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BY LINDA
ROGERS

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TREVOR CAROLAN ON
TEMPORARY STRANGER

DELMORE SCHWARTZ:
JACK FOLEY ON THE
FELICITOUS ERRORS

ANNA AUBLET: "LETTER FROM PARIS"
POÉSIE DANS LE MÉTRO

JOSEPH BLAKE ON
BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN AND GUY CLARK

READING POETRY BY THE KAMO RIVER: EDITH
SCHIFFERT IN KYOTO, BY GREGORY DUNNE

A COYOTE LIFE: JAIME DE ANGULO
AND TRACKS ALONG THE LEFT COAST

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REVIEWED BY ALLAN GRAUBARD

PLUS: NEW POETRY BY RHONDA GANZ, ADELE BARCLAY,
SHIRLEY GRAHAM; KEVIN SPENST, ROBERT MARTENS,
JANET VICKERS, & ERIC SPALDING ON THE NEWS WE DESERVE



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This issue of the
Pacific Rim Review of Books
is dedicated to the memory of
Joanne Kyger
(1934-2017)

A great friend and
bioregional mentor of PRRB.



About Now:
Collected Poems
National Poetry
Foundation



Strange Big Moon
The Japan and
India Journals,
1960-1964
North Atlantic
Books

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A COYOTE LIFE

Trevor Carolan

A kind of Don Quixote of the New World imagination, Jaime de Angulo is one of the West Coast's genuinely mythic figures. Put it this way, before Henry Miller, Jim Morrison, or Charles Bukowski, there was de Angulo and in manifold ways he wrote the play-book on living the outlaw life for brainy, bad-boy wannabees. Strangely, actual knowledge of his life, adventures and accomplishments has remained spotty. His legend has thrived on anecdotes shared by those who knew, or were close to those who knew him. That's until now. As Andrew Schelling's book resolves, de Angulo was a diligent, unbelievably hardworking (if unorthodox) scholar in precarious economic times. A pioneering linguist and ethnologist of privileged émigré Basque-Spanish family in Paris, de Angulo made his way to the western U.S. while redefining himself variously en route as Schelling has it, as a "cattle puncher, trained medical doctor, bohemian, buckaroo, Army psychiatrist, novelist, crackshot linguist, ethnographer, and poet."

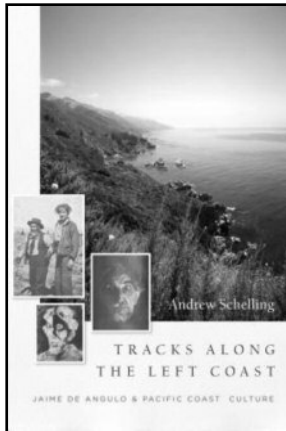
For decades, de Angulo's work has been known among Beat Lit scholars. The significance of this path-breaking book though is to consolidate anthropological knowledge of de Angulo's crucial role in the work of preserving both archival and living linguistic memory and storytelling from the northern California/southern Oregon Indigenous First Nations peoples. With his sharp appetite for wilderness life and constant investigative hunger for the topographies of primitive mind—where as Robert Duncan affirmed "the old gods reside"—de Angulo, who died in 1950, rests as a pivotal figure in the development of what we now recognize as Ethnopoetics. A loner and eccentric cuss by inclination, he was a myth-collector *par excellence* in his travelling, working and living among the indigenous peoples of first Mexico's Oaxaca region, then from the Klamath River south toward the Big Sur country around Partington Ridge where many of us first heard word of him through Henry Miller's writing.

De Angulo arrived in San Francisco at the age of 19 just in time to live through the city's devastating earthquake in 1906. Schelling offers good demographic portraiture of the city in the aftermath and traces de Angulo's early linguistic attunement to the remarkably polyglot immigrant culture that pitched in together during the rebuilding that followed. With the city's 20,000 strong Chinese community, the young migrant's ear learned to discriminate between Cantonese and Mandarin in what would become an enduring sphere of cultural and philosophical interest for him. Ecologically, California itself talked to him: other than his medical schooling at Johns Hopkins and his anthropology fieldwork, he would live there for the rest of his life. Significantly, as Schelling informs, it was during his medical studies that he first encountered Lao Tzu's Taoist masterwork the *Tao Te Ching* and he forged an intellectual bond with it that he would carry engraved on his heart throughout his life.

Schelling, who enjoys his own extensive interests in Asian insight traditions, observes tellingly that de Angulo was already making inquiries into the nature of meditative stillness and power while a young man. Based on this, he intuits the origins of de Angulo's spiritual grounding during the writing of his important 1924 essay "On the Religious Feeling Among the Indians of California." Keep in mind the time-lines involved when a Caucasian settler and essentially auto-didact scholar from Europe could recognize:

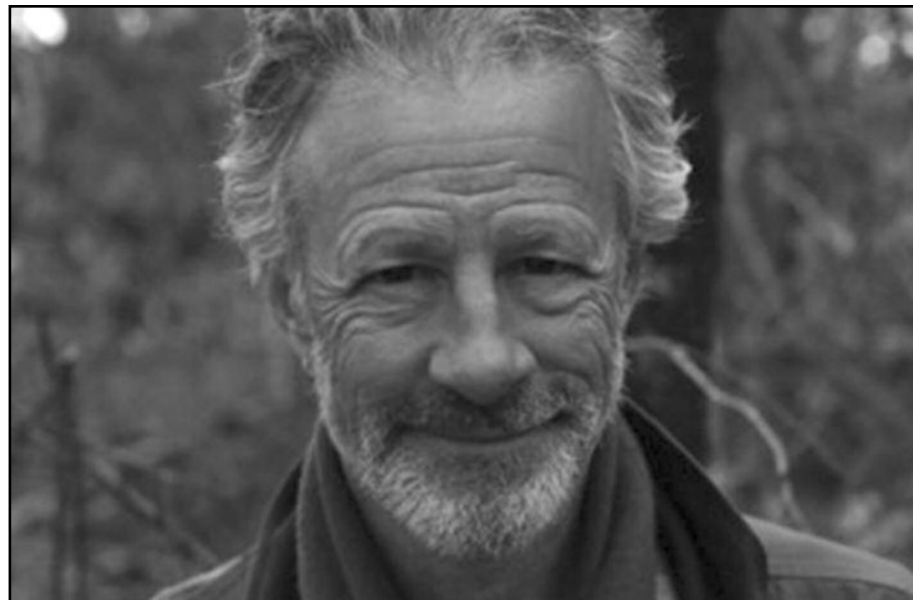
The spirit of wonder, the *recognition of life as power*, as a mysterious, ubiquitous, concentrated form of non-material energy, as something loose about the world and contained in more or less condensed degree by every object—that is the credo of the Pit River Indian.

Whether it was his vestigial Basque origins at play—among Europe's last tribal peoples—De Angulo was a figure who felt instinctively at home in associating with the quilt-work of California's tribal peoples he regularly came in contact with. Evidently, this companionable regard was reciprocal and during his 25-30 years of linguistic research he travelled and lived among some 30 separate tribal and linguistic indigenous First Nations groups.



Tracks Along the Left Coast: Jaime de Angulo and Pacific Coast Culture

Andrew Schelling.
Counterpoint. 2017



Andrew Schelling, photo by Hannah Devereux

Of contemporary note is his self-association with Coyote's trickster/Creator figure, a totemic relationship he treasured that significantly predates any current academic/ literary culture fetish with this primal archetype so beloved, yet warily regarded, among tribal peoples. His acquisition of Coyote lore and the unrivalled hoard of mythological tales he was entrusted with began in earnest when he returned to the West Coast from medical school. Settling in the Big Sur area, he progressively deepened his knowledge in "salvage ethnography [&] linguistics" by travelling among indigenous peoples in his favourite mode, on horseback. Schelling's writing demonstrates how acutely de Angulo's understanding quickened of tribal consciousness and "reason" in the north coastal California region in a manner that departed radically from the customary Darwinian approach of his traditional academic contemporaries.

Salvage ethnography and language study was a concept forwarded by the early anthropologists Franz Boas, Alfred Kroeber, Paul Radin, Edward Sapir and their colleagues who were determined to secure what knowledge could be recorded of North America's indigenous languages and cultures before they "blinked out" beneath the dominant weight of white settler culture. Strikingly, Schelling links this early 20th century academic passion with Modernism, illustrating the inescapable synchronicity between the time of great Cultural Innovation in Western industrial society and the "Great Dying" of North America's indigenous languages, notably in the west. Salvage linguistics relied upon training scholars who could capably record and write down the languages, the customs, traditions and rituals of peoples who were becoming extinct. What de Angulo had going for him was a non-indigenous ally's familiarity with the characteristics of local First Nations' societies that gave him a deep appreciation of the significance of orality and storytelling as theatre in these tribal cultures: this made him an ideal documentarian. He produced an abundance of research documentation that is still relevant, yet was begrudged legitimate scholarly recognition, a sinecure, or reliable funding for his work during the depths of the Great Depression. For much of his life he lived essentially hand-to-mouth and for long stretches was compelled to take on whatever roustabout country work presented itself. Yet, unlike academic theoreticians who worked in east coast and European universities and that often lacked first-hand contact with tribal peoples or had travelled comparatively little among them, his depth of knowledge about the complex influence of *landscape dynamics* on tribal society and language made his research capabilities unique.

The book's sustained commentary on the origins of Anthropology as a scholarly research discipline will be timely and informative even for non-specialists. De Angulo's peregrinations in seeking funding support for his field missions will also be familiar to anyone who has ever endeavoured to secure institutional financial assistance. What is refreshing are the glimpses that Schelling gives us of de Angulo's key relationships with Kroeber, Boas, and their university chums who wore the big-boy pants while regarding de Angulo as a wild man, not really out of the top-drawer like them. *Plus ça change!* Kroeber's association with de Angulo, for instance, grew plainly combative and sexually possessive as he fretted over the loss of "his girl", the gifted student Lucy Freeland, who became de Angulo's wife and blue-ribbon fellow researcher. We are seldom permitted such negative glimpses of renowned men.

Through his interpretive analysis of de Angulo's life and work with its many related literary sidebars, Schelling details the characteristics, as well as a valuable timeline study into the development of our Pacific Coast's recognizable mode of literary and artistic cultural expression, of which Ethnography is close to its heart. Implicitly, he reveals how this has contributed so much to its alternative, or countercultural

world view. In shedding light on the convergences in de Angulo's hybridized "interdisciplinary" Chinese and Indigenous American interests, Schelling presents readers with a garland of discoveries about critical American literature that threads such de Angulo friends and colleagues as Ezra Pound and Robinson Jeffers through to Kenneth Rexroth, Henry Miller, William Everson, Gary Snyder, Joanne Kyger, and what ultimately shapes up—literally—as a bona fide West Coast/Turtle Island lineage numbering many others.

Schelling's material compounds in becoming a rich scholarly reading dense with cross-references, secondary supportive information, and notes alluding to a linked diaspora of books that are crystallized in value in this singular volume. Schelling writes in a literary-colloquial style that is easy and entertaining to follow, but there is much in the work that is of superior research quality. Specifically, one notes its plenitude of direct source documentation obtained through personal interviews, and its strong secondary research sources; personal letters are especially well-mined.

Of additional value are the book's excellent historical and demographic portraits of late 19th/early 20th century life along the California littoral, especially the San Francisco Bay region south to Big Sur. Noteworthy is its thoughtful treatment of the region's Mexican and earlier Spanish missionary periods of sovereignty. Regarding the authenticity of Schelling's research in what has previously been much the provenance of conjecture, based on my own years of residence, scholarly training, and outdoors familiarity in the northern Humboldt County/Trinity River region in which de Angulo worked, I am comfortable with Schelling's descriptive detail and characteristics of the greater region. His discussion of mythic Big Sur as a literary and cultural incubator is superbly executed.

Regional studies enthusiasts will appreciate the book's timeliness in its discussion of approximations between indigenous West Coast and archaic Chinese/Taoist metaphysics. This area of studies in consciousness has been sounded at times and from diverse perspectives by such eminent Pacific Coast writers and scholars as Gary Snyder, Jerome Rothenberg, Dale Pendrell, Joanne Kyger, Bill 'Red Pine' Porter, Robert Bringhurst, Joanna Macy, Rex Weyler, Sam Hamill, Judith Roche, Wade Davis, Maxine Hong Kingston, Barry Lopez, among others. Again, like Coyote, de Angulo precedes them all. If this litany of names seems lengthy, the cast of characters among de Angulo's literary associations that Schelling addresses with authority includes Mabel Dodge Luhan, D.H. Lawrence, Jack Spicer, Carl Jung, and Ishi "the last wild Indian." That says something about a literary personality who, while having authored landmark papers in indigenous linguistics and whose posthumous collection entitled *Indian Tales* is now a revered modern classic, was never able to publish a book of his own during his lifetime. Through his ethnographic work and unconventional exam-

ple De Angulo became, quite simply, *influential*. Pound called him "the American Ovid." W.C. Williams claimed that he was "one of the most outstanding writers I have ever encountered."

Late in de Angulo's career when he moved to San Francisco and the Berkeley Hills, the poet Robert Duncan served as his amenuensis and Schelling provides a highly commendable look into this period during which the surrealist poet Philip Lamantia also appears. De Angulo's possible impact on these younger writers of what would come to be known as the San Francisco Literary Renaissance is fascinating. Building onto Duncan's role here is Schelling's discussion of Charles Olson's Projective Verse concept and de Angulo's linguistic theories that is both instructive and possibly provocative for Black Mountain fanatics.

No account of de Angulo's life would be complete without treatment of his renowned public radio broadcasts on KPFA alongside station stable-mate Alan Watts; however, Schelling's account of the role played by Ezra Pound, Allen Ginsberg and Carl Solomon in the eventual publication of the stories de Angulo shared in his more than 100 programs—collected as *Indian Tales*, and that are still in print—will be entirely new to many: it's wonderful information.

And so to the best-known story about de Angulo concerning the late-life period in which he left Big Sur to live in San Francisco's Telegraph Hill/North Beach community. Schelling notes discretely that de Angulo lived there openly "in drag", a mystifying aspect of the de Angulo legend that has percolated into popular awareness of his life and work. In the post-war 1940s, even in liberal San Francisco, such flamboyant behavior would have been extraordinary. Apparently he carried it off. One hears it said from those nearer to him that de Angulo was in a period of mental unbalance during this period; Schelling notes the tradition of First Nations' shamanic gender crossovers or contraries. It surely requires fuller discussion.

This book then is an invaluable, essential study of the legendary Big Sur trickster figure who researched as a non-First Nations ally among Northern California's indigenous peoples in the early 20th century. More than this, Schelling's formidable book establishes Jaime de Angulo's role, along with Indigenous and trans-Pacific wisdom traditions, San Francisco's Literary Renaissance, and the formative ideas contributing to Bioregionalism, in the shaping of our contemporary Pacific Coast's cultural imagination. For Turtle Island School aficionados it's an absolutely must-have book.

Trevor Carolan's current work is *New World Dharma: Interviews and Encounters with Buddhist Teachers, Writers and Leaders* (SUNY Press, 2016). He writes from British Columbia, Canada.

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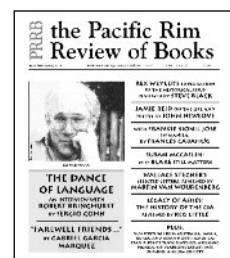
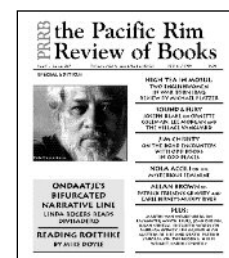
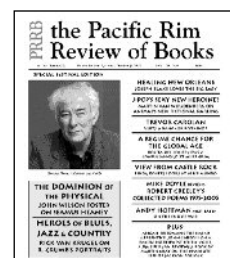
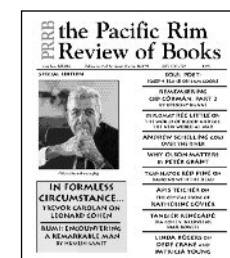
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BORN TO RUN

Joseph Blake

When I caught Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band at the Vancouver Coliseum back in the early 80s, they turned that old hockey barn into the best rock and roll party I've ever experienced, and I've enjoyed thousands of rock and roll shows over 50 years of music journalism.

The band's majestic, marathon show (and if you don't learn anything else from Springsteen's new autobiography, it's that it's a show, an act) rocked so hard it almost caught up to the showman, word-spitter, Boss out front. Sweating and wailing and bursting at his denim outfit's seams, Bruce took that sold-out crowd to rock and roll heaven.

I was saved from joining the circus and riding the bus to the next show and the next and the next by my marriage and kids. That show explained the Deadheads, albeit I'd seen the Dead a half-dozen times by then and never wanted to join the rock and roll circus. Like the Deadheads, who jump on that bus for the next night's rock and roll buzz someplace, Springsteen and company's act cooked my critical facility. I just wanted that heavenly rock and roll buzz again and soon.

It didn't work out like that. Over the years, I kept up with Bruce's hits and misses, watched as the band and the Boss transformed into magazine cover icons and into the tunnel of love and a second marriage to band mate and Jersey girl, Patti Scialfa, three kids, 18 studio albums, a never-ending run of nightly, war-like triumphs, war with the dark forces of war and corruption, war, as we learn from Bruce Springsteen's surprisingly insightful and articulate book, with himself and the black dog of depression. This 500-page doorstop of shared self-searching and self-knowledge has a clear, concise narrative voice. If it's an act, it's a good one.

Springsteen's blue collar work ethic is the product of his Irish-Italian roots and a princely childhood protected and nourished by his Italian grandmother and his tight-knit (to the point of dysfunctional) Catholic neighborhood in Freehold, New Jersey. "A crap house of a home town that I loved," Bruce writes.

His Irish father was a brooding, troubled drinker who held nightly "six pack séances."

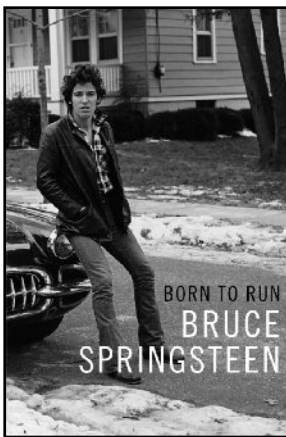
"My mom would read romance novels and swoon to the latest hits on the radio. My dad would go so far as to explain to me that love songs on the radio were part of a government ploy to get you to marry and pay taxes," Springsteen remembers.

The autobiography's opening *Growin' Up* chapter's depiction of his street with its relatives (all the Italian women married Irish men), and the Catholic church at the end of the block feels cloistered and explosive. For Springsteen, rock and roll and a \$69 Kent electric guitar lit the Boss's fuse. Subsequent chapters exhibit the single-minded discipline (pretty much no drinks, no drugs) and encyclopaedic knowledge of rock that helped launch Springsteen at the *Upstage* in Ashbury Park in 1969 and drives him to this day.

"My trustiest form of self-medication [is] touring," Springsteen explains in a later chapter about the depression that swallowed him in his 60s. "100 plus on two wheels" and the "life-giving, muscle-aching, mind-clearing, cathartic pleasure and privilege" of crafting and performing marathon live shows give him relief. Four hours of rock and roll heaven for us fans, a life-saving therapy for the dark prince described in *Born To Run*.

In short, painterly chapters Springsteen describes his act as "the sum of all my parts" and reveals a career that includes Zeppelin-like heavy rock bands, bi-coastal surfer crash pads, and the evolution of the E Street Band. The cinematic description of the first meeting with Dionysian saxophonist Clarence Clemons reads like a Clint Eastwood western. Later in the band's history Springsteen describes the ex-football star/E Street musician wanting to get paid "for being Clarence."

The E Street sidemen's stories are juicy and warm, loving and fraught with brotherly (and in Patti's case, wifely) weight. Better yet is the Boss's self-examination and unvarnished, sometimes over-ripe descriptions of his own battles, as for critics he becomes the "New Dylan" and "Rock and Roll's Future", as rock journalist and future manager Jon Landau famously called him. It was Landau who also told him later in



Born to Run,
Bruce Springsteen
Simon & Schuster
508 pages



Bruce Springsteen

their friendship "you need professional help."

"If somebody had to be the future, why not me?" Springsteen asks. Indeed, it was fellow Jersey boy Jack Nicholson who called him the "King of New Jersey," at Frank Sinatra's funeral. I loved reading those nuggets in *Born To Run*, especially the description of Bruce joining Steve Lawrence, Eydie Gormé, and Bob Dylan singing jazz standards around the piano at Sinatra's 80th birthday.

Lots of weird and wonderful stuff here too. Lots of hard-won wisdom on display as well. Springsteen's a good writer, and his book made me go back and listen to my old favourite records, paying particularly close attention to his autobiographical lyrics. Dig into the boxed set *Live 1975-1985* and imagine the man they call The Boss busting out another four-hour package of rock and roll dynamite.

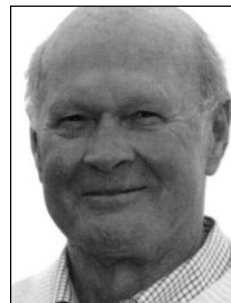
"There, strangely enough, exposed in front of thousands, I've always felt perfectly safe, just to let it all go. That's why at our show you can't get rid of me."

I hope he and the band come to town soon.

Joseph Blake is Music Editor for PRRB.



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Stanley Evans's previous novels are *Outlaw Gold*, *Snow-Coming Moon*, and the first six novels in the Silas Seaweed series: *Seaweed on the Street*, *Seaweed on Ice*, *Seaweed Under Water*, *Seaweed on the Rocks*, *Seaweed in the Soup*, and *Seaweed in the Mythworld*. He lives in Victoria, BC.

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POÉSIE DANS LE MÉTRO: POETRY AS COMMUTER

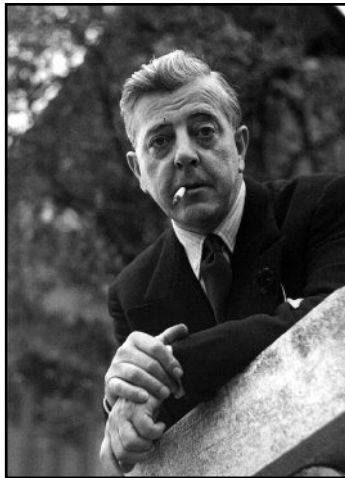
Anna Aublet

If you go underground to ride a Parisian subway these days, or take a bus to go about your daily routine, you might find yourself staring at a poem by Jacques Prévert, and accidentally reading it. We move from flash mobs to flash poetry. Many poems written by writers, known or unknown, are posted up on subway platforms, in trains and busses. Poetry has come to fill the foggy gap that separates the two rounds of the presidential election (that Emmanuel Macron will win). The idea is not new, but it developed greatly after the attacks and poetic lines are now spread all over the walls of the city like a protective spell. It is quite interesting for poetry to be shared like that in public transportation, in those transitory places that are always in movement. It makes the poems *move* forward, gives them dynamics and energy and reminds us that poetry itself is both a vehicle and a passenger: it commutes, literally.



Anna Aublet

So poetry has found a new space in the city. It is not the thing of fancy cafés, it belongs with the drifters, the rats and foul smells of the underground. The subway is the symbolic *locus* of the margin, the in-between, it lays at the frontier between the visible and the invisible. From the water spouting out in the Parisian gutters to keep the streets clean to the magmatic chambers, the unfathomable guts of the earth are a fertile ground on which to sow poetic seeds. Prévert's poem "Éclaircie" celebrates the poetic power of a metro daydream and repeats like a mantra: "I am in the metro, I doze off, I fall asleep, a woman I love comes and sits next to me". The inaugural poem of the poet's first collection *Paroles*, opens on a list and develops the anaphora "those who", cracking and fissuring the language and digging straight down to the ground as he did in this famous instance I read in the subway just last week:



Jacques Prévert

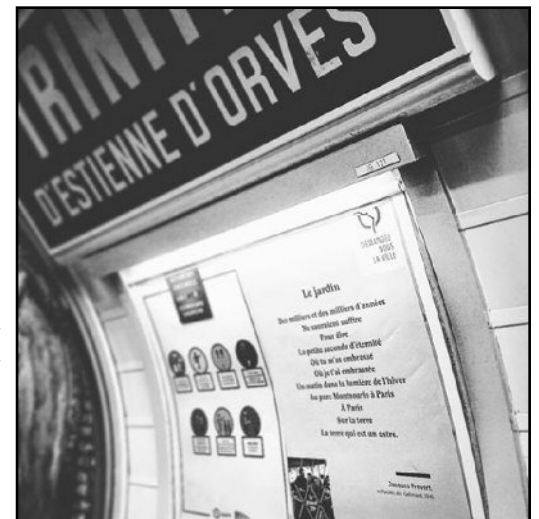
*Une pierre
deux maisons
trois ruines
quatre fossoyeurs
un jardin
des fleurs
un raton laveur*

*Une douzaine d'huîtres un citron un pain
un rayon de soleil
une lame de fond
six musiciens
une porte avec son paillason
un monsieur décoré de la légion d'honneur*

*Une autre raton laveur¹ [...]
from "Inventaire"*

The inventory, the list, the catalogue, the register, the record, the directory functions as an antidote, a counterweight to the neon advertising board standing next to it in front of the anxious passenger on the platform. It bypasses the codes of advertising hype and diverts its direction. Prévert intended to start with the ground below his feet, the prosaic world of the ordinary, "a stone", "a garden", "flowers" and so his poetry has quite naturally made its way to the underground to become the fellow traveller of all the Persephones of Paris. It is a meeting that is taking place in this display of poetry, between life and art, between poetry and its bemused readers.

William Carlos Williams, who compared himself to a stray dog in a park at Paterson many years ago, would come forth leaping and exclaim: "[Poetry] belongs there, in the gutter"², it sprouts where you might least expect it and cracks the asphalt like a flower, "saxifrage / is my flower that splits / the rocks"³. Poetry is better suited for the subway than the school where so many of Prévert's poems were learnt by heart and recited by unwilling pupils. Now his poem "le Cancre" [school dunce] finds itself plastered next to an advertisement for a big tutoring company: irony. But at least, poetry is used as a true williamsian field of action³: it is not buried in time but moving in the belly of the city.



¹Jacques Prévert, *Œuvres Complètes*, Gallimard, bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Paris, 1992, 131.

²William Carlos Williams, *Selected Letters*, New Directions, New York, 1957, 263.

³———. *Collected Poems*, Vol II, New Directions, New York, 1988, 55.

Anna Aublet writes from Paris. Her last contribution was *After The Attacks*.

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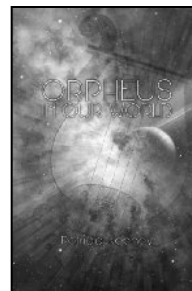


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- A.F. Moritz, poet



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BLOOD SOAKED PLAIN

Richard Wirick

David Grann has a way with creating razor-keen suspense out of already tension-filled historical narratives. *Killers of the Flower Moon* brings salient illustration to a centuries-old story that resonates even now. Just as he took us through struggles to find a lost city on the Amazon—the abject misery and hopelessness of the journey—he channels his outrage into an insistence that the oppressed Native Americans here have a voice, albeit, for some of them, from beyond the grave. In this new powerhouse, he brings us back to our own country, the southern Great Plains, where a series of calculated, shocking murders were disguised behind an altruistic movement of assistance, truly a wolf in sheep’s clothing.

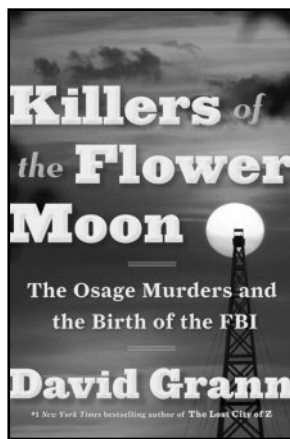
The “benevolent plan” of the Interior Department and the cavalry was to relocate the Osage Indian tribes from their ancillary lands in Kansas, which they in turn had been pushed to only a few decades earlier. The new location in Oklahoma was arid and rocky, and had little planting soil and zero ground cover. Bison had populated the crossings, but other Plains Indian tribes had depleted the herds, and the new transplants—robbed of their all-purpose sustenance—began suffering from malnutrition and diet depletion illnesses.

But there were riches under the land. Prospectors hand dropped wells and found supplies of oil that were rivalling those that had caused the Texas boom. At first the prospectors treated the tribe honorably, cutting them into leases and royalties. It enabled the tribal leaders to build spacious cabins in an otherwise hostile dust bowl. They lived well, hiring other rival tribes as house servants and rig and deerick workers. These new-found Oklahoma Osage suddenly became one of the wealthiest group of fin-de-siècle Americans.

But when the oil money truly became an investment worthy staple, the government’s paternalism devolved into vicious ripostes to anyone who resisted them. They decided the Indians simply could not manage their own wealth or oversee the lease areas and equipment. What the ground had given them, quite by happenstance, the white man was determined to fleece them of. White guardians were assigned, “authorizing and overseeing all of their spending, down to the toothpaste they purchased at the corner store, Grann writes. “The guardians were usually drawn from the ranks of the most prominent citizens in [Osage] County.”

The guardians skimmed millions of dollars from the tribe. The Gray Horse, a company town with merchants of the same name, increased prices for the Indians, but not their overseers. As the new century progressed, in a series of slow-moving, terribly efficient massacres, the tribe began dying in just such a manner that observers called it a Siege of Terror. Everything began happening all at once, and every episode was got more and more horrific.

Grann’s laboratory specimen of white oppression is Mollie Burkhart, an Osage squaw who had become the wife of a white man. Several of Mollie’s siblings suddenly died of a mysterious “wasting illness.” Another sister, Anna, was dispatched, execution style by a white merchant with a pearl handled revolver. Then the mother came down with the same wasting illness. Finally, Mollie herself became deathly ill. Grann writes: “She barricaded herself in dread, knowing that she was the likely next target in



Killers of the Flower Moon
David Grann
Doubleday
336 pages



Sisters Rita Smith, Anna Brown, Mollie Burkhart, and Minnie Kyle.
(Photo: Osage Nation Museum)

the apparent plot to eliminate the entire family.”

Though no one was able to solve the murders—evidence was spoliated and witnesses vanished—the case was assigned to the young J. Edgar Hoover, looking to build the profile of his young Federal Bureau of Investigation in Washington. It was one of Hoover’s best early pieces of work, rivalling that of the Dillinger assassination and the infiltration of the Chicago, Detroit and Cleveland mafias.

But the Texas Ranger that that Hoover deputized as an FBI regular, Tom White, had to work through a labyrinth of double and triple agents, and sheer decoy witnesses set up in a puzzle palace managed by a single, craft mastermind. This Great Oz of



David Grann



J. Edgar Hoover

Duplicity was discovered only after near-genius detective work, and only after White had become an arranger—indeed a connoisseur—of plots and false trails and investigatory legerdemain himself.

Grann has built a book (it is truly a narrative edifice) that will stand beside classics of Indian oppression like *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee*, Peter Mathiessen’s *In The Spirit of Crazy Horse*, and Peter Cozzens’s *The Earth Is Weeping*.

Killers of the Flower Moon belongs on the shelf of anyone interested in America’s long war against the people who first inhabited its land, gave it a fabric of glorious and mystical traditions, and eventually were killed off or at best disenfranchised in slow deracination. It reads like a thriller, its pages flying away like Osage ponies running over the doomed hills.

Richard Wirick practices law in Los Angeles.

A BLAZE IN THE DESERT

Allan Graubard

The writings of Victor Serge, well translated into English, comprise a unique, small library essential to understanding the fate of anti-capitalist revolution in Europe in the 20th century — from its early struggles and rare successes, to its tragic and bloody defeats. Some seven novels, six nonfiction studies, and six books of articles reveal a man, both player and witness, caught up in a history that, in large and small measure, influenced the formation of our world. Ever seeking to preserve for the individual the freedom to create, Serge also turned to poetry, which he wrote with clarity, lyricism, and poignancy. As much true to his time as to his own needs as a man, husband, father, and comrade, his poetry resonates, often piercingly so. And now we have this new translation, which gathers together the poems from the only such book published in his lifetime, *Resistance* (1938), along with an unpublished 1946 manuscript, *Messages*, and the last poem he wrote before he died in a Mexico City taxi in 1947, “Hands” — an elegy of depth and feeling.

The first section of this book records Serge’s experience as a victim of Stalinist repression. Formerly a committed if critical Bolshevik related on his mother’s side to Maxim Gorky, whom he meets and comes to know, Serge joins the Communist International, becoming a journalist for them. Expelled from the party in 1928 for opposing the concentration of power that led to Stalin’s ascendancy, he is condemned some five years later to internal exile in Orenburg, a garrison town fallen on hard times near the Urals. There he ekes out a life for himself and his son. His wife, infrequently visiting from Moscow, suffers from episodes of insanity, which finally claims her.

Unwilling to recant his opposition to Stalin, the brutal bureaucracy he directs and its repressive esthetic of socialist realism — which would have enabled him to seek salaried work even then under duress — Serge portrays in the poem, “Frontier,” the state of his world: a “terrestrial abyss deeper than the stellar abyss” where “a strange crimson beast” runs “spurred on by all the earth’s suffering.” This violent, near mythic image, true enough to its historical moment to stand for an analogue, does not prevent Serge from depicting quite human subjects as in the poems “Old Woman” and “Just Four Girls.” A portrait of the Kurdish town of “Tiflis,” with its “women in red dresses, a little donkey ambling/down the back street of the Maidan,” shifts to the distant mountainous horizon, which offers Serge visual and moral access to “fertile continents of consent and refusal!” — the very place Serge inhabits and which, despite his hope, encircles him.

The near mythic and human, reciprocally interactive, sometimes in balance, sometimes not, is a counterpoint that Serge uses throughout this book. With it, he is able to contextualize our presence, our cultures, and the immense deforming, political pressures that we and they endure. In “Tête-à-Tête,” the cumulative effect of his condemnation and exile, from an ideology turned rabid, become transparent in the most intimate way, with this admission: “Sane as I am, there are moments when I feel I’m going mad...” I cannot believe that Serge wrote this lightly, or without thinking of his wife.

By 1936, because of his stature in France as a writer and translator of Russian literature, including leading contemporary poets, a majority of whom the regime will crush, Serge is freed; the result of organized international protests, and the interven-



A Blaze in the Desert: Selected Poems

Victor Serge
Translated by James
Brook
PM Press
192 pp., \$16.95



Victor Serge



Victor Serge in Wolfgang Paalen’s Studio in Mexico
ca. 1942

tion of Andre Gide and Roman Rolland — the latter convincing Stalin in a meeting with him of the probity of such an act.

Serge returns to France and the language of his birth in Belgium as a known critic of Stalinist abuses. Of course, he is marginalized by the communist party’s control over cultural media. The poem “Sunday,” from 1939, chronicles the end of that period, and the ironic and desperate air in Paris just prior to the German invasion. With that invasion and victory, Serge flees on foot to Marseilles. There he meets Varian Fry, and works with Fry’s Emergency Rescue Committee to aid antifascist refugees. The poem “Marseilles” captures the scene with the immediacy and expansiveness that Serge expresses so well: “Planet without visas, without

money, without compass/great empty sky without comets/The Son of Man has nowhere left to lay his head...”

When Fry rents a villa near the city for refugees, Serge goes to live there along with Andre Breton. Other surrealist refugees are frequent guests. Although Serge recognizes in surrealism a vivacious, radical current, he also keeps his distance, identifying it as less of a revolutionary movement than a literary one.

In 1941, Serge and his son, Vlady, find passage on the last boat to leave Marseilles for the Americas, with several of those same surrealists he lived with, and hundreds of other political refugees on board. The poem “Out at Sea” depicts the voyage from war-torn Europe, and what would become a year-long absence from his companion, Laurette Sejourne: “Can it be that I am already fifty—with this all-consuming/black gold in my veins, this gold for you, this gold for/life?” The question pivots abruptly as he faces himself: “My past lives, torn to shreds, snap behind me in the trade/winds/like tattered flags.”

The boat arrives in Martinique where Serge and his son are interned in a former barracks for the quarantined ill. Serge continues to write, with one poem from that moment, “The rats are leaving...”: a fierce attack against the rich whose sole purpose is to secure and enjoy their wealth and hubris, whatever the political cost: “fat gray rats, rich treacherous rats that think/they’re great conquerors.” Serge counterpoints the moral plague they carry with the forbearance and strength that he and his friends possess, and without which they might very well be dead, or more simply have given up as so many others, known and unknown: “See,” he tell us, “even the plague can’t drive us to despair.”

Some time thereafter, through the support of writer Dwight MacDonald in New York and other exiled Spanish comrades of note, Serge and his son are given asylum in Mexico by the Cardenas government. He quickly learns to love the country and its people, rejuvenated by the landscape, its vibrant cultures, and the legacy of the Mexican revolution.

His past, however, never leaves him. Stalinist agents slander him in the press while he lives in poverty, ever writing his novels as war rages. I will not go into the poems born in that temporal space here; rather, I leave them to you as poems not to be missed.

Translator, James Brook, has done valiant service in making this book available with the verve and elegance Serge’s poems deserve. *A Blaze in the Desert: Selected Poems by Victor Serge* revives a rare presence whose voice, for this reader — despite the travails that marked his life — sings.

Allan Graubard is a poet, playwright and critic. A recent play, *Woman Bomb/Sade*, was produced in New York in 2008.

POETRY AND PROSE FROM THE TRANSMIGRATIONAL BEYOND

Trevor Carolan

Jamie Reid occupied a singular position in Canada's west coast literary community. A co-founder of Vancouver's original TISH group that arose at the University of B.C. in the early 1960s, unlike many of his student-era peers he veered away from literary/academic life for a lengthy 20-year period while engaging in labour activism. With the publication of his book *Prez* in the early Nineties, however—an homage to jazz saxophone great Lester Young—his active return to the city's literary community came as a shot in the arm for Vancouver poetry. Writing in the *Vancouver Sun*, John Moore, one of the country's most capable critics, noted of it that, "Cooler in tone than many of the raving epiphanies of Jack Kerouac, Gregory Corso and Allen Ginsburg, *Prez* unmistakably partakes of both their style and substance in its jazz-derived improvisations-on-a-theme form and its deeply humanistic take on life."

Opinionated, passionate, and generous, Reid moved within many artistic circles and was held in uniformly high regard by an uncommonly broad swath of B.C. and Canadian literary practitioners. He knew everyone, it seemed. Always socially-engaged, he encouraged younger and less-recognized poets, and his veteran presence at their readings brought them a kind of generational acknowledgement.

Temporary Stranger is a posthumously published collection of "Homages, Poems and Recollections." In 'Homages', Reid presents a suite of poems that he first brought out a chapbook in 2009 and that he said once were inspired in part by a journey he made with France with his wife Carol. In these works—what for many will be an introduction to the symbolism, surrealism, dadaism, and existentialism of the Paris School—he speaks of the poets he works with as "guides", and says of the poems: "These texts therefore might as well have been as ancient as the Rosetta Stone, because the poems I fashioned from them are really more like translations of translations than fully original works..." The voices? Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Andre Breton, Guillaume Apollinaire, Saint-John Perse, Pierre Reverdy, Max Jacob, Paul Eluard, Jacques Prevert, Francis Ponge, and Tristan Tzara. Add Jack Spicer and painter Francis Picabia for single-mindedness and anarcho-license. That's a formidable undertaking for any poet. Reid notes how in these poems or transliterations he seeks "allowance to speak through the invented voices of the ghosts of dead authors who mostly wrote in French. In a way, they are a kind of monologue with these authors, but also, I hope, an introduction to a dialogue, silent or otherwise, with readers of these poems."

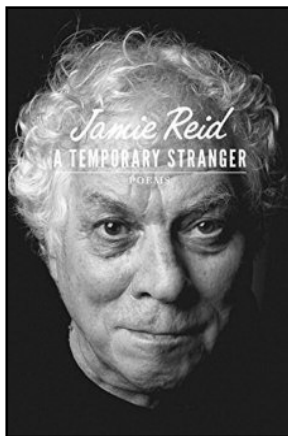
He takes up the challenge mindful of the fundamental mysteries that "art and poetry can sometimes reach toward", and he keeps things simple with a way of making them familiar. In "homage to jacques pervert" he writes,

*first you name a thing, a cup of coffee, say,
and then some cream to add to it, a bit of sugar,
a spoon to stir it with. Whisper
the name of lips...*

This is called the making of poems.

And in "homage to tristan tzara" we see

*Some steps beyond the copse,
in the distance
against the pale silvery evening sky
the Eiffel Tower upraised
like the solitary finger
of a giant iron skeleton
somewhere beneath the earth of Paris.*



Temporary Stranger
Jamie Reid
Anvil, 2017

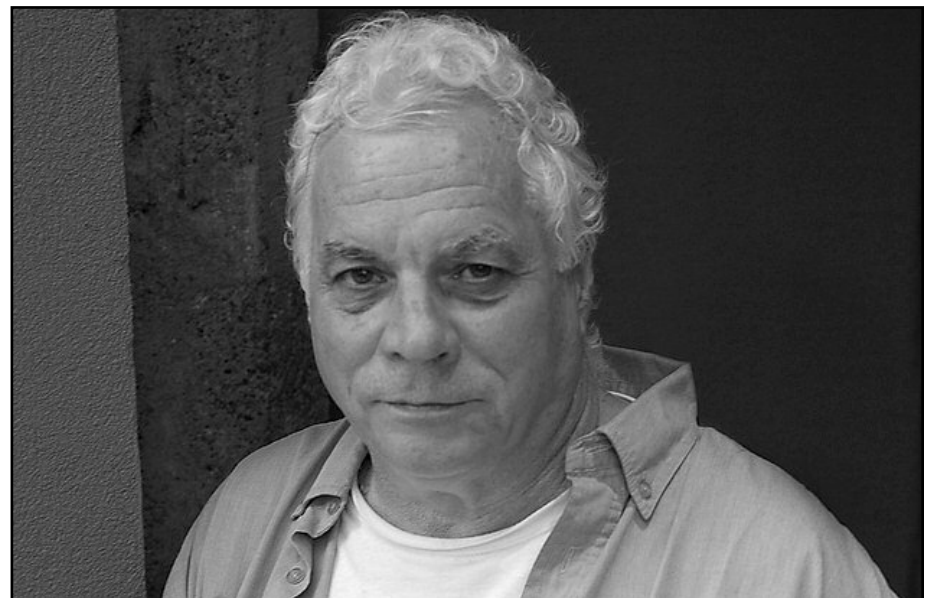
*A moment of silent freedom comes upon me,
completely inarticulate.*

Approximate man. Approximate monster.

In the book's second section entitled "Fake Poems", the author addresses the nature and scope of poetic consciousness, language and production. Reid's early academic lineage with the tutelage of Warren Tallman left him with an ear attuned to theory—Black Mountain, Beat Lit, Duncan-Spicer linguistic rigour, what have you. Steep this with his lengthy Leftist studies and there's little wonder that in the work of his mature, searching years he marries Paris School stream of consciousness methodology à la Robbe-Grillet with a Spicer-like probing of language that questions 'What's real? What's manufactured?' In his twenty-one "Fake Poems" he maintains,

*...all art is fake, because the artificial means we
use to represent those living objects cannot duplicate the
quality of human sensual experience, in which sensation and
intellect run inseparably together. Art and artificiality for
that reason are entirely inseparable. All art, in that sense,
must be, in some sense, false.*

Antonio Gramsci, the Italian communist who political theory permeates contemporary academic discourse, argued early in the 20th century something approximately similar—that if art and culture are routinely hijacked by western society's bigtime operators, what then is ultimately honest? One hears Reid's concern with politics and the influence of centralized media hype:



Jamie Reid (Photo by Brian Nation)

*...The garment of want, unspeakable itself.
Spoken through them, the speakable surrogate
Of the poverty-stricken, the experts
Who came to save them and speak in their name.
A permanent fog seemed to flow from their words,
Impossible to find the world there,
No earth, no water, no animals, no birds,
Nothing but language,
the hum and the effluvium of the cheating word.
("Fake Poems 14")*

There's no doubt about the *doubt* there, nor the determination; almost echoing

the negation of Eliot's *Four Quartets*, and like them, moving on toward something near to redemption. Dense, yet articulate, the Fake Poems are not easy reading and at times can be difficult to get to grips with, but it's clear that metaphysics is a part of this new style Reid is fitting on for the long distance.

Jamie Reid doesn't ordinarily spring to mind as a religious or spiritual poet; however, in "Where To Find Grace", a bookend to the Fake Poems he achieves what I'd argue is his most beautiful poem, offering a clear, resonant paean to the fundamental question of how and where to find grace in uncertain times:

*Under the kitchen table with the flour
and the cat dish, in the kitchen sink
with the supper dishes and the bubbles of soap.*

Behind half-closed eyelids in the sunlight.

*Round About Midnight
in the moonlit garden.*

*Two steps down into
the Qu'Appelle Valley in April sunshine.*

*Called by one's own name in the street,
an unfamiliar voice on any uncertain gray day....*

In a phrase, he finds "impossible grace" within community, in the random, observable beauty of the natural world, of ordinary mind. This is a poem he will be remembered for in anthologies; ; you can feel that homage to Jamie Reid vibrating down the line.

"Recollections", the third section of Reid's final opus is compulsory reading for any devotee of Vancouver literary history. Here he sets himself the task of compiling and recollecting his life and times as a witness to the city's literary ecology from the early 1960s onward, much of which has remained undocumented until now. It's a superb compendium of essays on significant characters he encountered, lived and worked among throughout the countercultural revolution that shaped the lives of Reid and his companions over the past six decades, and they establish his place as a superb memoirist along the lines of John Glascoe's *Memoirs of Montparnasse*.

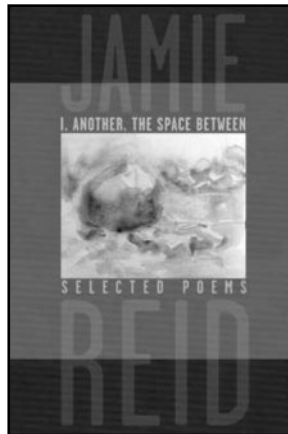
The recollections begin with a colourful reminiscence about Curt Lang, an idiosyncratic East Van figure from the early 1960s perennially at odds with the world, and an ingeniously creative thinker. Within his discussion of Lang, readers are treated to Reid's ancillary observations on Lang's circle that included John Newlove, Al Neil, Roy Kiyooka, and Fred Douglas—a remarkably impactful artistic group in Canada's west coast cultural history. To these Reid adds detailed remembrances about Red Lane; early psychedelic entrepreneur Sam Perry; Montreal's Artie Gold; Bob Dylan; and an uncannily accurate, sympathetic portrait of Gerry Gilbert.

The most penetrating writing is reserved for portraits of John Newlove, Bill Bissett, and Warren Tallman. Like William Hazlitt who wrote on his Romantic-era poet and painter colleagues, Reid's recollections engage with his subject's work from a critical lens too. Of Bissett he declares

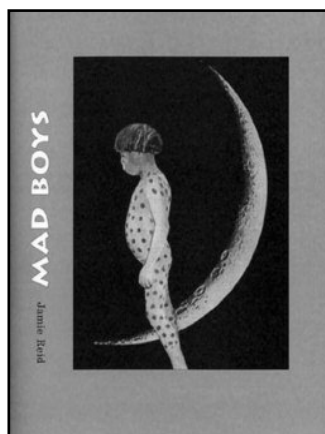
While others change and adapt, compromise and take on new public personae, Bill Bissett seems only to emerge as more and more of what he was before, as though perfecting and protecting an original image of himself. His program has never changed: from the beginning, his work in every genre has aimed to mobilize the rudest, simplest, oldest and most primitive pictorial and verbal techniques to invoke a state of mind and being that he calls "ecstatic yunyun," the linking of the phenomenal and the transcendental world, the vulgar and the celestial, the earthly and the heavenly.

By the time Reid trolls in the epic history of Bissett's publishing of *blewointment* journal, we are presented with something close to a national life and times digest of Canadian literature from the 1960s on. It's a *tour de force* tribute to this enduring coyote figure of our country's arts and letters.

In "The Legacy of Warren Tallman" we're given a necessary look at this complicated mentor about whom we need to know more as Vancouver assumes its larger



I. Another. The Space Between: Selected Poems
Talonbooks, 2004



Mad Boys
Coach House Press, 1998

place in the world. As Reid explains, "In the atmosphere of the late 1950s and early 1960s before TISH was born, we were so used to the idea that nothing of any importance ever happened in Vancouver, that my friend Peter Cameron was excited beyond words to tell me that the author of an article in *Evergreen Review* about Jack Kerouac whose writing had aroused us so profoundly, was actually a professor at UBC, living right here in our very own city."

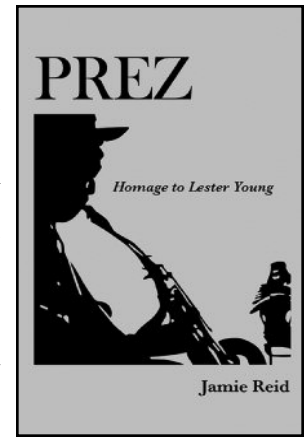
Tallman got Vancouver jumping with an alternative to the narrative espoused by Earle Birney about literature and poetry around these parts. As those who knew Tallman remember, even when still exotically new his personality was as ruffled as the contents of his wardrobe. When Reid's friend looks Tallman up at his faculty office he finds him,

far from being hip and cool in the style of the time...instead a skinny and nervous cigarette addict whose fingers were stained with nicotine and who shook throughout his entire body as he lit one cigarette after another, sometimes leaving the last one still burning in the overflowing ashtray on his desk. But there was also about him an air of restless intellectual energy and the nervousness was part of this energy.

The beat goes on and gets better. It's fascinating reading, and as Reid concludes "Tallman was "the evangelist, the father of Vancouver literary modernism, and his children are numerous, although many of them may not even know his name." There you have it.

Reid spoke later in life of possibly redeeming himself through his work. Complex, inherently feisty, and, as the Tibetans say, a poet of the bone, with *Temporary Stranger* it's clear that he accomplishes his aim, probably for a debt few would remember anyway. Cumulatively this is a wonderful book and we can civically thank Anvil Press for taking it on.

Trevor Carolan's current work is *New World Dharma: Interviews and Encounters with Buddhist Teachers, Writers and Leaders* (SUNY Press, 2016). He writes from British Columbia, Canada.



PREZ: Homage to Lester Young - new edition
Oolichan Books, 2010

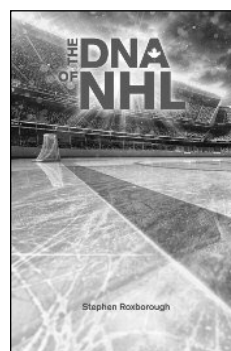
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The DNA of NHL

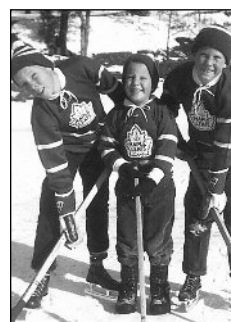
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Stephen Roxborough was born in New York to a Canadian father and American mother. He was raised in the Midwest, and grew up in Vancouver, B.C. He won Canadian and British swimming titles and represented Canada on the national team. He is the co-founder of the Burning Word poetry festival, board member of the Washington Poets Association and Head Poet for Madrona Center. An award-winning performance poet, Roxborough was nominated for a 2003 Pushcart Prize. He lives in Anacortes, Washington.



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DELMORE SCHWARTZ: "ERROR'S FECUNDITY"

Jack Foley

[S]o many of [my students] made the same errors that, in a way, they were no longer errors. Moreover, the longer I thought about some of the errors, the more they seemed to be possible enlargements of meaning and association which might be creative.

—Delmore Schwartz on the concept of "fruitful error" in "The Vocation of the Poet in the Modern World."

error's fecundity

—Delmore Schwartz, *Genesis: Book I*

Since Delmore Schwartz's death in 1966 at the age of 52, his ghost has shown considerable signs of stirring—in Saul Bellows' novel, *Humboldt's Gift* (1975), in James Atlas's widely-read biography, *Delmore Schwartz: The Life of an American Poet* (1977), and in various other more recent books. Schwartz appears as a character in John Berryman's *Dream Songs* and in the memoirs of some of his friends: William Barrett's *The Truants* and William Phillips' *A Partisan View*. Eileen Simpson's *Poets in their Youth* came out in 1982. During the 80s and 90s, many Schwartz titles appeared or reappeared: the *Selected Essays* was reissued in paperback in 1980; the *Letters of Delmore Schwartz* came out in 1984. Poet Robert Phillips (Schwartz's literary executor since the death of Dwight MacDonald) not only edited the *Letters* but was responsible for various other volumes as well: *Last and Lost Poems of Delmore Schwartz* (1979); *The Ego is Always at the Wheel* (1986); and *Shenandoah and Other Verse Plays* (1992).

The latest entry in the attempt to establish Delmore Schwartz as a major American poet is the New Directions anthology, *Once and for All: The Best of Delmore Schwartz*, edited by Craig Morgan Teicher, with a foreword by John Ashbery. The book is a wild ride through Schwartz's productions and includes stories, published poetry, critical essays, unpublished poems, "verse drama," and letters. (The last of the latter—and the concluding piece in the book—is a letter Schwartz wrote to his landlady, Mrs. Odell; the poet is complaining about what he regards as an unjust increase in his rent: "The only reason you give for your incredible demands, 'excessive damages,' has no basis in fact whatever. There are no excessive damages whatever: there are no damages.")

An interesting aspect of *Once and for All* is its inclusion of selections from Delmore Schwartz's celebrated "failure," *Genesis: Book I*. The editor describes *Genesis: Book I* as "Schwartz's most ambitious and least successful work. A sprawling book-length poem interspersed with narrative prose, it was intended...to tell Schwartz's life story, and by extension, the story of European Jews in America...[Schwartz] thought the poem would make him immortal...[A]lmost none of this book has been available since its initial printing in 1943."

If not quite career destroying, *Genesis: Book I* was far from the success Schwartz hoped it would be, and there was no *Genesis: Book II*. Following the lead of Thomas Hardy's *The Dynasts* and even more of Pound's *Cantos* ("These many crowded about me, with shouting"—ghosts, as in Schwartz's poem), *Genesis: Book I* maps mind as an area of many conflicting voices—though editor Teicher complains that "the ghosts...are often unbelievable or downright silly." Teicher's selection of passages does not include the poem's powerful conclusion.

Few would deny the brilliance of Schwartz's famous story, "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities," written in 1935 (when the author was in his twenties) and again in print as the opening selection of *Once and for All*. Robert Leiter, writing in *The Hudson Review* in 1985, calls the story a "certifiable masterpiece" but goes on to claim that "for the rest of his brief life...Schwartz wrote variations on this one story, with less and less technical expertise each time out." Many would agree with Leiter. Still, if Schwartz's reputation is nothing like what it once was, it has by no means died out, as this "best of" volume indicates. This fact is particularly interesting given the nature of his work. The question he raises again and again is: "What is the nature of the illumination present in a work of art?" In his essay, "The Isolation of Modern Poetry," Schwartz asserts that "the only life available to the poet as a man of culture has been the cultivation of his own sensibility." But what is the nature of this "sensibility"? If we

grant that art is some sort of "mirror," that it necessarily gives us an image of the "self"—whatever the "self" may be—we may still ask what sort of image it gives, what sort of "knowing" it involves.

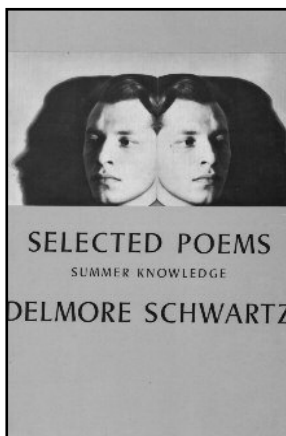
The title of Schwartz's selected poems is his term for the particular kind of "knowledge" generated by art: "summer knowledge," knowledge which is necessarily brief and limited—occurring only during the summer—but nevertheless full of the intense pleasure which summer promises. The phrase is also—at least potentially—a contradiction in terms: summer is that time when we don't go to school and so don't "learn" anything: no "knowledge" in the summer. It is "vacation" time, a time of "pleasure," not "knowledge." "In a way," Schwartz remarks in the title poem, "summer knowledge is not knowledge at all."

The potential contradiction allows us to enter more deeply into Schwartz's work. We might say of him what Hans-Georg Gadamer said in *Philosophical Hermeneutics of Martin Heidegger*: "He pursued the intrinsic and indissoluble interinvolvement of authenticity and inauthenticity, of truth and error, and the concealment that is essential to and accompanies every disclosure...."

It was in the strength of such paradoxical illumination—the interpenetration of "blindness" and "insight," as Paul de Man once put it—that Delmore Schwartz lived out his career. Few poets have been so committed to art as self-consciousness; few poets have understood so clearly that self-consciousness is necessarily shot through with fantasy and fiction.



Once and for All: The Best of Delmore Schwartz
edited by
Craig Morgan Teicher
forward by John
Ashbery
New Directions, 2016



Selected Poems: Summer Knowledge
Delmore Schwartz
New Directions, 1959

"In the celebrated selection of his poems published in 1959 under the title *Summer Knowledge*," wrote James Atlas in *Delmore Schwartz: The Life of an American Poet*, "Delmore chose to devote over a hundred pages to haphazard, euphonious, virtually incomprehensible effusions."

This judgment seems to me as repellant now as it did when I first read it in 1977. One cannot help but ask why Mr. Atlas made such a judgment upon a group of poems which I believe to be as strong as or stronger than anything in Delmore Schwartz's early career. "But too many of them," Atlas goes on, "are empty symphonies of sound; while not without a peculiar beauty, they verge on being devoid of any sense whatsoever."

What sort of "sense" can be made of these poems, these "virtually incomprehensible effusions"? In his foreword to *Once and for All*, John Ashbery questions Atlas's judgment only in the mildest way:

The late poetry does seem to lack the electric compressions and simplifications that animate his early writing, tending toward bald assertiveness. James Atlas calls it "haphazard, euphonious, virtually incomprehensible effusions...imitative of Hopkins, Yeats, Shelley." And he may be right. Yet there is something there, perhaps indeed the ruin of a great poet, but perhaps something more. It turns out that critics were premature in condemning the late work of Picasso and Stravinsky; perhaps Delmore will one day get a similar reprieve.

Schwartz himself boldly placed the newer poems in direct juxtaposition to the older, famous ones. "The second half of the book," he writes in his "Author's Note," "consists of poems written in the past five years." The famous poems are all included, of course, but the title of the volume—which is also the title of the second half—suggests his intention to emphasize the new. "*Summer knowledge*," he writes in the title poem,

*is the knowledge of death as birth,
Of death as the soil of all abounding flowering flaring rebirth.*

A passage from Nietzsche's *The Gay Science (Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft)* is relevant here:

Only great pain, the long, slow pain that takes its time, ... compels us philosophers to descend into our ultimate depths... [F]rom such abysses, from such severe sickness, also from the sickness of severe suspicion, one returns newborn, having shed one's skin, more ticklish and malicious, with a more delicate taste for joy, with a tenderer tongue for all good things, with merrier senses, with a second dangerous innocence in joy, more child-like and yet a hundred times subtler than one has ever been before. 1/

James Atlas's book gives ample evidence of Schwartz's problems with "the sickness of severe suspicion"—one remembers the poet's famous remark, "Even paranoids have real enemies"—but Nietzsche's emphasis, like Schwartz's, is on joy. The word "joy" echoes throughout *Summer Knowledge*, bringing to mind not only Nietzsche but a Romantic tradition which would include Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Beethoven, all of whom saw "joy" as an emotion central to their work. Schwartz's "I Am Cherry Alive," the Little Girl Sang" hints at the nature of that joy:

*"I am cherry alive," the little girl sang,
"Each morning I am something new...."*

One of the strongest—and most obviously autobiographical—of the later poems is "Once and for All," the opening of "The Phoenix Choir" section of *Summer Knowledge* and the title poem of the "best of" volume. This is the entire poem:

*Once, when I was a boy,
Apollo summoned me
To be apprenticed to the endless summer of light and consciousness,
And thus to become and be what poets often have been,
A shepherd of being, a riding master of being, holding the sun-god's
horses, leading his sheep, training his eagles,
Directing the constellations to their stations, and to each grace of
place.
But the goat-god, piping and dancing, speaking an unknown tongue
or the language of the magician,
Sang from the darkness or rose from the underground, whence arise
Love and love's drunkenness, love and birth, love and death, death
and rebirth
Which are the beginning of the phoenix festivals, the tragic plays in
celebration of Dionysus,
And in mourning for his drunken and fallen princes, the singers and
sinners, fallen because they are, in the end,
Drunken with pride, blinded by joy.

And I followed Dionysus, forgetting Apollo. I followed him far too
long until I was wrong and chanted:
"One cannot serve both gods. One must choose to win and lose."
But I was wrong and when I knew how I was wrong I knew
What, in a way, I had known all along:
This was the new world, here I belonged, here I was wrong because
Here every tragedy has a happy ending, and any error may be
A fabulous discovery of America, of the opulence hidden in the dark
depths and glittering heights of reality.*

The word "all" appears again and again in *Summer Knowledge*—"I see a great Sky, Moon and Stars, and ALL," says Schwartz's Swift—and it points to what Schwartz considered to be a particularly American concern. Behind Schwartz's "all" is Emerson's famous "transparent eyeball" passage in "Nature"—"I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all"—and Melville's remarks about "whiteness" in *Moby Dick*: "whiteness is not so much a color as the visible absence of color, and at the same time the concrete of all colors... a colorless, all color..." Schwartz himself writes of Jeremiah Dickson in "The True-Blue American,"

Jeremiah Dickson was a true-blue American,
For he was a little boy who understood America, for he felt that he must
Think about *everything*; because that's *all* there is to think about....

Yet, however American and autobiographical "Once and for All" may be, the



Delmore Schwartz, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1940s (Photo: Gertrude Buckman)

opening lines are nevertheless a paraphrase of the opening of Friedrich Hölderlin's poem, "Da ich ein Knabe war" ("Da ich ein Knabe war, / Rettet' ein Gott mich oft / Vom Geschrei und der Rute der Menschen..."). Indeed, in one section of Schwartz's very American *Summer Knowledge* the poet speaks in the voices of various European writers: Sterne, Swift, Hölderlin, and Baudelaire.

Schwartz's translation of Hölderlin is not the only European reference in "Once and for All." Apollo and Dionysus suggest Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, and the word "constellations" brings to mind Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés*, in which "UNE CONSTELLATION" is a prominent feature. In addition, the phrases "shepherd of being" and "master of being" are taken from Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism," a translation of which can be found in *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, a book edited by Schwartz's friend, William Barrett.

In Heidegger's essay, however, the phrases are *opposed* to one another, as they are not in Schwartz's poem. In "Once and for All," as in the structure of

the entire volume, antitheses—old poems vs. new poems, Europeans vs. Americans, translations vs. confessions—are at once asserted and denied; like the book as a whole, the poem is a kind of battleground in which the central "antithesis" of Schwartz's career is rehashed, brought up from the dark to be understood: his "tragic fall," the shift in his role from public, Apollonian poet to Dionysian poet of the abyss, the poet who sings "from the darkness"—from what Schwartz once referred to paradoxically as "famous obscurity" ("The Isolation of the Modern Poet").

For Schwartz it is only the "light" of poetry which can illuminate that darkness, and the mode of "knowledge" for which the entire book is striving, its peculiar mode of consciousness, is intimately bound up with the power of poetry to create states of transformation—*reversals* of "knowledge"—which might be called "Edenic." In "The Kingdom of Poetry" Schwartz writes,

[Poetry] transforms the water into wine at each marriage in Cana of Galilee...
a history of poetry would be a history of joy...

For poetry is like light, and it is light...
For poetry is the sunlight of consciousness:
It is also the soil of the fruits of knowledge
In the orchards of being...

"The Kingdom of Poetry" bears a slight, probably deliberate stylistic resemblance to "Jubilate Agno" by Christopher Smart, another "mad," alcoholic poet. (Like all the poems in the second section of *Summer Knowledge*, it also offers a liberation from the Audenesque manner of early poems like "Calmly We Walk through This April's Day.") For Schwartz, it is precisely the poet's "visionary" power, his power of "seeing," which enables him, like the painter Seurat, to flood his "darkness" with light, to name even the most horrific aspects of the self with lightness, gaiety, joy. Again from "The Kingdom of Poetry":

This is like light.
This is light,
Useful as light, as charming and
as enchanting

(Schwartz's surname, as Robert Lowell knew when he wrote "To Delmore Schwartz," means "black, dark, swarthy, gloomy, dismal"—the opposite of "light.")

Like the survival of the child in "I Am Cherry Alive," what Schwartz calls in "Once and for All" "the endless summer of light and consciousness" is, it seems, capable of sustaining him even amid the "tragic plays" of his life. Indeed, even the most catastrophic of his "errors"—the word unites Freud, with his psychology of "errors," and Columbus, who "erroneously" discovered America—may be, in this realm, the

occasion of a “fabulous discovery.”

Schwartz is rather harsh on Columbus in his playful piece, “Kilroy’s Carnival.” “The discoverer of America...was incompetent and hallucinated,” he writes,

Was Columbus capable of guiding a lily cup from one end to another of a moving railroad coach?...[T]he new world was discovered through hallucination.

In “Once and for All,” however, the poet seems to be denying the very possibility of error, writing a poem about a principle which declares itself “once and for all” and which works itself out no matter what the poet may do, no matter how “wrong” he may be.

Yet: doing and error, the poet’s being “wrong,” are the substance of the poem.

“Once and for All” is not what this paper is—an abstract consideration of themes—but a story, indeed a *life* story, a narrative which begins when the protagonist is a boy (“a true-blue American”) and whose central action is a temptation and a fall: “And I followed Dionysus, forgetting Apollo.” As such, the poem is, like any narrative, a manifestation of time, a presentation of something which can happen only *in* time: a wrong choice, a tragic error. (At the appearance of Dionysus the poem significantly shifts from the word “and” to the word “or.”)

And yet, to describe the poem as a “story” is to leave something out: the poem. Set against this “narrative,” this presentation of time, is a continual emphasis upon structure and completion—often upon the mere structure and completion of a list. The long lines, the continual pile-up of phrases, the constant sense of rhetorical balancing and phrasing (“A shepherd of being, a riding-master of being, holding... leading...training...”), the unmistakable *resonance* of the poem’s rhyming—all these are devices to distract us from *getting on* with the story. And the primary way they distract us is by making “stories” of their own, for a story—a beginning, a middle and an end—is nothing but a structure among other structures, and “Once and for All” presents us with a plenitude of such structures: rhyme, balances, antitheses, etc.

A poet who writes,

A shepherd of being, a riding master of being, holding the sun-god’s
horses, leading his sheep, training his eagles,
Directing the constellations to their stations,

is not interested in presenting his “story” in the most concise manner possible but in pausing, embellishing, exploring side-issues. Set against the very flow of time, against the “story” of our lives—indeed, against the area in which we act and make decisions—is the poet’s continuing, moment-by-moment ability to order his experience, to embellish it, to find structure and coherence in it. From this point of view we are within the exalted area of Schwartz’s homage to the painter, Seurat, “Seurat’s Sunday Afternoon along the Seine.” We are in the realm of “vision,” of the peculiar “reality”—to use the last word of “Once and for All”—of artistic creativity:

Seurat seeks within the cave of his gaze and mind to find
a permanent monument to Sunday’s simple delight; seeks deathless
joy through the eye’s immortality;
Strives patiently and passionately to surpass the fickle erratic quality
of living reality.

The poet, Schwartz writes in his essay, “The Vocation of the Poet,” “unites things, meanings, attitudes, feelings, through the power, prowess and benediction of words, and in this way he is a priest who performs a ceremony of marriage each time he composes a poem.” In “Seurat’s Sunday Afternoon along the Seine,” Seurat “seeks deathless joy through the eye’s immortality.”

Yet in “Once and for All” the artist is not described as “seeing” anything; he does not enjoy “the eye’s immortality”: rather, he is specifically “blinded by joy.” Indeed, the very last word of “Once and for All,” the word “reality”—qualified in the Seurat poem by the words “fickle” and “erratic”—is the one word which most fully calls the poem into question. The realm of James Atlas’s biography of Delmore Schwartz is very

much the realm of “reality,” and in it we read “stories” which are exactly the opposite of the one I have just told: “For years now, Delmore had been subjecting Elizabeth to what could only be called a reign of terror”; “it was out of sheer desperation that he concentrated on such matters as the New Jersey house”; “Delmore still enjoyed brief periods of approximate sanity.”

“Once and for All” clearly contains autobiographical elements, but I would argue that the word “reality” is at the conclusion of the poem because it is precisely “reality” that the poem is not. As we enter into Schwartz’s work, the autobiographical elements tend to disappear, to vanish, to transmute themselves. To become—what? An image of longing, a *wish*. Again from “Seurat’s Sunday Afternoon along the Seine”:

Can we not...hear

The voice of Kafka, forever sad, in despair’s sickness trying to say:
“Flaubert was right: *Ils sont dans le vrai!*
Without forbears, without marriage, without heirs,
Yet with a wild longing for forbears, marriage, and heirs:
They all stretch out their hands to me: but they are too far away!”

(“Here every tragedy has a happy ending...”) 2/

It seems to me that the “joy” which Delmore Schwartz attempts to name in *Summer Knowledge* is fundamentally the joy of esthetic *illusion* (“blinded by joy”), the joy of a continual capacity to uphold a strong fiction against the ever-deepening erosions of reality. At its furthest limits it is the joy of madness. “An artist worth his salt,” wrote Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, “is permanently separated from ordinary reality...we all know...the constant unreality of his innermost being...” It is precisely the pain and joy of *unreality*—one might indeed speak of it as a “dream”—that Schwartz is expressing again and again in these late poems, and we look for it in vain throughout Mr. Atlas’s long chronicle of events because it is in no way “in” the artist’s life but only behind it, above it, transmuting it, at odds with it, thrusting him again and again into the nothingness of “mental activity,” into the singular void which signifies the onslaught of “poetic creation.”

For Delmore Schwartz, the poet, like the “true-blue American,” must “Think about *everything*.” “Every point of view,” he writes in the “Author’s Note,” “every kind of knowledge and every kind of experience is limited and ignorant...” Yet it is precisely such “limitation” and “ignorance”—the word is the negation of “knowledge”—which accounts for the coherence of any individual poem. What does a poem’s “coherence” depend upon if not the poet’s ability to discard and balance various points of view? It is not possible for any individual poem to “Think about *everything*,” but, as we shall see in a moment, it is possible for a poem to maintain the *fiction* that one is thinking about everything. But, from this point of view, it is precisely “knowledge”—the awareness that one is maintaining a fiction—that the poet is trying to avoid.

I realize that I am tottering on the brink of paradox and contradiction here, but it seems to me that the joy of *Summer Knowledge* is fundamentally the joy of a “knowing” which is *not* a knowing (despite the poet’s assertion that “I knew”) but is essentially a will towards fiction or belief which, under the guise of “knowledge,” maintains itself against all the various hazards of unbelief, against the mind’s own overwhelming tendencies to annihilate fictions, as in “Psyche Pleads with Cupid”:

My sisters taunt and torment me. They say
I have invented a religion, a superstition, a deity
To hide the love of a monster or monstrous usages
Nursed by love’s absence, love’s unquelled desire...
And think of me
As one who is very strange, as one possessed
By lunacy, or by a dream dispossessed....

Though “Once and for All” presents itself as a kind of autobiography, its autobiographical elements are finally nothing more than the mask of a will to inclusion, a determination, embodied by the word “and,” to “think about everything”: “I knew...This was the new world...the dark depths *and* glittering heights of reality.” By the conclusion of the poem, the contradictions represented by Apollo (“glittering heights”) and Dionysus (“dark depths”) have been joined together, perceived as aspects of a larger whole (“reality”). The implied image is of course the path of the sun, which passes through both “dark depths” and “glittering heights”; and like the sun the poet explores—“dis-covers”—everything.

From this point of view, Apollo and Dionysus are no longer mighty contradictions which it is necessary for the poet to choose between (“One cannot serve both gods. One must choose to win and lose”) but merely individual moments in the poet’s continuing exploration of “everything,” of “reality.” From this point of view too, the

poem tends constantly, as do so many of the poems in *Summer Knowledge*, to become a list, and its true movement is not so much towards a confrontation with the primary events of Schwartz's life as it is towards the overcoming of any event or word which threatens to limit his will: words such as *or*, *but*, *wrong*, *choose*. For Schwartz it may be that self-consciousness begins with the painful perception of a radical discontinuity of selves—a perception which gives rise to the necessity of “choice”: “Once, when I was a boy...*But...*”; Apollo vs. Dionysus. The poem then functions as a way to heal or evade the very discontinuity which gave birth to it.

In the opening lines, “Once and for All” places us within the once-upon-a-time of a story, but it soon moves away from that impulse and offers us a list instead: a “shepherd of being, a riding master of being, holding the sun-god's horses,” etc. Similarly, the appearance of Dionysus is accompanied by the threat of “but” and “or”—words which imply the necessity of choice—but in the very next lines Dionysus too is assimilated to the poem's tendency to make lists, and there is a renewed emphasis on “and”: “Love *and* love's drunkenness, love *and* birth, love *and* death, death *and* rebirth.” And so on throughout the poem. Beneath the poem's surface drama of “choice” is the continual tendency of each of its sentences to become a list, which is to say, a vehicle by which it is possible, through sheer enumeration, to “think about everything.”

And the implications of list-making do not end there.

If the events of the poet's life are nothing but the elements of a list, then they are all equal, nothing can cancel anything else, and even the most intense of oppositions can inhabit the same space. This is the basis of many of the themes and stylistic strategies in *Summer Knowledge*, and we will see a little later some of the implications of such a vision. (Schwartz writes in “The Kingdom of Poetry” that “Poetry is an everlasting Ark, / An omnibus containing, bearing and begetting all the mind's animals.” Note again the word “all.”) For the moment, however, it is enough to notice that such a vision is essentially (and deeply) self-deceptive: it is in effect an “error.” The shift from Apollonian to Dionysian poet is the central event of Schwartz's life and not merely one event among others. Like so much else in the poem, Schwartz's “vision” places us firmly in the realm of illusion. It is, in fact, precisely the poem's unerring sense of illusion—its ability to assimilate or distort any experience which threatens to contradict it into its own illusory projection—that is a sign of its strength. While it clearly projects us into the “real life” of Delmore Schwartz—his guilt, his problems with alcoholism, his shifts of allegiance from friend to friend—it nevertheless gains its strength from a contrary movement, from the poet's desire to assert that the central event of his life was something different from what it was, and it is not surprising that a good historian and biographer like Mr. Atlas should find such poetry to be “virtually incomprehensible.” Indeed, it would seem that the poems themselves are declaring that language—or at least poetic language—is fundamentally deceptive, *against biography*, on the side of the lie. “The art of poetry makes it possible to say: *Pandemonium*,” writes Schwartz in “The Kingdom of Poetry.” And again, from the same poem: “poetry invented the unicorn, the centaur and the phoenix”—each of them an animal which is simultaneously fabulous and *unreal*. (Cf. “the *phoenix* festivals, the tragic plays in celebration of Dionysus....”)

2

And yet: *the will to illusion itself is saturated with autobiography*.

At the conclusion of Genesis: Book I, the book-length “failure” and clear anticipation of *Roots* Schwartz published in 1943, there is a scene which has great bearing on the concerns of this paper, though it is not included in the selections presented in *Once and for All: The Best of Delmore Schwartz*. Hershey Green's father is (like America) “discovered”—in a roadhouse, “trapped while dining with a whore.” Holding Hershey “with a grasp which hurt his hand,” the boy's mother, Eva,

moved to [the father's] table,
Turned to the rest of the long dining-room, the head-waiter beside her, helplessly polite,
Begging her to sit down, and cried out and spoke aloud
Her passionate righteous anger, inspired and shouting
phrases she had read in the Hearst papers about divorce cases,
Pointed to Hershey, his hand still clutched in hers, his
joy at seeing his father destroyed at that moment,
Shouted to the diners on the mezzanine floor that her
husband had left her and her children to dine with a whore!
And no one was able to stop her until her rage had been
exhausted....



Delmore Schwartz

Now, this is the climactic scene of the book—the entire movement from the Old World to the New has culminated in just this moment—and my commentary here can scarcely do it justice. Yet perhaps the most important thing to notice about the scene is that though Schwartz has an enormous amount of sympathy for his father (“And yet admired most of all his father's poise and dignity”), he never makes the least suggestion that his mother is “wrong” to do what she does. He speaks of her “passionate righteous anger,” calls her “inspired,” and has a commentator remark that

matrimony is a ground for her,
The sacred nature of the family
Enforced by feelings of the polity,
Grew from the deepest source, the actual child.

It seems that the movement from the Old World to the New—present in “Once and for All” as the shift from Dionysus and Apollo to “the new world”—has involved an enormous dependence upon the solidarity of the family, upon the family's “sacred nature.” And yet, in the climactic scene of the book, this family is suddenly, and in public—disintegrated. The event becomes the very center of the child's being: “This hideous scene presents the biggest Truth, / Man's Nature is this being-in-the-world”; “Childhood was ended here! Or innocence”; “This is before and in all images.”

Yet, “hideous” as it is, the scene also involves “a certain joy”:

“...here you learned to cry aloud your life!”

“Your mother's oratory will abide,
“The growing fusing boy takes it all in,
The strong divinities, this vision of himself
Surrounded by many relationships and little else....”

The scene is in fact, as still another commentator says, the moment of the birth of the super-ego (with all of the super-ego's awareness of the past), the moment of the child's emergence into adulthood:

Here is the Super-Ego wholly grown,
Upon your temples it will live forever!”

Yet, as the echoes of Walt Whitman might suggest—one thinks especially of “Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking,” another poem about separation, “fusing,” and the emergence of a child into adulthood—there is something more to the passage as well. (Heidegger's “Dasein” is of course also present in the phrase “being-in-the-world.”) Discussing the beginnings of the super-ego in his essay, “Dissection of the Personality,” Freud writes, “I formed the idea that the separation of the observing agency from the rest of the ego might be a regular feature of the ego's structure.” Schwartz is presenting us with just such a moment here, a moment in which a portion of the ego violently breaks away and takes on the function of observation and criticism, and he is presenting that moment through the figures of his parents.

As the child watches—and the child is the site in which this transformation takes place—his mother takes on the role of super-ego, his father the role of ego. The vindictive and condemning mother (referred to as both Medea and Clytemnestra), the condemned father, even the witnesses, the diners (Freud's notion of the super-ego

arose from his observations of patients with delusions of being *watched*) are becoming figures in a psychodrama, no longer persons but aspects of a history of the mind: “the growing fusing boy takes it all in.” (Again, the poet “unites things, meanings, attitudes, feelings, through the power, prowess and benediction of words, and in this way he is a priest who performs a ceremony of marriage each time he composes a poem.”)

Yet it is precisely the appalling awareness of *separation* which has given rise to the intense emotion of the scene. By internalizing the figures of father, mother and child—“fusing” them into different aspects of a single mind—the poet is necessarily moving them towards unity, though it is a unity in which they are no longer persons but only personifications: abstractions, figures of the mind. As “persons” they remain separated. In effect, the very internalization of the family which supposedly marks the beginning of the child’s authentic growth—indeed, of his very awareness of “being-in-the-world”—is itself the result of a strong wish that his parents not be separated, a wish which cannot be realized in the world but only approximated in the relationships of the poet’s mind to itself. But such an area—the area of the mind’s relationship to itself—is precisely the area of fiction, and the whole (literally) traumatic incident throws us back once again onto the issues raised by “Once and for All.”

Indeed, “Once and for All” can be seen as still another version of the incident in *Genesis: Book I*, which, Schwartz admits, repeats itself again and again. The two gods, Apollo, who is traditionally associated with justice, and Dionysus, whom Schwartz associates with “love” (“Love and love’s drunkenness, love and death,” etc.) are from this point of view versions of Hershey Green’s parents—embodiments of the mother’s sense of justice and the father’s desire for sexual liberty. (Cf. the contradictory conclusion of “Jacob”: “Love is unjust; justice is loveless.”) As in the passage from *Genesis: Book I*, we are confronted with Greek tragedy, with the word “joy,” with an appalling sense of separation, with the word “all” (“takes it all in”), and with the terrifying necessity of “choice” (“One must choose to win and lose”).

And yet, there is an important difference. The concluding lines of “Once and for All” are an affirmation of one of Delmore Schwartz’s most important themes: the theme of the American Dream. “The American Dream,” he writes in his essay, “The Fiction of Ernest Hemingway,” “converts the pursuit of happiness into the guarantee of a happy ending”; it is “a source of illusion and hope....” What Eva Green is discovering at the conclusion of *Genesis: Book I*—which deals with the American Dream in ways too complicated to be fully considered here—is precisely the “reality” of America and *not* the “dream”: “This hideous scene presents the biggest Truth.” For Schwartz, divorce, separation, and the breaking up of families are characteristic of the “reality” of the New World, not of the Old.

And yet, as the poet knew very well when he wrote “The Foggy, Foggy Blue”—

the only only wrong in all my song
Was the view that I knew what was true—

such a “reality” is itself only one “view” among others. As he writes in the “Author’s Note” to *Summer Knowledge*, “Every point of view, every kind of knowledge and every kind of experience is limited and ignorant....” The very fact that Schwartz presents Eva Green’s view as “the biggest Truth” is not so much an indication of the nature of reality as it is an indication of the intensity of his desire to avoid the limited and ignorant aspect of *any* experience: as such it is fundamentally a *wish*, a product of the essential violence of poetic perception, of the poet’s irrepressible thrust towards illusion, though it is an illusion which extends its roots into the deepest experiences of his being: “I see a great Sky, Moon and Stars, and ALL.” Like “Once and for All,” the concluding episode of *Genesis: Book I* projects us into a vertiginous area in which illusion and reality come into constant contact, and the intense longing behind all these poems, located as they are in the gulf between reality and fiction, is the longing to avoid precisely that sense of separation which the mind cannot help acknowledging again and again. It is a longing which inhabits even the sounds and structures of the poems in *Summer Knowledge*: lines such as

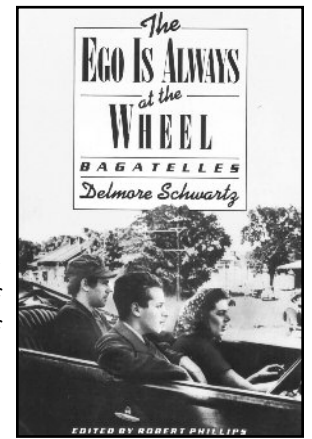
Love and love’s drunkenness, love and birth, love and death, death
and rebirth,

And I followed Dionysus, forgetting Apollo. I followed him far too
long until I was wrong and chanted,

Seeking with serene belief and undivided certainty, love’s miracles,
tender, or thrashing, or thrashing towards tenderness boldly

are attempts to hold together in a single breath-unit contradictions and tensions which, if allowed to meet head-on, would explode the line into disintegration.

No matter where one looks in Schwartz’s work one sees the same elements asserting themselves again and again (“once and for all”). Whether the contradictions are presented as mother and father, Apollo and Dionysus, Europe and America, or simply as the diverse, conflicting sounds of the poem, we are constantly in the presence of a mind which continually generates the most intense of oppositions but which, at the same time, attempts by an act of poetic will (or fictionalizing) to reduce those oppositions to silence. As Schwartz begins to write—and despite the autobiographical nature of much of his subject matter—he enters into an area of intensity and illusion. His poems and stories are therefore not the realistic documents Mr. Atlas would like them to be (at one point Atlas suggests that the “veracity” of “In Dreams Begin Responsibilities” was “attested” by the poet’s mother!) but are essentially expressions of what Hannah Arendt called in “What is Freedom?” “a will which is broken in itself, which wills and wills-not at the same time” (my italics). One might call this will a will which *errs*. Arendt traces its genealogy back to St. Paul and *Romans* 7:19: “For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.” But the genealogy may be pushed back even further. Doesn’t it describe exactly the situation of Sophocles’ Oedipus—a central figure for Delmore Schwartz? It is in a kind of “emptiness,” an abyss of consciousness which is irredeemably neither one thing nor another, that Schwartz’s work takes place.



The Ego Is Always at the Wheel by Delmore Schwartz

3

“Wonderland is nothing but a game of cards, after all.”

—Joyce Carol Oates, “Alice in Wonderland,” *TV Guide* (1/16/82)

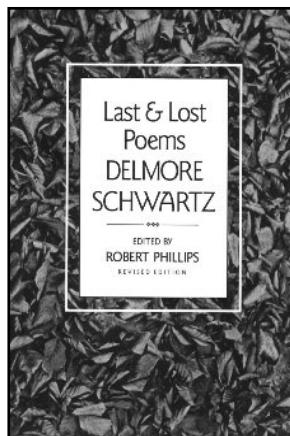
I suggested above that Schwartz’s abyss of consciousness might be called the realm of fiction, a realm which at once promises and denies material substantiality (“reality”) to the poet’s imaginings. In *Dreams Begin Responsibilities* (“erroneously” quoting Yeats, who actually wrote, “In dreams begins responsibility”) is the title of Schwartz’s first major work. One sees the same elements again and again in these poems: “the dream of knowledge,” “summer knowledge,” “Is it a dream? I asked.” “When the work of interpretation has been completed,” wrote Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, “we perceive that a dream is the fulfillment of a wish.” The work of Delmore Schwartz is a testimony to the extent to which dream substance, wish substance—born as it is not out of the absolute but out of the obsessional longings of our histories—penetrates and permeates the world. The realm of “reality” is also the realm of *time*, a subject which obsesses Schwartz. Indeed, despite the idyllic implications of the word “summer,” “summer” is by definition a time word, and while the artist can to some degree “transcend” time in his immersion in dream substance, time (which is also “reality,” which is also “knowledge”) nevertheless announces itself with relentless fury:

Time is the school in which we learn,
Time is the fire in which we burn.

(“Calmly We Walk Through This April’s Day”)

Such testimony is hardly peculiar to Schwartz—we may find it in one of his favorite books, *Finnegans Wake*—but Schwartz’s genuine claim to our attention lies in the intensity and complexity with which such awareness is present in his work. Again and again he returns us to a place he calls “the new world”; to a person who is at once innocent and guilty, “wrong” and “right”; to the realm of the “true-blue American” who is also (and necessarily) the “would-be Hungarian”; to the whirl-a-gig of exile and home; to the always elusive and ever-present “child” of consciousness—the mind’s continuing and endlessly-renewed capacity to deceive and reveal, a capacity Schwartz symbolized by the many “children” who appeared in his work. We see this capacity in the “poor boy” and the “little girl,” figures whom his deepest experiences of the world forced him to imagine and re-imagine again and again:

Behold how this poor boy, who wished so passionately to be Hungarian



The Last & Lost Poems
by Delmore Schwartz

Suffered and knew the fate of being American.
Whether on Ellis Island, Plymouth Rock,
Or in the secret places of the mind and heart....
("The Would-Be Hungarian")

Delmore Schwartz's poetry will not allow us to stand still. Rather, it forces us to enter a whirlpool of powerful, contradictory forces which are never resolved. You may be "paranoid"—with all that implies. But "even paranoids have real enemies."

Finally, we don't need a volume demonstrating the "best" of Delmore Schwartz. We have that in the collection the poet himself edited: it is made up in equal parts of autobiography and longing. Though Delmore Schwartz's short stories and criticism are certainly of interest, it is the poetry that really matters. (In *Once and for All* we have to wade through seventy-six pages of prose—including a story William Barrett described as "dull, unless you know the people"—before we arrive at a poem.) We don't need more Delmore Schwartz books. What we need is a better understanding of what Schwartz actually accomplished. Sad, mad, and glittering ruin that he was, it was his genuine triumph in *Summer Knowledge* to pull together a monument to his divided, fictionalizing, truth-seeking, evasive, fabulous sense of awareness—to his greedy, ever listening consciousness. 3/ In his delusory illumination he sought to become aware of *everything*—of *all*. "Even to this fact," he wrote upon discovering that a local barbershop was closed for a holiday, "some significance can be attached."

for Liz Leyh

Notes

1. Translator Walter Kaufmann comments on Nietzsche's title, *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*:

What Nietzsche himself wanted the title to convey was that serious thinking does not have to be stodgy, heavy, dusty, or, in one word, Teutonic. The German *Wissenschaft* does not bring to mind only—perhaps not even primarily—the natural sciences but any serious, disciplined, rigorous quest for knowledge...

It was in Provence that modern European poetry was born. William IX, Count of Poitiers around 1100 A.D., is said to be the poet whose verses are the oldest surviving lyrics in a modern European language. He was followed by other, greater troubadours of which the most famous are probably Bertran de Born (1140-1215) and Arnaut Daniel, his contemporary. Both

are encountered in Dante's *Inferno* (Cantos 28f.); Bertran de Born is also the hero of two remarkable German poems, one by Ludwig Uhland, the other by Heinrich Heine. The Albigensian Crusade (1209-1229) all but destroyed the culture of the troubadours; but in the fourteenth century the *gai saber* or *gaia sciensa* was still cultivated in the Provence by lesser poets; and under "gay" *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (1955) duly lists "The gay science (=Pr[ovençal] *gai saber*): the art of poetry."

Schwartz's phrase "summer knowledge" is a kind of equivalent to *gai saber*. In this context, Schwartz may have meant the phrase to designate—in an oblique way—"the art of poetry."

2. In his essay, "The Grapes of Crisis," Schwartz writes,

When Edith Wharton's novel, *The Age of Innocence*, was made into a play and produced on Broadway and soon proved to be a failure, William Dean Howells told Mrs. Wharton that what the American public wanted was a tragedy with a happy ending.

It is worth noting that, in the context of Greek tragedy, the word "blinded" suggests Sophocles' Oedipus: the tribulations of the god-possessed man. In "The Isolation of Modern Poetry" Schwartz quotes from Werner Jaeger's *Paideia*:

After the state organized the dramatic performances held at the festival of Dionysus, tragedy more and more evoked the interest and participation of the entire people...Its power over them was so vast that they held it responsible for the spirit of the whole state...it is no exaggeration to say that the tragic festival was the climax of the city's life.

In "Once and for All" tragedy appears as the opposite of what it was to the Greeks: it is an indication not of "the spirit of the whole state" but of "the poet's conscious experience of the isolation of culture from the rest of society." The poet is precisely *not* Oedipus, though he may be subject to the "Oedipus complex": "there was no room in the increasing industrialization of society for such a monster as the cultivated man; a man's taste for literature had at best nothing to do with most of the activities which constituted daily life in an industrial society...the artist feels at home nowhere and he suffers from an intense longing to be normal and bourgeois himself."

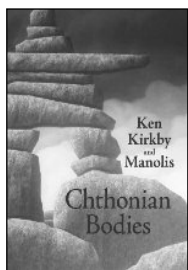
3. From "The World is a Wedding": "For what he wanted and what satisfied him was the activity of his own mind. This need and satisfaction kept him from becoming truly interested in other human beings, although he sought them out all the time. He was like a travelling virtuoso who performs brilliant set-pieces and departs before coming to know his listeners."

Author Note: This essay is published simultaneously in *Poetry Flash* (San Francisco), edited by Joyce Johnson.

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

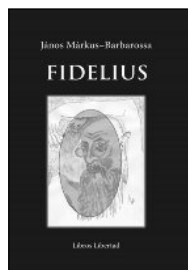


In Dreams Begin Responsibilities
by Delmore Schwartz



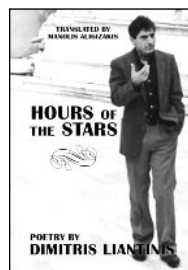
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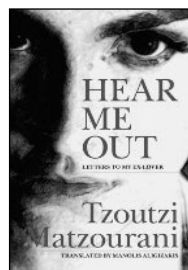
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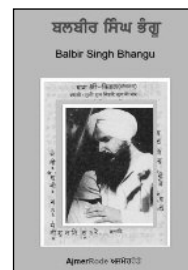
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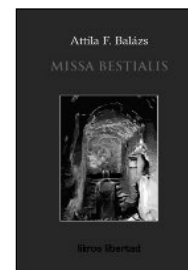
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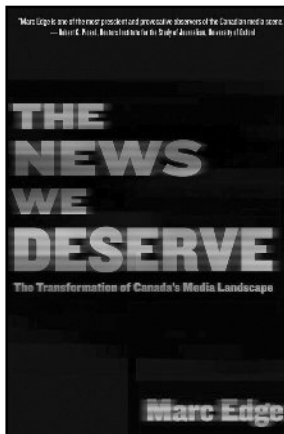
JOURNALISM WITHOUT EDGE

Eric Spalding

In *The News We Deserve: The Transformation of Canada's Media Landscape*, Marc Edge argues that the media in Canada no longer have the necessary resources to provide the news that citizens need. Today, journalists have to do more with less and are not as able to engage in in-depth reporting as they used to. Meanwhile, Canadian audiences appear to be apathetic towards the decline of reporting in their country. Are they indeed getting the news they deserve?

In his book, Edge employs a political economy of communication approach, focussing on the conditions of production for news. There is no analysis here of content or audiences. The focus rather is on the newspaper owners whose actions in his view have led over the past few decades to a reduction in the diversity of voices in the media. The author studies the cases of such former news magnates as Conrad Black (Hollinger) and the late Izzy Asper and his son Leonard (CanWest) and their practice of buying up and consolidating newspapers and TV stations with the short-sighted goal of enriching themselves and their shareholders. As with any business, salaries are the largest expense, so owners lay people off from their new acquisitions, which ensures short-term profits. These cuts, however, leave Canadians with substandard media, and the surviving journalists bear increased workloads and constant deadlines. Under these circumstances, the news media are hampered in their capacity to moderate a public forum in which a vigorous debate of ideas can occur.

Over the past few decades, Canada has become one of the developed countries with the least diverse media in the world. Edge, who lives in a suburb of Vancouver, describes as an example of media concentration the situation in BC's largest city. There, Postmedia owns four of the six English-language dailies, namely *The Vancouver Sun*, *The Province*, *The National Post* and *24 Hours*. Under such conditions, journalists who wish to practice their craft in BC's Lower Mainland have few alternatives, and some of them are understandably wary of covering stories in a way

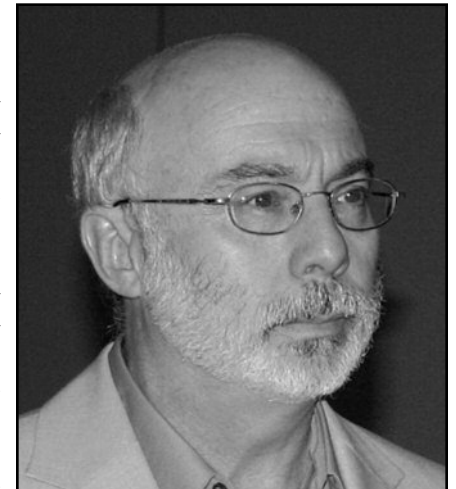


The News We Deserve: The Transformation of Canada's Media Landscape
 Marc Edge
 New Star Books

that might displease their bosses. Moreover, Postmedia has been on the edge of bankruptcy for years, crippled by debt accrued as a consequence of overambitious and costly investments. It has tried to save money by having its dozens of large and small newspapers across Canada operate on smaller budgets with reduced staffs. For instance, since October 2016, *24 Hours* has not had its own newsroom. This commuter daily now publishes stories generated by reporters from its sister papers. Moreover, since the publication of *The News We Deserve*, Postmedia has laid off additional employees from its Lower Mainland newspapers. In 2010, the *Sun* and *Province* together had a staff of 200. As of May 2017, the number of employees was down to 70, according to David Beers in *The Tyee* (dated April 1, 2017).

Edge himself wrote for *The Calgary Herald* and *The Province* for fifteen years, but he was laid off in 1993. As a consequence of this background, he brings to *The News We Deserve* an evident enthusiasm for journalism and a pronounced concern for its current state in Canada. His style, moreover, reflects a journalist's ability to write accessibly. Indeed, on the whole, Edge's prose is clear and he maintains a certain narrative momentum throughout his book. He is addressing lay readers who are not necessarily familiar with the political economy of communication. For instance, he explains the rather byzantine financial machinations that led to current circumstances in a manner that is understandable to someone without an MBA. And he is methodical in explaining the government inaction and public indifference that have led us to the "news we deserve." As such, his book is a worthy contribution to the conversation we should be having about the precarious state of Canadian reporting today.

Eric Spalding teaches in the Department of Social, Cultural and Media Studies at the University of the Fraser Valley in Abbotsford, British Columbia.



Marc Edge

LOVE AMONG THE LANDSLIDES

Hilary Turner

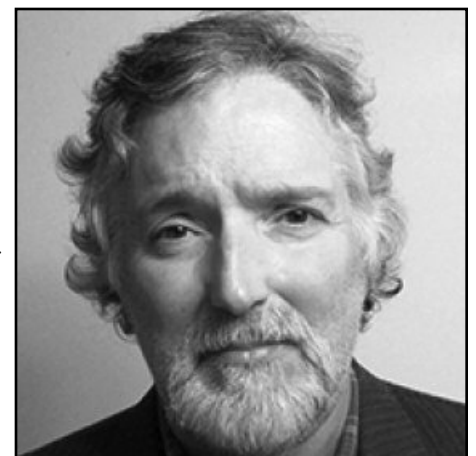
A quirky book by any measure, *The Road to Vermilion Lake* is at once steamily erotic and transcendently religious; both bursting with appetite and laced with self-denial. It is populated, moreover, by down-to-earth working guys who connect with luscious female advocates for chastity, encased in enticingly low-cut garments. Given its various motifs—vintage cars, target shooting, allegorical tattoos, meaty sandwiches washed down by chocolate milk, fishing for steelheads in rushing streams—the book might be dismissed as an extended male fantasy set to the sonorous timbre of a Gregorian chant. And yet. First-time novelist Vic Cavalli has a larger (in fact, a metaphysical) point to make. In the mystical space that his narrator refers to as a "theology of the body," Cavalli argues for a kind of symbiosis of flesh and spirit, and he disarmingly investigates the possibility of shared vibrations between the human body and God's body, the natural world.

Protagonist Tom Thames has the enviable misfortune to be in love with two beautiful women—two sisters—simultaneously. Tom is a medic, and a bit of a



The Road to Vermilion Lake
 Vic Cavalli
 Harvard Square Editions, 2017. \$24.84

hermit, at a remote site of construction and development in the BC interior. Into his solitary dreams crashes Johnny Nostal, an architectural planner, stunner, and genius. Awkwardly, she is the older sister of his first (and probably only) love, a woman whose remembered kisses have supplied Tom with an interior video to accompany every ear-splitting blast of dynamite that has made possible the difficult clearance of the road to Vermilion Lake. Still more awkwardly, Johnny is (in no particular order) self-sufficient, self-directed, marriage-minded, a practising Catholic, a virgin, a stickler, and drop-dead gorgeous. The course of true love does not run entirely smoothly, yet it is convenient for the lovers that younger sister Sally is first crushed by a boulder, then amnesiac, and finally intent upon life in a convent. On the other hand, it is inconvenient that Tom is singled out by a predatory loose woman who deeply desires him, then



Vic Cavalli

(continued on page 30)

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

Linda Rogers

When literary mothers have literary daughters, it is natural to draw comparisons, the tics, syntax and characteristic gestures that identify family members are usually apparent, even when the language is carefully chosen to distinguish root from branch. These familiar things make studies of families like the Brontes, Sitwells, Trollopes and Amises even more interesting.

Clea Young, whose first book *Teardown*, has a deconstructionist post-millennial edge with urban angst and snappy contemporary dialogue, is an apple that falls close to the family tree. In fact, comparison with her father, whose suburban writing has a Big Chill factor and her mother, a human tuning fork, reveals the parental legacy of ruin and beauty, the bruises in almost perfect apples.

Having grown up on a street lined with cherry trees whose spring storms of pink snow might have distracted Clea from pavement cracks, her stories tremble with the uncertainty of lives lived in proximity to the fault that runs through the Chinese graveyard at Mile Zero. The end of western civilisation could happen right at the end of her street. This possibility is not lost on the daughter of a mother who wrote about demented women haunting the basements (female subconscious?) in middle class neighbourhoods.

One day they were simply there
In ermine-trimmed jackets, tipping pitchers of milk.

The poems and the short stories reveal a genetic predisposition to three-dimensional observation, the invisible aura around migraine.

The poems in Patricia's new book, *Short Takes on the Apocalypse*, are expected tremour notations amplified by growing evidence of cataclysmic times, climate change, despotic regimes and mass migration. The poems are also short hand for short stories, arcs of beautiful failure in our brave attempts to normalize life in the abnormal twenty-first century. Even in romantic relationships, the matrix of mother and daughter storytelling, there are inherent flaws. Every word is a storm warning.

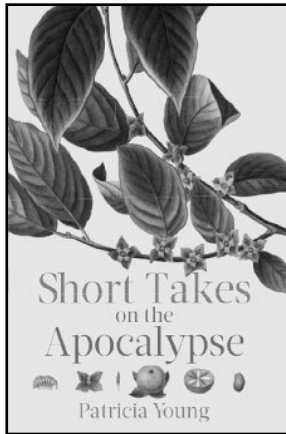
In "Cabin Time," she meditates on Henry James assertion that "summer and afternoon" are the two most beautiful words in the English language. Perhaps they should be for writers of *la belle époque* and Anglo-Victorians like the Youngs, who summer in a beautiful cottage in the woods near a lake, a place where she would ask, "is love overrated like happiness and sobriety? The endangered planet tilts." Gathering storms reverberate, even at the apex of privilege,

Isaiah, the Prophet wrote: When the father eats sour grapes, the son's teeth are set on edge. So it is also with mothers and daughters. Not every apple on the tree is ripe for picking. Some have worms or are made of vulnerable china.

"Grief slides from a mother's shoulder to the daughter's," the mother writes, "Once as a child I heard my mother complain that the summers were getting shorter. Oh no, by the time I grow up there'll be nothing left."

More than nothing, the Youngs share a surplus of uncanny ability to focus the light. Opportunity and their inherited and nourished curiosity is both a gift and a curse. In telling their stories, mother and daughter connect generations of women and provide the impetus for continuity. Their blessing is an enhanced awareness that brings with it opportunities to transcend banality.

Hannah Arendt wrote about the banality of evil, a lesson for our time. With their accelerated vision, mother and daughter penetrate dreams that often pass for reality,



Short Takes on the Apocalypse
Patricia Young
Biblioasis, 2016



Teardown
Clea Young
Freehand Books, 2016

lies for truth. Their deeper narrative punctures fiction riding on hot air.

Like her mother, Clea deconstructs the apparently perfect moment. Death hovers like shadows stalking sunshine. There is a cliff at mile Zero, the end of the street where she was raised, and her stories are speed bumps on the suburban road to the sea.

In "Teardown," a pregnant wife tries to escape her own body, her fate, but the writer who is both a mother and a daughter knows that our stories are already written. It is the variations that are beautiful and the Youngs excel at exquisite description, while dispensing doses of irony on a silver spoon.

"It'll all be over soon," Clea's character says, which is both true and untrue." And Patricia has written, "Save the tears sister, you're gonna need them down the road."

Their female characters wear bangles, like the elder Young and her sisters and cats with bells, and that is no accident. Alluringly, perhaps misleadingly feminine, the bracelets sound a warning. Here we come with our thirst for life, our hunger for mortality. This is the music of time and we have perfect timing. The women lead the dance because they inhabit the dance language. Bangles.

In "Firestorm, a memoir of betrayal, Clea sets up a motif for female revenge. The parable of the deer reveals how damaged women survive.

To their left a deer has materialized. She wades into the water to drink. On her flanks, where there should be fur. Rory sees flesh and the rawness of it She must have come through the fire. She drinks and drinks, keeping a dark marbled eye on them. She wades deeper, until water sloshes beneath her belly. Then she starts to swim.

Indeed. These are stories of survival and survival depends on integrity, the marbled eyes of apparently dispassionate observers.

A writer gets to manipulate the games she invigilates. This is the mother daughter advantage. Despite tectonic faults, the diminishing value of loyalty, and the inevitability of death, they are the ones who decide how the story or poem turns out. Young the younger could be speaking for both of them when she writes, in "What are you good at. What do you like to do?"

I knew I should be looking inward, but I was too curious about what everyone else was emptying from their open hands. I wanted to gather up all their grievances and humiliations and regrets and examine them. I wanted to measure them against my own.

That is the measure, the smell of beeswax candles covering the stink of decay, "where orchids languish on rotten tree trunks." The mother writes, "I understand that I will grow old and so will the child. I understand the word *love* and also *beauty* but those are better left unsaid. In the end, there are facts and there are truths."

They can't leave that distinction to the alternative truth people. Not when so much is at stake. Writers have a sacred responsibility. Whether this is nourish or nature matters less than the urgency of speaking, finding the beatitudes that are their gifts to the human family and framing them responsibly.

Linda Rogers' recent novel is *Bozuk*, a Turkish memoir, and her story, "You Need Me at the River" appears in *Clifi, Canadian Tales of Climate Change* from Exile Editions.



Patricia Young



Clea Young

(photo: Théodora-Armstrong)

FROM DARKNESS INTO LIGHT

Jim Reid

Late in life, Peter Dale Scott continues to publish significant works of political history and poetry. In 2010 he published *American War Machine: Deep Politics, the CIA Global Drug Connection, and the Road to Afghanistan*. That revealing and disturbing book was followed in 2015 by *The American Deep State: Wall Street, Big Oil, and the Attack on U.S. Democracy*. Both books shared a number of the concerns in his poetry.

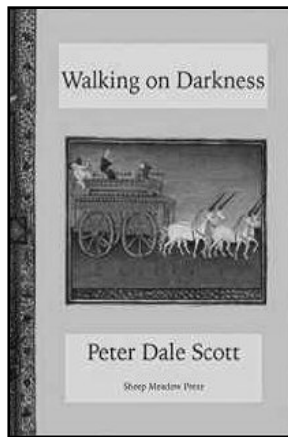
In 2002, Scott had received the prestigious Lannan Literary Award for Poetry. The Lannan recognized the signal achievements of his trilogy *Seculum: Coming to Jakarta: A Poem About Terror* (1988), *Listening To The Candle: A Poem On Impulse* (1992), and *Minding The Darkness: A Poem For The Year 2000* (2000). In "Seeing Things as They *** Are" in the *Notre Dame Review*, John Peck, (*Poems and Translations of Hi-Lo*), a poet with similarly wide-ranging contemporary concerns, described Scott's *Seculum* as "one of the essential long poems of the past half century." Of how many other poems of the last half century could this be said? Peck's thoughtful and considered essay appears at: http://ndreview.nd.edu/assets/35286/peck_review.

In 2009, Scott's *Mosaic Orpheus*, presented engaged, yet meditative responses to the world, and to its devastation—especially in the sixteen pages of his long poem, "The Tao of 9/11". *Tilting Point* appeared in 2012, and at the time, it seemed possible that these two recent poetry books might provide capstones supported by the pillars of his trilogy.

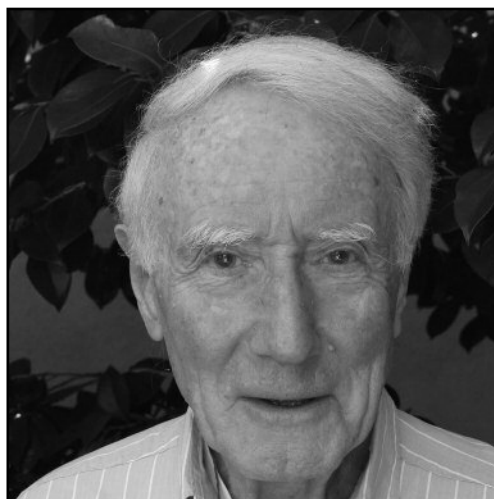
However, his next book of poetry has just appeared, and yet again breaks new ground with new concerns. *Walking on Darkness* is the title. *Not Walking in Darkness*. Nor *Walking through Darkness*, both of which we can imagine. But *on Darkness*. The title appears to be a contradiction. Or a challenge. Certainly a challenge to approach these poems attentively. Attentively enough that the intersection of the past and the future in Scott's latest poems open into a sharp clarity that clearly echoes the late work of the Swedish Nobel Prize Winner, Tomas Tranströmer. Tranströmer's grandfather was a ship's pilot on the Swedish coast, and his poem "Baltics" describes how a pilot had to read the sea in the early days, even in thick fog, and before radio communications. As the ship in this poem moves into the dangerously thickening fog, the mist lifts ever so briefly, as "His eyes read straight into the / invisible."

How easily Tranströmer transforms a quotidian espresso, in his poem "Espresso" into "... the drops of black profoundness / sometimes gathered up by the soul." And Scott, similarly, in "To My Wife Ronna", after two decades of seeing "the tall blue and white hydrangea / around the corner" sees it clearly for the first time, and is inspired "... to say / you / are more beautiful than you know" both transforming the quotidian, and suggesting a multiplicity of meanings in these lines.

Scott's poetry is firmly grounded in his debts to his precursors, among them Homer, Dante, William Blake, Walt Whitman, Ezra Pound, and his dear and difficult friend Czeslaw Milosz. For readers who wish to explore his references, Scott has placed page and line references to other poems on the right hand side of the pages in *Walking on Darkness*. A particularly rich example of the gift in these guideposts appears in the poem "Tavern Underworld". It opens up suddenly as the reader considers references to Homer's *Odyssey* and to Dante's *Inferno*, each of which, across the centuries, then engage with each other. The references recall Odysseus in Homer's Hades and Odysseus in the Cantos of Dante's *Inferno*, both of which also appear in



Walking on Darkness
Peter Dale Scott
Sheep Meadow Press
2016
85 pages, paper



Peter Dale Scott

Ezra Pound's *Cantos*.

Scott has spoken recently about the importance of Dante's poetry to him over the course of his life as a poet and a teacher: "I thought that – maybe if I teach people Dante, they will see that when we love with a pure heart, we will enter into better relationships with other people." (*Paideuma: Modern and Contemporary Poetry and Poetics*, p.381, Vol. 42, 2015). Then all of unfolding relationships above poetry move effortlessly toward the blunt vernacular in one of the penultimate stanzas of "Tavern Underworld" in *Walking on Darkness*:

the Quebec tavern men's room wall
where I had scribbled *Daryl is a poet!*
Inspiring beneath it *Is she? Well fuck a snake!*

Occasional and rare toilet room wall graffiti notwithstanding, or sitting, the poems in *Walking on Darkness* remain as sharp as the clear and present danger in Scott's poem *Chainsaw Dhamma*, concerned that the saw's *chain will heat up / stretch / and maybe snake off its / saw bar rail*, lines obviously written by some one who has operated a chainsaw at length, and is also committed to clarity.

Scott's commitment to clarity surfaces again in *Walking on Darkness*, as he revisits the translation of Zbigniew Herbert's poem "Pebble" which Scott worked on with Czeslaw Milosz in 1968 for the publication of *Selected Poems: Zbigniew Herbert*. They could not come to agreement on the use of the definite or indefinite article to describe the pebble, or, a pebble. Unfortunately, the version of "Pebble" that appears in Zbigniew Herbert: *The Collected Poems 1956-1998*, was altered by the editor of the book, who made manuscript changes to the Scott and Milosz translations of this poem and other Herbert poems, without contacting Peter Dale Scott, or the Milosz estate, thereby missing an opportunity to provide us with the trustworthy Scott and Milosz translations from the Polish for inclusion in Herbert's *Collected Poems*. I look forward with hope to the appearance of a trustworthy editor for *The Collected Poems: Peter Dale Scott*.

James Edward Reid is a Canadian writer and editor. He publishes poetry and essays in *The Sarmatian Review*, at Rice University in Houston Texas. His publications appear at <http://www.jamesedwardreid.ca/writing/publications/>



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Fiction
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New novel by

Yolande Villemaire

translated by **Margaret Wilson Fuller**

In occupied Paris in 1940, Celia Rosenberg, a prostitute, discovers passion through Karl-Heinz Hausen, a Wehrmacht officer. Little by little, the implacable Nazi death machine eats away at her illusions. In *The Cygnus Constellation* the author's masterly style renders an atmosphere of eroticism, suffering and memory palpable.

Yolande Villemaire is one of Quebec's most prolific writers, proficient in both poetry and prose. She has published more than twenty-five books, four of which are available in English translation from Ekstasis Editions: *Midnight Tides of Amsterdam*, *Poets & Centaurs*, *India, India and Little Red Berries*. Yolande Villemaire lives in Montreal.

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PASSAGE: HOMAGE TO EDITH SHIFFERT

Gregory Dunne

The long-time Kyoto-based poet Edith Shiffert passed away in Kyoto in early March. She was a hundred and one years old and had suffered from dementia for the past ten years. The executor of her estate, the poet, translator and publisher Dennis Maloney, arrived in Kyoto from California in mid-April to attend to her affairs and papers. It was at this time that I traveled to Kyoto from Miyazaki to meet with him and to learn more about Edith Shiffert and Maloney's ongoing work to bring her poetry and translations forward into the world.

Edith Shiffert lived in Japan for more than fifty years and seldom returned to North America. Although she was not widely known in North America for her poetry, she was a local legend in Kyoto and to those in the world who read Japanese literature in translation. Her literary reputation comes by way of her own poetry, her translations from the Japanese poets, and for the manner in which she mentored and inspired many younger expatriate writers and artists in Kyoto. Her translations of Buson's haiku (1716 – 1783), for example, are widely appreciated and are thought to be some of the best extant.

Born in Toronto in 1916, Shiffert moved to the United States with her family when she was a child and settled in the state of New York. Ever adventurous and on the move, by 1938 she was in Hawaii, twenty-three years old and married. She would spend much of her time with her husband exploring the more remote regions of the islands. In the late 1940s she moved to Alaska for a short while before returning to the mainland and settling in Washington State, where in the early 1950s she and her husband built a two-storey log cabin on twenty-five acres of wilderness at the base of Mt. Si. She returned to school at the University of Washington from 1956-1962 and studied Anthropology, Far Eastern Studies, and Creative Writing. Her teachers included Theodore Roethke and Louise Bogan.

Edith's iconoclastic lifestyle, propelled by her desire for learning, creativity and an abiding appreciation for the natural world led her to Japan in 1963 and there she would remain.

Dennis Maloney met Edith ten years later on an exchange program while he was working on an independent study of Japanese gardens. A trained landscape architect he was also writing and translating poetry and studying Zen. As Maloney tells it, "While I was in Kyoto I picked up a copy of *Poetry Nippon*, a magazine of Japanese poets writing in English. The group met monthly and their next meeting happened to be at Edith Shiffert's house so I phoned her and asked if it would be OK to attend. She invited me to the meeting and I stayed on afterward and we ended up meeting many more times and becoming good friends."

This experience was pivotal for Maloney and helped him to discover and clarify what he wanted to do in his life: he intended to create a poetry press that would publish books of poetry and literature in translation. That same year in 1973 he founded White Pine Press. Shiffert's *Grasshopper*, was one of his first books. White Pine has since brought out three further collections from this fascinating figure of the East-West literary world, and two years ago Maloney collaborated with the photographer and founding editor of *Kyoto Journal*, John Einarsen, to create *Kyoto: Forest Within the Gate*, a handsome limited edition dedicated to Shiffert.

During his recent journey Maloney was collecting Edith's papers, books, and journals. Some of the material will be sent to the Shiffert archives at the University of California at Santa Cruz and a guide to this collection can be accessed online. The note of introduction provides a brief glimpse into the world that informs her poetry:

[Shiffert's] books are inspired by the natural and human worlds, and the aesthetic, philosophical and literary traditions of Japan. Many call her a religious poet, but she rejects such labels by stating: "I have no religion. It's a religious feeling that holds me, watching the birds or the sunshine moving on leaves. To me that's religion..."

Poetry too then, perhaps, is something Shiffert would understand as a kind of religion – for it holds the poet and reader in its own slow unfolding of seeing and awareness:

Those flower petals
From roots in the earth, stems in light
Self too roots and lifts

White Pine Press is currently celebrating nearly forty-five years of continuous

publication, remaining dedicated to the work of several notable Kyoto-based poets, namely the late Cid Corman and the late David Jenkins. It was Shiffert who introduced Maloney to Corman in that important year of 1973 and this fortuitous meeting resulted in Maloney's eventually publishing Corman and Kamaike's seminal translation of Basho's *Oku no Hosomichi (Back Roads to Far Towns)*, thus keeping it in print. Similarly, Maloney would secure rights to *Simmering Away, Songs from the Kanginshu*, translated by Yasuhiko Moriguchi and David Jenkins.

On the evening in which I met Maloney in Kyoto, I was invited to a memorial event celebrating *Kyoto Journal's* thirty years of continuous publication. The timing of Maloney's arrival in Kyoto and the celebration of this remarkable journal founded by the photographer John Einarsen, mentioned above, seemed serendipitous. As a young man, Einarsen was also inspired by Shiffert and they remained life-long friends. The elder poet's interests in art, culture, history, and her abiding concern for contemplation and the natural world still seem to resonate in the editions that Einarsen continues to produce.

Thus it seemed fitting that after spending the day talking about Shiffert, we ended up at an art gallery in the north of town where we met with Einarsen and many others associated with the magazine over the years.

On the wall were large black and white portrait photographs of both Edith Shiffert and Cid Corman, among other more colorful and stunning images that had appeared in the journal over the years.

Toward the close of the celebration, a contingent of thirty-five people meandered down to the Kamo River in the darkness and sat beneath a tree lit by tiny electric lights. In a cool night breeze we indulged in more wine and in the reading of poetry that had appeared in the pages of the journal over the years. John Einarsen read poems of Robert Brady, a sharply witted, direct-spoken poetry that opened your eyes and heart. Ken Rodgers, the journal's managing editor, read from David Jenkins and Yasuhiko Moriguchi's unsurpassably beautiful rendition of *Hojoki*. With its opening passage, speaking from a thousand years ago of the ephemeral nature of existence, of how quickly things pass away, it runs,

The flowing river
never stops
and yet the water
never stays
the same.

Foam floats
upon the pools
scattering, re-forming
never lingering long.

So it is with man
and all his dwelling places
here on earth.

(Moriguchi and Jenkins, *Hojoki: Visions of a Torn World* 24)

Then, as if to relieve us from the downward draft of too much thought, Ken lightened our hearts with Nanao Sakaki's immortal "Break the Mirror":

In the morning



Edith Shiffert Palaceside Hotel Kyoto Feb14 2005
(Photo by Micah Gampel)

After taking cold shower
 —what a mistake—
 I look at the mirror.
 There, a funny guy,
 Grey hair, white beard, wrinkled skin,
 —what a pity—
 Poor, dirty, old man,
 He is not me, absolutely not...

...I'll never be tired of life.
 Now I'm seventeen years old,
 Very charming young man.
 I sit quietly in lotus position,
 Meditating, meditating for nothing.
 Suddenly a voice comes to me:
 "To stay young,
 To save the world,
 Break the mirror."

(Sakaki, *Break the Mirror* 108)



Edith Shiffert reading at Nama Chocolate with Saitosan (Photo by Micah Gampel)

Sakaki's poem had us feeling lighter, and perhaps wiser. Still, there was a palpable sense of loss in the air as all the writers that we were reading, with the exception of Robert Brady, were poets who had passed on and gone, poets many of us had known and loved.

There were many younger people listening to the readings who had come to Kyoto from around the world and were working with the magazine. A young Indian woman from Bangalore spoke of how she felt a familial quality to the reading, that it had the ability to bring people together in this way. I read a few of Cid Corman's short poems. One, untitled, reads,

I will tell you the secret.
 Listen.
 What is it – you ask?
 I keep telling you:
 Listen.
 (Corman, *Nothing / Doing* 64)

A poem I should have read but failed to is called "Family:"

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

Dante and Shakespeare
 And Homer were and
 so many others

Who never leave us
 Alone – light shining
 Under the closed door.

(Corman, *of Vol. II* 378)

Dennis Maloney read a few of his own poems in homage to Edith Shiffert. One poem dealt with love of Kyoto:

Kyoto Dwelling
 for Edith Shiffert

For years she roamed
 the hills and paths
 around Kyoto enjoying
 plum blossoms
 in early spring,
 summer flowering
 of blue gentians,
 the autumn brocade,
 and the patina of the
 Shinnmyodo Buddha.

But with age, the circle
 has become smaller.
 Her balance shaky,
 steps tentative and unsure.
 Holding my arm
 as we traverse
 the path around the care home
 set among rice fields.

A bird song greets us
 as we walk,
 a few blossoms collected
 in the summer heat
 before a thunder shower,
 cleanses the air.
 Wisps of mist hide
 and reveal the hills.

Approaching one
 hundred, friends no
 longer remembered,
 mind slips away, perhaps
 once again roaming
 those hills and seasons.

(Maloney, from *Listening to Tao Yuan Ming* 74)

As the evening came to a close it felt appropriate that we should hear from Edith herself, so Dennis read several of her poems. Here's one:

Passage
 If this is the ending time I shall be at peace.
 The night is silent with just a few faint dripping
 sounds.
 Of winter rainfall, sparse, slow, occasional, drop by
 drop,
 like the running out of my last energy.
 I remember poets I knew, loved and wanted to be
 among.
 Now I lie down to rest
 and wait for whatever comes.
 The quietness is good.
 (Shiffert, from *Pathways* 108)

The time passed on in the quiet evening by the Kamo River. I listened to the poems and drank my wine, happy to be among such good new friends in Kyoto. And in the old imperial city I thought of Edith Shiffert, her life and work. It could have been a thousand years ago.

Gregory Dunne is the author of two poetry collections. He lives in Japan and teaches in the Faculty of Comparative Culture at Miyazaki International College.



Edith Shiffert reading in 2007
 (Photo by Micah Gampel)

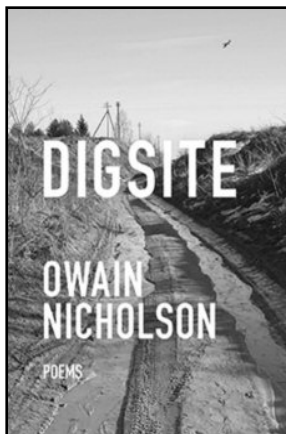
DIGSITE

Jesse Boyes

With the opening line “Aspen are pale femurs thrust skyward,” working archaeologist Owain Nicholson admits readers into such excavations of fractal similarities. The first poem, “Diggin’ in the Rain”, is a gripping beginning that hints at what humour, beauty, and casualties are to be uncovered in *Digsite*.

The poems compose some narrative throughout, but mostly they are keen observations dressed in metaphor or rhetorical jesting. Nicholson describes potentially miserable conditions while working in the field such as being covered in muskeg and swarmed by horseflies while hard at work in the Alberta oil sands. But there are no pleas for sympathy, just pure expressive observation of gratuities and grievances. He sways from contemplating the beauty of dragonflies coupling in the rainfall, to lugging his steel-toes through *Ecclesiastes’* less than encouraging notions. Titles like “Sisyphus Takes Atlas on a Hike” declare these existential reflections while Nicholson and fellow workers dig and sweat. In “Omens”, the gloomy line “bipedality preceded encephalization” proclaims the sentiment that the work seems to have no intelligent goal; it just keeps going. Legs must have evolved before brains. He alludes to further auditing the significance of life later in the same poem: “Sometimes, I think there is meaning in people. All night, thunder, the clash of two rocks underwater. I am often wrong.” Trivial patterns can be meaningful for this archaeological poet, and intentional actions seen as absurd.

In Nicholson’s collection, the archaic is salvaged from everyday language in a way that surprises you with your own vocabulary. He employs the etymology of more familiar words to use them unusually, letting the word “photograph” become something that an ocean wave can do. This is poetry which requires the mid-poem clause in the poem called “Let Us Dismember ‘Cultural Superiority’”: “May my words never be eroded by another’s citation; it is there that this language will sinister.” Trying to explain his poems would too often disfigure them. With sharp imagery Nicholson follows through with the metaphors he finds that sometimes become overt only after multiple stanzas are read. At the same time, he forbids any over-indulgent public analysis. There are poems in *Digsite* that inspire one to sit quietly for a time before



Digsite
Owain Nicholson
Nightwood Editions



Owain Nicholson

reading on. In others, I will surely see new meanings jump out during future readings.

Often a poem points out the worldly presence of metaphor rather than using it for another end, as in “Natural Selection” where in the city “sunlit stalagmites scrape sky,” so that man-made buildings are embellished deposits of sediment dripping from a cave ceiling. Different processes are illustrated as having similar patterns, or as being part of one larger process. Also in “Natural Selection”, the paddling arms of a surfer are “cilia”, as in the microscopic flailing limbs of a single celled protozoa. Nicholson, labouring over the hot muskeg, glimpses the invisible threads of the great chain of being, the helix, and brings us these poems.

This is neither an optimist’s handbook nor a bohemian’s weeping for nature ravished by a senseless human species. In a strange way it seems to embrace the idea that “Every living is a kind of sacrifice, and each burial a monument for the beaks of scavengers.” Somehow it does not come across as hopeless raving that “it’s all a migration, all a hopelessness we share.” Deep time comes to light in “Hypocrisy Beneath the Sun” with the line “How they walked, those earlier people, we walk” and then future generations are envisioned looking back at us as their ancestors to “laugh / at our short, pitiful extirpation.” The poet sees evolutionary success as both the lottery jackpot, and the catastrophe.

While the drudgery of impersonal toil can outwardly seem to be meaningless, in *Digsite* Owain Nicholson effectively shows us that there are interminable meaningful visions to be extracted from its practice.

Jesse Boyes is a student at UFV interested in biology and psychology. He writes from Abbotsford.

CAREYON

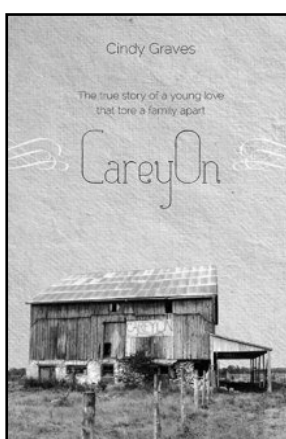
Joel Robertson Taylor

In *CareyOn*, Vancouver-based author, Cindy Graves, reveals her family’s significant relational hardships. What becomes of it all is a story of struggle and overcoming. *CareyOn* addresses what is at the heart of family — secrets, hurt, forgiveness, unforgiveness. But there is also love, strength, and compassion.

In her teen years, Cindy’s family uprooted from their Toronto home to embrace country life, 80 kilometers away, in Orangeville, Ontario. Moving to a small town was the worst thing to happen to teenage Cindy and her younger sister, Natalie. The struggle of fitting in, finding new friends, and creating one’s own identity lead both sisters to seek out new means of coping. Cindy finds solace through dance and modeling, Natalie in a boy.

The family gets along under their new circumstance. Natalie has her struggles, as the others do, but they remain together. Until one day, in an act of misjudgement, their father fires a shotgun at a car that has repeatedly terrorized the family’s property at night. What follows are a series of repercussions that estrange part of the family.

Although written by Graves herself, their story is told from the perspectives of



CareyOn
Cindy Graves
Friesen Press
2016, 368 pp

both Cindy and Natalie. Some parts are told by Cindy, some by Natalie, others by both. These alternative perspectives give story telling control to both sisters; and both sisters saw largely different parts of the story.

Initially, Cindy and Natalie read similarly — attention to the subheadings is key to staying oriented. But as the narrative continues, both sisters take shape. As their lives diverge, so do their voices. And it isn’t just their different circumstances that define them, it’s as much their subtler traits.

Early on in the book, the most driving force for reading is wanting to know what would happen to Natalie — and short chapters. But as the story unfolds, the pacing picks up. Descriptions enliven as the story carries through. Graves unlocks the complexity of her sister’s decisions; her family begins to come alive, and their descriptions anneal. The shape it eventually takes becomes a worthwhile commitment.

Periodically, the story strays, leading into other family stories, and then back again. Graves opens a window into her family’s past and in doing so, allows for it all to pass through.

So much of it is familiar. It’s peppered with Canadian nuances — not to prove its Canadian image but because of it. Beyond the hockey, curling, and *The Toronto Star*,

(continued on page 28)



Cindy Graves

LOVE NOT GIVEN EASILY OR EASILY UNDERSTOOD

Paul Falardeau

Love is the theme at the center of two new books of poetry, by Vancouver writers Adèle Barclay and Kevin Spenst. That may seem trite and overdone, but Spenst, a nominee for the Robert Kroetsch award for innovative poetry and Barclay, also a nominee for that honour and recent winner of the Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize tackle love in fresh, captivating ways that merit multiple close readings.

In *If I Were in a Cage I'd Reach Out for You*, Adèle Barclay takes an epistolary approach to her poetry, most notably in the six poems titled "Dear Sara" which start each chapter of her collection before also ending it. These letter-poems frame the larger work and offer it an example to follow. Even when not addressed, Barclay's poems feel as if they are written with a specific individual in mind, giving her book an elegiac tone.

There is longing here, love, and even lust. In the first "Dear Sara," Barclay memorably pens the lines "I'm having one more cigarette/so I can pretend to split it with you." Barclay takes time to carefully unravel these often complex mandalas of thought and emotion in Dylanesque metaphoric phrase and a vernacular that feels lush and precise without losing its relatability. In "Unfucked" she admits, perhaps with a well-earned bit of jealousy that "somehow our connection/ feels deeply transcendent/ and stupidly material/ never hitting the sweet spot/ most people call ordinary life."

As much as *Cage* is about love, in no way is its mission to unravel it or even give understanding to Barclay's own experience. Moreso, it is a recounting of the utterly mystifying enigma of anything that dares to call itself love. Here is a rich pageant of synesthesia-inducing imagery. We are not situated above what's happening, we are right down in it. Love after all has no place for logic and little time for understanding. Take "Destination wedding," for example:

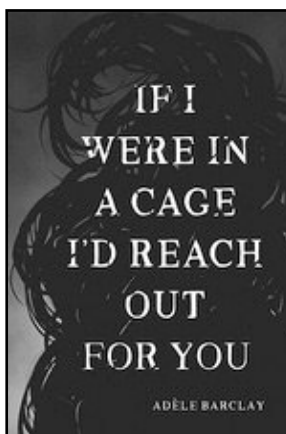
Wild like man who sets a fire
and then shows up early for work
the next morning, we howl past
the tipped dinner plate of mountains.

When i ask the sunset about love
his hand pours light onto my lap —
we lie down in hay and are married.

A woman from the interior explains
how to lure bears with pig's blood.
I think how ceremony is made
of bear-baiting and silver rush.

There are mountains where you can go
to think about God and love, where valleys talk
like it's their business to burn.

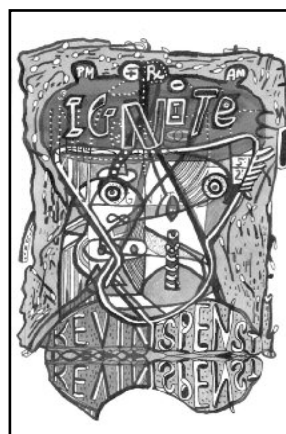
In the way that Barclay uses her poetry to replicate the woozy, boozy, metaphor-



If I Were in a Cage I'd Reach Out for You
Adèle Barclay
Nightwood Editions
2016. 95 p.



Adèle Barclay



Ignite
Kevin Spenst
Anvil Press. 2016. 96 p



Kevin Spenst

filled haze of love and lust, Kevin Spenst has constructed *Ignite* to house the constant duality of his father, Abe. A Mennonite in Abbotsford, BC, Abe fought a three-decade long battle with schizophrenia. Stylistically, he keeps his language clear and terse, but we get multiple, interspersed narratives. Running parallel are the struggles between his strict Mennonite upbringing and "sinful" opportunities available to him in the new world and those presented by his deteriorating mental health. Snippets of doctor's notes, photos of brain cells, and some of Abe's own writing become part of the narrative. Often all three are warped into spirographic concrete poem vortexes that appear amongst Spenst's more plain verse. Even here conflict is a driving force. For example, his father's time as an ambulance attendant is captured in "Ward Notes: Provincial Mental Health Services (1955)." He writes, "You light up/down Granville street,/ your pride of places/ racing away old-world/ practices of quiet/ Low-German prayers...The doctor listens to admissions/of drinking at shows/ in the Commodore, but/ nothing *sinful*. You are/ in the world, not of it."

The issue of self is a central question on the path to love for Spenst, whose own experience plays a role, running parallel to his father's. Though they share the question of identity, their relationship is understandably strained by this piece of common-ground. In the book-opener, "Ghosts on Meds," Spenst writes: "Even as pallbearer,/ I ignored your implications,/ your chemical-heavy heart,/ but only if i see you in some flesh/ can I hold a goodbye, say/ I'm sorry like it means something." Here

is a man trying to love his father when it seems too late or even, possibly meaningless. Still, it is perhaps the best chance he has yet had to make the kind of emotional ablu-tion that a Mennonite family and mentally ill father have never allowed. In "Dark Matter" he recalls a childhood where he tries to make sense of himself, his father and define his own moral compass. Here, he remembers, "I draw superheroes on my ruler in small panels: exemplars of strength, confidence, abnormality." There is empathy here, and love, this time not hidden in language, but lost in the void, waiting for a superhero to reach out for it.

In pace with Barclay, Spenst doesn't connect the dots for his reader. Some things end the way they end. We get something of a eulogy for Abe near the close of *Ignite*, but "Under the Tree Again" suggests that things do roll on. Though both authors can seemingly find some amount of understanding of their own, they leave their readers to do their own work; make their own conclusions. These two collections contain personal reflections on love, for a distant muse, for a sick father. Not love given easily or easily understood, but love, after all, is not always a matter of understanding.

Paul Falardeau is a longtime contributor to PRRB. He writes from Vancouver.

WITHOUT GETTING KILLED OR CAUGHT

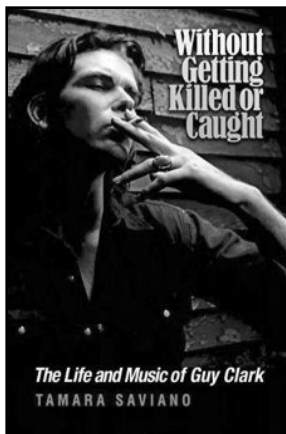
Joseph Blake

Texas singer-songwriter Patty Griffith has called Guy Clark “one of the great songwriters of our time.” Lyle Lovett has said “because of Guy, I was able to have a career.”

While based in Nashville, the south coast Texas-bred Clark wrote country hits for Ricky Skaggs, The Highwaymen, Vince Gill, Rodney Crowell and others. Songs like *L.A. Freeway* (a song Grammy-winning record producer, music business maven and author Tamara Saviano mines for the title of her new Guy Clark bio), *Desperados Waiting For A Train*, *Heartbroke*, *Dublin Blues*, *The Randall Knife*, and *Old Friends* are some of my personal favourites from Clark’s well-crafted canon. I’ve got most of his recordings from 1975’s *Old No. 1* to 2013’s *My Favorite Picture of You*, and Saviano’s well-researched biography with its seven years of more than 200 interviews and a deep friendship with Clark and his muse-wife Susanna Clark sent me back to my stereo and weeks of Guy Clark songs. It’s that good of a book, and he’s that good of a songwriter.

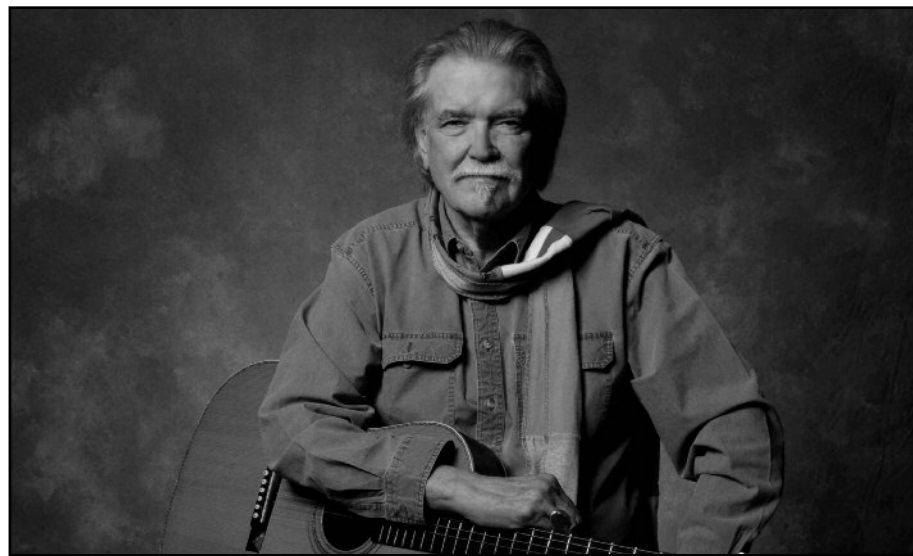
Dylan’s scope is a lot bigger. Leonard Cohen definitely carved down deeper and more worldly/otherworldly. But Guy Clark is arguably the dean of Americana music whose pals and acolytes include Lyle Lovett, Patty Griffith, Rosanne Cash, Steve Earle, Joe Ely, Jerry Jeff Walker and Ramblin’ Jack Elliott to name just a few.

Clark’s most influential musical friendship was with fellow-Texas hell-raiser,



Without Getting Killed or Caught: The Life and Music of Guy Clark

Tamara Saviano.
Texas A&M UP, 406 pp



Guy Clark

Townes Van Zandt. My favourite Townes story didn’t make it into Saviano’s book, but it’s worth retelling. While buying prescription codeine-laced cough syrup from a Houston pharmacy, Van Zandt was asked if he wanted it in a bag. “No, I’ll just drink it here,” the death-defying Texan responded before downing the whole bottle.

Van Zandt, Susanna Clark and Guy were a strange *ménage à trois* of Texas Beats. A visual artist and songwriter in her own right, Susanna met Clark met when he was

(continued on page 25)

THE GROSS AND FINE GEOGRAPHY

Antonio D’Alfonso

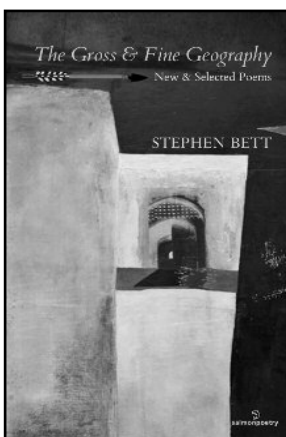
The *Gross and Fine Geography* presents a selection of Stephen Bett’s poetry published between 1983 and 2014. Selecting poems from the entire output entails invariably choosing what a poet considers perhaps not his best, but certainly what he believes to be significant for the narrative told by his new chronology. Selected Poems is a camouflaged memoir, and Stephen Bett’s chronicle begins with “How true it is that we need to be /close to the brink of language when / we speak now” and ends with “Though we are in- /credibly small / the path just / got shorter / by two breaths.”

I do like this type of writing, with its outcome of impropriety: the stumbling, reversals, jesting, equivocality, the wrong beat in the wrong place, the offbeat. As long as the image is diaphanous and the music upright, verbal grandiosity is never needed. The fissure attracts the curious more than the polished stone.

Stephen Bett will here and there reveal his literary idols and dislikes, but he is most elegant when his speech is tactful and civil. His wager against all odds wins him the big lottery, for in the end his intimate intentions as a writer are fulfilled.

From the sidewalk of matter (language) Bett journeys the way to the Divine, and what is divined is immateriality, that which comes betwixt breath and breath. Simply put, Bett is one *heaven* of a love poet. And a great writer of aphorisms. Sure, the words might be graphically unfamiliar and the verse in the shape of DNA strands. At times, stanzas read like disparate fragments and look like stand-alone blocks of images.

The reader should not be sidetracked by the jazzed voice or torn terms. “I know it’s you I want to breathe.” Bett’s poems are about love, the love of woman, the love of



The Gross and Fine Geography: New & Selected Poems

Stephen Bett
Salmon Poetry
Ireland, 2015



Stephen Bett

justice, the love of music, poetry, and art. He lifts the sidewalk up to the brink on a platform where few care to stand. He vacillates on the brink of (non)space where “Clear vision... moves in-ward.” When Stephen Bett enters the “town called love” he can believe in what he had not believed in.

There is something special, particularly moving, about the narrative that these Selected Poems bring to the reader. In, beneath, and above each single word and space, Stephen Bett recalls the story of his experiences; his poems are diary entries, reworked transience. He sings, he screams, he doubts, he cries, he tears everything apart, and then glues the world back together, one piece at a time.

From “too many maybes” we venture to something where “it’s like the world turns in the sky.” Matter mutates into Stephen Bett’s jive.

Antonio D’Alfonso is a Canadian writer, editor, publisher, and filmmaker, and was also the founder of Guernica Editions

HONEYCOMB FOR THE SOUL

Rose Morrison

'Where there is hope for bees,' Lori Weidenhammer writes in her blog, 'there is hope for humanity.' Weidenhammer, a Vancouverite uprooted from the prairies, is the author of *Victory Gardens for Bees: A DIY Guide to Saving the Bees*. Multi-talented Weidenhammer who writes, paints and performs, is passionate about the plight of bees and their importance. She is also an educator who, as 'Queen Bee,' tells students about eating locally, planting for pollinators and gardening. She invites everybody who can, to plant a garden that will not only feed and please its caretakers but also attract bees.

Weidenhammer likens planned bee gardens to the victory gardens that were planted in Allied countries to supplement homegrown food during two World Wars. During recent years, 'colony collapse disorder' has drastically reduced populations of European honey bees reared for honey production and / or crop pollination as well as the many other breeds of bees, both reared and wild. Reasons given for the bee crisis include use of pesticides, lack of food, climate change and diseases such as varroosis, which is caused by the predatory varroa mite.

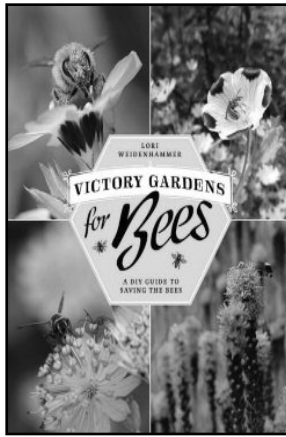
Weidenhammer is distraught about the present state of bees, and all its implications; 'If we want to protect our pollinators and the very survival of life on our planet,' she writes, 'we need to grow Victory Gardens for Bees with a level of dedication similar to the Victory Gardens of our past.'

I browsed *Victory Gardens for Bees* for several days before reading it; on a coffee table it is the kind of book that is hard to resist with its brightly-coloured cover photographs. But this book is much more than a coffee table adornment; at whatever page I opened it, I was amazed at the amount of detail and information given. I soon learned, for example, that eighty per cent of flowering plants are pollinated by bees, that there are an estimated twenty thousand species of bees in our world, and that some of them are green.

The book has 10 chapters. Chapter 1 gives background on the bee crisis and its implications for everyone; 'No bees, no seeds.' Weidenhammer wastes no time in addressing her solution; victory gardens for hope. Each chapter presents a planting plan for a different kind of bee garden; in Chapter 1 it is the Community Bee Garden. Some other examples of Weidenhammer's garden planting plans are the Balcony Garden for Bees; Wild Plants for Native Bees; A Hedgerow; and Rocky Mountain Safari Park: a Children's Bee Garden. Seven chapters also contain a Companion Planting chart that complements the garden plans. These charts are detailed arrays that give each plant's origin, bloom period and the kind of bees that it attracts. Every chart is well presented and several pages long.

While browsing, I thought that such an information-dense book might become heavy-going or even monotonous; reading proves that not to be true. Weidenhammer's well-researched book is written light-heartedly in plain words; bees that carry pollen in built-in depressions on their legs, for example, are called 'pollen pants' bees. There are snippets of interesting facts on most pages; and every page in the 10 chapters, excluding the Companion Planting Charts, has either an illustration (nearly all the photographs are the author's own) or an interesting sidebar. Her photos, mainly of diverse flowers and bees, are high quality. The illustrations that captivated me, however, are Weidenhammer's gently coloured, carefully laid out, garden planting plans. There is something delicate and whimsical about them that reminds me of the garden my mother kept when I was a child. What is more, the author knows a lot about plants.

I am not sure how best to categorize *Victory Gardens for Bees: A DIY Guide to Saving the Bees*. Its detail makes it more than a compendium; its style makes it more than just a 'how-to' book; perhaps it is a book of bee and garden knowledge with a call to simple action. Most people, states Weidenhammer, can do something to help restore declining bee populations, and thus help restore stability to this vital ecological niche. 'If bees disappear,' writes Weidenhammer, 'they're taking us with them.' Little space for a garden? Perhaps a roof garden is possible, or at least have a pot of lavender, then 'plot out where you could plant four more ... Yes, dig up your lawn if



Victory Gardens for Bees: a DIY Guide to Saving the Bees

Lori Weidenhammer
Douglas & McIntyre
2016 240 pp



Lori Weidenhammer (photo: Peter Courtemanche)

you have to.'

Victory Gardens for Bees: A DIY Guide to saving the Bees is a winner, whether it is read as an important wake-up call, or for a particular bee garden plan. Children, as well as adults, will enjoy both the beautiful illustrations, and the 'fun facts' that pepper the book. End notes and a list of sources are a good resource for readers who want to know more. This book will be handled a lot, and my only recommendation for improvement is that its binding could be sturdier.

Rose Morrison is a longtime contributor to PRRB. Her last review was *The Flour Peddler*.

GUY CLARK (continued from page 24)

dating her sister, Bunny. They bonded over Bunny's suicide. Later Susanna found her soul mate in Townes, another of America's most influential singer-songwriters. (Just ask Cowboy Junkies). Guy's records usually included one of Van Zandt's gems like *To Live Is To Fly*. Van Zandt often covered Clark's songs on his albums too. They drove each other's songwriting, and their friendship and creative rivalry produced a musical form that became known as Americana.

Townes' death in 1997 sent Guy's wife into a long, downward spiral that Saviano captures with understated, ghostly depictions drawn in part from Susanna's journals. Her slow-motion death-wish finally ended in 2012, Susanna slipping away year after year in her bed upstairs, starving and smoking herself to death while Guy and his pals smoked and sang and played guitars in the kitchen.

Descriptions of Guy Clark's Texas boyhood are also central to Saviano's biography. His grandmother Rossie Clark was a real character, a divorced amputee and former bootlegger who ran a Monahans hotel for oil drillers and bomber pilots. Her boyfriend, Jack Prigg was a wildcatter who lived at the hotel and introduced young Guy to rough taverns, pool halls and life in the oil fields. Check out Guy's *South Coast Texas* for a taste of old Jack's blue collar influence.

Guy Clark was the captain of his high school football team, student body president, and used a National Science Foundation grant to study at Houston's M.D. Anderson Hospital one summer before slipping into Townes' Beat demi-monde and a booze and pot-fuelled hippie lifestyle. In addition to his songwriting, Clark kept bread on the trio's table as a guitar maker and instrument repairman.

Saviano's lengthy narrative describes Guy's life from a *Last Picture Show*-like small, Texas town, to a soulless Los Angeles singer-songwriter stay, to life as a Music City-Nashville outlaw and legendary folk hero. Driving from L.A. to his new Nashville home, Clark wrote on a scrap of burger bag, "If I could just get off of this L.A. freeway without getting killed or caught." He held onto it until he could carve it into a great road song of escape and redemption. The rest is history and a good read indeed. Highly recommended.

Joseph Blake is Music Editor for PRRB.

"THIS ACT IS AN ANCIENT TALE NEW TOLD"

Hilary Turner

"Shakespeare has no heroes; his scenes are occupied only by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion." Thus proclaimed Samuel Johnson in 1765 in his "Preface" to *The Plays of William Shakespeare*. The old and venerable idea that the auditor or reader of Shakespeare's plays is indirectly himself or herself the speaking subject of those plays is tested in a new way by Shirley Graham in her collection of poems, *Shakespearean Blues*. Graham does more here than merely identify with such characters as Miranda, Ophelia, Gertrude, Juliet, Lady Macbeth, Lear, Richard III, and even Bottom the Weaver; she inhabits their consciousness, she echoes their hopes and doubts, and she extrapolates from their insights and their foolishness to the exigencies of the present day. The technique might be described as the poetic equivalent of method acting, yet with the author's voice still distinguishable even under layers of assumed personae. In "Blue Walking Shadow," for example, we encounter "A Poor Player" who "all his life long" has



Shakespearean Blues
Shirley Graham
Mother Tongue
2016, 89 pp

tried to be
not to be himself
studying hypocrisy
the actor's posture
so carefully
he forgot
his own name

The superimposition of one voice on another is even more striking when Graham adopts the first person. Speaking as Prospero, the weaver of spells and illusions, she obliquely refers to her own authorial capacity to conjure realities through words, intricately arranged:

Will anyone ever know what I have chosen
to do with my words? Will my words know?
Will I?
Having something to say
is a dangerous form of magic.
and lonely.
I am tired of loneliness.

The book is divided into four thematic sections, each titled with one of Shakespeare's more oracular lines. For example, the poems grouped under Hamlet's subjectivist declaration "There is nothing good or bad but thinking makes it so" explore the gap between the mind's confident ability to shape the world and its rueful recognition of its own finitude. Here is Graham speaking in the voice of Katherina from *The Taming of the Shrew*:

I thought I would be happy
winning the verbal chess match
the jab, the trap, the double bind
unleashed on my opponent
my voice modulating assuredly
my gaze steady as a pendulum dagger
but there is a reason
honey bees die after the sting

Like most serious students of Shakespeare, Graham is alert to his capacity for speaking "not for an age but for all time," and some of the most intriguing poems in this volume repurpose the words of a Shakespearean character for a contemporary situation. Thus Lear's lament "O, reason not the need," while pardonable at a time



Shirley Graham

"before mankind was bursting / at the seam," strikes a different note in a world of excess, where

the making, taking
and tossing enough
cheap objects to clog
five oceans

have created "a topography of waste." In similar fashion, Graham gives us a version of Richard III, wondering aloud in the sly accents of Donald Trump, "Was ever nation in this humour wooed? Was ever nation in this humour won?" It is comforting to recognize Trump as merely the latest in a long series of incarnations of the Machiavel so well drawn by Shakespeare.

A final layer in this complex collection consists of Graham's subtle yet moving use of autobiographical material. Never completely out of sight, this personal dimension comes through most clearly in a series of twelve haikus or "one breath poems." Many of these depict the struggles of midlife; most are associated with the ruminations of Shakespeare's mature heroes. In response to Richard II's lines, "For God's sake let us sit upon the ground / And tell sad stories about the death of kings," Graham writes of a more immediate death:

a sudden thought
en route to the funeral
my friend won't be there.

Then, responding to a line from *Two Gentlemen of Verona* ("Banished from her / is self from self: a deadly banishment"), she writes:
fallen cedar branch

my son moved far to the East
I fold his old shirts

It is Graham's stated wish that her readers will discover an appreciation of Shakespeare equal to her own. For those who are already on that path, this collection is intriguing evidence of how one poet reads another, and of how "words, words, words," as Hamlet would have it, keep on coalescing in new patterns, resonating, and acquiring new significance down the generations.

Hilary Turner teaches English at the University of the Fraser Valley

AFTER ALL THE SCISSOR WORK IS DONE

Candice James

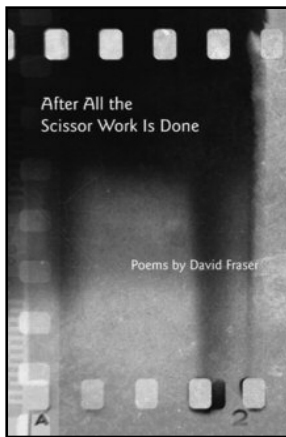
There are some beautiful scenes David Fraser has scooped up from the cutting room floor and there are some he has resurrected from the darkened corners of the room, scraping the varnish off the floor and life as he peels these images back and pastes them onto the pages of this book.

Memories seep from the poet's mind ever so eloquently in "The Dead Come": ['At night when you have drifted / to that other world you think / you are alone, but you drag along / a cast of characters, some versions of yourself, / others, the dead who trail / long trails of what's still unresolved.']

Fraser's scissors cut even deeper with a blunt blade in "Being Alone": ['Eventually we all fall into loneliness']. He leaves us wondering if he is referring to death or life? He paints them both as prison sentences of sorts with their own private jail cells, both blatantly distinct and hazily indistinct.

In "Near Death" the angel of mercy retrieves Fraser from the gaping jaws of death: ['An angel watched / my fingers crumple / on the bottom of the lake. / An angel carried me / dripping from water / back to earth, a sleepy child, / legs and arms draped / from outstretched hands.] The poet aptly shows the precarious balance and fragility of life in stark abstract juxtaposition to the unsuspected chilling moments when it is nearly lost.

"Beating Up That Kehoe Kid" evidences how aggressions and transgressions, no



After All the Scissor Work Is Done
David Fraser
Leaf Press
67 pages, \$16.95

matter how far mired in the past they may be, still linger in the dimly lit canyons of one's psyche as one looks back on the past and finds dark monoliths of guilt have taken up permanent residence in tarnished tribute to past indiscretions and misdeeds: ['Now his look still, / a victim in the shadows of that small pathetic / corner of your mind']

"In the Moment As We Dance" Fraser forces us to become painfully aware of the impermanence of it all; ['We move as gentle rain. / We know the music cannot last. / We know the sadness in the moment / as we dance. / We know this music that we will make.']

"How the Earth Moves": In stanza one we can feel the force and fantasy of lust coming alive with mercuric speed in the here and now. ['her breath upon his ear / but suddenly, as the ceiling flew away left the open sky, / the cold air / and all the stars / to watch them wish.'] and then everything is suddenly gone in the last two lines of the poem; ['then all was silent, / dust picked up by the wind.']

This is a cleverly crafted book by a learned poet who has more than paid his dues, and, after all the scissor work is done, the poet leaves us wanting more.



David Fraser

Candice James has recently completed a pair of three-year terms (2010-2016) as Poet Laureate of New Westminster, BC and has been appointed Poet Laureate Emerita of the city. She is author of twelve poetry books.

LIFE IN SUSPENSION

Antonio D'Alfonso

Seventy-eight poems, divided into four sections, make up H el ene Cardona's poetry book, *Life in Suspension*. One hundred and seven pages, the French version on even pages, and the English version on odd pages, preceded by two pages filled with commentaries praising the book.

'... first conceived in English, then rendered in French... the "translations" must have been there from the beginning... each poem fully exists in two tongues', Richard Wilbur explains in his Foreword to the collection.

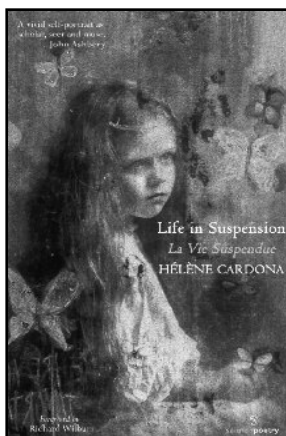
When a writer toys with two languages, the reader should not expect a one-to-one correspondence between on text and its equivalent. Something mysterious appears between one text and the other. I say 'between'; but in fact it should be 'outside' the texts.

Translators are obsessed with the wish to capture the exact mirror image of an original text. Everyone knows that translation is never the original text. Translation is betrayal. Oftentimes, it is not even correlation. Translation is the twin of a text.

Translating one's own work is an enviable experience. Perhaps the most beautiful practice for any writer. What a privilege it is to discover twoness in a single poet. The twin poet.

Let us compare 'ton sourire  clipse la lumi re,/consume le sortil ge et fait na tre le songe' and 'your smile eclipses the light and turns the dream into a spell' (52-53).

Anyone with the slightest knowledge of French is aware that the English smile that turns the dream into a spell is not the French smile that dissolves a spell and gives



Life in Suspension
H el ene Cardona
Salmon Poetry
2016

birth to dream. In fact, it is the exact opposite. H el ene Cardona has delivered to us a book in which she celebrates the magic of parallel worlds.

Isn't the outcome interesting? Yes, it is, because Cardona does what the translators' protocol warn her not to do. Yet this lack of fidelity is what makes Cardona, the bilingual poet, fascinating. The reader, able to appreciate the swell of double meanings, can benefit of inspiration at work.

The impulse is not the quest of perfect correlation. Agreement does not necessarily imply convergence. Cardona conceives adjustments.

'I hang in the void', she writes. 'I'm fourteen years old, between worlds.' In 'Mind Games', she says: 'In the dream two of me/catch up with each other.'

Two languages, two persons, one testimony. Not so much a disclosure of truth, as much as the revelation of doubt. Not mistrust, but incredibility. What sways above the emptiness is a life lived in complete awe.

Plants, animals, birds are signs of beings transmuting. Fairy tales are more than just stories. They are art 'as perpetual rebirth, the way we choose to express ourselves, the way we receive counsel from God.'

There is no dichotomy, no splitting down the middle of imagery. No Dr. Jekyll on one side, and Mr. Hyde on the other. No irony at work when Cardona switches registers; she balances over a cosmos of fragments. The sparkling, the reflections do not throw back a perfect mirror image. Lives are shared, not possessed. The result is a song for the acceptance of doubleness, pluralism. H el ene Cardona provides synthesis for what is inevitably separated.



H el ene Cardona

Antonio D'Alfonso is an award-winning author, translator, and filmmaker.

TALK TO ME ABOUT SUNLIGHT: A TRIBUTE TO THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Jessica McDermott

A *Visit to the Ranch & other poems* gives a gritty glimpse of what travel, even today, can feel and look like, while also paying tribute to a mentor. The places Klipschutz (pen name of Kurt Lipschutz) visits, the mode of travel, and travel itself become characters. One of the book's best features is the way it gives voice to day to day on the road moments. Whether it's a dog sitting beside a freeway, taking a moment to stand on a mountain, eating oatmeal and sunflower seeds, or playing a board game in bed, nothing is off limits or unworthy of entering a poem.

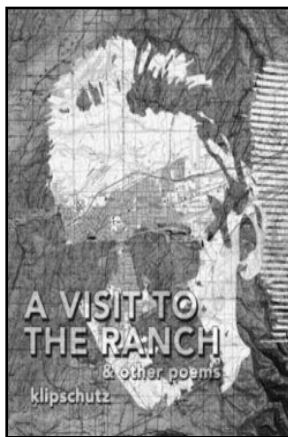
The towns and cities of the book are all in the Pacific Northwest. Without restraint or regret, the poems note both the beauty and the fraught history of these overlooked areas and do not shy away from criticism or sarcasm. Contemporary poetry too often abandons these characteristics and replaces them with indecipherable forms and a lack of opinion. For this reason, it is refreshing to see someone speak directly and risk both sentimentality and simplicity.

"The Ballad of the Marcus Whitman Hotel & Conference Center" describes the Whitman Massacre, which took place near what is now Walla Walla in southeastern Washington (where the ranch in the title is located). The quotes and dates in the poem recount the tragedy of the Cayuse who died of measles, and the violent death of the Whitmans who brought the disease with them. Framed around these descriptions of death and "resettlement" is an eight-line rhymed stanza that bookends the poem. These lines reveal an unflinching straightforwardness, ending with: "History is full of heathen souls that went unsaved/God's Love lies like a rug tossed in a ditch." The tone in these lines contrasts with the more historical account found in the body of the poem, but together both parts reveal an observant and critical precision.

Along with his ability to discuss a wide variety of subjects, Klipschutz also reveals his appreciation for both well- and lesser-known writers. Multitudes of writers and translators are directly addressed throughout the book. From Ezra Pound to Ernest Hemingway to Kenneth Rexroth to Sharon Doubiago and William Carlos Williams, traces of many influences can be found in his diction, epigraphs, and subject matter. Even a major Chinese poet from the Tang Dynasty makes an appearance, in "Free Translation of Du Fu From Memory." Although the title sounds like a joke, the content is of a more serious nature, ending with: "travels in forgotten dreams, grateful to be gone. /A spore with no religion drifts, cloud matter breaks in two." These final lines harken back to the beginning of the poem where a blanket, cicadas, and sunlight all resemble the traveller. Similar to the winds, clouds, and light mentioned in Du Fu's own poetry, the heavy rain and drifting clouds that split remind us that being human often means to leave places and selves behind to embark on the new. The traveller who is the voice of the poems becomes more aware of his mortality because he is in constant motion, and with motion comes continual change.

Another example of tribute to predecessors appears in "Saturday Night on Paradise Ridge." This prose poem recalls American poets from the 1970s—John Haines, Robert Bly, James Wright, and Bert Meyers—while the narrator is standing on a mountain. Even when startled by a deer and water running downhill, the narrator is never quite alone because he carries the words and ideas of those who came before him.

The writer most central to the book is counterculture poet and publisher Charles Potts. In addition to hosting seven infamous Poetry Parties over fifteen years, Potts also created presses, ran a bookstore, and published over forty books. Klipschutz's attention to nature and the vast complexity of the West, his interest in Asian writers, and his bluntness all resemble Potts. Klipschutz's four visits to Potts's Blue Creek Ranch, over twelve years, are the moments where he finds simplicity and insight. These visits symbolize a sort of pilgrimage and rejuvenation. In the introduction, Klipschutz tells how Potts made a place for him, "an urban Californian," to experience poetry and ranch life.



A Visit to the Ranch & other poems
Klipschutz
Last Word Press, 2015
53 pages



klipschutz

Like Klipschutz, Potts is a true poet in the sense that he takes time to pause, reflect, and bear witness to the subtleties in life. The poem "Pieces of a Poet, Horseman at Seventy" describes Potts's quiet life on his ranch while still paying tribute to his past accomplishments and trials. The Masonic Temple (now partly a taqueria) in the poem once housed Potts's quarterly multilingual publication *The Temple*, and a bookstore of the same name. His daughters, Berkeley, and his Appaloosas all make appearances, as does his wealth of knowledge undiminished by age. In the poem, Potts dreams of "an equine IQ test" and compares the formation of horse feet with those of "rhinos and with tapirs." These references and images affirm the slow-paced life Potts found on his ranch and its surrounding sea of wheat and legume fields in the larger Palouse region. In many ways, the life Potts returned to in his later years resembles his upbringing in rural Mackay, Idaho. In this way, the book solidifies the cyclical patterns found in travel, friendship, and in life.

In the book's final and title poem, we are again reminded of the astute fortitude Potts embodies. Here, the seventy-year-old poet-rancher has suffered a heart attack and eats pumpkin seeds and oatmeal for breakfast with freshly squeezed grape juice. An outing to scout additional grazing land for his horses finds Potts studying the ridgeline and wondering how early the property will get dark on winter afternoons, after which he challenges Klipschutz to "talk to me about sunlight." This seemingly simple request defines Potts both as a writer and person. Even in his seventies, Potts continually hosts travellers with whom he candidly shares his respect and attention towards living and writing. This sort of attention and honesty can rarely be found and for that reason, Klipschutz celebrates it. In the end, *A Visit to the Ranch's* enduring quality is its subtle indication that travel, like aging and history, leaves traces formed from direct experience, and even the smallest of them holds meaning.

Jessica McDermott is a poet and a non-fiction writer from Southeastern Idaho. Her most recent publication will appear in the Manifest West series, *Women of the West*, this fall.

CAREYON (continued from page 22)

we've seen these characters before. They're cousins, grandparents, siblings. The Carry family is really just a typical family — they happened to witness the two or three bad decisions that separates us all from fractured relationships.

Graves might have explored a deeper intimacy with the characters — her family. A breadth of detail displaces the depth, at times. But by the end, Graves commits to exposing more — as if respeaking into existence the very stories that were supposed to be hidden. Cindy's family works hard to keep order by not talking of Natalie's decisions, or her father's actions. Graves diligently unloads it all and deals with it.

More than anything, this novel is a gift to her family — and any family who's experienced turmoil — by honouring their history with such a comprehensive piece.

Some of the names in her book were changed, and most of the story is nearly 40-years-old. With so many memories involved it inevitably speaks to different events in different ways. But Graves's writing is true in that something can be truer than what happened. Broken relationships, abuse, heartbreak, they linger and don't heal in isolation. *CareyOn* reopens that phase of Graves's life, and it brings it a poignant close. The joy is seeing how it all comes to its end.

Joel Robertson-Taylor is editor of *The Cascade*.

THE CHARM BUYERS

Micheline Soong

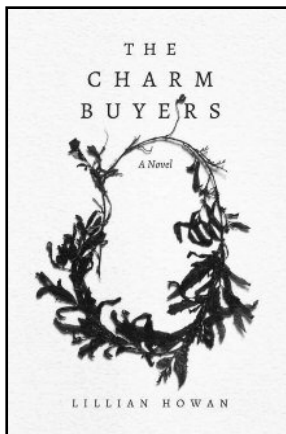
Lillian Howan's debut novel is distinctive on several fronts. Unlike published works on Tahiti by famous late 18th-early 20th century Anglo-European writers such as Cook, Melville, and Gauguin, who wrote from a Western-adventurer-outsider's perspective, or emerging post-colonial indigenous *Ma'ohi* writers such as Louise Peltzter, Michou Chaze (Rai a Mai), Flora Devatine (Vaitiare), and Chantal Spitz who write in French and Tahitian, Howan's novel, written in English, offers a unique window into the lives of the Hakka Chinese immigrant community that settled in French Polynesia.

The work is of sufficiently impressive calibre that it caught the eye of the University of Hawaii Press, whose publication catalogues customarily feature great scholarship on Oceania and the Pacific but rarely include works of fiction. (One notable exception that comes to mind, however, is the 2006 special issue of *Manoā: VāruaTupu: New Writing from French Polynesia* edited by Kareva Mateata-Allain, Alexander Dale Mawyer, and Frank Stewart, which features *Ma'ohi* writers introduced to a English reading audience through translation).

The Charm Buyers is set in a crucial transitional moment in French Polynesia's history spanning the 1960s-1990s with repercussions that continue onward to the present—intersecting lines of indigenous Polynesian Tahitian self-determination, push-back against French nuclear testing on Mururoa and imperialism in the Pacific, and convulsive economic forces that shape the lives of the local Chinese, Tahitian, and French residents in the islands.

Ultimately what makes this novel a haunting, dreamlike and immersive read is its crisp, elegant and sumptuously precise prose that weaves an engrossing tale which draws the reader in from the very first sentence declared by the sensitive yet seemingly disaffected twenty-something male protagonist, Marc Antoine Chen, that "The things you've heard about me—they're true, especially the lies". The blurred line between what is true and what is false, what is real and what is imagined, what is spoken and what is left unsaid, are themes that echo throughout the story of the insular world that a young, privileged Hakka Chinese man from a *nouveau riche* family invested in the cultivation of black pearls, must navigate as he faces his greatest challenge towards maturity and clarity. The protagonist discovers the power that stories have for people is often built on the strength of the belief on what cannot be known for sure—gossip based on suppressed secrets, the existence of ghosts based on ephemeral childhood memories, and the power of shamans based on the magic of a charm to save a life.

Howan's homage to Cao Xue-qin's *Dream of the Red Chamber* is evident in the way that her novel is similarly a Taoist-Buddhist meditation on the karmic strands that bind certain people together (like the love between first cousins), and an exploration of the hard lessons of the four Noble Truths of Buddhism. Howan illustrates through her protagonist's trials the tenet that it is the nature of human existence to desire that which is impermanent, and as this condition can never be satisfying, humans experience pain. It is only through the process of attaining the cessation of craving and clinging that one can be free of endless cycles of living to suffer. Marc



The Charm Buyers
Lillian Howan
University of Hawaii
Press, 2017



Lillian Howan

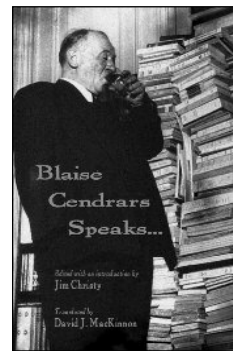
Antoine Chen's life journey in the novel reflects the experience of first becoming aware that the illusory feel of the unexamined life we live often feels like awakening from a dream. The man that he becomes is possible only once he deals with the life that he has before him that he sees with painful clarity.

As an American child of immigrant Hakka Chinese parents who were both born and raised in Tahiti and Raiatea, Howan, whose home base is Berkeley, California is uniquely positioned to craft her novel. Her parents sought to maintain her ties with Tahiti through language (tri-lingual education of English, Hakka Chinese and French) and familiarity with family in Tahiti, with regular extended visits to Tahiti while she was growing up. An attorney and writer with short works of fiction published in U.S. literary journals and the editor of Wakako Yamauchi's collection, *Rosebud and Other Stories*, Howan has a fine, attentive ear for language that is evident in her writing. *The Charm Buyers* is a thoroughly recommended read which leaves the reader craving for her next project to be published.

Micheline Soong was born and raised in Honolulu. Her father was third-generation local Chinese from Hawai'i; her mother, a Hakka Chinese from French Polynesia. She teaches East Asian Literatures and Literatures of the Pacific at Hawai'i Pacific University.

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Oral Autobiography
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Originally published by Denoel in 1952, *Cendrars Speaks...* is a collection of radio interviews and memories of his life and times. From Surrealism to Cubism to the French novel, Cendrars was enormously influential — the heir of Rimbaud and the precursor of the beat poets and of Marshall McLuhan. He was a close collaborator and crony of Léger, Modigliani, Chagall, and venerated by Henry Miller. John Dos Passos immortalized him as the "Homer of the Transsiberian". But Cendrars, unlike most of his contemporaries, also marked his era as a participant and front-line witness to the tragic events of the twentieth century. Cendrars own experience and compassion transformed him into a Cassandra-figure who sounded early warnings that modernism was reeling out of control at the expense of our common humanity. It is all here in these remarkable oral memoirs — the theft of the Mona Lisa for which Apollinaire was accused, his drinking bouts with Modigliani, the caustic asides on Breton and Picasso, his days in the circus with Chaplin, his friendships with tziganes and train robbers, whaling in the south seas, the pathos of the last days of Apollinaire, and the tragedy of having his works destroyed by the Gestapo and being falsely placed on the infamous "Otto List" as a Jewish writer.

Frédéric-Louis Sauser (September 1, 1887 – January 21, 1961), better known as Blaise Cendrars, was a Swiss-born novelist and poet who became a naturalized French citizen in 1916. He was a writer of enormous influence in the European modernist movement.

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ANYDAY KIND OF POEMS

Julia Dovey

Rhonda Ganz is a poet writing from Victoria, BC. She has had poetry featured in multiple anthologies and festivals. EleeKraljii Gardiner is a writer, publisher, and editor hailing from Vancouver, where she directs Thursdays Writing Collective, a program of creative writing classes in the Downtown Eastside.

This particular morning, it felt like a Wednesday.

I couldn't pinpoint why, especially since my phone assured me that it was, in fact, a Thursday.

It was this Thurwednesday evening that I finished Rhonda Ganz's *Small, Frequent Loads of Laundry*, and though I rode on the satisfied high one feels after devouring a tasty bit of writing, I also had the slight urge to drink as though it were a Friday.

Rhonda Ganz has performed a curious feat of time in this small, tightly packed book of prose poetry; though separated in sections by the seven days of the week, one can choose to take either several months, or a mere afternoon, to read a lifetime of aching, snappy thought. The ups and downs one might feel over a tumultuous week are heightened in these poems, discussing love, sex, suicide, and aliens with a level of rare wit that scratches every inch of the brain. The only educated guess a reader can take on the book's path is that the Thursday section will probably—though not certainly—follow the Wednesday; if it didn't, there would be the immediate acceptance that it was likely better this way, and perhaps we should start a petition to switch the days around.

Despite this, one can see a definite pattern of a troubled life lived in these pages; a woman grows dutifully older, musing on her childless status while considering smoking an eight minute cigarette on the tracks of a train that passes every seven. It is a book that throbs with subtle pain, but is written in a matter that can eek a reluctant sniff of delight at the most inopportune of times. Although this book can be understood completely by anyone who has found the deepest part of themselves in a throwaway song lyric, there are bits and pieces that ring true only for readers close to the author's home; mentions of Stellar Jays and cedar chippings give it a flavour that is wholly British Columbian.

BC seems to provide incredible scope for poets. This is obvious in *Frequent, small loads of laundry*, and also in Elee Kraljii Gardiner's *serpentine loop*, another book of thought-provoking verse. Though they share similar elements in size and style, *serpentine loop* offers yet another, perhaps colder, path through the mind of its readers.

The name of the book is chosen well, as is the beautiful, stormy blue and white cover that is tactilely rough to the touch. The poetry itself has a serpentine quality, moving around and twisting back upon itself in a way that is both jarring and graceful; beautiful images and exquisite descriptions are used both in poems of mother's love and



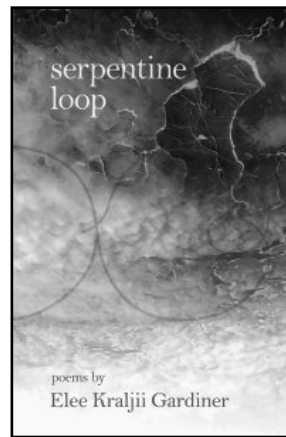
Small, Frequent Loads of Laundry
Rhonda Ganz
Mother Tongue Pub.
2017



Rhonda Ganz



Elee Kraljii Gardiner
(photo: Christoph Prevost)



serpentine loop
Elee Kraljii Gardiner
Anvil Press

poems of black eyes and drug use. The imagery of figure skating is the foundation of this coolly poignant volume, the technical breakdown diagrams of the loop move itself used as the headings of sections. Skating the edge of art and poetry, the book utilizes figures and interesting structure to keep a reader engaged to the fullest. And again, we can see British Columbia in the frozen ponds and forests, in the rain greying the city, in the "multimillion dollar structures cantilevered on cliffs mined with otter slides."

There is a certain isolation one might feel when reading; figure skating lingo is predominant in this book, which could cause some confusion to the non-skating crowd, though there is a long glossary of terms thoughtfully provided at the back. Perhaps, though, this adds yet another layer to a book that sets itself in isolation—skating alone and cold on a frozen lake, or living solitary and scared in a cold, caustic relationship. Perhaps it's fitting. It is a story told in a serpentine loop, in focused moments of

a precise movement that seem easy and obvious to an outsider looking in. But, like a silent, frozen lake, there is so much below that is not easily seen.

I finished *serpentine loop* on a Friday, a Friday that a friend told me, somehow, felt more like a Tuesday. Different days have different tangs, just as BC poems have that undeniable BC flavour. These recent days feel just that little bit off—maybe it's understandable, in a BC spring that by all rights and means should still be a BC winter.

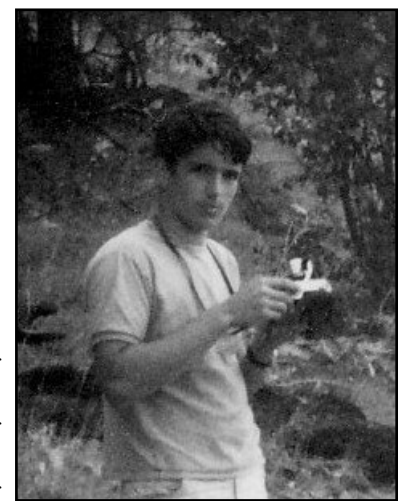
Well, no matter what day it feels like, it is technically a Friday. Perhaps I will have that drink tonight. Ice cold.

Julia Dovey writes from Aldergrove, British Columbia. She is currently attending the University of the Fraser Valley, is a board member of Savittar Productions, and is working towards publishing her first novel.

CAVILLI (continued from page 17)

disabled by a shooting accident, which is then quickly exploited by an opportunistic grizzly. Can love stand firm against these tremors and shocks? Providentially, Tom retains his uncanny ability to pepper a 1000 meter target with the shot of a Sako TRG 42.338 Lapua Mag rifle, just as thoroughly compassionate Johnny fulfills her voluptuous promise as a life partner.

The plot of this novel is not its strong point. However, Cavalli's command of literature, liturgy, and the notion of the Romantic poets that humans are at the centre point of "nature naturing" redeems the story from its various improbabilities. There is a great deal of promise here. Cavalli well understands the use of first-person point of view, the effectiveness of dreams and interior visions, and the deployment of suspense. He is perceptive about landscape, and renders the rugged terrain of the northwest with accuracy and passion. I look forward to a second installment in which Tom and Johnny navigate the vicissitudes of married life, perhaps in recognition that sometimes a kiss is just a kiss, and that actual mountains don't always tremble when we experience that seismic feeling in the regions of our bodies that are prone to shudder and erupt and disgorge hot lava.



Vic Cavalli

Hilary Turner teaches English at the University of the Fraser Valley

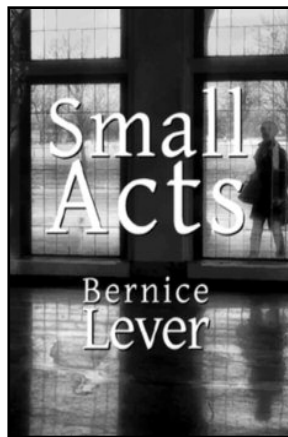
POETRY ROUND-UP

Candice James

Small Acts, Bernice Lever. Black Moss Press, \$17.99

Small Acts is a testament to the reverence of the ocean, the unity of the all and the continuing hope for peace. Many of the poems reflect personal experience but others are impersonal and esoteric. Lever explores love, lust, reality and fantasy with the fine tooth comb of maturity and experience in sorting through recollections of youth and innocence. "Mom's Glow" is laced with guilt and joy, denial and acceptance, and finally the unavoidable separation of death.

The poet successfully compares people's ideas, wishes, and worries with the ever changing shape of clouds. The ending poems turn into a bitter attack on the relevance and exposure of lives on social media, Facebook and Google, mourning the loss of real identity to the hazy realm of virtual identity.



Gnarled Love, Daniel G. Scott, Ekstasis Editions, \$23.95

Scott's poetry disrobes love and shows its stark reality in all its glory and sorrow; a season unto itself, passing, yet never-ending. The poem "Surviving" paints human loneliness in the invisible cloak of grief's fallout and compares it to the ravages of nature while at the same time it clings with broken fingernails to its survival instincts: "a leaf curled brown / turned in on itself" // "living in loss with a desire to die // still her laughter / sparkles / in brief moments"

The poem "Winter" so aptly describes the closing days of love: "love ebbed in time / the bed became winter / white and brittle"

The poet has a unique way of describing an outsider within a family wherein blood ties seem to be a moot point in the poem "The One Family Member Outside". Scott displays an amazing insightful glimpse at an outsider family member from both sides: the point of view of the outsider: "couldn't see how broken he was" and the point of view of the family: "didn't have enough form to be seen"

In "Such an Emptiness" Scott's innate eloquence erupts to the fore in affluent beauty: "she wove words / lines / from the lace of rain / leaves and mosses / to give shape / to the emptiness". I found those lines so evocative and moving that I read them again...again and again. Kudos to Scott for so fully capturing my attention with those lines that the world seemed to fly away.

"As She Forgets" is a moving poem on the cruelties of aging. Fear of loss of self leaving only bits and pieces of glimmer in the wake of fading memory and the dimming of the light: "before forgetfulness thickened / before night was all there is".

"She Remains" has the coveted flavour of literary excellence spilled throughout the entire poem and particularly the first four lines: "smoke curls up, dirfts, dissolves / she remains, haunts my memory // a far away figure from before / threaded into my bones, my soul"

This book of poetry continues to please throughout and offers a variety of emotions to chew on and digest. It is definitely a savoury meal for the soul.

The Dirty Knees of Prayer, Timothy Shay, Caitlin Press, \$18.00

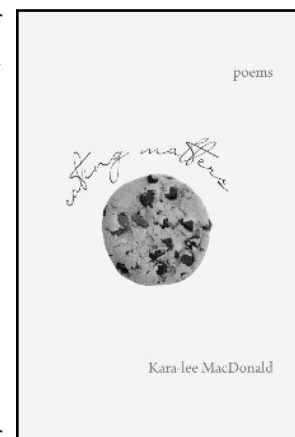
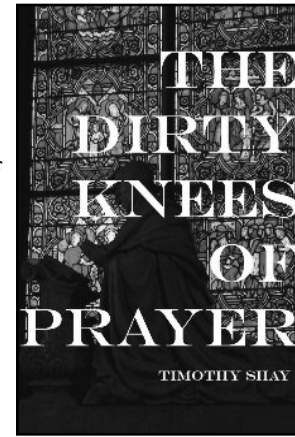
Dark and sultry like coveted shade under a blistering sun, this is the flavour of the poems stuck between the covers of this book. The opening Journal Entry from Shay's mother in 1957 gives the reader a window into the poet's soul at five years old. This tender side of Shay surreptitiously sneaks and peeks through the squalid corners of his darker poems sporadically and many time unexpectedly, succeeding in enhancing and confusing in a potpourri of words, images and emotions. "Beside Me" is a deeply romantic, poignant work of poetic art and quite possibly one of the best love poems I have ever read. Kudos to Shay for his poetic ability to walk the tightrope of desire and fall into the jaws of despair only to bounce back into the arms of love unscathed.

Shay's ability to surprise, capture and mesmerize never cease to amaze throughout this book. In "Niagara" he plumbs the depths of love, and impersonification in perfect surreal harmony:

The journey I travelled while winding through the pages of this book was one well worth taking and some of the passages will remain indelibly etched in my memory.

Eating Matters. Kara-lee MacDonald. Caitlin Press, \$18

The book is totally concerned with food, calories, fat content and the poet's undaunted enslavement to a constant awareness of it. Divided into 4 sections, the first section, "The Binge" is preoccupied with Bulimia, gravity and foods most suited to achieve the desired body image results. MacDonald plunges the reader into a world of horrors and extremes where the primary goal is to "look good" and therefore supposedly "feel good" about oneself. In the second section "dissection" the author dissects her own psyche with self-reproval and slanted discrimination. She asks "what good is bulimia if it / doesn't get the attention I crave." Section three "scale" is a running commentary on the personification of an otherwise inanimate object, the "scale", and it states an anachronism unto itself in two opposite sentences: one near the beginning "the scale does not lie" and the other sentence ending the poem: "the scale lies". The final section of the book "society" delving fully into the disease and exposing the underbelly of bulimia as it relates to her description of herself as someone "who trades medicine for laxatives and / hides chicken carcasses under her bed". The reality of the insidious self-denial and yet full gratification of the condition is evidenced with brutal honesty: "the camera follows her into the bathroom a quick succession of / shots, fingers, stall, flush, blood-shot eyes. she washes her hands / and rejoins her friends, reaches for a fry." MacDonald gives a riveting look at the stark truth and insanity of eating disorders.

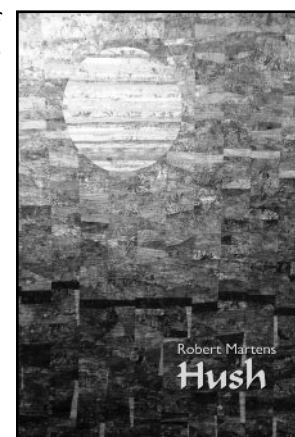


Hush, Robert Martens. Ekstasis Editions, \$23.95

In these poems, Martens allows us to taste the darkness of their rebirth and allows us to rest our minds on a 'pillow as soft and heavy as a spirit stone'. In the poem "Strangers", we embark on a surreal walk through a hollow planet as Martens 'travels with shadow people on a random road of strangers backlit by a chainsaw flame.' He leads us into the esoteric comparison or rain to heaven's tears: 'last night I heard/ the rain on my roof/ a falling broken god.'

The book is in four sections "hush," "the great depression," "Talking Hollywood," and "a few short sequels." In section 3, "Talking Hollywood," Martens takes us through the kingdom or filmworld from 'The Jazz Singer, 1927' through to 'The Terminator, 1984. Some very brilliant imagery is evidenced in the lines 'If the barrel breaks/ we'll drown in the spill of the light.'; and then there is the very unique poem "Instant Karma" encompassing a conversation between the Buddha and Menno, both meditating and thinking on transcendence. The weave of the line spoken by the Buddha 'All existence is suffering' runs eloquently through the poem like a coveted river of regret.

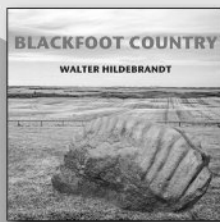
Candice James recently completed a pair of three year terms (2010-2016) as Poet Laureate of New Westminster, BC. The author of twelve poetry books her many awards include the Bernie Legge Artist Cultural award and the Pandora's Collective Citizenship award.



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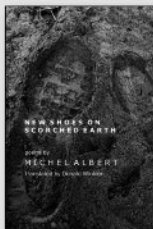
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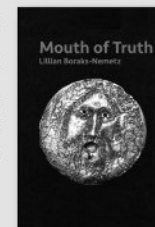
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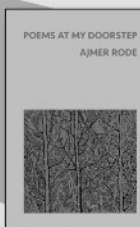


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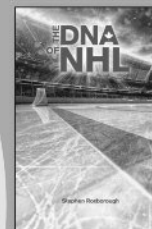


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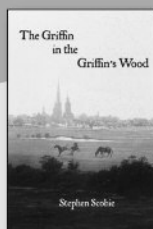
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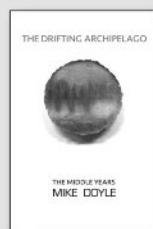
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