so much depends on seamless grace. This collection, beautifully illustrated by Gabriela Campos, whose Hispanic sensibilities make it seem as if the poems could be ekphrasis, poetic response to her feminine gestalts, is faithful.

It is sometimes tempting for a poet to read with her ears, and the following verse demonstrates the temptation. Sonnet X1 reads: “I look for the liquid sound of your feet in the day;” and this guilty reader has written in the margin, “I look for the splash of your feet in the day.”

There are many ways of looking at the blackbird and translation is a speculative game, justified and satisfying when it brings cross-pollination in the garden of Canadian poetics.

Like French poppy fields of that grew out of battlegrounds, the Agio Press adagio taps have the scent of blood, a commitment to the principle of never again. In his book, *A Soldier’s Fortune*, Canadian PTSD survivor Ed Brown witnesses to the horror of war and the soul destruction of men and women sent to fight. Brown’s book, complete with exegesis for every poem, is the unpretentious record of his season in hell. Poetry is his prescription for recovery and the books message rests in the transformative power of words. If a poem is a rose, “How it got there/God only knows,” the true astonishment is its power to heal.

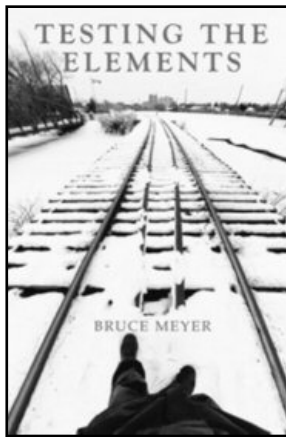
Ed Brown fought in the Middle East and Youssef Abdul Samad and his translator Ghada Alatrash are exiles from Syria. *So That the Poem Remains* is remarkable in the resonant musicality of its translations, which reiterate a longing for the taste of figs and pomegranates, the elixir of peace.

This translator has taken advice from Rumi, “You must dance inside my chest where no one sees you.” Her translations retain the grace of Samad’s Arabic calligraphy, replicating the essential bridges that connect past and present, Holy Lands and Promised Lands.

*I will help you remain,
for in poetry
everything is renewed.*

When fear rises from the compost of memory, poets look up. Recently, bill bissett sent a minor-key poem about silt in Lake Ontario. “I hear stars singing in the mud,” I responded to the usually optimistic poet. Even in end times, poems reassure us that there are alternatives to despair.

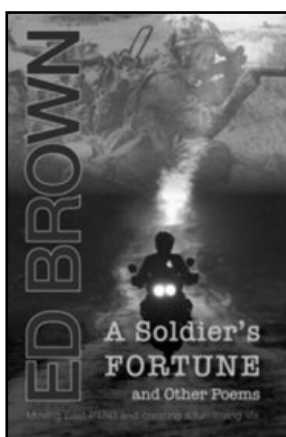
Two spring books from Palimpsest, a press that honours the poem by printing on



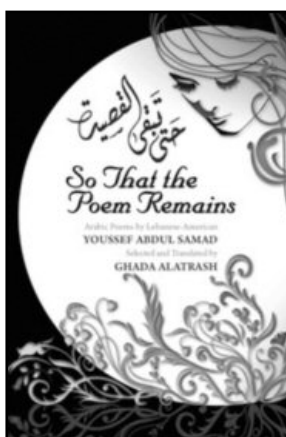
Testing the Elements



100 Love Sonnets



A Soldier's Fortune



So that the Poem Remains

beautiful paper, take us back to the first garden, where Patricia Young, in *Summertime Swamp Love*, mimics the voices of copulating animals. The pong is fresh and funny, somewhere between orchid jism and squids squirting ink.

*How our reptilian brains sink into mud.
Our four-chambered hearts steer us like rudders.*

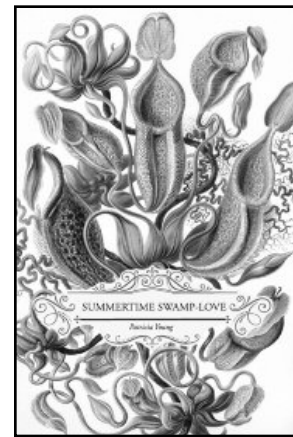
We should listen to the animals. They might inherit the mess we have made of our time on Earth. It would seem that poetry and Google would be antithetical, but, in the midst of social disassociation and toxic landfill, we find information that connects us to other species. Young’s poetry celebrates the carnal connections.

And last but not least, in Yvonne Blomer’s *As If a Raven*, the trickster who might be our Redeemer appears, translating prosaic realities into the pure poetry of prayer. As she reports, just saying the names is psalm and somehow comforting, for birds control the infinite, the sky, the power of song in cosmic transformation.

Who is building the new ark and who will ride the lyrics to a brave new world? It might be birds gathering twigs and laying down a nest with the parameters of Paradise, a walled garden, bigger even than the Beijing Olympic stadium, also a nest.

*How to build a bower –
Think small hut, small hut,*

*Amazingly, another way –
Fall in love with shards of coloured glass.*




Summertime Swamp Love



As If a Raven


Linda Rogers is an award-winning poet, novelist, teacher and journalist. She is completing the Victoria trilogy she began with *The Empress Letters* and the recently released second volume *Tempo Rubato*.

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A MEMOIR BY
MIKE DOYLE

ISBN 978-1-77171-099-2
Memoir
240 pages
5.5 x 8.5
\$25.95



FLOATING ISLANDS

a new memoir by
Mike Doyle

A 'warts and all' story of a writers early life.

Mike Doyle has lived in Victoria B C for nearly half a century; a longtime Canadian citizen, as a poet he considers himself ‘cosmopolitan.’ He is also a biographer, critic and editor. *Floating Islands* tells the story of his Irish family background, his childhood and youth in London, England, during the 1930s Depression and the Second World War, through the blitz and the flying bombs. At age fourteen, he discovered his gift for poetry and decided to make it his life’s ambition. Intended as a ‘warts and all’ rather than a back-patting life story, *Floating Islands* deals with events up to the point when a Fellowship of the American Council of Learned Societies enabled Doyle to spend a year as a visiting fellow in American Studies at Yale University. A poet, critic, biographer and editor, Ekstasis Editions published his *Collected Poems 1951-2009* in 2010.

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A MANUAL FOR CLEANING WOMEN

Richard Wirick

The stories of Lucia Berlin (how's *that* for a Cold War mother's name?) are utterly raw in their emotion, smarting like scuffed knuckles or strings of firecrackers, each new one snapping with pain in the echo of the one preceding it. The tales are narrated by a seemingly straight, middle-aged mother of four (which L.B. was) who sinks into addiction, petty crime, and unexplainable flight from unseen tormentors in the American Sunbelt of the fifties, sixties and seventies. Their miseries lie open like the viscera first apparent to the surgeon as he opens the wound along his marker. That bright, that perfectly horrific. These are worlds of pain from a narrator slipping into poverty alone in spite of what Phillip Dick called the "Perky-Pat Layouts" of the post-war economic boom, those natural communities of mid-20th-century abundance.

But even as they display true misery, their stylistic delivery is laconic, spare, diffuse. The lines along the page look not so much like locutions as much as mere revenants of sentences. Punctuation is unorthodox and sometimes inconsistent. If Celine were wandering across Tucson's trailer parks instead of war-torn Germany, the layout of the pages would be very similar. As her executor Steve Emerson has written, Berlin avoids the comma that results from a pause that would not be heard in actual speech, or that results in an undesired slowing of any kind. At the same time, the cadences can feel rushed and hectic. She has drawn comparisons with the first-person stories of Denis Johnson's *Jesus's Son*, but the narrator bears the responsibility of her four children seriously, so the vision is not drug-addled or hallucinogenic.

But what amazing stories these are, and how deprived the modern short tale has been by her itinerant, hard-to-find appearances in journals edited by Saul Bellow or the Black Sparrow Press anthologies where they were eventually gathered in the nineties. She has an almost supernatural ability to tell a story from the perspective of the non-literary storytellers she grew up with, filtered through a smugless knowingness and affection for those she describes. Her stories have the illusion of a loose naturalness, but at the same time a solid beginning, middle and end. They open and shut like a music box. Their music is dusty, deludedly hopeful, salving and bandaging the wound like a palimpsest letting the blue smudge of blood show through.

The sixties come more alive here than in anyone's fiction or non-fiction, and that includes Carver, Didion, those who have etched out a branded grit and desperation for what their narrators deliver. There are lots of laundromats and lost TV game shows. In 'Carpe Diem,' the mother telling the story puts us exactly where we need to be, looking through exactly the lens that does it justice:

So many laundromat attendants I have known, the hovering Charons, making change or who never have change. Now it is fat Ophelia who pronounces No Sweat as No Thwet. Her top plate broke on beef jerky. . . . When she comes down the aisle with a mop everybody moves and moves the baskets too. She is a channel hopper. Just when we've settled in to watch *The Newlywed Game* she'll flick it to *Ryan's Hope*.

The rightness, the click of completeness and the ending *lift* of the trash TV reference are seamless, the sacred stuffed screamingly down into the profane by someone who has come to know too much to be happy. An Elmore Leonard narrator would have no familiarity with Charon, and a Bellow or Martin Amis character wouldn't even know what a laundromat was. This is the kind of incipient enlightenment someone like my own mother underwent when returning to college in the mid-sixties, raising three of us, my sisters and me wondering what she was doing with those SBX-bought Norton Critical Editions.

The sheer messiness of life brims over for narrators who had the glamorous, Jackiesque sheen of the author herself (look at the jacket photo!). She meets other mothers who have descended into parental abnegation and misanthropy, waiting for their issue to become tweens and run away: "The mother. She hated children. I met her



A Manual for Cleaning Women
Lucia Berlin
Farrar, Straus & Giroux
446 Pages

once at an airport when all four of my kids were little. She yelled 'Call them off', as if they were a pack of Dobermans." It gets even better when the narrators are kids themselves: "All the clean restrooms were on the other side of the road, on the left side. But Mrs. Snowdon couldn't make left turns . . . It took us about ten blocks of right turns and one-way streets before we got to a restroom . . . I'd already wet my pants by then but didn't tell them, drank from the cool, cool Texaco faucet."

The stories I feel closest to are set in the Oakland-Berkeley flatlands of the seventies. I was an undergraduate and Berlin, somehow, kept gravitating back to that sun-blasted hodgepodge of students, welfare moms, immigrants and would-be artists of every stripe. (Of course, she was a cocktail waitress somewhere along San Pablo Ave.) She took up nursing ("It's good, you can meet doctors that way. Dying rich men who are patients.") "Emergency Room Notebook, 1977" packs a wallop and draws the Denis Johnson comparisons. Of course, this narrator knows every conceivable variety of overdose: phony, incompetent, sure-to-succeed: "Exam week at Cal. Many suicides, some succeeding, mostly Oriental. Dumbest suicide of the week was Otis. Otis's wife, Lou-Bertha, left him for another man. Otis took two bottles of Sominex, but was wide awake. Peppy, even." Who would call peripheral Asian characters Orientals but someone of that time and place? And not lost on us who watched TV the decade before—Otis was the town drunk in *Mayberry RFD*, who locked *himself* into a jail cell every night for safekeeping.

I have locked myself into this collection, turned the key, and fallen asleep with it every night since the book came out in early August. Scenes will drift into your dreams whether you recognize a reference or not: "It's Marlene the Migraine, an ER habitue. She is so beautiful, young. She stops talking with two Laney College basketball players and stumbles to my desk to go into her act. Her howls are like Ornette Coleman in early 'Lonely Woman' days . . . all I can see is her elegantly manicured hand, extending her Medi-Cal card above the desk."

Berlin finally found a place in Boulder, where the poet Ed Dorn ran creative writing and brought her onto the Colorado faculty and where she still wore her hair—on into the nineties—like Barbara Eden in *I Dream of Jeannie* (did I tell you to look at the jacket photo?). She was the most popular teacher in the English Department's history, though old habits die hard. She complained of the impersonal atmospherics of Colorado liquor stores, "Gigantic, Target-sized nightmares, where you could die from DTs just trying to find the Jim Beam aisle."

She wrote to Emerson from there, dying in the University Hospital, disappearing into the shady pantheon of her characters:

Bay Area, New York and Mexico City [were the] only places I didn't feel I was an other. I just got back from shopping and everybody kept on saying have a great day now and smiling at my oxygen tank, as if it were a poodle or a child.

She wrote till the end (2004), with even her titles starting to swell and boost with beautiful, colloquial helium: "Let Me See You Smile," "How'd You Get It So Hot?" and my favourite, "So Here It Is Saturday." Her last letter was to August Kleinzahler, the San Francisco poet and discoverer of great, neglected talents like hers: "Augie, so what is marriage anyway? I never figured it out. And now it is death I don't understand."

Richard Wirick is the author of the novels *One Hundred Siberian Postcards* (Telegraph Books) and *The Devil's Water* (Ekstasis). He practices law in Los Angeles.



Lucia Berlin

KABUKI BOY

Apis Teicher

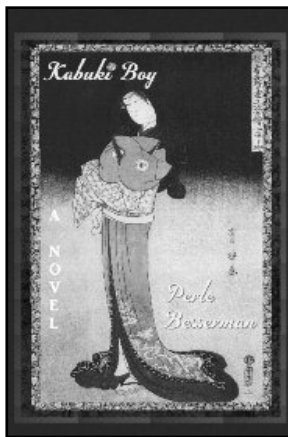
Perle Besserman's *Kabuki Boy* is nothing short of exquisite. *Kabuki Boy* is an intricately layered masterpiece. Its deceptively straightforward claim to be 'a novel of old Japan' hardly does justice to the tapestry woven within. It speaks well for the world in flux it strives to capture, that ever-elusive floating world.

Taking place during Japan's tumultuous Tokugawa period (1603-1868) Besserman sets off to explore the rich mosaic of life as seen through the eyes of her protagonist, Myo. A tragically doomed *onna-gata* (male kabuki actor that played the female roles) Myo is our guide to the experiences of the disenfranchised Japanese living under the thumb of the shogun and his daimyo.

While we are forewarned from the very start that Myo meets a tragic end, it's hard not to be enthralled by his memoirs. His recollections are vivid and endearing and his apparent naiveté draws one in. We follow him as he moves through the ranks of the dispossessed: the overtaxed rice farmers who can't feed their own families, the street physicians who heal curses when they can't heal the illnesses themselves, the store clerks under the iron fist of their employers.

Finally, Myo's beauty and his skill at dancing (likely inherited in part from his mother, a former geisha) set him on the path that leads to becoming a Kabuki actor which proves to be both his greatest success and the onset of his downfall.

Besserman is a master storyteller. She weaves political intrigues and the overarching political maelstroms of the era without abandoning the main focus of the everyday plights. Sexual encounters are delicately written and exposed in both their



Kabuki Boy - A Novel of Old Japan
Perle Besserman
Aqueous Books
311 pages

fragile beauty and violent horror, just as emotions are laid bare and re-examined by each character.

Once Myo is no longer the narrator we are given the opportunity to layer the story further as Besserman adds those closest to the short-lived Kabuki boy give voice to their own tales and the way they intertwined with his. Each new narrator brings a fuller understanding of events and the way they unfolded; more than that however, it casts fully into the light the passions that brought them about.

My monkey didn't talk religion or politics; he didn't stand for anything other than what he was: a tree-swinging creature that screeched and danced and threw beans for no reason but to amuse, and be petted, loved and applauded for his performance. During his quiet moments alone, my monkey slept and dreams of his mother far away.



Perle Besserman

In the end Myo's words seem to echo in the lives of all the narrators as they are caught between their own desires and the inescapable karma of their stations in life, acutely aware that what is shouldn't be ... but impotent to change it.

Apis Teicher is a freelance writer based out of Vancouver, Canada. A frequent contributor to PRRB, her work can be found at www.uneide.com

ALICE'S ADVENTURES (continued from page 22)

"Imagination is the only weapon in the war against reality."

When he is done with the imaginative text, Day describes, in his last chapter, Dodson's expulsion from his apposite Dean's Garden of Innocence. As the Industrial Age became a leavening agent for the middle classes, educational reform was inevitable and Alice's parent, the ecclesiastical aristocrat, went with the flow and argued for liberal change as Dodson, the commoner with a perceived interest in perpetuating medieval university system, shaped his indignation in antithetical arguments congealed in bitterness, stones in the river of change.

Socially executed by The Queen of Hearts, Alice's mother, the obfuscating pedant was not even invited to her wedding at Westminster Abbey, a huge disappointment. Alice and her family could not have guessed at the time that her unsuitable suitor's book would later save her from penury after the great war changed her world, rabbit holes called trenches.

I am the Dean and this is Mrs. Liddell
She plays the first, and I the second fiddle.
She is the Broad; I am the High
And we are the University.

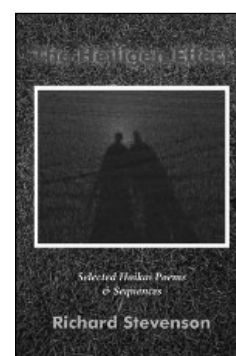
And how the mighty fall, all of them, like Humpty Dumpty. Death, the inevitable consequence, ended the adversarial lives of Dodson and Liddell, and the Great War ended the privileges of Alice, beloved by professor and the prince who presumably named his daughter after her. Still, her story endures, as it should, because decoded it reveals a slice of our cultural and historical DNA in a very English *commedia dell' arte*, archetypal characters infused with irresistible magic and spells.

Spells are recipes, some with intoxicants, mushrooms and teas, pipes filled with dreams. It is all about chemistry, action and reaction. In the end we are left to digest the sensory information provided by Lewis Carroll; and he has a theory, "All the original genius...by which our forefathers have so advanced human knowledge, must slowly but surely wither away, and give place to a system of Cookery, in which the mind is a sausage, and all we ask is, how much indigestible stuff can be crammed into it?"

The pie hole is another transformative door. We are what we swallow, down the hatch, changed by ingestion, altered in substance.

"It's no use going back to yesterday because I was a different person then," says Alice.

Linda Rogers, herself descended from Victorian clerics and writers, Hopkins, Dodsons, and Trollopes, whose father thought acceptance at Lady Margaret College, Oxford would turn her into an unmarried bluestocking, and so became the mother of descendents of George Darwin (son of Charles) and Maud Dupuys, was naturally curious and curiouser about Day's explication of the Alice back story, which many of us share in some degree of separation. Poor Evelyn will complete her Empress trilogy.



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80 pages
6 x 9
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THE BIG THIRST

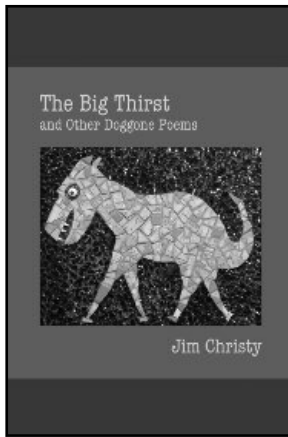
Ryan Pastorchik

Jim Christy's *The Big Thirst and Other Doggone Poems* continues the ambling visions of this veteran, vagabond author. A collection of 46 poems, its vignettes draw from rides along switchbacks, and from diverse topics in a raw, but still charming voice that has led to him being called a Canadian Indiana Jones.

Published following Christy's 69th birthday, the collection takes a hard look at growing old. What the process feels like varies, depending on where you open the book. With his first new poem, "The Old Painter," Christy reveals that age lends sturdiness and knowledge. It is the "fir tree with fur / So thick it doesn't stir / In the breeze" that outshines the "late-June poplars that have lost their youthful glow." A little further along, Christy reveals that getting old is a fearsome road he contemplates rebelling against. Rather than succumbing to the playing-card kingdom of the retired, Christy intends to maintain his maverick image, envisioning geriatric erotic conquests, stoop-shouldered evasions of authority, and reaching a final climax as "A legend at last" ("Elder Legend").

As the visions of aging are conjured, Christy balances past and present with the former carrying more weight. The balance is a reflection on the shifting views of history that all generations contemplate.

Occasionally there is dialogue between the poems. In several instances, poems lie next to one another and communicate. Noteworthy is the chatter between "Christy, You're Becoming a Recluse On That Farm; Isn't There Anything About The Present That You Like?" and "Immortal Rural Canada Sunday Summer Afternoon." In the first, Christy laments a life of luxury, of unnecessary complication, of divergence from the



The Big Thirst and Other Doggone Poems, Jim Christy Ekstasis Editions.

raw past. He pines for "a world without raspberry vinaigrette." Juxtaposed with these frustrations with the modern world, Christy paints a multi-cultural, multi-generational scene of hard-work, modern machines, and portraits of a less urbanized life where it's impossible not to participate in the community.

This is a collection full of waning legacies and leather-tough depictions of experience, but Christy provides the reader with thoughtful, impacting glimpses of real crises that are made all the more startling as they grab your collar, making you bear witness from within the company of his other poems. One such, "By The Shores Of Cuyahoga Were Shed A River Of Tears," takes us to the haunting scene of a flaming river: the result of humanity's vainglory and narcissism. Amidst the chemical-drenched, tar-thick scene, Christy shows a connection to environment that cannot be forgotten.

Within 80 pages, *The Big Thirst* tours the reader through aging, the past, the environment, music and style, beauty and sex—all with the grit and off-handedness that has led to Christy's placement amongst the countercultural crowd of Bukowski, jazz, country and the Beats.



Jim Christy

Ryan Pastorchik holds degrees from UFV and Simon Fraser University. He works in alternative education in the B.C.'s Fraser Valley.

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MAILER (continued from page 5)

to everyone, his home in Provincetown was virtually a commune. It drove crazy all of his wives save for the last and longest, the very public Norris Church of Little Rock, Arkansas.

Lennon's selection of a thousand letters, from fifty times that number, is nicely balanced between the peaceful and the provocative. He displays, as the critic John Aldridge once described of his work, "the various ways a man may sin in order to be saved." Sticking one's finger into any section of this book yields rich, plentiful passages. A few float on the waters of the drowned. But most fly up, over every dark thing, to join the company of the saved. I last saw him a year before his death, squired along a Beverly Hills street with two canes and his powerful son John Buffalo [full disclosure—John Buffalo was my editor at *High Times*], and he looked happy—writing-happy, fighting-happy. Not ready to give up anything.

Richard Wirick is the author of the novels *One Hundred Siberian Postcards* (Telegraph Books) and *The Devil's Water* (Ekstasis). He practices law in Los Angeles.

GINSBERG PHOTOGRAPHS (continued from page 16)

Joined by fellow poets Gary Snyder and Joanne Kyger (both in show) he travelled widely, lived India deeply and spent months in Benares meditating on the burning funeral ghats along the Ganges. He learned to sing, to chant like the Bengali street poet *Bauls*, he incorporated mantras in his work. He began playing the harmonium. He adopted the loose Indian cotton clothes, bells, beads and long hair/beard that identified him throughout his years of public opposition to the Vietnam war. India transformed Ginsberg profoundly; from poet with Old Testament prophetic strains he became bard, chronicler and agent provocateur for a global generation. Returning to the world via Japan and Vancouver's 1963 Poetry Conference at UBC (some essential photographs are here) he'd emerge as the poet that spooked both the Pentagon and the Kremlin.

From the Hindu and Buddhist forms of meditative practice he encountered in India, Ginsberg evolved his poetic concept of "Aesthetic Mindfulness"—what he frequently explained as "Writing our own mind. Writing down what we see when we see it, what we feel when we feel it." Partly a return to the Romantic roots of Wordsworth and Blake, it was also a concrete, practical way of building spontaneously on his longtime friend and ally Gary Snyder's observation that "poetry suddenly seemed useful in 1955 San Francisco." No longer would it be the dreamy stuff of Sunday afternoon campus tea parties. Poetry and poets had a job to do. From this would come Ginsberg's epic *Howl* and all that would follow it—*September On Jessore Road*, *Plutonian Ode*, "I Beg You Come Back And Be Cheerful" and the rest. This tremendous photographic exhibition demonstrates Ginsberg's continual act of mindfulness as poet, friend and political and social activist—the gift of a compassionate augury as antidote to the crisis of meaning and purpose in our time.

Trevor Carolan is the author of *Giving Up Poetry: With Allen Ginsberg at Hollyhock* (Banff Centre Press, 2001) recounting his studies with the poet at Cortes Island.

GODAWFUL STREETS (continued from page 27)

like the speed up high
when it comes
crashing down

—*Those Godawful Streets of Man (10th St.)*

You can feel those tight turns, drops, and ascents as you might on a carnival ride; Bett doesn't waste a word, but pastes you to the back of your vernacular cage. You are in for the ride.

Each piece in the series is entitled with the overarching title and a street number: *Those Godawful Streets of Man (15th St.)*, ... *(2nd St.)*, etc., and each can be read as a separate lyric poem or as a shifting architectonic set of narrative/lyric plates, a long poem sequence.

Line for line, strophe for strophe, image for image, Stephen Bett's latest delivers the news, along with the tart taste of jazz and blues.

Richard Stevenson has just retired from a thirty-year gig teaching for Lethbridge College. His latest publications (all forthcoming) are *Fruit Wedge Moon: Haiku, Senryu, Tanka, Kyoka, and Zappai*, (with b&w photography by Ellen McArthur); *Rock, Scissors, Paper: The Clifford Olson Murders*, and *The Heiligen Effect: Selected Haikai Poems & Sequences*.

JUSSAWALLA (continued from page 28)



Poets Gieve Patel (L), Arvind Mehrotra (R), with Trevor Carolan

AJ: Well, the *Express* newspaper imported a foreign literary editor, Stephen Hugh-Jones, and he carried, to everyone's surprise, a nude photo of Allen Ginsberg squatting on the ground taking a bucket bath like an Indian. He wanted to cause a shock with us fussy Indians and it did have people talking. One thing I would care to mention that no one takes up, is that there remains an unwritten chapter from that time—it's the Marathi poets Ginsberg and the others met. No one seems to have followed this up. Deborah Baker incorrectly refers to them as "starving poets": they weren't. I'm sorry she used that word.

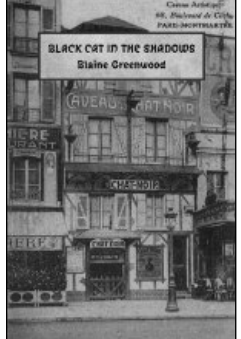
It's true that most of the poets who met Nissim were English-speaking poets, they wrote in English. Everyone knows Bombay stinks of money, but Nissim wasn't rich. Setting him against the local vernacular poets isn't right. Who's left to take it up?

Allen also influenced the Hungryalist group of Bengali poets who were written about by *Time* magazine. They became famous overnight—Malay Roy Choudhury who wrote "Stark Electric Jesus" was prosecuted. You couldn't write that now. This myth of Indian tolerance is just that, a myth. We have a history of banning books. No lawyer seems to want to take on this book-banning in the Indian languages. I think that around the world it's not that people aren't free to express themselves; it's that they feel free to express themselves through violence.

TC: Arvind Mehrotra has helped introduce the work of Arun Kolatkar. Did you know him well?

AJ: Hmmm. About Arun, you can find his *Collected Poems* in the Bloodaxe edition in the U.K. Arvind was the closest among us to Arun, and Arvind was also the most influenced among us by Ginsberg and the Beats. He wasn't in Bombay at the time Ginsberg and his friends were visiting. We knew each other and as a group we established Clearing House. Our first books came out in 1976. This was a cooperative venture. We published our books. Arun's *Jejuri* won the Commonwealth Poetry Prize. Arun, no question, was the best of the lot.

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OF A FEATHER

Jim Bodeen

The beauty of the sound. The rollers, coyote scat on the lawn. What's wild, what's domestic, right here. And the dog back and forth between the two worlds rolling in it all. A new book of poems enters the world of banalities, our world. The poet, part observer, part caretaker, relishes being here, before it all, at least in some sort of imaginative nuzzle of the earth himself, watching his dog. The poet, part prophet-priest, part exile.

Look at the book on the table. What's there that needs cracking open? The poet or the poems?

What's it going to do to me? There are things I can do at the threshold to prepare, yet preparation alone won't make anything happen. If there's nothing here, nothing will show. This is how it is before a new book.

The new book in this case: Michael Daley's *Of A Feather* (Empty Bowl Press). I'm reading. That's quite a task he's set for himself in that first poem. Like getting out of the car and heading straight up the mountain. A 29-poem title suite, *Of a Feather*. Let's get started with the rollers and the coyote scat. Add the tics of my father's car, this is a dream journey, too. The frog is important, "...the frog's silhouette." No ordinary frog, this, the blond child, Michael Daley, the poet, hearkening back, under the car, time-traveling, back further, all the way to Basho and the frog in the pond.

Michael Daley, poet in late middle age, friend over thirty years, transporting me. It's going to be all right in these pages. He's got me. We're going somewhere. "Haven't you seen... beside the puddle, / he looks like a hairless old man / stretched out with best intentions?" The tradition shows itself without the hammer of a less experienced (and deeper-knowing) writer. Now he's outside on the deck with coffee, he hears something and goes to take a peek. Ordinary stuff, right, this lyric from poem #8. It's woodpeckers—but hold on, "A call and response between woodpeckers," maybe three of them "pileated." There's a bee caught in rhododendron blossoms, and a couple of poems later, "First light scoops / a crystal chip / out of the lake." This is not ordinary reality, and neither are the poems "random observations" as the poet suggests in notes accompanying the manuscript.

This is lyric poet following dream rhythms. Called poet following the call, born into the still-ascending and dominant Christianity of the times. An Irish Christianity at that. A Christianity that had usurped and cancelled out the earlier call, discipline, and apprenticeship of the poet. Responding first to the Catholic Church, and given traditions—and going back beyond the beginnings.

I ask him about this as I read. What about this frog? This child's sympathy reaching under the car? By tribal chance, after reading the first long title poem, I began a re-read of Seamus Heaney's Nobel Speech, and find another way into the poems. So many connections. The first one humble enough: St. Kevin and the birds in his held out hands. The poet under the car saving a bull frog. And Daley writes back: "St. Kevin's was our parish church: First Communion, Confirmation, a few funerals, Lent practices, Sunday School, the nuns who made me pray to be 'a good boy,' (and not a horse's ass). Most of all the loveliest voices I've ever heard still singing in memory. Running after Fr. Kierce to ask to be an altar boy—never caught up. Thank you, Jesus! A few years later in the cassock meself."

Would that call and response could be so easy. That it survives in the North American oral tradition through African-Americans is by necessity, not chance. Vocational calls necessarily bring with them negation, refusal, denial of all sorts—Christian vocation included. Daley's included betrayal and initiation, but his call was to the earlier vocation, to poetry and the music of the human voice, and how is he supposed to get there on his own? The ancient Hebrew prayer, Who by Fire?—the grand ordeal?

Listen, it doesn't matter. He got there. Michael Daley, as much as any of our poets, had to live through not only the betrayal of the institution, but to walk through, read through, love through, as he lived towards what Robert Graves calls "the unimprovable original" language of the poet. Robert Graves, who in his introduction to *The White Goddess*, writes "Who am I you will ask, to warn you that she demands either whole-time service or none at all?"



Of a Feather
Michael Daley
Empty Bowl Press
72 pages



Michael Daley

Enter here, Michael Daley, *Of a Feather*, late 60s, Irish-American master-poet, olave, in Robert Graves' terms, refining complex poetic truth to exact statement. "He knew the history and mythic value of every word he used..." Michael Daley's search of silence leads to here and the quest of the true poet, *What remains of the beloved?*

When he sits to write the first poem of the day, Daley tells us this is everyday discipline. Daily work. There's more than one poem a day. Significant information for the reader holding *Of a Feather* in the hands, because in this context, the big book in the hands becomes lighter and smaller before becoming large again. Feather-like. Unawares we read, thinking, Wow, look at this opening poem made of 29 poems, a book in itself! We can't go fast. The poems insist on going line by line. Before long, a week has gone by, then two and three. We're still here. Demands are being made of the reader as well, and we discover, over time, these poems have been written over time, now, yes, but over a lifetime, too. And these are the poems Michael Daley has chosen to set before us. I find this to be very moving. Moving and courageous. A presentation of the all. We know, now, reading, that Michael Daley sits before his desk this morning, writing one of those poems, his task part of his every day. Some poems of this short book reach back to the 1970s.

The called poet is religious by his nature. "The thing that interests me now is how many religious references appear, and that they were unintentional. Meaning, I think, is built in, a part of my make-up, and so inescapable.

"It begins with the Marcuse quote, but carries through the book—St. Desire, St. Jerome, Paraclete, Lot's Wife, Thomas a Kempis, the Latin bible quote, the Resurrection in the title. Though I don't catch any in that first poem, and only the one anti-Jesuit remark in the Haibuns, the notions of timelessness and immortality seem to pick up and become more pervasive by the middle and final poem. They also move through what years ago could have been called pagan references to nature as if animistic, existential, to solstice/equinox reverberations.

"Just a thought, and perhaps references you've already noted. I think what Mike O'Connor wrote in the publisher blurb at the back is true: 'off-hand,' which to me means unplanned, and a little random."

"The title really implies kinship, and there are several references to families, mine and families of birds and other species. I think this, which I think of as compassion, is in keeping with O'Connor's other suggestion of a strain that runs through; Taoist."

His language of his work piles up, directing one towards a kind of "Ah, shucks," humility—"ah shucks" being my language, not Daley's. Reliance on Daley as guide, however, is misleading, too. He's too close to his own work. When Daley says, "Go small," that is the time to "Go large." He says he wants readers to experience delight. All right. But delight with the poet in the pond with Whitman. Daley, big-eared himself, beside those huge, bright yellow balls. that close to cock of bull frog. The scent of it all!

Immersion on the way to becoming frog. Transformational amphibian. "...that frog in a field of frogs," me, says the poet—"wild note under the new moon." A fool. Bellowing devotion. Going that far for the poem? Going that far for delight. Getting that close to the chipmunk, counting his scurlings and circles. Eleven times eleven, singing. Let's do the same thing twice.

Once shown, delight surfaces from the pond and it's everywhere. Among those doctors creeping everywhere: "We'll only need a sample / of your blood, just for the record." How to keep it new, "shadows across sundials"—get the idea. Poet playing, syllabics against the grain, "Car-ruthian syllabics." If you still don't get it, lift your eyes "from the nest of garden hose" and listen for it. Look for them, these little epiphanies, moments of delight carrying you, through the manuscript, into your day.

Where Daley won't lead you can be seen in the Haibun sequence, six of them immediately following the opening title suite of 29 poems, haibun combining prose and poetry. Looking closely at Haibun #1, "The Hawk," on a windy day. Windy. By the water. The neighbourhood. Small hawk perched, watching the poet. Poet watching, too, guessing, *This bird's injured, maybe poisoned*. The two of them eyeing each other, clicking, each moving both ways. Predator eyes, studying. Getting too close. Dangerous here. I could lose my face, my eyes. And then it's gone. In the air, flying. Name it now. There had been another one, days earlier, between his sister's house and the cathedral. Reading Thoreau in the between times. Here the poet steps out of the scene: "I'd like to be a good observer and learn from his books..." but this hawk trumps what gets written down, and he follows after the hawk, hoping to find—what? the hawk? Or the poem? Poet wounded too. Poisoned perhaps. Needs to clean himself up. It is the poem that emerges from the grass. The poem is the hawk he's after, the fall "to its fierce grass/ a clear and sullen line..." Blurred boundaries here. Confusion of hawk and poet. Do with "clear" and "sullen" what you will. This is dangerous country, not academia, a dive and full immersion into desire.



Michael Daley

Daley allows us to get a good look without saying too much about it. Don't be fooled. Listen to Helen Macdonald, writing in *H is for Hawk*. It has to do with Celtic mythology.

From an anonymous 13th-century poem, Sir Orfeo: "Sir Orfeo is a retelling of the Greek myth of Orpheus and the underworld by way of traditional Celtic songs about the otherworld, the Land of Faery. In Celtic myth that otherworld is not deep underground; it is just one step aside from our own. Things can exist in both places at once—and things can be pulled from one to the other." As Macdonald writes, "It is the hawks' flight and the deaths they brought that ushered him into that other world, let him find his wife that was lost. And this ability of hawks to cross borders that humans cannot is a thing far older than Celtic myth, older than Orpheus—for in ancient shamanic traditions right across Eurasia, hawks and falcons were seen as messengers between this world and the next."

Poet as falconer, shaman-like, more nature-philosopher. Cultural interpreter. Return to the epigraph of Thoreau that opens the manuscript: "Perception of beauty is a moral test." Daley's observer is a "charged observer," watched over by Thoreau. Thoreau says this observer "... would make the most of his life... must be abroad early and late, in spite of cold and wet, in pursuit of nobler game..." And Herbert Marcuse asserting, "...the reality of Hell... asserts that this Hell was created by Man (and by Nature). Not small ball here, this is big stuff. That the poet seeking the beloved, asking, What remains? is enough to keep him humble. Daley lives in this world where mistreatment of animals is fact. Older than the Judeo-Christian-rabbi-priest, in the neighbourhood of God that is older than God, that's where Daley goes when he goes into the fierce grass.

On All Saint's Day I return to the sequence of poems in Fall Notebook, stopping on *Oct 10*, writing the poem in my notebook:

May the deep ink slip
along a surface like an
ice skater from Canada
with years of experience,
polite monk who knows better
than let his enthusiasms
direct his spiritual life,

figure eights for god.

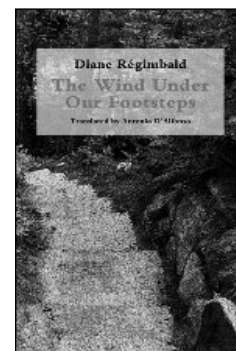
The poet is up early and it's dark. Clocks have been turned back and chimes from the old clock interrupt the silence. The image of the ice skater surfaces from somewhere in a timeless past, and the emotional life drifts where it will. The boy received his training from the church, but takes his discipline from an earlier time. The lovely figure 8s cut into the ice are lines from his morning poem written in syllabics, hardly noticeable. To get the poem right is an athletic endeavor. The discipline learned so long ago, his training disappeared from external certainties, settles with bankless dreams. Cold blade of the skates cut into the ice, surface breakers cutting out of time, offered up as music or prayer. The poet does not ask how he arrived at this point. Being outside of time, accessing multiple realities, it no longer matters.

By now, the reader, too, settles in. Arriving here, *Oct 20 St. Jerome*, the poet's been here for sixteen days, worked through the fears of his task "...to illuminate/ the letters calligraphed on the granite." Remember the skater, here, skates laced tight around the ankle, making it possible for the body descending, holding on the ice, the day's work before him. November's snow geese cross a white sky, traffic thick and everywhere in the whatever world. Radio squawk, the poet works through the noise of the day, the hucksters for war.

"Why write?" begins the lines of poetry in "The Hawk." They're short, these lines. It's important to remember that opening poem, "as I sit down to write the first poem of the day", a kind of bow to Basho, as he sits looking at New England hawks in October. "...weathering the wild...corpses all along the stormy beach. Our house..." Daley wants to be a good observer, can't help himself, and in the moment of confrontation, the haibun completes its task:

Why write? Why else each day
does the hawk fall
to its fierce grass,
a clear and sullen line...
talons stabbing once
aim true as desire?

Jim Bodeen is a Viet Nam vet, a trained theologian, a poet and a high school teacher. He has traveled extensively in South America. Some of his books have been translated into Spanish which he speaks fluently. He lives in Yakima, Washington.



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The Wind Under Our Footsteps

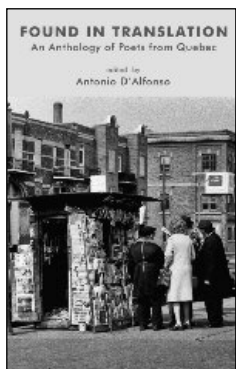
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The Wind Under Our Footsteps, a selection from four books by Diane Régimbald, startles with its energetic originality. The sequence is profoundly elemental and vigorous as it moves through the dreamlike spaces between the sensual and the mindful experiences of existence. Régimbald leads the reader along a path of dark wisdom as the poet crosses the borders between the mind and self. In *The Wind Under Our Footsteps*, Diane Régimbald appears in English for the first time in a translation by Antonio D'Alfonso.

Diane Régimbald was a writer in residence in Amsterdam, Holland, in 2006, and in Amay, Belgium, in 2006. A widely published poet, she has given readings in America and Europe. Her work has been published in English, Catalan, and Spanish. She lives in Montreal.

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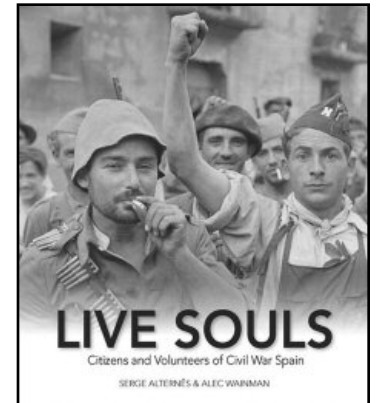
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WORTHY OF NOTE

The current season's book harvest has been unusually rich. Among new titles received, PRRB's editors note the following.

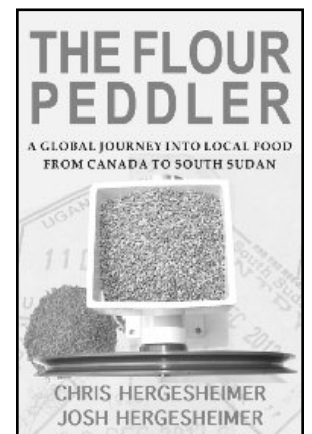
Live Souls: Citizens and Volunteers of Civil War Spain. Serge Altermes & Alec Wainman. Ronsdale.

In 1936, British Quaker Alec Wainman volunteered as an ambulance driver during the Spanish Civil War that drew 40,000 anti-fascists to the Republican cause and its International Brigades from around the world. For two years he documented the nightmare of Spain and her people through his photography. This exquisite collection of 210 photos brings to life the history of that concussive revolutionary time we've customarily known through the writing of Orwell, Spender, Auden, Hemingway, Gellhorn, Cornford, and Dr. Norman Bethune. Wainman's images offer a brilliant portrait of the human, daily life of Spain in crisis. He survived to teach at UBC in Vancouver.



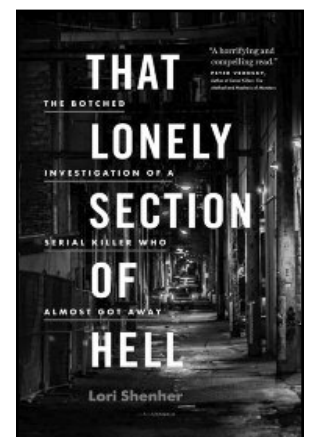
The Flour Peddler. Chris & Josh Hergesheimer. Caitlin.

Definitely a book out of the blue, this upbeat account by two brothers of their love of freshly-milled, organic B.C. wheat makes it a keeper. From selling at local farmers' markets throughout southern B.C., the pair head to impoverished Southern Sudan with an improvised, bicycle wheel-powered flour grinder to show villagers not far from the Darfur region how to make life a little easier and how to begin selling their own food products. A surprise happy planet kind of read.



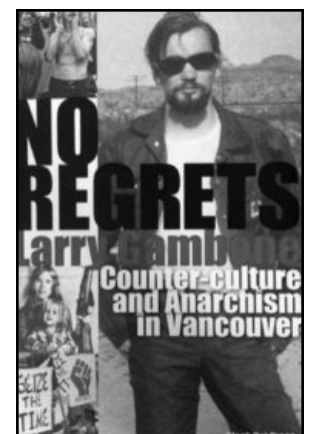
That Lonely Section of Hell. Lori Shenher. Greystone.

An ex-police detective's heavy account of her role in Vancouver's infamous murdered and missing women investigation that took years to nail Robert Pickton. Bill Deverell's cover blurb says it all: "This impassioned, deeply personal memoir by a Vancouver cop vividly recalls the racism, sexism, and sheer incompetence that undermined the hunt for Canada's most prolific serial killer."



No Regrets. Larry Gambone. Black Cat.

A personal forty-five-year history of Vancouver's counterculture and anarchist scenes by a committed insider. Gambone packs in plenty, from SFU's New Left student and faculty struggles of the Sixties, through New Westminster's long-running SFU Co-Op, to furious Leftist splinter group infighting, and on to Punkoid days and the fringes of the Squamish Bombers group, the Solidarity labour wave, and right up to Occupy days. There's music, art and occasional mayhem with more than a few well-loved characters from the city's other culture.



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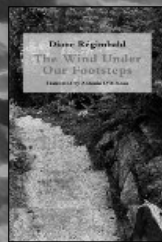


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